

The Most Superior Type of Offering

There are two types of offering:

1. The offering which produces full fruition, and
2. The offering which produces no fruition.

Which type of offering do you prefer? Please answer.

I would like to explain the Buddha's wishes for his disciples (*sāvaka*), regarding offering in this dispensation. Your wish and the Buddha's wish may be the same or different. Let us look at the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta*:

'On one occasion the Buddha was living in the Sakyan country, at Kapilavatthu in Nigrodha's Park. Then Mahāpajāpatigotamī went to the Buddha with a new pair of cloths, which she had had made by skilled weavers. After paying homage to the Buddha, she sat down at one side, and said to the Buddha: "Bhante, this new pair of cloths has been spun by me, and woven by me, specially for the Buddha. Bhante, let the Buddha out of compassion accept it from me."

The Buddha then said: "Give it to the Saṅgha, Gotamī. When you give it to the Saṅgha, the offering will be made both to me and to the Saṅgha."

She asked the Buddha in the same way three times, and the Buddha answered in the same way three times. Then Venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha: "Bhante, please accept the new pair of robes from Mahāpajāpatigotamī. Mahāpajāpatigotamī has been very helpful to the Buddha. Although she was your mother's sister, she was your nurse, your foster mother, and the one who gave you milk. She suckled the Buddha when the Buddha's own mother died.

The Buddha has been very helpful towards Mahāpajāpatigotamī. It is owing to the Buddha that Mahāpajāpatigotamī

has gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. It is owing to the Buddha that Mahāpajāpatigotamī abstains from killing living beings, from taking what is not given, from misconduct in sensual pleasures, from false speech, and from wine, liquor and intoxicants which are the basis of negligence. It is owing to the Buddha that Mahāpajāpatigotamī possesses perfect confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, and that she possesses the virtue loved by noble ones (*ariya*). It is owing to the Buddha that Mahāpajāpatigotamī is free from doubt about the Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*), about the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*samudaya-sacca*), about the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*nirodha-sacca*), and about the Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*maggā-sacca*). So the Buddha too has been very helpful towards Mahāpajāpatigotamī."

Then the Buddha replied as follows, "That is so, Ānanda, that is so. (*Evametaṃ Ānanda; evametaṃ Ānanda.*) When a disciple, owing to a teacher, has gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, I say that it is not easy for that disciple to repay the teacher by paying homage to him, rising up for him, according him reverential salutation and polite services, and by providing the four requisites.

When a disciple, owing to the teacher, has come to abstain from killing living beings, from taking what is not given, from misconduct in sensual pleasures, from false speech, and from wine, liquor and intoxicants which are the basis of negligence, I say that it is not easy for that disciple to repay the teacher by paying homage to him, rising up for him, according him reverential salutation and polite services, and by providing the four requisites.

When a disciple, owing to the teacher, has come to possess perfect confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, and to possess the virtue loved by noble ones (*ariya*), I say that it is not easy for that disciple to repay the teacher by paying homage to him, rising up for him, according him reverential saluta-

tion and polite services, and by providing the four requisites.

When a disciple, owing to the teacher, has become free from doubt about the Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*), about the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*samudaya-sacca*), about the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*nirodha-sacca*), and about the Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*magga-sacca*), I say that it is not easy for that disciple to repay the teacher by paying homage to him, rising up for him, according him reverential salutation and polite services, and by providing the four requisites.”

Here, I would like to explain further. If a disciple knows the Four Noble Truths through the guidance of a teacher, his insight-knowledge of the Four Noble Truths is comparatively more beneficial than his acts of respect, and providing of the four requisites to the teacher. If he knows the Four Noble Truths through Stream-Entry Path Knowledge (*sotāpatti-maggañāṇa*), and Stream-Entry Fruition Knowledge (*sotāpatti-phalañāṇa*), then that insight-knowledge will help him escape from the four woeful planes (*apāya*). This result is wonderful. Those who neglect to perform wholesome deeds, usually wander the four woeful planes. The four woeful planes are like their home: ‘*Pamattassa ca nāma cattāro apāyā sakagehasadisā.*’ They have only sometimes visited good planes. So it is a great opportunity to be able to escape from the four woeful planes. It cannot be compared to the disciple’s acts of respect, and providing of four requisites to the teacher. Again, if a disciple knows the the Four Noble Truths through Once-Returner Path Knowledge (*sakadāgāmi-maggañāṇa*) and Once-Returner Fruition Knowledge (*sakadāgāmi-phalañāṇa*), he will come back to this human world once only. But if he knows the Four Noble Truths through Non-Returner Path Knowledge (*anāgāmi-maggañāṇa*), and Non-Returner Fruition Knowledge (*anāgāmi-phalañāṇa*), his insight-knowledge will help him escape from the eleven sensual realms. He will definitely be reborn in a brahma realm. He will never return to this sensual realm. Brahma bliss is far superior to sen-

sual pleasure. In the brahma realm there is no man, no woman, no son, no daughter, no family. There is no fighting and quarrelling. It is not necessary to take any food. Their lifespan is very long. There is no one who can spoil their happiness. They are free from all dangers. But they are subject to decay; subject to death; subject to rebirth again if they do not attain arahantship.

Again, if a disciple knows the Four Noble Truths through the Arahant Path (*arahatta-magga*) and Arahant Fruition (*arahatta-phala*), his insight-knowledge will lead to his escape from the round of rebirths. After his Parinibbāna he will definitely attain Nibbāna, and he will have no more suffering at all, no more rebirth, decay, disease, death, etc... So these benefits are more valuable than the disciple’s acts of respect, and providing the four requisites to the teacher. Even if a disciple offers a plieof requisites as high as Mount Meru, that offering is not enough to repay his debt, because the escape from the round of rebirths, or the escape from rebirth, decay, disease, and death is more valuable.

What are the Four Noble Truths?

1. The Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*): this is the five aggregates. If a disciple knows the Noble Truth of Suffering, dependent upon a teacher, this insight-knowledge is more valuable than acts of respect, and providing the four requisites to the teacher.
2. The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*samudaya-sacca*): this is dependent-origination. If a disciple knows dependent-origination dependent upon a teacher, this insight-knowledge is also more valuable than acts of respect, and providing the four requisites to the teacher.
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*nirodha-sacca*): this is Nibbāna. If a disciple knows Nibbāna dependent upon a teacher, this insight-

knowledge is also more valuable than acts of respect, and providing the four requisites to the teacher.

4. The Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*magga-sacca*): this is the Noble Eightfold Path. In other words, this is insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) and Path Knowledge (*maggañāṇa*).

If a disciple possesses insight-knowledge and Path Knowledge dependent upon a teacher, these insight-knowledges are more valuable than acts of respect, and providing the four requisites to the teacher, because these insight-knowledges lead to one's escape from the round of rebirths, whereas acts of respect, and providing the four requisites, cannot be a direct cause for escape from the round of rebirths. Indirectly, however, the four requisites can be a supporting cause for one who is practising Samatha-Vipassanā to reach Nibbāna.

Here again I would like to explain further. The five aggregates are the Noble Truth of Suffering. In the five aggregates is included the materiality-aggregate (*rūpa-khandha*). Materiality (*rūpa*) arises as kalāpas (small particles). When they are analysed, one sees that there are generally twenty-eight types of materiality. Please consider this problem. Outside the Buddha's dispensation, there is no teacher who can teach about these types of materiality, and how to classify them. Only a Buddha and his disciples can discern these types of materiality, and teach how to classify them. Again, in the five aggregates are included also the four mentality-aggregates (*nāma-khandha*). Apart from bhavaṅga, these mental formations arise according to thought-processes. The Buddha taught exactly how many mental-concomitants (*cetasika*) are associated with one consciousness (*citta*) in a mind-moment, and he taught how to discern and classify them. There is no teacher outside the Buddha's dispensation who can show and teach these mental formations clearly, because there is no other teacher who fully understands. But if a disciple of this Sakyamuni Buddha practises hard and system-

atically, according to the instructions of the Buddha, he can discern these mental formations clearly. This is a unique opportunity for Buddhists. You should not miss this opportunity.

Again, dependent-origination is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering. The Buddha also taught his disciples how to discern dependent-origination. When a disciple of the Buddha discerns dependent-origination according to the instructions of the Buddha, he fully understands the relationship between cause and effect. He can gain the insight-knowledge which knows that the past cause produces the present effect, and that the present cause produces the future effect. He knows that within the three periods, past, present and future, there is no creator to create an effect, and that there is nothing which occurs without a cause. This knowledge can also be gained only in the Buddha's dispensation. You should not miss this opportunity either.

Again, when a disciple discerns dependent-origination, he sees past lives and future lives. If you discern many past lives, you gain the insight-knowledge of knowing which type of unwholesome kamma produces rebirth in the woeful planes, and which type of wholesome kamma produces rebirth in good planes. Knowledge of the thirty-one planes, and the Law of Kamma, can be found in the teachings of only the Buddha. Outside the Buddha's dispensation, there is no one who can come to know the thirty-one planes, and the Law of Kamma, that produces rebirth in each plane. You should not miss this opportunity either.

Again, if a disciple discerns cause and effect in future lives, he also sees the cessation of mentality-materiality. He knows fully when his mentality-materiality will cease. This is the Noble Truth of Cessation of Suffering. This knowledge can be gained only in the Buddha's dispensation. You should not miss this opportunity either.

Again, the Buddha also taught the way, that is Samatha-Vipassanā, to reach that state of cessation. Samatha-Vipassanā means the Noble Eightfold Path. The Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-materiality and the Knowledge of Discerning Cause

and Condition is right view (*sammā-ditṭhi*). The Knowledge of the Cessation of Mentality-materiality is also right view. The Knowledge of the Noble Eightfold Path is also right view. Application of mind to the Four Noble Truths is right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*). These two are Vipassanā. To practise Vipassanā we must have Samatha concentration, which is right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). When we cultivate Samatha-Vipassanā, we should have purification of conduct, that is right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), and right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Cultivating Samatha-Vipassanā based on virtuous conduct (*sīla*) is to cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path. This Noble Eightfold Path can be seen only in the Buddha's dispensation. You should not miss this opportunity either. Why? Insight-knowledge of the Four Noble Truths leads to a disciple's escape from the round of rebirths.

In the Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta, mentioned in the beginning of this talk, the Buddha explains the fourteen types of personal offerings (*pāṇīpuggalika-dakkhiṇa*). 'Ānanda, there are fourteen types of personal offerings:

- One makes an offering to a Buddha; this is the first type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to a Paccekabuddha; this is the second type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to an arahant, a disciple of the Buddha; this is the third type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to one who has entered upon the way to the realisation of the fruit of an arahantship; this is the fourth type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to a non-returner (*anāgāmi*); this is the fifth type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to one who has entered upon the way to the realisation of the fruit of non-return; this is the sixth type of personal offering.

- One makes an offering to a once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*); this is the seventh type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to one who has entered upon the way to the realisation of the fruit of once-return; this is the eighth type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*); this is the ninth type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to one who has entered upon the way to the realisation of the fruit of stream-entry; this is the tenth type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to one outside the dispensation who is free from lust for sensual pleasures due to attainment of jhāna; this is the eleventh type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to a virtuous ordinary person (*puṭhujjana*); this is the twelfth type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to an immoral ordinary person; this is the thirteenth type of personal offering.
- One makes an offering to an animal; this is the fourteenth type of personal offering.'

The Buddha then explained the benefits of these fourteen types of offerings: 'By making an offering to an animal, with a pure mind, the offering may be expected to repay a hundredfold.' That means it can produce its result in a hundred lives. Here 'pure mind' means offering without expecting anything in return, or help from the receiver. One makes the merit to accumulate whole-some kamma only, with strong enough faith in the Law of Kamma. Suppose someone feeds a dog with the thought: 'This is my dog'; that is not a pure mind state. But if someone gives food to the birds, such as pigeons, then the offering is pure, because he does not expect anything from the birds. This applies also to the instances mentioned later. For example, if a person offers requisites to a bhikkhu, with the thought that it will

bring about success in his business, or other commercial activities, this is not offering with a pure mind. This type of offering does not produce superior benefits.

The Buddha explained further: ‘By making an offering with a pure mind to an immoral ordinary person, the offering may be expected to repay a thousandfold. By making an offering to a virtuous ordinary person, the offering may be expected to repay a hundred-thousandfold. By making an offering to one outside the dispensation who is free from lust for sensual pleasures due to attainment of jhāna, the offering may be expected to repay a hundred-thousand times a hundred-thousandfold. By making an offering to one who has entered upon the way to the realisation of the fruit of stream-entry, the offering may be expected to repay incalculably, immeasurably. What then should be said about making an offering to a stream-enterer, or to one who has entered upon the way to the realisation of the fruit of once-return, or to a once-returner, or to one who has entered upon the way to the realisation of the fruit of non-return, or to a non-returner, or to one who has entered upon the way to the realisation of the fruit of arahantship, or to an arahant, or to a Paccekabuddha, or to a Buddha, Fully Enlightened One?’

Here, an offering means one offers food enough for once only. If a giver offers many times, such as, over many days or many months, there are no words to describe the benefits of those offerings. These are the different types of personal offerings (*pāṭipuggalika-dakḥiṇa*).

Offerings to the Saṅgha (*Saṅghika-Dāna*)

The Buddha then explained to the Venerable Ānanda: ‘There are seven kinds of offerings made to the Saṅgha, Ānanda.

- One makes an offering to a Saṅgha of both bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs headed by the Buddha; this is the first kind of offering made to the Saṅgha.
- One makes an offering to a Saṅgha of both bhikkhus

and bhikkhunīs after the Buddha has attained Parinibbāna; this is the second kind of offering made to the Saṅgha.

- One makes an offering to a Saṅgha of bhikkhus; this is the third kind of offering made to the Saṅgha.
- One makes an offering to a Saṅgha of bhikkhunīs; this is the fourth kind of offering made to the Saṅgha.
- One makes an offering, saying: ‘Appoint so many bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs to me from the Saṅgha’; this is the fifth kind of offering made to the Saṅgha.
- One makes an offering, saying: ‘Appoint so many bhikkhus to me from the Saṅgha’; this is the sixth kind of offering made to the Saṅgha.
- One makes an offering, saying: ‘Appoint so many bhikkhunīs to me from the Saṅgha’; this is the seventh kind of offering made to the Saṅgha.’

These are the seven types of offering to the Saṅgha. The Buddha then compared personal offerings to offerings to the Saṅgha:

‘In future times, Ānanda, there will be members of the clan who are “yellow-necks”, immoral, of evil character. People will make offerings to those immoral persons on behalf of the Saṅgha. Even then, I say, an offering made to the Saṅgha is incalculable, immeasurable. And I say that in no way does an offering to a person individually, ever have greater fruit than an offering made to the Saṅgha.’ This means that offerings made to the Saṅgha (*saṅghika-dāna*) are more beneficial than personal offerings (*pāṭipuggalika-dakḥiṇa*). If Mahāpajāpatigotamī offered the robes to the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha it would be far more beneficial. The result would be incalculable and immeasurable. So the Buddha urged her to offer them to the Saṅgha too.

The Buddha also explained the four kinds of purification of offering:

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‘There are four kinds of purification of offering. What are the four? They are:

1. There is the offering that is purified by the giver, but not the receiver.
2. There is the offering that is purified by the receiver, but not the giver.
3. There is the offering that is purified by neither the giver nor the receiver.
4. There is the offering that is purified by both the giver and the receiver.

(1) What is the offering that is purified by the giver, but not the receiver? Here the giver is virtuous, of good character, and the receiver is immoral, of evil character. Thus, the offering is purified by the giver, but not the receiver.

(2) What is the offering that is purified by the receiver, but not the giver? Here the giver is immoral, of evil character, and the receiver is virtuous, of good character. Thus, the offering is purified by the receiver, but not the giver.

(3) What is the offering that is purified by neither the giver nor the receiver? Here the giver is immoral, of evil character, and the receiver is immoral, of evil character. Thus, the offering is purified by neither the giver nor the receiver.

(4) What is the offering that is purified by both the giver and the receiver? Here the giver is virtuous, of good character, and the receiver is virtuous, of good character. Thus, the offering is purified by both the giver and the receiver. These are the four kinds of purification of offering.’

The Buddha explained further:

(1) An offering is purified by the giver’s virtue, but not the receiver when:

- (a) The giver is virtuous.
- (b) What is offered has been righteously obtained.

(c) The giver has at the time of offering a clear and taintless mind. He should have no attachment, anger, etc.

(d) The giver has strong enough faith in that the fruit of that kamma is great,

but the receiver is immoral. If the giver wants superior benefits, there should be these four factors. In this case, although the receiver is an immoral person, the offering is purified by the giver. The commentary mentions the case of Vessantara. Our bodhisatta in a past life as Vessantara, offered his son and daughter (the future Rāhula and Uppalavaṇṇā) to Jūjaka Brāhmaṇa, who was immoral, of evil character. That offering was the final generosity pāramī for Vessantara. After fulfilling this last pāramī, he was ready to attain enlightenment; he had only to wait for the time to mature. Because of this generosity pāramī, and other previous pāramīs, he was certain to attain Omniscient Knowledge (*sabbāññuta-ñāṇa*). So we can say that this offering was a support for his attaining enlightenment. It was purified by Vessantara. At that time Vessantara was virtuous, of good character. What he offered was also rightly obtained. He had a clear and taintless mind because he had only one desire: to attain enlightenment. He had strong enough faith in the Law of Kamma and its results. So the offering was purified by the giver.

(2) An offering is purified by the receiver, when an immoral person, with an unclear mind full of attachment, hatred, etc, without faith in the Law of Kamma, makes an offering of what is unrighteously obtained to a virtuous person. The commentary mentions the case of a fisherman. A fisherman living near the mouth of the Kalyāṇī River in Sri Lanka, had three times offered almsfood to a Mahāthera who was an arahant. At the time near death, the fisherman remembered his offering to that Mahāthera. Good signs of a deva plane appeared in his mind, so before he died he said to his relatives, ‘That Mahāthera saved me.’ After death he went to a deva plane. In this case the fisherman was immoral and of bad character, but the receiver was virtuous. So

that offering was purified by the receiver.

(3) An offering is purified by neither the giver nor the receiver, when an immoral person, with an unclear mind full of attachment, hatred, etc, without faith in the Law of Kamma, makes an offering of what is unrighteously obtained to an immoral person. The commentary mentions the case of hunter. When that hunter died, he went to the peta realm. Then his wife offered almsfood on his behalf, to a bhikkhu who was immoral, of bad character; so the peta could not call out, 'It is right (*sādhu*)'. Why? The giver too was immoral, and not virtuous, because she, as the wife of a hunter, had accompanied him when he killed animals. Also, what she offered was unrighteously obtained, as it was acquired through killing animals. She had an unclear mind, because had she had a clear understanding mind, she would not have accompanied her husband. She did not have enough faith in the Law of Kamma and its results. Had she had enough faith in the Law of Kamma, she would never have killed living beings. Since the receiver too was immoral, of bad character, the offering could be purified by neither giver nor receiver. She offered almsfood in the same way three times, and no good result occurred; so the peta shouted, 'An immoral person has three times stolen my wealth.' Then she offered almsfood to a virtuous bhikkhu. At that time the peta could call out 'It is good', and escape from the peta realm.

Here I would like to say to the audience; if you want good results from offering you should fulfil the following four factors:

- (a) You must be virtuous,
- (b) What you offer must be righteously obtained,
- (c) You must have a clear and taintless mind,
- (d) You must have strong enough faith in the Law of Kamma and its results.

Furthermore, if you are the receiver, and have strong enough loving-kindness and compassion for the giver, you should also be virtuous. If your virtue is accompanied by jhāna and insight-knowledge, it is much better. Why? This type of offering can

produce good results for the giver. Please note the next type of offering, the fourth kind of purification of an offering.

(4) An offering is purified by both the giver and the receiver, when the giver has the four factors:

- (a) He is virtuous,
- (b) What he offers is righteously obtained,
- (c) His mind is clear and taintless,
- (d) He has strong enough faith in the Law of Kamma and its results,

and the receiver too is virtuous. As for this type of offering, the Buddha said: '...Ānanda, I say, this type of offering will come to full fruition.' This offering can produce incalculable, immeasurable results. If the receiver's virtue is accompanied by jhāna, insight-knowledge, or Path and Fruition Knowledges, then that virtue is superior.

Here I would like to relate another sutta. This is the Nandamātā Sutta in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, Chakka Nipāta. Once the Buddha was living near Sāvatti, at Jetavana in Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. Then Nanda's mother, a lay disciple of the Buddha, who lived in Velukandaka, offered almsfood. Her offering was endowed with six factors, and the receiver was the Bhikkhu Saṅgha, headed by the Venerable Sāriputta and the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna. The Buddha saw the offering with his divine eye, and addressed the monks thus: 'Bhikkhus, the lay disciple of Velukandaka has prepared an offering endowed with six factors to the Saṅgha, headed by Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna. How, bhikkhus, is an offering endowed with six factors? Bhikkhus, the giver should be endowed with three factors, and the receiver also should be endowed with three factors.

What are the giver's three factors? Bhikkhus, do do

- He is glad at heart before giving,
- His heart is satisfied in giving,
- He is joyful when he has given.

These are the three factors of the giver. What are the three factors of the receiver? Bhikkhus,

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- The receiver is free from attachment or trying to destroy attachment,
- The receiver is free from anger or trying to destroy anger,
- The receiver is free from delusion or trying to destroy delusion.

These are the three factors of the receiver.’

Altogether there are six factors. If the offering is endowed with these six factors, it produces immeasurable and noble results.

The Buddha explained further: ‘Bhikkhus, it is not easy to grasp the measure of merit of such an offering by saying: “This much is the yield in merit, the yield in goodness, accumulated for wholesome kamma hereafter, ripening to happiness, leading to heaven, leading to happiness, longed for and loved.” Verily the great mass of merit, wholesome kamma, is just reckoned unreckonable, immeasurable. Bhikkhus, just as it is not easy to grasp the measure of water in the great ocean, and to say: “There are so many pailfuls, so many hundreds of pailfuls, so many thousands of pailfuls, so many hundreds of thousands of pailfuls”; for that great mass of water is reckoned unreckonable, immeasurable; even so bhikkhus, it is not easy to grasp the measure of merit in an offering endowed with the six factors. Verily the great mass of merit is reckoned unreckonable, immeasurable.’

Why? The giver was endowed with the four factors of the Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta. They are:

- (a) She was virtuous,
- (b) Her offering had been righteously obtained,
- (c) Her mind was clear and taintless,
- (d) She had strong enough faith in the Law of Kamma and its results.

The three factors mentioned in the Nandamātā Sutta were also fulfilled. They are:

- She was glad at heart before giving,
- Her heart was satisfied in giving,

- She was joyful when she had given.

These factors are very important for a giver, whether male or female. If he or she expects incalculable and immeasurable good results, he or she should try to fulfil those factors. But according to the Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta, the receiver too must be virtuous. According to the Nandamātā Sutta, it should be a bhikkhu or bhikkhunī who has cultivated Samatha-Vipassanā meditation up to the arahant stage, or who is cultivating Samatha-Vipassanā meditation to destroy attachment (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*).

Now in Yi-Tung Temple, there are many bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs who are practising Samatha and Vipassanā meditation to destroy attachment, anger, and delusion totally. They are also virtuous. So we may say that now there are worthy receivers here. The givers too may be virtuous. Their minds may be clear and taintless. What they have offered has been righteously obtained. They may have strong enough faith in the Triple Gem, and the Law of Kamma and its results. They were glad before giving, and were satisfied in giving. They were joyful after having given. So we can say that the offerings made in these two months have been in accordance with the Buddha’s wishes. They are noble offerings. If the givers expect good results in the future, certainly this wholesome kamma will fulfil their desire. Why? The Buddha said in the Saṅkhārupapatti Sutta: ‘*Ijjhati bhikkhave sīlavato cetopañidhi visuddhattā*’: ‘Bhikkhus, a virtuous person’s wish will certainly be fulfilled by purification of conduct.’ So, a virtuous person’s wholesome kamma can produce the result of his desire:

- If he wants to become a Buddha he can become a Buddha,
- If he wants to become a Paccekabuddha he can become a Paccekabuddha,
- If he wants to become a Chief Disciple (*aggasāvaka*) he can become a Chief Disciple,
- If he wants to become a Great Disciple (*mahāsāvaka*)

he can become a Great Disciple,

- If he wants to become an Ordinary Disciple (*pakatisāvaka*) he can become an Ordinary Disciple.

This is only when his *pāramīs* have matured. Wishing alone is not enough to attain one of those types of enlightenment (*bo-dhi*). Again:

- If he wants human happiness after death, he can get human happiness in the human realm.
- If he wants to go to the deva realm, he can go to the deva realm.
- If he wants to go to the brahma realm after death, this wholesome kamma can be a support for him to go to the brahma realm.

How? If his offering fulfils the previously mentioned factors, the receiver is his mind's object. He has strong enough loving-kindness and compassion for the receiver. If he at that time practises lovingkindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*), his loving-kindness *jhāna* will take him to the brahma realm after death. In this way his offering is a support for him to go to the brahma realm. So, if the giver wants to go to the brahma realm after death, he should practise lovingkindness meditation up to the lovingkindness *jhāna* stage. If he has practised lovingkindness *jhāna*, and offers almsfood, his wholesome kamma is a very superior and powerful support for him to go to the brahma realm. So, if you want good results in the future, you should also practise lovingkindness meditation up to the lovingkindness *jhāna* stage. Among the three types of happiness; human happiness, deva happiness, and brahma happiness, brahma happiness is the highest. There is no mundane happiness higher than brahma happiness. It is the most superior happiness in the thirty-one planes.

This is the first type of offering mentioned in the beginning of this talk, namely, the offering which produces full fruition. Do you prefer this type of offering? If you do, then please listen to the following stanza from the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta*:

*‘Yo vītarāgo vītarāgesu dadāti dānaṃ
Dhammena laddhaṃ supasannacitto
Abhisaddahaṃ kammaphalaṃ uḥhāraṃ
Taṃ ve dānaṃ āmisadānanamagganti’*

‘Bhikkhus, I say that when an arahant, with clear and taintless mind, placing faith in that the fruit of kamma is great, offers to an arahant what is righteously obtained, then that offering indeed is the most superior of all worldly offerings.’

In this case, the four factors present in the giver are:

1. The giver is an arahant,
2. What is offered is righteously obtained,
3. He has a clear and taintless mind,
4. He has strong enough faith in the Law of Kamma and its results.

One more factor is necessary, namely:

5. The receiver also must be an arahant.

The Buddha taught that this type of offering is the most superior type of worldly offering. He praised this type of offering as the most superior. Why? This offering produces no result. Why? The giver has destroyed delusion and all attachment to any life. Ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), are the main causes for kamma, that is volitional-formations (*saṅkhāra*). In this case, volitional-formations means good actions like making an offering to the receiver. But this kamma cannot produce any result, because there are no supporting causes; there is no ignorance (*avijjā*), and no craving (*taṇhā*). If the root of a tree is totally destroyed the tree cannot produce any fruit. In the same way, an arahant's offering cannot produce any result, because he has totally destroyed those roots; ignorance and craving. He has no expectation of a future life. In the *Ratana Sutta* the Buddha taught the following stanza:

‘Khīnaṃ purāṇaṃ nava natthi sambhavaṃ

The Most Superior Type of Offering

*virattaccittā'yatike bhavasmim
te khīṇabījā avirūhichandā
nibbanti dhīrā yathāyam padīpo
idampī sanghe ratanaṃ paṇḍitaṃ
etena saccena suvatthi hotu.'*

'Arahants have exhausted all old wholesome and unwholesome kamma. New wholesome and unwholesome kamma do not occur in them. They have exhausted the seeds of rebirth, that is, ignorance, craving, and force of kamma. They have no expectation of a future life. All their mentality-materiality will cease like a lighted oil lamp, when the oil and wick are exhausted. By this truth may all beings be happy and free from all dangers.'

This is an assertion of truth. By the assertion of this truth all the people in Vesāli became free from dangers. Vesāli was a city visited by drought, famine, evil yakkhas (lower devas), and epidemic diseases. The people of Vesāli asked the Buddha to help them, and he taught them the Ratana Sutta as a way to become free from dangers.

An arahant's offering is the most superior because it produces no result in the future. If there is no future life, there will be no rebirth, decay, disease and death. This is the most superior. This is the second type of offering mentioned at the beginning of this Dhamma talk: an offering which produces no fruition.

On the other hand, if due to an offering there is a good result, such as happiness in the human realm, happiness in the deva realm, or happiness in the brahma realm, then there is still suffering. The very least is that they are still subject to rebirth, subject to disease, subject to decay, and subject to death. If the giver still has attachment to sensual objects, animate and inanimate, then when those objects are destroyed or have died, there will be in him sorrow, lamentation, physical suffering, mental suffering, and despair.

Please consider this question: Can we say that an offering is

superior when it produces rebirth, decay, disease, death, sorrow, lamentation, physical suffering, mental suffering, and despair? Please consider also this question: Can we say that an offering is superior when it produces no result: no rebirth, no decay, no disease, no death, no sorrow, no lamentation, no physical suffering, no mental suffering, and no despair? This is why the Buddha praised the second type of offering as the most superior. Now you may understand the meaning of this Dhamma talk. At the beginning of this Dhamma talk I mentioned two types of offering:

1. The offering which produces full fruition,
2. The offering produces no fruition.

Which type of offering do you prefer? Now you know the answer.

But if the giver is not an arahant, how can he then make the second type of offering? In the Nandamātā Sutta mentioned before, the Buddha taught that there are two ways he can do this: when the receiver is free from attachment, anger, and delusion, or when he is trying to destroy attachment, anger, and delusion. You can say that the offering is also most superior, if the giver too is trying to destroy attachment, anger, and delusion; if he at the time of offering practises Vipassanā, that is, if:

- He discerns his own mentality-materiality, and discerns their impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*) nature;
- He discerns the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of external mentality-materiality, especially the receiver's mentality-materiality.
- He discerns the ultimate materiality (*paramattha-rūpa*) of the offerings.

When he looks at the four elements in the offerings, he sees the

kalāpas easily. Then when he analyses the kalāpas, he discerns eight types of materiality: earth-element, water-element, fire-element, air-element, colour, smell, taste and nutritive-essence. They are materiality produced by temperature (*utuja-rūpa*). They are produced by the fire-element in each kalāpa. They are the generations of the fire-element. Furthermore, he discerns the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of the materiality produced by temperature (*utuja-rūpa*). If he is able to do this type of Vipassanā, his attachment, anger and delusion are suppressed at the time of offering, and also, his offering will usually produce any result, and so we can say that this type of offering also is the most superior.

He can do this type of Vipassanā before, after, or while offering. But his Vipassanā must be strong and powerful. He must have practised up to the stage of at least Knowledge of Dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāna*). Only then can he practise this type of Vipassanā. We should not miss this opportunity either. This opportunity exists only in this dispensation. But you may ask, how can we make this type of offering if we have no insight-knowledge? I would like to suggest that you then make your offering with the following thought: ‘May this offering be the supporting cause to reach Nibbāna.’ This is because the Buddha many times taught to make offerings with the wish for Nibbāna.

I would like to conclude my Dhamma talk by repeating the stanza from the Ratana Sutta:

*‘Khīṇam purāṇam nava natthi sambhavam
virattacittāyatike bhavasmiṃ
te khīṇabījā avirūhichandā
nibbanti dhīrā yathāyam padīpo
idampi sanghe ratanam paṇṇam
etena saccena suvatthi hotu.’*

‘Arahants have exhausted all old wholesome and unwholesome kamma. New wholesome and unwholesome kamma do not occur in them. They have exhausted the seeds of rebirth,

that is, ignorance, craving, and force of kamma. They have no expectation of a future life. All their mentality-materiality will cease like a lighted oil lamp, when the oil and wick are exhausted. By this truth may all beings be happy and free from all dangers.’

May all beings be well and happy.