

## **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2019: Skype: Kathina History**

Luang Por Anan: Now we are nearing the Kathina season. The laity make merit and offer Kathina cloth, following the Buddha's allowance for this one month period. This allowance was given due to the effort and diligence of monks wandering and practicing strictly.

MahaKassapa Thera was foremost in ascetic practices amongst the Buddha's disciples.

MahaKassapa built a huge amount of parami, so that in his last life he was very wealthy. He had a wife but renounced the world to search for freedom from suffering, instead. He met the Lord Buddha, followed the teachings, and was able to realize freedom from suffering. MahaKassapa followed the ascetic practices strictly like living in the forest and wearing discarded cloth.

For the history of the Kathina, this occurred due to 30 monks holding to ascetic practices and wanting to come listen to the Buddha. Let us now learn about this story.

### **Video:**

*Homage to the Worthy One, the Blessed One, the Rightly Self-awakened One*

Welcome to all the monks, novices, and laity here who are interested in Dhamma practice.

After the Pavarana Invitation Ceremony, which marks the end of the rains-retreat, is completed, the next 1 month period that follows is the Kathina season. The end of the Kathina season falls on the 15th day of the 12th lunar month. Let us all learn about the history of the Kathina ceremony. I will be giving teachings on building parami, the spiritual perfections of our Lord Buddha Gotama.

During the Dispensation of Kassapa Buddha, Gotama Buddha was a Bodhisatta who was born poor and destitute. He lived in the city of Varanasi and was named Tina Bala. He lived as a worker of a very wealthy person who possessed great wealth amounting up to 80 crores. Tina Bala worked looking after the fields of this wealthy man. His duty was to cut the grass of the fields in exchange for food and shelter. He thought to himself that since he is very poor, he must not have made enough merit in his past lives. He was in a low status where he served another person, he had no friends, and he was born not having even the

slightest wealth. With these thoughts in mind, he split the food he received from the wealthy man into two portions. He offered the first portion to the monks during their alms round, whereas the second portion he consumed for himself. We can see that in whatever life the Buddha was born, even in the midst of hardships and difficulties, he was still able to build parami through his mindfulness and wisdom, as well as his faith in the Buddha Sasana. With thoughts of generosity, he made merit by regularly offering alms to the monks.

From the merit and goodness he had built, this made the wealthy man feel sorry for the poor man and the wealthy man increased the amount of food he gave to him by double. Tina Bala then split his food into 3 portions. The first portion he offered to the monks, the 2nd portion he gave out as charity to poor people, and the 3rd portion he consumed himself. He continued doing this practice for a long time. Even though he was poor and destitute, he had the nature of a Bodhisatta and had the mindfulness and wisdom to make merit. He could even sacrifice his portion of food to give out to charity to help those in need. After the end of the rains retreat, the faithful devotees were prepared to make merit and offerings for the large meritorious ceremony, the Kathina. Even the wealthy man was getting ready to offer the Kathina, and so he announced to the public that he, the wealthy man, Siridhamma was making merit by offering the Kathina. When the Bodhisatta Tina Bala heard this, he gained faith in his heart as the Kathina is an excellent dana.

With this, he went to ask the wealthy man, “What is the benefit of offering the Kathina?” The wealthy man answered that offering the Kathina had many benefits. Among them, the Buddha said that offering the Kathina is an excellent dana. When Tina Bala heard this he had great rapture and his heart was full of joy. He said to the wealthy man that he had the desire to rejoice in this offering and wanted to give dana and make merit on this occasion as well.

“When is the Kathina ceremony?” he asked. The wealthy man answered, “We will begin the ceremony 7 days from now.” When Tina Bala heard this he was very happy. He had faith and a strong wish to participate in doing dana for this Kathina. However, when he looked in front, behind, to the left and right, he couldn’t find anything he could give. His heart was already moved to such an extent that he really wanted to do it but he couldn’t find any money to give because he was so poor. He had no money or possessions to give along with the wealthy man’s offering. The only thing he had is the one cloth he was wearing.

In the end, he decided to wash this cloth clean. Then he sewed clothing out of leaves instead of his own cloth. He went to sell his cloth in the market. He went there wearing his clothing made out of leaves. The people laughed at him when they saw him like this. But Tina Bala said, “All of you should stop laughing. Though it is true that I am poor, and I have no clothes to wear, it is only in this life that I will wear these leaves. In the next life I will be wearing divine clothing.” He had strong faith in merit and goodness, in giving and generosity. In the end, he was able to sell his cloth for 5 masaka, equivalent to about 1 Thai Baht. With this money, he joined the Kathina ceremony offerings with the wealthy man. It so happened that the Kathina offerings of the wealthy person were complete except that it lacked thread to sew the triple robes. The wealthy man used the money Tina Bala gave to purchase thread to sew the robes. This was the great merit and goodness that the Bodhisattva had built.

The story was spread all the way to the devas in the heavens. They were all praising the sacrifice of Tina Bala's offering. And this rejoicing was even heard in the palace of the King of Varanasi. When the King heard this, he asked for Tina Bala to have an audience with him in the palace. However, Tina Bala refused to come because he was ashamed that he had no clothes. The King kept asking his retinue about Tina Bala and had one of the princes bring Tina Bala clothing worth 100,000 coins. After that, he was given much royal wealth, including elephants, horse, cattle, and he was given the status of a wealthy person in Varanasi. After this, he was named the wealthy man Tina Bala. After living through a meaningful life, he passed away and was born in Tavatimsa heaven as a deva. The rich person Siridhamma was also born as a deva. This was the story of the Bodhisattva Tina Bala in the era of the Buddha Kassapa. This was how our Buddha had made a Kathina offering.

And. Now, coming to the current era of our Buddha. During the Buddha Gotama's time, there were 30 monks from the village of Patha who had attainments from Sotapanna to Anagami. They had the desire to listen to the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha, so they travelled to Savatthi where the Buddha resided. But when it came time to start the rains-retreat, they could not make it to Savatthi and were forced to spend the rains-retreat in Saketa.

When the rains-retreat was completed, they quickly continued to travel to Savatthi to see the Buddha. It was still raining and the roads were still muddy and wet. When they arrived to see the Buddha in Jetavana monastery, their robes were wet and worn and they were tired from the journey. The Buddha asked them whether they had been living in peace, free from disputes and in harmony? Was alms difficult? The monks replied that they had been living in peace, free from disputes, in harmony, they had sufficient support, and alms was not difficult.

The Buddha noticed that the monks of Patha had old and tattered robes, and that they had quickly gone on a journey to see the Buddha. Then, the Buddha gave the special allowance for those monks who spent the 3 months rains-retreat living in peace and harmony with no disputes in a monastery which had 5 monks or more to receive Kathina cloth. And this is the history of the Kathina.

And on the benefits of the Kathina offering, the one who gathers in the offering receives the full benefits. The laity who help with the work and volunteering of the Kathina also receive the full benefit of the offering of the Kathina cloth. So it is not that we only give cloth, we also help with the work and duties of the Kathina ceremony. Then the monks will take this cloth to cut, sew, and dye to complete a robe before dawn the next day. And we anumodana and rejoice at the offering. Then we receive all the merit and goodness.

This is the history of Kathina and the story of how our Buddha made excellent parami by taking leaves to sew them together to use as his clothing instead of his old cloth. This came from his mindfulness, wisdom, and strong faith. It led him to become a wealthy man in that lifetime. This is the building of the Buddha's parami in the past. So may we reflect on this.

But in our own situation, may we act according to the strength that we presently possess. When we do a Kathina offering, do not do it in a way that imposes on oneself or imposes on others. Imposing here means doing it in a way that gives a bad feeling, an uneasy feeling. That is imposing. As for the Buddha he had already made a lot of parami, so when he gave up his own clothing, he was not imposing on himself, as his heart was full of rapture and joy. This was so before the action, during the action, and after the action. But we are not to that level, so do it just the right amount. Don't impose on oneself. Don't take the wealth of

others to make offerings. Do it with a heart of purity. Our wealth that is pure will have great benefit. May you grow in blessings.

### **Questions and Answers:**

1. Q: Why was the Bodhisattva, who had built such great parami, poor in the lifetime in the story?

Luang Por Anan: Bodhisattvas are not just born in good situations. They get born in lower realms of suffering a lot, too. Old karma, the results of past actions, must follow them. In some lives, they will have everything, in others, they will be lacking. But in whatever life, they will have wisdom.

2. Q: How do we build parami in order to have wisdom in every life?

Luang Por Anan: To build wisdom, we must study—listen, read, associate with wise people, reflect and review what we have learned, then try to understand deeply, broadly, and comprehensively what we have learned. This will lead to wisdom in worldly things and in Dhamma.

3. Q: How do we respond to others who impose their values on us? Especially values that we do not agree with.

Luang Por Anan: The person imposing values – do they have more power or seniority than you?

Q: They are more like a peer. Though they may think that they are above me.

Luang Por Anan: Hold firmly on to goodness and virtue. If it is against sila then do not follow it.

4. Q: When doing my retreat, I think if I do good in the present, then the future has to be good. Like I can control the future. Is this true?

Luang Por Anan: Causes done in the past create the present, and causes done in the present lead to the future. One cannot change the past. Make the present good in order to have good results in the future.

5. Q: When we dedicate merit, and dedicate to one person, will dedicating to just one person lead to desire with regard to that one person?

Luang Por Anan: For the second question, we spread merit with metta and compassion. We wish for the recipient to have happiness and overcome suffering. This is a wholesome intention, a meritorious intention. This is not craving—we don't crave for others to be free from suffering, but we think with lovingkindness, a wholesome intention.

6. Q: Why do people do evil deeds knowingly?

Luang Por Anan: This is because people do not really know what evil is and what results evil deeds will bring about. They fall under the power of mental obscurations, kilesas, and act accordingly. Their mind is dark and they do not fully understand what they are doing. If people knew they would not do evil deeds.

6. Q: People know that ageing, illness, and death are normal. But why is it that when these things happen, people cannot accept these things and they suffer? How does one overcome this?

Luang Por Anan: One knows that ageing, illness, and death are there. One sees these things happen and understands to a degree. But one does not understand deeply. One does not cut off underlying wrong views or address underlying attachments. There is still clinging, therefore, suffering arises. There is not enough wisdom. When we study Dhamma, read, listen, think, and then meditate, we make the mind peaceful. We slowly study more and understand more deeply. Wisdom arises more and more. Then we can cut off suffering and reduce suffering according to the wisdom that we have cultivated.

We can take the story of Venerable Sariputta's nephew. He was looking for a place where no one had ever died. He encountered the Lord Buddha. The Buddha said that the nephew

had died in that area many times already. The nephew said that whatever he liked, he wanted. Whatever he did not like, he did not want. The Buddha said that this was a wrong view. The Buddha asked, “Do you like ageing, illness, and death?” “No”, he answered. “Will you have to receive these things?” “Yes”, he answered. So the nephew gained wisdom and saw Dhamma through this exchange. For ourselves, monks and laity, we may know about ageing, illness, and death, but we do not yet have the wisdom to understand these things.

There was a poor person who asked the Buddha why was the poor man so poor. The Buddha asked him about his present life—did this poor man know about giving and generosity, did he know how to give? The Buddha said that he had a face and so could smile, he could have metta, could speak well to others, and these were all merit. He had a body, so he could help others with metta and compassion. These are all ways one can make merit and do goodness.

The Buddha taught that true poverty is a heart that is not making goodness. One may be poor on the outside but still be doing good in one’s heart.