

Seven Spiritual Treasures

(One day Retreat October 2, 1999)

During Buddha time in the City of *RĒjagaha*, there was a leper. His name was *Suppabuddha*. This *Suppabuddha* is different from the other *Suppabuddha*, father of *YasodarĒ* and a member of the *Sakya* clan. This *Suppabuddha* who was a leper was an ordinary person.

Since he had leprosy and he was very very poor, he had to beg for his food and others. People shunned him and also he did not want to come and to connect with other people. One day he saw a big crowd at a distance in the city. When he saw the big crowd, he thought, "Oh! there is a big crowd and there might be food distributed there. And I might get some food there." So he went to the crowd and as he approached, he saw that there was no food being distributed there but just the crowd quietly listening to the preaching of the Buddha. When he saw this, he thought to himself, "Oh! there is no food distributed there but this Recluse *Gotama* is giving a *Dhamma* talk. I might as well listen to the *Dhamma*." So he took a place the edge of the crowd and then listened to the Buddha's preaching.

It is said that when Buddhas preach, they always looked into the minds of those who were listening to their preaching. They could examine the mental capacity of people. When they saw someone who is capable of understanding the preaching and who is capable of reaching enlightenment, they would direct their preaching to that person as though they were preaching to that person only. So when Buddha surveyed the audience while He was giving the talk, He saw *Suppabuddha* and with His wisdom knew that *Suppabuddha* was capable of understanding the *Dhamma* and attaining enlightenment. Because *Suppabuddha* had accumulated *PĒramĒs* in the past and so he was ready to get enlightenment. Buddha directed His talk to him. He taught about *DĒna* first, giving, good things about giving and then later He taught about *SĒla*, keeping precepts, how good keeping precepts was, and so on. Then He taught about the celestial realms where people who practice *DĒna* and *SĒla* are reborn and they enjoy their lives.

After showing the pleasures enjoyed in the realms of *Devas*, Buddha taught about the faultiness of sensual pleasures and degradation of sensual pleasures and corruption of sensual pleasures. So He taught bad things of sensual pleasures. Then He taught about the benefits in renouncing the sensual pleasures and renouncing the world. Buddha taught in this order in order to prepare the mind of the listener, here *Suppabuddha*. While listening *Suppabuddha's* mind became calm, clear and receptive. When Buddha knew that he was ready, Buddha taught him the special teaching that is peculiar to the Buddhas. That means Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths; suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path leading to or that goes to the cessation of suffering. At the end of the talk there arose in the mind of *Suppabuddha* the "Eye of Dhamma." That means the understanding or realization of the *Dhamma*. *Suppabuddha* became enlightened as a *SotĒpanna*.

When he became a *SotĒpanna*, he was happy and so he wanted to report his attainment to the Buddha. He was afraid to go through the audience because he was a leper and people despised him. So he waited until the audience went away. When he was going towards the Buddha, maybe he was a few distance away from the Buddha, *Sakka*, the King of Gods,

approached him and told him: "*Suppabuddha*, you are a leper and you are very very poor. I will give you immeasurable wealth if you just say, "The Buddha is not the Buddha, *Dhamma* is not the *Dhamma* and *Sa-gha* is not the *Sa-gha*. I have nothing to do with the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sa-gha*." If you just say, I will give you immense wealth."

Then *Suppabuddha* looked at *Sakka* and asked him, "Who are you?"

He said, "I am *Sakka*, the King of Gods."

Then *Suppabuddha* said, "Oh! foolish man, you don't even deserve to talk to me. Because you are saying what is not fit to be said. I have realized *Dhamma* myself and so I cannot be shaken away from this faith or confidence in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sa-gha*. And more over you call me a poor man, but I am not a poor man. I possess the seven spiritual treasures. And those who possess these seven spiritual treasures, the noble ones do not call him a poor man."

So *Sakka* knowing that he could not shake *Suppabuddha* from his faith went to the Buddha and reported to Buddha his conversation with *Suppabuddha*. Buddha said: "Even a hundred or a thousand *Sakkas* like you cannot make *Suppabuddha* say Buddha is not the Buddha, *Dhamma* is not the *Dhamma* and *Sa-gha* is not the *Sa-gha*. He is firmly established in the *Buddha SĒsanĒ* or the confidence in the three gems."

Suppabuddha approached the Buddha and told Him that he was very pleased with the teaching. The teaching was like opening his eyes, like uncovering something that is concealed like lighting bright light in the darkness so that those who have eyes can see. He proclaimed himself to be a disciple of the Buddha. He said, "Please regard me as a disciple who takes refuge in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sa-gha* even at the risk of his life." And then he left.

After a while a cow with a young calf attacked him and killed him so *Suppabuddha* died. When he died, the monks assembled and then went to the Buddha and asked Him that the man who was gladdened by You and your *Dhamma* talk has now been killed by a cow. What might be his destination, what might be his future life? Then Buddha said: "Monks! *Suppabuddha* has exhausted or eradicated three fetters. (That means he has become a *SotĒpanna*.) He is not liable to fall away or he is not liable to fall down to the four woeful states. He is assured and he is bound for higher stages of enlightenment."

When Buddha said this, one of the monks asked, "Bhante, how come this man who had the capability of attaining enlightenment was a leper and a poor man." So Buddha related the past story of *Suppabuddha*.

In long past *Suppabuddha* was a rich man in that very city of *RĒjagaha*. When the *Paccekabuddha* was going for alms round in the city, when he saw the *Paccekabuddha* that rich man said, "Who is this leper?" You know *Paccekabuddha* was not a leper. *Paccekabuddha* was *Paccekabuddha* with the robes, bowl and his head shaved. He saw him as a leper and so "Who is this leper going around in the city?" And then he spat out and he acted disrespectfully to the *Paccekabuddha*.

As a result of that evil unwholesome *kamma* he was reborn in hell for many many years. And as a residue of the result of that *kamma*, when he was reborn as a human being he

became a leper. Now he was reborn as a human being not as a result of that *kamma*. He was reborn as a human being as a result of another good *kamma* he did in the past. But in that life he became a leper that was as a result of that bad *kamma* in the past. So Buddha exhorted His monks not to do any evil to avoid suffering like this.

In this story Suppabuddha said, "I possessed seven kinds of noble treasures." We may call them seven kinds of spiritual treasures. The number one is *SaddhĒ* faith or belief or confidence in the Buddha or in the enlightenment of the Buddha. That means he has faith, he believes that Buddha was a real enlightened person and Buddha was the One who knew or who understood what is to be understood in the world without outside help. Buddha was the One who is endowed with wisdom, conduct and so on. That means you know the formula of *Iti so BhagavĒ Araha~, SammĒsambuddho* and so on. A person believes in the Buddha as One who knows what is there to be known in the world and knows it correctly without help from any other person. If a person believes in this way, he is said to have faith or confidence or belief in the Buddha and His enlightenment. We may extend this to include the belief or faith in the *Dhamma* and the *Sa-gha* and also in the practice.

The second treasure He mentioned was *Sila*, purity of moral conduct. Purity of moral conduct or keeping the precepts is also a spiritual treasure, keeping the five precepts; not killing, not stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying and no intoxicants. Keeping these precepts is called a spiritual treasure. It is precious for those who keep them. All followers of the Buddha or all those who claim to be the followers of the Buddha are expected to keep at least these five precepts. These precepts are also called *UpĒsaka SĒla, SĒla* of those who follow the Buddha. Keeping moral precepts or keeping one's moral conduct clean is one spiritual treasure. This is the second spiritual treasure.

The third treasure is moral shame. In *PĒĀi* it is called *HirĒ*. Moral shame means shame in doing unwholesome acts, shame in killing, shame in steal, and so on. Because of this moral shame people refrain from breaking the rules, people refrain from killing living beings, stealing what is not given, and so on. This moral shame is also a spiritual treasure. It is a precious treasure for us. So long as we possess this moral shame, we will abstain from doing what is wrong. If we do not possess it, then we will do what we like. Most of what we do will be unwholesome acts. Moral shame is one of the wholesome qualities one should possess. Here it is called riches or treasure or in *PĒĀi* it is called *Dhana*.

Then next one is, you may have guessed it, moral fear. Moral fear means not really fear. It is fear of consequences of the immoral acts. If we do something wrong, first we will be censured by noble persons and then we will experience the painful consequences of these immoral acts. Because we are afraid of these painful results we refrain from doing immoral acts. This is also a treasure. This is the fourth spiritual treasure.

These two always go together. When there is *HirĒ* there is *Ottappa* and when there is *Ottappa* there is *HirĒ*. Moral shame and moral fear are described in other discourses as protectors of the world. So long as beings or so long people keep these two spiritual treasures, then the world or society of man will be in good shape. Once people lose either moral shame or moral fear or both, society will become contaminated. So these two are called *LokapĒla*

Dammas those the qualities that protect the world from becoming immoral and so on. These two are also the spiritual treasures we should cherish.

The fifth treasure is called learning. That means learning or understanding the teachings of the Buddha, not just learning anything. Much learning in *PĒli* it is called *Bahusuta*, *bahu* means many or much, *suta* means hearing. In the olden days there were no books and whatever you know, you know from hearing the talks of other people, especially your teachers. So it is called *Bahusuta*, much hearing. This means knowledgeable about the teachings of the Buddha both theory and practice. This is one spiritual treasure we should possess. You may acquire this treasure by reading books, by asking questions, by having discussions with other people and also by practicing what you understand.

The sixth treasure is *CĒga*. *CĒga* means giving away. It is like *DĒna*. People are instructed not to be much attached to what they possess and also to share with other people what they have. It is described that people should be open-handed, ready to give to other people. It is called one whose hands are washed. That means ones whose hands are washed off stinginess. One who has little or no stinginess, who is always ready to share what he possesses with other people. This is also one of the spiritual treasures.

The seventh and the last one is *PaŌŌĒ*, Knowledge. Here also *PaŌŌĒ* does not mean just knowledge of anything. *PaŌŌĒ* is described as the knowledge of the rise and fall, knowledge of arising and disappearing of all objects. This *PaŌŌĒ* you get only when you practice *VipassanĒ* meditation. So you practice *VipassanĒ* meditation and at one stage you see the objects you put your mind on arising and disappearing. Any object that you take as an object comes and then goes away. When you see them clearly in your mind, you are said to possess this knowledge of rise and fall. This knowledge of rise and fall is described as leading to the exhaustion of suffering. This can lead to cessation of suffering although this is a lower stage in *VipassanĒ* knowledge. This understanding of rise and fall is very important. If we do not see the rise and fall of the objects, we will not be able to see the three characteristics: impermanence, suffering, and non-soul.

If we do not see these three characteristics:— the characteristic of *Anicca*, *Dukkha* and *Anatta*, impermanence, suffering and non-soul,— we will never get weary with mind and matter. If we do not become weary with mind and matter, we will not want to get out of or to give up to relinquish mind and matter. If we do not want to get out of with, we will not do anything to get out of it. It is very important that a person has this understanding, the understanding of rise and fall of objects through the practice of *VipassanĒ* meditation. So if we possess this understanding of rise and fall of objects, we are said to be those who have begun the practice of *VipassanĒ*. In *PĒli* such a person is called *Āraddha Vipassaka*. *Āraddha* means a person has begun, who has made effort, *Vipassaka* means one who practices *VipassanĒ*.

So before you see rising and falling of things, you may not be called a person who has begun the practice of *VipassanĒ*. Because *VipassanĒ* strictly means seeing the three characteristics. Until you see the three characteristics you are not in *VipassanĒ* proper yet. But you are approaching or getting near to *VipassanĒ* and so we call it also *VipassanĒ* practice. Strictly only when we reach seeing the three characteristics, can we be called those who practice *VipassanĒ*.

So this is the seventh and last of these spiritual treasures.

We should try to possess these seven spiritual treasures. And if we possess these seven spiritual treasures nobody can say that we are poor. Although we may be poor in material things, we are not poor in spiritual matter. It is good to understand that these qualities are called the treasures. These treasures are the real treasures and not the material things because material treasures are not ever lasting. They can be burnt, they can be washed away by water, they can be confiscated by the government or the King, they can be taken away by those sons and daughters whom people don't like, and they can be stolen. The material things are subject to these dangers. The seven spiritual treasures are not subject to the dangers mentioned. They cannot be burnt, they cannot be stolen away and so on. So long as we possess these treasures, we are rich, we are spiritually rich.

We should look back and examine whether we possess these seven things. I think we do. So we can be pleased with ourselves that we have these treasures. If we do not have these treasures yet, then we should make effort to possess these treasures. These are the seven spiritual treasures taught by the Buddha. Now there is one thing about the seven.

Did you find *Sati* among these seven?

There is no *Sati* here. In one book, in sub-commentary, these seven are given as *SaddhĒ*, *Sati*, *HirĒ*, *Ottappa*, learning (*Suta*) the others are the same, relinquishing and knowledge. In stead of *SĒla*, *Sati* is given as the treasure there. So following that we are rich in *Sati*. We practice *SatipaĀhĒna* the whole day. Today we have been practicing it for many years and so we are especially rich in this treasure. All of us are here practicing *VipassanĒ* meditation or mindfulness or *SatipaĀhĒna* meditation and so we are rich in *Sati* also.

As *Suppabuddha* said we are not poor, we are rich people. We should try to get richer by following the practice of *VipassanĒ* meditation.

SĒdhu! SĒdhu! SĒdhu!

Sayadaw; How is meditation today?

Yogi; I have a lot of pain.

Sayadaw; How did you note when pain came? Actually you have to be mindful of it when pain comes. But mindful of pain is not to get rid of it but to understand it fully.

This we must understand because many people think that when they are told to make notes of pain, it is to get rid of it. Actually if we want to get rid of it, there is the want or a kind of *Loba* there. Because we want it to go away and instead we want a pleasant feeling. There is *Lobha* involved if we want to get it away. With that want, with that desire to get rid it away, we make notes, we may not. We may not be able to get out of it. So the real purpose is to understand the feeling fully.

Buddha once said, "Monks, there are three kinds of feeling; pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. For the full understanding of the feeling you practice the four foundations of mindfulness.

Practicing foundations of mindfulness on feeling is to understand it thoroughly that means to understand what it is. Now you have pain here, right? Pain here means actually when we make notes of pain, what are taking as an object, mind or matter?

Yogi; Mind.

Sayaday; We are taking mind or a mental state as the object of meditation, not the pain here, physical pain actually. Although there is physical pain and we are saying "Pain", "Pain", "Pain". We are taking the feeling of that pain, experience of that pain as an object, not the physical pain here. That we must understand. Because we differentiate two things, I will call this sensation. Let me call it sensation, this sensation of pain we experience with our mind. And so there is what we call *VedanĒ*, feeling in the mind. It is mental state, *Cetasika*. What we are noting or what we are being mindful of that feeling, feeling of that pain.

What is that feeling?

When we pay attention to it and we make notes of it and you come to understand that feeling is the experience of the physical pain there, experience of the painful physical sensation there. And also as we make notes of pain, we will see that pain is not just one solid thing. Suppose you have pain for five minutes. That means you think you goes on for five minutes without interruption like solid thing. But actually pain is not like just one solid thing. Pain at every moment pain comes and goes. There is one pain that means one feeling and you are aware of that feeling and that feeling disappears and then your noting also disappears. Then in its place there is another feeling and then another awareness, another feeling another awareness and so on and on.

You will come to see that what you thought to be one continuous pain is just a series of small moments of pain coming and going one after another. When you see this, you come to see that pain is also impermanent. It also comes and goes, it does not even last for two consecutive moments. At one moment there is pain, next moment it is gone. But there is another pain there. In this way you come to see that pain is also impermanent. When you see that it is impermanent, you also see that it is suffering not because there is pain but because pain itself has a beginning and an end and so it is suffering. Whatever has a beginning and an end is impermanent and whatever impermanent is suffering. That is what the Buddha taught.

Then you cannot turn this pain into pleasure. It is just pain arising there coming and going. And you have no control over it. So that is the characteristic of *Anatta*. *Anatta* means not *atta*, no soul, no self. And also anatta means no control, we cannot control over it. So first you know what pain is, or what this feeling of pain is. This is the experience of the painful sensation there. This is called the individual characteristic. So we first understand the individual characteristic when we pay close attention to anything.

And then next we come to see that it also comes and goes and so it is impermanent, suffering and non-soul. That means we see the common characteristic. There are two kinds of

characteristic at least. Two are individual characteristic and common characteristic. We first see the individual characteristic and then we see the common characteristic. For example here two person are Sri Lankan and the others are Burmese. So our being Sri Lankan and our being Burmese is our individual characteristic. I am different from you as a Burmese and you are different from me as a Sri Lankan.

What is common to both of us?

We are human beings. So being a human being is common characteristic. Being a Burmese and being a Sri Lankan is individual characteristic. In Vipassanā meditation we first see the individual characteristic because we are making notes of this object. So we see what it is first and then this has the characteristic of arising and disappearing or characteristic of impermanence and so on. We later see the common characteristic. When we see the common characteristic, we are able to avoid grasping at it, we are able to avoid being attached to it or being reposed by it. In other word we are able to prevent either *Lobha* or *Dosa* regarding that object.

When we see that this is impermanent then we are able to discard that it is permanent, the notion that it is permanent. When we see that it is *Dukkha*, then we are able to discard the notion that is *Sukha*. When we see that this is *Anatta*, then we are able to discard the notion that it is *Atta*. In this way we are able to discard the wrong notions of the things of object when we come to see the common characteristic. When we see the common characteristic that they are impermanent and so on, we can also avoid either *Lobha* or *Dosa* regarding that object. That is the purpose in watching an object, especially here in this discourse in watching the feeling. When there is pain, we are watching it "Pain", "Pain", "Pain". Our purpose is not to get rid of, not for it to go away although this comes to us first. Because whenever there is pain you want it to go away and we want to have pleasant feeling. But the actual purpose is to understand it thoroughly. Understand it thoroughly means there are three kinds of full understanding:

1. Understanding of what is known,
2. Understanding as investigation and
3. Understanding as abandoning.

So there are three kinds of understanding. In *PĒĪi* it is called *PariĪĪĒ*. So three kinds of *PariĪĪĒ*:

1. The first one is understanding the individual characteristic.
2. The second one is understanding the common characteristic and
3. The third one is relinquishing the wrong notions about that particular object.

So through these steps of *PariĪĪĒ*, we will reach the higher stage of enlightenment. So when there is pain, we are making notes of "Pain", "Pain", "Pain". We are trying to understand it, we are trying to see it clearly, we are trying to see that it is also impermanent and so on.

Sayadaw; Did your mind go else where?

Yogi; Uh hun...yeah.

Sayadaw; That is common, everybody has that experience. We don't have to be ashamed.

Actually it is the nature of mind to go out here and there. When our mindfulness and concentration is still weak, it will still go out. But we are not frustrated by it or not to be angry with it but just to watch it and make notes of it, just watching. So *VipassanĒ* meditation or the *SatipaĀhĒna* meditation is just watching the object. Sometimes we say accepting, accepting means just taking what is given, but accepting with neutrality. Because sometimes accept may imply attachment also. We accept something because we like it. But here we accept it not that we are attached to it but we cannot avoid not accepting it something like that. This is reacting to it with neutrality of mind so that we are not attached to it or we are not angry with it. This can be achieved with practice. You may not get it at just one sitting but you have to practice, you have to persevere in nothings or in taking yourself mindful of the object at the present moment.

So when you practice, I always say that you have to be careful about three things; the object at the moment to be mindful of the object at the present moment, and to take it as it is without any additions of your own and not to have expectations. If you can take care of these three things, your practice will be alright. The object at the present is very important because when we practice *VipassanĒ*, we are trying to see the true nature of this object, we are trying to see that it is impermanent and so on so that we do not become attached to it, or do not dislike it. In order to see that it is impermanent and so on, it has to be with us, it has to be a present thing. We cannot take an object which is passed. We can recall it in our mind but we will not see it as clear as when it is here with us. We cannot see it come and go, we cannot see it clearly and so it is very very difficult to see the impermanence of things that are passed. Although we may understand by inference that they are impermanent because now they are gone. But we don't see them come and go, right? What is important in *VipassanĒ* meditation is the present object. If we can be mindful of the present object, then we know what it is and we know that it comes and it goes. So to be mindful of the object at the present moment is the most important.

After you see the present object as impermanent, suffering and non-soul, then you may by inference contemplate on the past things just as this present thing is impairment, so are the things in the past and so will be the things in the future. So you can't by inference come to the conclusion that things of the past are also impermanent and so on and things of the future also will be impermanent and so on. In order be able to infer that way you need to see the present thing here. only from seen the present thing here can you infer the past or the future. That is why the understanding of the present object as impermanent and so on is very important.

When we the object, we take the object as it is without any subjective additions like "This is beautiful and this is ugly. This I like and this I don't like." and so on. Because we are trying to examine it like in lab. If you want to examine something, that something must be clean, that something must not be mixed with the other thing as well. Because if it is mixed with other things, you will not see the thing clearly, you will not be examining the thing pure and simple, but mixed with other things. So when we say, "This is beautiful", then we are putting something unreal onto form. Buddha said that every thing is not beautiful, *Asubha*.

Then we say, "It is beautiful", then we are putting something to the thing which is really unattractive. Then we put something on it and we think, "It is beautiful." With that we cannot see it as it is. Because we have put something onto it, we have something grafted onto the object. So we need to clear away this dirt or something from the object so that we see that object as it is without any mixtures, without any additions. That is why when we try to be mindful, we just say, "It is just seeing, just hearing." and so on, not that it is beautiful. Say you hear a voice, and than "Oh, it is sweet voice, or it is awful voice." something like that. We do not say like this. We just say, "Hearing", "Hearing", "Hearing". Just the hearing the voice something like. When you try to be mindful of the object, you take the object as it is. This kind of thing, *©aÓapuÓÓika* called bear attention, paying bear attention to the object. Just the attention, not likes and dislikes and so on.

Third thing is not to have expectations about this practice. We all expect something from this practice. That is why we practice. but it is good before we get down to real practice. We need to have this kind of expectation because only when we have this kind of expectation, we will practice. Otherwise we will not practice. But when we get down into practice, when we are right in the practice, then this expectation becomes an obstacle. Because it is actually a kind of greed, a kind of *Lobha*. So when there is *Lobha*, there can be no *SamÉdhi*. We need to keep this away from us when once we are right in practice. But you may have found out that it is very difficult to keep it away from you. It will come quite often to you because we always expect something from our actions. So they may come.

What to do when they come?

We don't fight with them, we don't try to push them away forcefully. We just watch. That means when they come, you make notes of it saying "Expectation", "Expectation." or "Expecting", "Expecting" something like that. By making notes we will be able to get rid of the expectations or whatever. So long as there is expectation, you cannot even get concentration, let alone the other benefits or other results of this practice. Many yogis have wasted much time because they are not able to deal with the expectation during meditation.

One man reported to me he went to Burma and practiced there for maybe about seven months. He didn't get anything out of practice there because he was very eager to become an *Arahant*. It is very important that telling you that do not expect anything from this practice. But it is true that you are not to have expectations, desires, or whatever. I compare it to a shadow. So if you follow shadow, it will go away from you. Once you don't care about the shadow and you come back, and then it will follow you. So you went the result, you will not get them. You don't care about the result then they will come. So that is also important. If we can take care of three things, I think our practice will be fruitful.