

Our Ultimate Goal - Nibbana



Many in Myanmar practice either *Samatha* or *Vipassana* Bhavana with the sole aim of reaching out for the samatha group to reach out for the *Celestial abode*; and for the latter group to first become a *stream winner* (Sotapanna) and slowly progress to Arahathship. It must be noted that both practicing groups target their ultimate aim for liberation - *Nibbana*.

When Buddha, after attaining the Buddhahood, delivered his first sermon - Dhamma Cakkappa Vattana Sutta – *Turning he wheel of the Dhamma – Dhammasekkya Sutta* – the Four Noble Truth to Pyinsa Weggi,. at the end of the sermon – *Rev. Kondanna* attained *Sotapanna* along with million of *Brahmas* who were assembled there listening to the Dhamma.

Buddha then, delivered the *Anatta Lakhenna Sutta – Non-Self* – to the same. At the end of the second sermon, the *Pyin Sa Waggi* – along with the million of Brahmas attained *Arahathship*. In the human world, to attained Nibbana, the process is in sequential steps - in progressing steps – *Sotapanna* (Stream Winner) or (guaranteed to enter Nibbana after completion of seven rebirths in the sensual world); *Sagadagami* (Once returner)(to take one more rebirth in the sensual world); *Anagami* - Non-returner – taking rebirth in the Brahma world; and ultimately entered arahathship. To attain arahathship one must be in the Sangha order (Either Bhikkhu or Bhikkhuni), if one is in the human world.

We will first deal with Vipassana Meditation to reach out for Nibbana.

How can we reach Nibbana?

Nibbana is the ultimate goal for most Buddhist. That is why, Nibbana is known as supra mundane (*lokuttara*) to liberate from suffering. Meritorious deeds that would afford to liberate is supra mundane moral consciousness (*lokuttara kusala*). **There are four types of supramundane moral consciousness.**

1. *Sotapatti path*- consciousness – Stream-winner
2. *Sagadagami path*- consciousness, = Once returner
3. *Anagami path* consciousness, - non-returner
4. *Arahattha path* consciousness. Arahant.

If one strives to attain sotapatti- consciousness, he will attain sotapatti fruition consciousness. Sotapatti consciousness has been arisen in one's mind, he is a sotapanna (Sotapanna means one who enters the stream of the *ariya path*) in meditating for *tranquillity and Insight*, and the meditator who has just gained stream- entry knowledge is called a sotapatti puggala. At that immediately following instant after that enlightening thought- moment there follows the fruition knowledge. Then he is called a sotapanna, a term used is winner of a stream – enterer.

A stream winner is endowed with the following *five attributes*:

1. He has an **unshakable faith in the Buddha**,
2. He has an **unshakable faith in three gems**,
3. He **observe five precepts even at the risk of his life**,
4. He becomes **absolutely free from the fetters (Sanyojana) of the illusion of self, doubts, wrong belief in rite and rituals outside the Ariya path, jealousy and stinginess**,
5. He totally extinguishes five modes of evil conduct that lead to the four miserable state of *Apaya*, namely, **killing, stealing, sexual misconduct (i.e., adultery) lying and wrong views**.

Stream –winner enjoys seven more sensual pleasure realms. He can take rebirth, at most seven more rebirths, in the sensual pleasure realms. Beyond that, he will reach Nibbana during the world cycle where Buddha arises. To become a stream – winner, *one needs to approach to virtuous person*. Beside oneself, *one must attempt so that virtuous person approach him*. Faith is needed to carry out these things. Providing one has faith –saddha, he would be endowed with five kinds of benefits. They are:

1. Being look after by virtuous person,
2. Receiving approach and assistance of virtuous person, coming to receive one's articles of offering by virtuous person,
3. Coming to receive one's article of offering by virtuous person,
4. Being preached by virtuous person,
5. Getting rebirth in celestial world after he died.

For One having faith, there are many articles to test one's objects whether it is genuine or not. If one wants to know the qualities of goal, one could test it using touch-stone. Similarly, using the following qualities one could ascertain whether he is virtuous person or not they are:

1. Wishing to see and pay homage to a good moral person,
2. Wishing to listen to the teaching of virtuous person,
3. No stinginess.

One having faith are endowed with these 3- qualities. Their mind is quite purified. As result of the purification of mind, he will be reborn in celestial world after dead, similar to the clear water is clear without waterweed, one can see through the water. Likewise, one having faith knows and understands the benefits of others and oneself.

To Reach for Brahma World



Erawan Shrine with Brahma Image

Those who practice Samatha Bhavana, there are benefits that can be attained while absorbed in concentration – absorption (jhanas). Depending on the level of jhanas that one is in, one is likely to take rebirth in the Brahma world. Many who had visited Thailand are familiar with the Erawan Shrine – four headed Brahma shrine in the middle of the city of Bangkok. Many Thai and tourists went to the Erawan shrine, to pay homage and made their wishes for prosperity, happiness and protection, at the great Brahma shrine. Like those who practice Vipassana Bhavana, there are equal numbers of Samatha practitioners in Myanmar, who strive to get to the Brahma world.

How can we reach for Celestial Realm?

By practicing Samatha - (Samadhi – Absorption.)

To reach the celestial realm, one must practice about mental absorption (Jhana). In mental absorption (Jhana), there are five absorptions.

First Absorption (jhanas)

Practicing the first absorption (jhana) only, he would rebirth as upper celestial beings (Brahma) in the first jhana realm.

Second and third Absorption (jhanas)

Practicing the second and third absorption (jhanas), if one died after attaining second and third jhana, one would take rebirth in upper celestial beings in the second jhana realm.

Fourth Absorption (jhanas)

Practicing the fourth jhanas, he will become Brahma in the third jhana realm,

Fifth Absorption (jhanas)

Practicing the fifth jhana, one will attain the fourth jhana realm. If one has non- material – sphere consciousness (Arupa jhana), he will rebirth in the non- material –sphere. That Brahma was called Arupa Brahma.

Here below is a story from Dhammapada – **Verse 106: The Story of Thera Sariputta's Uncle**

While residing at the Veluvana monastery, the Buddha uttered Verse (106) of this book, with reference to a brahmin, who was the maternal uncle of Thera Sariputta.

On one occasion, Thera Sariputta asked his uncle the brahmin whether he was doing any meritorious deeds. The brahmin answered that he was making offerings to the value of one thousand *Kahapanas* every month to the Nigantha ascetics, **hoping to get to the Brahma world in his next existence. Thera Sariputta then explained to him that his teachers had given him false hopes and that they themselves did not know the way to the Brahma world. So saying, he took his uncle the brahmin to the**

Buddha, and requested the Buddha to expound the Dhamma, which would surely take one to the Brahma world.

The Buddha said to the brahmin, "Brahmin, an offering of a spoonful of alms-food to a bhikkhu would be much better than your present offering of one thousand Kahapanas to your teachers."

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

Verse 106. Month after month for a hundred years, one may make offerings (to ordinary people) to the value of a thousand Kahapanas; yet if, only for a moment one pays homage to a bhikkhu who has practiced Insight Development, this homage is, indeed, better than a hundred years of making offerings (to ordinary people).

At the end of the discourse, the brahmin, who was the maternal uncle of Thera Sariputta, attained Sotapatti Fruition.



Ananta Metta

Maung Paw