

# Destined to Teach

Āyasmā Kumāra interviews Sayadaw U Tejaniya on the origins and evolution of his teaching and more.

## His Story

Ven Kumāra Bhikkhu: **Sayadaw, can you tell us a bit about your story on how you came into meditation, particularly how you came to meet the late Shwe Oo Min (SOM) Sayadaw?**

Sayadaw U Tejaniya (SUT): It started with my father. When SOM Sayadaw was still teaching at the (main) Mahāsī Centre (in Yangon), my father became a temporary *bhikkhu* there. At that time SOM Sayadaw, who was then just known as Ven U Kosalla, was teaching the temporary monks. Later when SOM Sayadaw left Mahāsī and set up his own place, my father followed him there and helped out. He would bring the family there every now and then. The children would become temporary *sāmaṇeras* (novice Buddhist monks). That's how I first began going there.

When I first became a *sāmaṇera* and began to learn meditation from Sayadaw, I particularly found meditation very, very interesting. So I stayed the longest. My brothers stayed for only one week. I stayed for 3 months even though it was my first retreat as a *sāmaṇera*.

**And it was three months just for meditation?**

For meditation. I liked this *sāmaṇera* life.

**How old were you then?**

Twelve or thirteen years old maybe.

**You continued to practise with him later on after that?**

Very often during the summer holidays I went to stay at the monastery, as a *sāmaṇera*. I started

to become intimate with meditation. I liked it a lot. When Sayadaw noticed that I was so interested, he explained a lot of things to me. I asked many questions. *[Laughs]*

**Were there many students other than you at that time?**

Yes, we all practised together but I was the most curious. I asked a lot of questions.

**Where was this place?**

North Okkalapa. The old centre.

**How was it like practising with your teacher?**

Wah... my teacher was very open. He never pushed me to meditate. He only explained and talked in ways that would make the child interested. So the child had his own interest in practising, and he would be very eager to try things out.

He would never say, "Do this. Do that." He would talk in ways that would make the child want to do it. He would talk about other people: how they did this and that; how or what it was like; when you practise like this, what happens; and if you practise like that, these good things will happen. I would start to think, "Oh, it's like this and like that," and was willing to practise. He gave me information about the Dhamma—what and how it is like. He explained and then I would think. At that time, I started to think deeply about the Dhamma.

**And that has influenced the way you teach now?**

Yes! I like that. So I want to do it that way and I'm teaching in the same style. Sayadaw would always only ask me, "How are you

practising?" He would never ask, "What happened?" The yogi would always talk about what happened. This is very important. I feel that there is a difference with other teachers. Based on my experience, many teachers ask, "What happened?" He never asked that way.

So, from a very young age, what I heard was "How are you practising?" rather than "What happened?" He would only talk about the way to practise. He would say, "Why don't you try it this way or that way? Why don't you think of it this way?"

**So he was very different.**

Very different. Very different. Every time I said, "I know", he would encourage me, "Ah, very good! Very good!" I would feel very happy. He tried to encourage everyone to value 'knowing'. So every time you said, "I know (something)", even though it was something bad, he would rejoice, saying, "Be happy that you know." Many times he told me, "If you know something, be happy. Whatever. Good or bad, no problem. If you know it, be happy."

So, as a young child, I tried to know things. The more things I knew, the happier I got. *[Laughs]* Whenever I told him, he'd say, "Okay, good. Continue, continue..." *[Laughs]* At that time, I started to practise because of the desire to know. I got very interested whenever I knew something that I didn't know before.

**Sounds like he had a lot of time for you.**

At that time he had a lot of time because he stopped teaching. When other people, like monks, came to practise at the monastery, he didn't teach them how to meditate. After he left Mahāsi Meditation Centre, he basically stopped teaching. He sort of let people practise on their own. They could come and stay in his monastery and practise. They just had to behave well. If they misbehaved or they were not in harmony with the community, then he would say, "Go." (Translator asks, "What about the children?") The children he taught. He would teach them the basics. At that time they were still doing the rising and falling (method) and stuff like that.

**Wait. Let me get this straight. There were monks who came to practise at North Okkalapa, but they didn't get instructions?**

No, my teacher wouldn't give them instructions.

**He made an exception for the children but not for the grown up monks...**

He didn't teach grown up monks. He started teaching children.

**I see. That's interesting.**

When the families came there would be a whole lot of children. That's how Sayadaw started a Dhamma class, which he called the Maṅgala Class.

**Do you know why he taught only children and not adults?**

At that time most people, usually monks who came to stay at the monastery, already knew some kind of practice. So Sayadaw assumed that they knew how to practise. And he also didn't want to teach any more at that time. If they came and asked him questions he would give answers, but he wouldn't have regular teaching sessions.

My teacher was like a drum. It's only when you beat the drum you hear the sound. He would never be the first to say something. It depended on you. He never started

with his idea. He would look at you, then, depending on you, he would talk.

So I'm influenced by that idea. If I have to start by saying something, I'm a bit at a loss. I don't know where to start, because I don't know the situation. Sometimes, when a new person comes and I don't know him, I never start to talk. If he starts to talk, I listen. Then I know something. I also think whether I can talk about it or not. If it's okay, I talk. If it's not okay, then I stop there. I just keep quiet. Better. *[Laughs]*

I discussed this with Bhante Chekinda, a monk in Burma who is quite famous now. He gives excellent Dhamma talks. I thought it was a weakness of mine that I couldn't just start a conversation. At that time, I already recognised that it was actually my teacher's influence. But Bhante Chekinda said that's not a weakness but a kind of technique.

**How did you start to teach? How did that happen?**

Even when I was a young yogi, I was able to explain what happened, how I felt and how I was actually doing the practice, in a very detailed way. I was able to do that because I was very interested in meditation. At that time, Sayadaw always listened. So, from a very young age, I learnt to be able to speak clearly about my experiences.

When I was at home and practising very seriously, I began to have Dhamma discussions with my family. The whole family—10 brothers and sisters—would get together every Sunday at our mother's house. They just brought food and ate. At that time, I looked at that situation and realised that a better way to spend time was to meditate. Everybody knew how to meditate, but they just came to talk and eat. I thought Sundays spent on meditation was more worthwhile. So I suggested 15 – 20 minutes of sitting meditation to start these

Sunday gatherings with. So they would sit and after that I'd ask, "How do you feel?" and "How do you feel about your life?" Slowly we started discussing life—whether it was according to Dhamma or not.

At that point when I began to suggest that we used the Sundays for meditation and discussion, I had already changed drastically. And everybody knew I was the black sheep of the family. *[Sayadaw repeats the figure of speech "black sheep" in English, and laughs.]* But I had changed practically from black to white. So everybody was watching me. They were really interested to know what was happening. Whenever I spoke, everybody listened, because now they had a renewed interest and respect for what was happening. They didn't deliberately try to learn (from me) though. But they had begun to listen to me more, because I didn't speak very much at all any more. I spoke only when necessary, but my words were sometimes very effective. They were meaningful and usually very true. *[Laughs]*

So, it (teaching) started from there. Whenever I met my teacher I would tell him my situation in great detail and how I was practising. So Sayadaw knew everything about my practice and my ability to speak clearly. Then by the time I decided to become a bhikkhu, Sayadaw knew about it. I became a bhikkhu in April 1996.

**(Asking the translator) His age then?**

(Translator: He was 36 years old.) After my first *vassa*, Sayadaw was quite confident that I really meant what I had said; that I wanted to become a bhikkhu for good. Then Sayadaw began asking me to teach. I didn't have any plans to teach. In the beginning I said I would go to another forest to meditate alone. He said, "What for? This place is safer. Don't go anywhere." He discouraged me from going to the forest. Then he started to give me work. *[Translator laughs.]*

## To teach?

To teach. I always had conversations with Sayadaw. I was very close to him. Even when I was in retreats I had discussions with the yogis. I would ask them, “Is your meditation good or not, okay or not?” If they told me, I tried to advise, “Like this and like this; like this is better and like this is better.” Then I would go back to tell my teacher everything. He listened and listened; then he knew that I could talk, I could teach.

[*Big smile*] I want to talk about my teacher. Whenever I talk about Sayadaw, no matter what it is about, I always feel happy. I never feel sad.

## I can see that he’s been a great influence in your life.

Yes, yes. Sayadaw understood me very well—even more than my own father—because he was very wise.

## So, in a way, he was your father.

Yes. Dhamma father.

## How long have you been teaching now?

Eleven years. From 1996 after vassa to 2008.

After my first vassa, I taught one Korean monk at SOM, but that was kind of ad hoc. I didn’t speak much English, but that was the first person Sayadaw sent to me.

At that time, Sayadaw would go away each December to a place called Bam Way Gon near Moktama in Mon State. It’s a forest monastery up on a little hill. That year, he asked all his old students, all his old devotees, and all the monks he knew to go there. He had makeshift shelters—costing about 5,000 – 6,000 *kyats*<sup>1</sup> each—built very quickly so that he could house everyone. That was how he planned my first teaching retreat.

But he didn’t say he wanted me to teach, though. He said, “At 4

o’clock, come here.” So I went there. Then many devotees and monks also came. I didn’t know at that time that he had asked the devotees and monks to go there as well. (I thought) they just practised on their own. He asked me to go there every evening at 4 o’clock. Sayadaw sat on his chair while I sat on the floor beside him. Then he said, “Ask. Ask them: ‘Are you practising? How are you practising?’ ”

I was very young—only one vassa—but because Sayadaw had so many more vassas than them, they had to speak to me out of respect for him. [*Laughs*] Then he would say to me, “Tell him. Tell him how to do it.” Then I talked. [*Laughs*]

## So, SOM Sayadaw asked you to tell them what to do?

Yes. Then when we returned to our centre (having been away for three months), he started to make some changes. He told the usual monk in charge of meditation, “It’s okay, *ashin-phayah*<sup>2</sup>. You don’t need to do it any more. U Tejaniya is going to do it.” [*Translator laughs.*] So it started from there.

## Just now you mentioned one Korean monk.

He was practising in Paṇḍitārāma (Hse Main Gon Forest Centre). Now, my teacher and Paṇḍitārāma Sayadaw were very close. Every time my teacher passed by Bago (near Hse Main Gon), he would go to meet him. When the Korean monk saw my teacher, he was very drawn to him. Then, without telling anyone, he came quietly to SOM. He was the first foreign yogi there. Then many Koreans followed.

## I see. No wonder there are so many Koreans there, even right from the start.

That’s how the Koreans started to come. As for the Vietnamese, there was one nun who came in April 1997. Then she told the Vietnamese, including the American Vietnamese

monk, Ven Khippapañño<sup>3</sup>. (Translator: She persuaded him to come when he was in Burma for Mahāsi Sayadaw’s death anniversary festivities.) And then it all started from there.

## Defining Terms

**People who speak about meditation may use the same terms but understand them differently. So let us define some terms. As I understand, when you use the word “meditation”, you refer to the Pāli word *bhāvanā*. Is that correct?**

Yes.

## Can you please give us your definition of “meditation” or *bhāvanā*?

*Bhāvanā* means cultivation, cultivation of all wholesome mental qualities. In Pāli, we say, *bhāvanāyeva manokammaṃ*. *Bhāvanā* is a mind job.

## How do you understand *samādhi* then?

Stability, steadiness, stillness. Stabilised stillness. It’s more about stability and clarity. There are two ways we can get *samādhi*. One way is, when we focus on something, the mind stops thinking—so it has stability and clarity. On the other hand, when the mind has wisdom (i.e. experiential understanding); right thinking (i.e. it can think logically or reasonably); or right information (i.e. it has some general knowledge that enables it to be stable)—then in any of these cases, because the mind understands (things) in the right way, it does not react to what is happening with aversion or attachment; therefore the mind has stability and clarity. These are the two ways to get *samādhi*.

One more thing I’d like to point out is that there can actually be wrong

<sup>3</sup> A very highly respected, very senior Vietnamese bhikkhu who practised meditation at the Mahāsi Centre, Yangon in the early 80s.

<sup>1</sup> That’s about RM50 at that time.

<sup>2</sup> (Myanmar) respectful form of address for monks.

concentration, which has nothing to do with *samatha* or *vipassanā*, because both of these have right concentration. Wrong concentration happens to a lot of yogis. They use too much energy to focus because of greed, because they are trying to get something; so they develop this heavy concentration. That can be dangerous. Because it's wrong concentration, of course it's dangerous. The motivation behind that kind of concentration is greed actually. They want something so badly they use a lot of energy to focus, thinking that's how they'll get it, and sometimes that energy builds up to a level that they themselves cannot control. That's because there is a combination of the power of focusing and the power of the defilements. So it is really very out of control. Double trouble.

**That's why you have this strong emphasis on having the right attitude...**

Yes.

**... which is your English translation of *yoniso manasikāra*<sup>4</sup>. Briefly, what do you mean by this?**

If we have right information—as a form of wisdom—so that we are able to think in the right way, we would have *yoniso manasikāra*. And that would be right thought.

**So *yoniso manasikāra* is right thought based on the right information. Is that correct?**

Yes, but if that person already has some innate wisdom, it would also bring about right thought.

My teacher talked a lot about *yoniso manasikāra* or right attitude. A lot. That was his main message—that you must not practise with *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (aversion) or *moha* (delusion). Every day he came to remind (the yogis about) this because people have a lot of *lobha*.

4 This has been variously translated by others as “wise consideration” (Bodhi), “appropriate attention” (Thānissaro), etc.

**Yes, I agree... . I was one of them.** [Translator laughs] **Well, I am still a little bit like that but I'm trying not to do that.** [SUT laughs]

**Can you explain the difference between *yoniso manasikāra* and *sampajañña*<sup>5</sup>?**

There are four *sampajaññas*. The first two—understanding suitability and benefit—are directly related to the actual practice itself, e.g. how to properly carry out the practice. You understand what is suitable, what is beneficial, and you practise such. The other two *sampajaññas*—*gocara* and *asammoha*—are actually insights. They are insights that develop when you practise in the right way.

Because *yoniso manasikāra* is applicable to right practice, it helps the first two *sampajaññas*: having right thoughts, you think about what is right so that you know what is suitable and beneficial for your practice. You reflect on what is right and wrong.

**So, Sayadaw, you are saying that the first two aspects of *sampajañña* are based on *yoniso manasikāra*?**

You could say so.

**Or are they the same?**

It's like this. In the beginning you take what you hear from your teacher and you think about it. You think about what it means, how to use it and so forth. When you reflect on this and clearly understand, that is *yoniso manasikāra*. You have done some thinking about it and how to use it in the right way, and then you start to observe. So you've got this right view now because you have thought about how to do it, and using this right view you are now observing. As you observe, the mind actually begins to understand what is suitable and what is beneficial. Because there will still be mistakes and things that are done

5 Thorough awareness (Interviewer's personal choice of translation).

right, you learn lessons about how this is suitable or not suitable, how this is beneficial or not beneficial. So that is when *yoniso manasikāra* becomes *sampajañña*.

**I see. Can you explain your understanding of the other two aspects of *sampajañña*?**

The meaning of *gocara* is literally “grazing place”. In *gocara sampajañña*, the grazing place of wisdom has become reality (*paramattha*)—or rather, more of reality. So there's understanding of *nāma-rūpa*<sup>6</sup> (mind-matter) at all times and more understanding of the ‘reality aspect’ of experience. The conceptual part of experience doesn't disappear. It's not ignored. It's still known. You don't have to ignore a concept to understand reality. But despite the concept being there, wisdom understands and has more of its attention on the ‘reality aspect’ of the experience.

*Asammoha* occurs when there is understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*. There's the understanding of these three characteristics all the time. Basically wisdom understands these at a deeper level.

About these two *sampajaññas*—the third and fourth—because we talk about them, we separate them. But in fact they are the same—they occur simultaneously.

**People often translate *sati* as “mindfulness”. What do you think of that?**

When I talk to yogis I notice that they understand “mindfulness” in a different way. They understand it to mean exerting energy, the combined functioning of the five spiritual powers (*bala*). But *sati* as one of the five *balas* is actually only one part of what the yogi calls “mindfulness”.

6 According to the suttas, this refers to the cognitive and physical aspects of individual existence, i.e. feeling, perception, volition, contact, attention and form (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *cetanā*, *phassa*, *manasikāra*, *rūpa*). Here however SUT is using the term according to the common Theravādin understanding, i.e. mind and matter.

I would rather prefer to define "mindfulness" as "the mind full of awareness". In English, they use "mindlessness" to mean "awarenessless". That's why I think mindfulness is "awarenessful". So, "the mind full of awareness" is mindfulness. I made this up. Everybody likes it. [Translator laughs] It's not because I know English but because this is how it feels in my mind.

Also (some) yogis have this misconception: When they talk about "strong mindfulness", they think it's when they use a lot of energy to focus, to pay attention.

When I talk about sharp mindfulness or awareness—both of them mean the same thing to me—I mean the mind has the ability to know many things at the same time. Then *only* is awareness really strong.

### **So, how do you understand the word *sati*?**

Not forgetting. Not forgetting the right object, what is really there, what is real. And not forgetting wholesomeness (*kusala*).

### **How then do you understand the term *satisampajañña* as found in *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*?**

The *sampajañña* part is wisdom. Even if it's not 'understood' or 'experienced' wisdom, but just 'derived' or 'heard' wisdom, it understands that everything is nature, that there is not a person or some being there, that it's actually cause and effect, conditions at work, so that right view is present with *sati*.

In practical terms, it means that you are aware, and while aware you also use the information from the teacher to bear on the way you are being aware. This means you have to base your awareness on right view and not be blindly aware; not just focussing. That's *satisampajañña*.

## **Instructions**

**In the last interview we had, which was published in *Sāsanārakkha Newszine* July 2004, you said, "Year by year, my instructions change a little. I'm not rigid. When I see a weak point, I change the instruction, so that it becomes more helpful to the yogi." Can you tell us the changes you made in recent years, and what prompted them?**

In the beginning, I used to tell yogis to be aware. And yogis *are* aware. They try very hard to be aware. I have always known that my own awareness had a large measure of wisdom in it. When my teacher talked to me about awareness, or told me to be aware, I understood he meant "with wisdom". But as I talk to yogis more and more, I begin to see that they're applying a lot of awareness but are not growing in wisdom because their own wisdom is very weak. Also, despite the amount of awareness they develop, most of them are do not recognise whether or not the wisdom is there.

So seeing this weakness, I began to talk more about wisdom than *sati*. Another thing is, people are strongly inclined to forcefully put effort into their awareness. But because I watch my own awareness a lot, I begin to notice that without deliberately putting in effort I can simply remind myself to be aware.

My instructions have changed from year to year ever since. Before that, I used to give instructions on how to practise, the mechanics of practice. But it has moved now to almost hardly any instructions about the mechanics of the practice. There's a little, but before that, I give a full explanation on the theory of practice or the ideas behind the practice, telling them what it's about, giving them all the information they need, so that they can practise the right way.

You've heard my instructions. Are they the same as the last time?

**Definitely not. I remember the idea about asking questions (when I was there in SOM in year 2000). But talking about wisdom and understanding is something I hear more of only recently.**

(Translator: But I think most people didn't catch it at that time although he talked about asking questions. He emphasises it more now.)

In my 27 points on right attitude there are so many questions.

**Retreats under your guidance have a very simple schedule. The only fixed times are for meals and discussions with you. The meditators can talk and even take an afternoon nap. This is very uncharacteristic of what most people understand as a meditation retreat. What prompted you to make this change?**

I want yogis to think for themselves. I'm *telling* them to think for themselves. Because if you are being aware, thinking must be part of it (i.e., the awareness). You must think for yourself.

If somebody is talking in a retreat and he talks non-stop, for sure there's no awareness. You can tell. If someone is being aware, he's going to think about whether talking is suitable.

There are people who may need to sleep at a particular time. They know they need to. But when there is a schedule that doesn't allow them to do so, that can mess things up.

Every yogi is bound by his own particular situation. The teacher does not and cannot know each of them individually: their situation in life, their needs, their bodies. They need to know for themselves. The main thing is I really value human potential. I'm not looking down on them. I'm giving them the space to use their wisdom. Later I came to know that they were not using their own intelligence. And because of

that I deliberately encouraged them to do so.

**That would work well with people who are actually interested to meditate, to improve themselves, to cultivate (wisdom). But what about those who just want to come for a holiday retreat?**

It's all on an individual basis. For those who don't have much internal motivation, I work them of course. That's what they deserve. But that's not suitable for those who are already motivated. To fit everybody into one formula, a single mould, I would say, is not very wise.

**Maybe a bit cruel too.**

Yes, maybe it can be cruel, because there is no understanding and allowance for individual differences. They all have good qualities. Why force those who can already practise by themselves?

**I agree.** [Translator laughs]

It's better to have an overview of the whole situation and then adjust accordingly, rather than squeeze everybody into the same box without knowing anything of the circumstances. If anyone feels that he cannot fit into the way I am teaching, he can bring it up to me individually, and I will help him to adjust. The Buddha was never fixed on one style of teaching. He was always very flexible, tailoring his teaching to suit each individual. Everybody is different.

**I doubt if he had a schedule (for his disciples) too.**

Yes. [Translator and SUT laugh]

## **Worldly Problems, Spiritual Solutions**

**I understand that you went through serious depression before and meditation was the way out for you.**

The *only* way out.

**What's your advice to people who now suffer from depression?**

The first thing that I explain to someone who is depressed is what depression is. It is actually a state where the good qualities of the mind have become weak but the bad qualities have become stronger.

It is said that stress leads to depression. When the body is tired, the mind is tired, so one becomes easily angry. Then this anger grows until depression sets in.

For me, it is then very clear that depression is a reduction in the good qualities of the mind, while meditation is a cultivation of its good qualities. That is so clear. If you meditate and start cultivating as much good qualities that you possibly can, and these actually grow, then depression will be gone.

When I was depressed I didn't ever resort to antidepressants. The depression was very, very strong. I started with knowledge. I didn't start with samādhi. That is why I say, if you have the knowledge and you use it, samādhi will develop.

**At that time did your brothers who were doctors disagree with your way of not taking any antidepressant?**

No, no. (Translator: I think at that time it was not popular yet.) They didn't even know what to do for me. That's why they just sat and watched me. I had to work it out by myself. What do you think Sayadaw did? He just encouraged me to keep going. He could not even give me any other advice.

**So you were practically on your own at that time.**

Yes.

**In your case you had the mental strength.**

Because I wanted to be free. I wanted to have relief. I couldn't stand it any more.

**So I suppose a person who is depressed must himself want to be free.**

Everybody who is depressed wants to be free, to be relieved. It's a very unpleasant feeling. [Laughs] But most want to be free through anger. They don't use their wisdom. I already understood what was happening to me. I also knew what I had to do. And because of that, I began working at it. But I knew all that because I had practised before. So all my past practice was not in vain.

**But for a person who has no past practice before, that would be a bit difficult.**

Yes. If they had no knowledge, it's very difficult.

So for those who are intelligent, I make a special effort to explain to them because they are able to actually get it and be free.

But it's very difficult for the less intelligent. In such cases, they could use samatha. When samādhi develops, the depression can be alleviated. But only for a while. When they stop, the depression comes back. [Laughs] This is because the depression has a lot more power than the samādhi. It is only as effective as its established strength. When they stop meditating, the depression comes back.

**I've some experience talking to a person who is depressed. There was this man who was a manager of a medium sized company. So, he should be quite intelligent. He had already been taking pharmaceutical drugs for quite some time. I am not too sure if that has anything to do with it, but when I try to talk to him, it just seems like it doesn't get through to him.**

He probably doesn't want to use this way. My brother is like this. He is intelligent and he also understands how to practise but he doesn't want to do it. There is another kind of person who doesn't

want to do something just because somebody else tells him to do so.  
[Laughs] Very funny idea.

### **Then it's very difficult to help them.**

Yes. If they don't want to accept help, it is difficult.

### **Some people want to spend more time in meditation by attending retreats, but they face resistance or even objections from their family members. What do you think they can do?**

Practise at home. It's win-win. Just tell them how to practise. That's the best.

There is a little farmers' village called Kalaw in Shan State. A lady there had always wanted to go for retreats, but she and her family were very poor. They lived from hand to mouth. They had to work every day, so her husband could not allow her to go for a retreat. She would always blame her husband and their poverty for this.

When I was there they would come and pay respects to me in the evenings after they had finished work. As we were discussing the Dhamma, I explained that she could actually practise at home. She was amazed because she had never heard that it was possible to do that. She began to earnestly practise at home. And then she really changed, so much that her husband was inspired to practise even harder than her! Previously, if he heard the word "Dhamma" or "meditation", he would just take off because it gave him so much trouble through his wife's continual complaints.  
[Laughter]

### **Can meditation improve relationships?**

(Translator: Yes!)

### **I know it can, but how?**

Because when you understand your own mind and its defilements, then you can understand and forgive other people. One person came to meditate. He said, "Jesus said, 'Forgive and forget,' but he didn't say how to practise it. Now I understand." By practising satipaṭṭhāna we understand how to forgive and forget.

### **In the modern world, many people are living with a lot of stress, which is related to anxiety, anger, etc. How can having the right attitude help them to live with less stress?**

You have to tell them a lot about right ideas, because when they can think in the right way, it is much faster in relieving stress than to watch (stressful thoughts caused by originally wrong attitudes).

## **Books, Website and Future Plans**

### **Sayadaw, you already have a book, *Don't Look Down on the Defilements*, published and recently there's a pocket-size version of that. I understand a new book is on the way. Can you tell us the title and what it is about?**

*Awareness Alone is Not Enough*.  
(Translator: It has already been published.)

### **Can you briefly say what it is about?**

The whole point of that book, *Awareness Alone is Not Enough*, is to explain wisdom. It's in a question-and-answer format. (Translator: Most of the book.) It's about the importance of discussion and how it can help us understand more and get more information, more data.

### **I hear that a website on your teachings will be set up. Can you tell us something about that?**

I have agreed to set up the website now because so many people keep asking to get them printed. So (with this website) everybody can access and read the books and listen to the discussions with yogis and some instructions too.

### **Any idea when this will be available?**

(Translator: Maybe another two months.) Also, so that people can get the information faster.  
(Translator: Instead of him running around the world, and it takes so much time.) I realise that it's important for them. It doesn't make a difference any more now. The sooner they can get as much information as possible, the better for them.

### **It might attract more yogis to your centre too.**

It wouldn't be easy to go to Burma at all now.

### **Oh, I see. Okay. Do you have any other special plans for the future?**

For now, I'm still young; so I will try to speak as much as I can. I want to continue helping people so long as I am able to. Conducting retreats is nothing more than a gesture of helping out.

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