

Samyutta Nikaya X.12

# Alavaka Sutta

Discourse to Alavaka

Translated from the Pali by Piyadassi Thera.  
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မြတ်စွာဘုရားက အသဠဝကဘိလူးတား ဆုံးမအောင်မြင်တော်မူပုံ

Introduction:

*Alavaka, Yakkha (Ogre) is a famous character, often noted in the Pali scripture as one that Buddha defeated after he attained his enlightenment. This victory over Alavaka is one of the major victories, named as one of the eight (Aung Gyin Shi Par) that Buddha overcome in his early part of his Samana career. The lesson given to Alavaka is very significant for all of us to learn.*

*In Myanmar there are many in villages who are given tattoo on their body with Alavaka Ein (sign of vigor) to provide protection against opponents, may they be physical or spiritual enemies.*

*yakkha: One of a special class of powerful "non-human" beings -- sometimes kindly, sometimes murderous and cruel -- corresponding roughly to the fairies and ogres of Western fairy tales. The female (yakkhini) is generally considered more treacherous than the male.*

Thus have I heard:

**On one occasion, the Blessed One was living in the abode of Alavaka, the Yakkha (demon), at Alavi. Then Alavaka approached the Blessed One and said:**

*"Get out, recluse (samana)." "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One went out. "Come in, recluse." -- "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One entered. "Get out, recluse," said Alavaka to the Blessed One a second time. -- "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One went out.*

*"Come in, recluse." -- "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One entered. "Get out, recluse," said Alavaka to the Blessed One a third time. -- "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One went out.*

*"Come in, recluse." -- "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One entered. "Get out recluse," said Alavaka to the Blessed One a fourth time. -- "No, O friend, I will not get out. Do what you will."*

"I will ask you a question, recluse. If you do not answer me, I will confound your mind (thoughts), or cleave your heart, or take you by your feet and fling you over to the further shore of the ocean (*para gangaya*).

"Well, friend, I do not see anyone in the world of *Devas, Maras, Brahmas*, or among the generation of recluses, brahmanas, deities, and humans, who could either confound my mind or cleave my heart, or take me by the feet and fling me over to the further shore of the ocean; nevertheless, friend, ask what you will."

Then Alavaka addressed the Blessed One in verse:

1. What wealth here is best for man?  
What well-practiced will happiness bring?

What taste excels all other tastes?  
How lived is the life they say is best?

*[The Buddha:]*

**1A. Faith is the wealth here best for man;  
Dhamma well practiced shall happiness bring;  
Truth indeed all other tastes excels;  
Life wisely lived they say is best.**

*[Alavaka:]*

2. How does one the currents[1] cross?  
How is ocean's[2] existence crossed?  
How is one's suffering quelled?  
How is one purified?

*[The Buddha:]*

**2A. By faith are currents crossed;  
By diligence is the ocean crossed;  
By effort is one's suffering quelled;  
By wisdom is one purified;**

*[Alavaka:]*

3. How does one wisdom win?  
How does one wealth obtain?  
How does one come to fame?  
How does one friendship win?  
How does one without sorrow fare  
When from this world to another he's gone?

*[The Buddha:]*

**3A. The mindful and discerning one,  
Who in the Dhamma plead his faith;  
By his will to hear that Dhamma  
Wins the wisdom of Nibbana.**

[*Alavaka:*]

4. Who is tactful and energetic,  
And gains wealth by his own effort;  
Fame will he acquire by truth,  
And friendship by his giving.

[*The Buddha:*]

**4A. He who has faith and is also truthful,  
virtuous, firm, and fond of giving;  
By virtue of these four conditions  
Will never in the hereafter grieve.**

[*Alavaka:*]

5. Truth and Restraint,  
Charity and Forbearance,  
Are the great reformers of man;  
If there be any better  
Ask of other *samanas* and *brahmanas*.

[*The Buddha:*]

**5A. Why should I now try to ask  
From other samanans and brahmanas  
When this day I came to learn  
What weal is here and hereafter?**

[*Alavaka:*]

6. This for my weal indeed  
The Buddha to Alavi came;  
A gift always bears a fruit;  
This too I learned today.

[*The Buddha:*]

**6A. From village to village and town to town  
I shall now wander along**

**Praising that Supreme Buddha  
And the Dhamma well preached by him.**

Having thus spoken, Alavaka said to the Blessed One:

**"Most excellent, O Gotama, is thy teaching, most excellent. Just as a man would set upright what is overturned, reveal what is concealed, point out the way to one gone astray, bring an oil lamp into the darkness so that those with eyes could see objects; even so the Dhamma (doctrine) has been declared in many a manner by the Venerable Gotama. I take refuge in the Venerable Gotama (the Buddha), in the Dhamma and in the Sangha (the Order). May the Venerable Gotama accept me as a disciple who has taken refuge, from this day forth while life lasts."**

Notes

1. "Current" stands for the Pali word '*ogha*' which is fourfold -- sense pleasures, becoming, wrong views and ignorance (*kama-ogha*, *bhava-o.*, *ditthi-o.*, *avijja-o*).
2. "Ocean" stands for the Pali word '*annavam*' which is metaphorically used to signify repeated existence, or *samsara*.

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<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/samyutta/sn10-012a.html>

A Gift of Dhamma

Maung Paw