

=====
This text was prepared as the opening address on the occasion of the
dedication of the Dhamma Yaungchi Ceti (Light of the Dhamma Pagoda) at
IMC-USA
=====

THE LIGHT OF THE DHAMMA
by Sayagyi U Chit Tin

Kanham dhammam vipphahaya sukkham bhavetha pandito
Oka anokam agamma viveke yattha duramam.

Tatrabhiratim iccheyya hitva kame akincano
Pariyodapeyya attanam cittak'lesehi pandito.

Yesam sambodhiyangesu samma cittam subhavitam
adanapatinissagge anupadaya ye rata
Khinasava jutimanto te loke parinibbuta.

A wise man should abandon the dark practice and cultivate the
brightone after leaving (the sensual pleasures of) home for the homeless
(life), (and by living) in seclusion, which is hard to enjoy.

A wise man should wish for delight there, after leaving behind
sensual pleasures, possessing nothing; he should purify himself from
defilements of the mind.

Those who have thoroughly developed their minds in the factors of
Awakening delight in giving up attachment and in not grasping. Free from
taints, shining ones, they are perfectly quenched in this world.

Dhammapada, vv. 87-89; Samyutta-nikaya V 24;
Anguttara-nikaya V 232f.

Light plays an important role in the Buddha's Teachings. In his
first discourse to the group of five bhikkhus (Panca-vaggiya) who had
followed him when he began his quest for the end of suffering, the Buddha
describes how he attained Awakening through thoroughly understanding the
Four Noble Truths. He explains that as he mastered each of the Noble
Truths, light arose along with vision, knowledge, wisdom, and higher
knowledge.[1] After he became a Buddha, he spent several weeks in the
vicinity of the Bodhi tree where he attained Self-Awakening.[2] During the
fourth week, he sat in the jewel house provided by the Devas and
contemplated the highest doctrine, the Abhidhamma. He contemplated the
teachings found in the first six books of the Abhidhamma, but as soon as
he came to the doctrine contained in the book of //Conditional Relations//
(Patthana) his body began to emit six-coloured rays of light. These rays
were so bright they spread throughout the entire world-system and went on
to illumine an infinite number of world-systems. Such is the power of the
knowledge and understanding developed by a Buddha. This light of the
Buddha-Dhamma can dispel the darkness of the world. This light of the
Buddha-Dhamma is greater than the sunlight we see by day, the moonlight we
see at night, or firelight that can burn both day and night.[3]

That is why Sayagyi U Ba Khin chose the name Dhamma Yaungchi Pagoda
-- the Pagoda of the Light of the Dhamma -- for the Pagoda at the
International Meditation Centre in Yangon, Myanmar (Rangoon, Burma). When
Pagodas following the same design were built at Centres in the tradition
of Sayagyi U Ba Khin in Western Australia and in the United Kingdom, the

same name was used. Now, with the dedication of the fourth Pagoda of the Light of the Dhamma at the International Meditation Center, U.S.A., these beacons of light are spread around the globe.

These Pagodas are used for teaching and practising the Buddha-Dhamma. People who have tried Buddhist meditation know that the more a person purifies himself or herself the more light there will be. This is especially striking in developing a concentrated mind. As Sayagyi U Ba Khin pointed out, a person who makes "a determined effort to narrow down the range of thoughts of his wavering and unsteady mind" can reach a stage where "the mind becomes freed from hindrances -- pure and tranquil, illumined within and without. Outside, it is represented by light, which is just a mental reflex, with the light varying in degrees from that of a star to that of the sun. To be plain, this light which is reflected before the mind's eye in complete darkness is a manifestation of the purity, tranquillity and serenity of the mind." [4] Seeing this mental light, however, is not what we mean in Buddhism when we say a person is Enlightened (or Awakened). True Enlightenment or Awakening only comes through using a concentrated mind to gain insight into the true nature of conditioned existence. When we truly "see the light," so to speak, it will be much more than just a mental reflection before the mind's eye.

The universe as described by the Buddha includes thirty-one planes of existence. There are four lower worlds below the human plane where there is great suffering. These planes are dark. Above the human world there are six planes in which celestial beings, Devas, enjoy great sensual pleasures. Above that, there are twenty Brahma planes in which all sensual desires are left behind. The Deva planes and the Brahma planes are very bright. In between these lower planes and higher planes is our human plane of existence. The human plane is a mixture of dark and light. It is the best plane for appreciating the true nature of conditioned existence, for while suffering on the human plane can be great, it is still possible to cultivate good thoughts, and while there may be intense pleasures, they are not so constant that a human being forgets the existence of suffering.

Conditions in the human plane vary in different periods. When a Buddha is living in the human plane, that is the period when the attainment of the true happiness of Nibbana is open to the maximum number of beings. After a Buddha attains final Nibbana, his Teachings may live on for a period. This is the case for the last Buddha, Gotama, and we are extremely fortunate to be living during a period when the Teachings of a Buddha are available. These Teachings are like a great light dispelling the darkness of our world. The light of the Buddha-Dhamma is infinitely more important than the light of the celestial worlds of the Devas and Brahmas, for the light of the Buddha-Dhamma leads to the complete destruction of all suffering, to Nibbana.

We should not look on the light of the Dhamma as opposed to the light of the celestial worlds, however. As the Buddha pointed out, the darkness of the lower worlds and the brightness of the higher worlds are produced by the immoral and moral actions that lead to those worlds. If we commit dark deeds they will lead to dark results. [5] The Buddha defined "dark deeds" as being harmful deeds committed by physical, verbal, or mental actions. Dark actions can be summed up as actions done because of shamelessness and recklessness (ahirika-anottappa). [6] If, on the other hand, we do bright deeds, we will obtain bright results. "Bright deeds," the Buddha said, are physical, verbal, or mental actions that are harmless. Bright deeds are summed up by the two types of motivation that protect the world: conscientiousness (or a sense of shame) and a fear of blame (hiri-ottappa). [7] But it is also possible to commit deeds that are dark and bright and which will lead to mixed results. We on the human plane are experiencing the results of a mixture of dark and bright deeds, good and bad deeds, done in past lives. [8]

The Buddha spoke of four types of people with regard to the dark and the bright.[9] Some people are born into a dark situation, that is to say, they are poor or physically handicapped. If they do only evil physical, verbal, or mental deeds, then they are headed for another dark existence. If, on the other hand, they do good physical, verbal, or mental actions, they will go to a bright existence. Some people are born into a bright situation, that is to say, they are rich and physically handsome. But if they do evil, they will go to a dark existence; if they do good, they will go to another bright existence.

The highest goal, however, is achieved by actions that are neither dark nor bright, actions that lead to the ending of all renewed existence.[10] The difference between ordinary good actions and actions that are neither dark nor bright is the mental volition accompanying the acts. If our aspiration is a future human life, or a future life in a celestial world, then our action will be an ordinary good action. If our goal is to attain Nibbana, however, the action is done in the hope of going beyond the good and evil of conditioned existence and such an action will be neither dark nor bright.

Venerable Nagasena gives a vivid description to King Milinda of how brightly the disciples of the Buddha shine once they have reached Nibbana.[11] The disciples, he says, "shine forth in splendour, illuminating the whole world of Devas and men, brightening it in its heights, in its depths, from horizon to horizon, with a brilliant glory," for they wear the jewels of right conduct, concentration, knowledge, emancipation, insight (which comes from the assurance of emancipation), and the sevenfold wisdom of the Arahats. The Buddha told his disciples that they would benefit greatly by associating with those who make the Teachings shine, those who bring light.[12] By this, he meant those who are endowed with virtue (sila), concentration (samadhi), wisdom (panna), deliverance (vimutti), vision and knowledge of deliverance (vimutti-nana-dassana); those who admonish (ovadaka), who are able to instruct (vinnapaka), who do instruct (sandassaka), who arouse others [to make the effort] (samadapaka), who fill others with enthusiasm (samuttejaka), who gladden others (sampahansaka), who are competent teachers (alamsamakka-taro), and who are able to see and experience the true Doctrine (saddhamma-rasa-dassanampaham).

As we look around the world today we can see more and more darkness. The world needs all the light it can get. It is our fervent hope that this Pagoda of the Light of the Dhamma in the United States together with the other three Pagodas in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin will be able to introduce some of the light the world so desperately needs.

Sayagyi U Chit Tin

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Vin I 9f.; S V 420ff.

[2] See //Expos//, pp. 16-18.

[3] GS II 142f.; KS I 22f., 67.

[4] //What Buddhism Is// (1989), pp. 16f.

[5] MLS II 57f.

[6] GS I 46.

[7] //Ibid//.

[8] Earth Devas and beings in some of the lower realms also experience mixed results.

[9] KS I 118-121; //Designation of Human Types//, pp. 70-72.

[10] MLS II 57f.

[11] QKM II 220-229.

[12] It 107ff. (MA II 191f.).

Worldwide Contact Addresses
in the Tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin
~~~~~

\*AUSTRIA\*: International Meditation Centre, A-9064 St. Michael/Gurk 6,  
Austria;Tel: +43 4224 2820, Fax: +43 4224 28204  
Email: CIS, IMC-Austria, 100425,3423

\*EASTERN AUSTRALIA\*: International Meditation Centre, Lot 2 Cessnock Road,  
Sunshine NSW 2264, Australia;  
Tel: +61 49 705 433, Fax: +61 49 705 749

\*UNITED KINGDOM\*: International Meditation Centre, Splatts House,  
Heddington, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 OPE, England;  
Tel: +44 380 850 238, Fax: +44 380 850 833,  
Email: CIS, IMC-UK,100330,3304

\*USA (East Coast)\*: International Meditation Centre, 438 Bankard Road,  
Westminster MD 21158, USA;  
Tel: +1 410 346 7889, Fax: +1 410 346 7133;  
Email: CIS, IMC-USA, 74163,2452

\*WESTERN AUSTRALIA\*: International Meditation Centre, Lot 78 Jacoby Street,  
Mahogany Creek WA 6072, Australia;  
Tel: +61 9 295 2644, Fax: +61 9 295 3435

\*CANADA\*: IMC-Canada, 336 Sandowne Drive, Waterloo, Ontario, N2K 1V8,  
Canada; Tel: +1 519 747 4762, Fax: +1 519 725 2781

\*GERMANY\*: Sayagyi U Ba Khin Gesellschaft, Christaweg 16, 79114 Freiburg,  
Germany, Tel: +49 761 465 42, Fax: +49 761 465 92

\*JAPAN\*: Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, Komatsuri-Cho 923,  
Kishiwada-Shi, Osaka-Fu, 596 Japan, Tel: +81 724 45 0057

\*THE NETHERLANDS\*: Sayagyi U Ba Khin Stichting, Oudegracht 124, 3511 AW  
Utrecht, The Netherlands,  
Tel: +31 30 311 445, Fax: +31 30 340 612

\*SINGAPORE\*: Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Association, 9 Penang Road #07-12,  
Park Mall, Singapore 0923  
Tel: +65 338 6911, Fax: +65 336 7211

\*SWITZERLAND\*: Sayagyi U Ba Khin Gesellschaft, Greyerzstrasse 35, 3013  
Bern, Switzerland;Tel: +41 31 415 233, Fax: +41 61 271 4184;

Email: CIS, 100256,3576

\*USA (West Coast)\*: Contact Address: IMC-USA c/o Joe McCormack,  
77 Kensington Rd., San Anselmo, CA 94960,U.S.A.  
Tel: +1 415 459 3117, Fax: +1 415 459 4837

\*BELGIUM\*: Address as for the Netherlands, Tel: +32 2 414 1756

\*DENMARK\*: Contact Address: Mr. Peter Drost-Nissen, Strandboulevarden  
117, 3th, 2100 Kopenhagen, Denmark. Tel: 031 425 636

\*ITALY\*: Contact address: Mr. Renzo Fedele, Via Euganea 94, 35033  
Bresseo PD, Italy. Tel: +39 49 9900 752

-----  
Published by the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, United Kingdom  
Address as above, registered charity no. 280134  
-----

-----  
DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENT  
~~~~~

TITLE OF WORK: The Light of the Dhamma
FILENAME: THELIGHT.ZIP
AUTHOR: Sayagyi U Chit Tin
AUTHOR'S ADDRESS: n/a
PUBLISHER'S ADDRESS: International Meditation Centre, Splatts House,
Heddington, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 OPE, England
COPYRIGHT HOLDER: The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, U.K.
DATE OF PUBLICATION: 1995
RIGHTS & RESTRICTIONS: See paragraph below.
DATE OF DHARMA NET DISTRIBUTION: 16 February 1995
ORIGIN SITE: BODY DHARMA * Berkeley CA 510/836-4717 DharmaNet (96:101/33)

The copyright holder retains all rights to this work and hereby grants electronic distribution rights to DharmaNet International. This work may be freely copied and redistributed electronically, provided that the file contents (including this Agreement) are not altered in any way and that it is distributed at no cost to the recipient. You may make printed copies of this work for your personal use; further distribution of printed copies requires permission from the copyright holder. If this work is used by a teacher in a class, or is quoted in a review, the publisher shall be notified of such use. See the title page of this work for any additional rights and restrictions that may apply.

DharmaNet International, P.O. Box 4951, Berkeley, CA 94704-4951

[end of file]