

# MYANMAR TRADITIONAL SARANAGAMMA AND DANA DEATH CEREMONIES

David Tin Win\*

## บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้บรรยายประเพณีทางพระพุทธศาสนาของชาวพม่า คือ Saranagamma ceremony และ Dana ceremony เพื่ออุทิศส่วนกุศลให้ผู้ที่เสียชีวิต บทความนี้นำเสนอในรูปแบบของการสนทนาโต้ตอบทางจดหมายอิเล็กทรอนิกส์และทางโทรศัพท์ซึ่งชี้ให้เห็นถึงจุดอ่อนและข้อเสนอแนะในการประกอบพิธีดังกล่าว

## Abstract

Myanmar (Burmese) traditional **refuge taking** in the **Triple Gems** (Bud-dha, Dhamma, Sanga) known as the **Saranagamma ceremony** and the specifically directed good conduct of giving called **Dana ceremony** invariably performed at a person's death are described. The weaknesses are identified and effective alternatives are suggested. These are presented in dialogue form via e-mails and phone calls together with the corresponding replies.

## INTRODUCTION

The Buddhist concept of life consists of extremely rapid rise and decay series of *rupa*<sup>1</sup> and *nama*<sup>2</sup> (roughly body and mind), which forms a continuum propelled by *kamma*, a cause and effect mechanism of interdependent *kusala* (good) and *akusala* (bad) forces, through thirty one abodes of existences via sequences of rebirths.

The next life that one lands in after a certain life ends depends on the interaction of the good and bad *kamma* forces. Previous *kamma* are carried over to the new life and are modified by *kamma* in that current life. Thus *kamma* is **continuous causality**, rather than deterministic.

Of the thirty one levels of life, the lower four called *apayas* are levels of woe with total misery. People wish to avoid rebirth

---

\*Professor David Tin Win holds a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from Strathclyde University, Glasgow, U.K. He was a former Lecturer in the Faculty of Science and Technology, Assumption University of Thailand. He is the author of several articles on Buddhism and Meditation.

<sup>1</sup>That which is impermanent and continuously changes (appear and disappear; rise and decay) rapidly.

<sup>2</sup>That which can point towards and know rupa.

into these levels. This is achieved by gathering merit via good conduct (*kusala kamma*). Doing good deeds and taking refuge in the **Triple Gems (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha)** enforces *kusala kamma* forces and prevent rebirth into the *apayas*.

Thus Myanmar (Burmese) have the traditions of refuge taking and giving (*dana*) at death, designed as a means to avoid the four lower *apaya* levels of *neya*, *peta*, animal and *asuya* worlds.

### Letter to a Dear Friend in Reply to His Request

Dear David,

*I have a solemn request. Can you guys perform the customary religious rites on my death? As you know we're living abroad in the West, rather isolated from the local Burmese community. So I rely on you my dearest friend. Yours, .....*

Dear ...,

We shall comply with your request. Provided we're still alive, of course.

I think you were thinking of the two things customarily done by Burmese upon a person's death.

(1) **Saranagamma ceremony** - literally enveloping (or instilling, if you like) the dead body with Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha "vibrations", so to speak.

(2) **Dana (donation) ceremony** - a *kusala kamma* (good deed) directed especially to the person who had died.

Allow me to enlighten you on these two traditions:-

The first one - once a person dies his lifeless body cannot receive *saranagamma*, the Triple Gem (*Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha*) "vibrations". Even if one has taken refuge in Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha throughout his whole life, it gets washed away with death. So there's really no point in trying to effuse the dead body with *saranagamma*. The ceremony only serves to instill *saranagamma* and comfort to those left behind.

The *saranagamma* does not get washed away if you have reached at least the lowest *ariya* stage of *sotapanna*<sup>3</sup>. You do not need the *saranagamma* ceremony for such people.

The second one - when relatives and friends do the *dana* especially intended for the person who had died, it is they that get the good *kusala* benefits. The dead person may not get the benefit, unless he has become a **peta**<sup>4</sup> and is also *nearby*. If he is in the other lower realms (*neya*, animal, *asuya*) he will be too dumb or too intoxicated to know of it. If he has gone to higher planes (*Devas, Brahmas*)<sup>5</sup> he will not know of this *dana*, owing to the greatly expanded time frames as compared to human times. Thus this is mostly for those left behind. By doing this, apart from the direct *kusala kamma*

<sup>3</sup>The first of four stages to liberation from *samsara*, or life-cycle involving rebirth in the 31 planes of existences.

<sup>4</sup>This is the existence plane to which one is pushed down if one had greed (*loba*) as the prominent *akusala* (bad) emotion at the point of death.

<sup>5</sup>Exalted planes of existence. They are higher than the human plane.

resulting from the good deed, they have the satisfaction (and probably some relief from grief) - a feeling of doing something for the dead person.

But of course there's no harm in doing it on the off chance that the dead person may have become a *peta* nearby.

Here's a **simple procedure** that we can do **without any great hassle** to cover our needs for our samsara journey (life-cycle involving rebirth in the 31 planes of existences). It will effectively cover the functions of the above two traditions.

### (1) Taking refuge in the Triple Gems (*Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha*).

According to **Taungpulu Sayadaw**<sup>6</sup>, there are four ways of taking refuge in the Triple Gems. The following is one of them.

**Donating rupa/nama "stream" to the Triple Gems with full confidence (Sadha) in Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha.**

**Seriously and intensely** - "I hereby donate this rupa/nama "stream" known as ...(name) to *Buddha*. Repeat with *Dhamma* and *Sangha*".

If you prefer to do it in Burmese: "... (name) *hu khaw thaw, ei yoke/nan khanda ko Phaya ahh hlu dan, art-hnan bar ei*" Repeat with *Taya* and *Sangar*.

Do it for 5min or more, when your *Sadha* (confidence in this) grows.

*Note:* Taungpulu Sayadaw said **taking refuge** in Triple Gems can lead to **liberation** from *samsara*. He considers it most important and admonishes people to keep saranagamma throughout their lives.

### (2) Donation or shedding of attachment.

The **best** and **most effective** is donation of rupa/nama "stream". Yes the same one above. It actually covers both **taking refuge** and donation aspects. **DO ONE GET TWO!**

It doesn't cost much. All you need is **time** (not much required) and **effort** (not too much, really. Just don't be lazy!).

The reasoning is that attachment to life (*rupa/nama* stream) is the **strongest** in everyone. The Triple Gems are the **noblest**. So one gets the most benefit by **donating** (shedding) the **strongest attachment (life)** to the **noblest ones (Triple Gems)**.

*Note:* Taungpulu Sayadaw said the benefits are many, some of which are the following: freedom from **dangers** of all sorts, present and future; freedom from **fear and anxiety**; freedom from **physical and mental stresses**; blocks the path to **four apaya** (four lower realms - *neya, peta*, animals, *asuya*). He cites various Pali passages and stories from *suttas*.

Of course there are many other means of donation that can be done. Some may be costly and some more so. But it's the volition (Cetana) that counts. Remember **even offering a glass of water is very effective**. So take time to offer water to Triple gems, morning and night.

*Note:* Taungpulu Sayadaw said **shedding attachment** to LIFE or BELONGINGS / BLESSINGS, **any one of them**, and having **full unshakable confidence (Sadha)** in the Triple Gems, can **develop insight** WITHOUT PRACTICING, and

---

<sup>6</sup>Sayadaw = chief monk/abbot. He was a famous Burmese monk, whose fame and reach spread to California. Many believe he attained *arahatship* (one liberated from *samsara* - round of rebirths).

lead to liberation from *samsara*. Metta<sup>7</sup>, DTW.

### Remaining Three Refuge Taking Methods

The remaining three factors conducive to refuge taking in Triple Gems are:

#### (a) Direct refuge taking.

First contemplate for a while that you are going to take refuge in the Triple Gems because ***Buddha*** - has **shown the way** to liberation from *samsara*; ***Dhamma*** - is **the way**; ***Sangha*** - has **protected and kept** the way in pure pristine form.

Then start by saying **seriously and intensely**:- “*Buddham saranam gicchami*”

While saying this imagine Buddha “vibration” slowly covering you from head to toe.

Repeat with “*Dhammam saranam gicchami*” and “*Sangham saranam gicchami*”.

Do it for 5 min or more when your *Sadha* (confidence in this) grows.

#### (b) Vowing discipleship.

**Seriously and intensely** - “I hereby accept Buddha as my teacher”.

Repeat with *Dhamma* and *Sangha*”.

If you prefer to do it in Burmese: “*Paya htan ta-pe* (follower) *khan you bar ei*”.

Repeat with *Taya* and *Sangar*.

Do it for 5 min or more when your *Sadha* (confidence in this) grows.

#### (c) Paying obeisance.

**Seriously and intensely** - “I pay respect to *Buddha*” - use proper posture - palms together, etc... Repeat with *Dhamma* and *Sangha*”.

If you prefer to do it in Burmese: “*Paya ahh shi kho bar ei*”. Repeat with *Taya* and *Sangar*.

Do it for 5 min or more when your *Sadha* (confidence in this) grows.

*Note:* **TAUNGPULU SAYADAW** said doing **ANY ONE** of the above four is conducive to taking refuge in the Triple Gems - keeping *saranagama*.

### Supporting Stories from the Suttas

Stories are in decreasing order of refuge-taking *Sadha* (confidence in the Triple Gems).

#### Story 1.

During Gotama Buddha’s time, one of his relatives steadfastly took refuge in the Triple Gems. Because of this he was known as *Sarana Upasaka*. However he did not give up drinking. He continued drinking even at the point of death. To the disbelief of others Buddha said that he became a deva after death.

Buddha explained that his refuge in the Triple Gems was extremely strong and unshakable. He will not refute the Triple Gems even if threatened with his life. This sort of refuge is called *avissapathada*. The *akusala* (bad) *kamma* of drinking could not pre-

---

<sup>7</sup>Loving kindness

vent *avissapathada* from “transporting”<sup>8</sup> him to the *deva* world, demonstrating the power of taking refuge in the Triple Gems.

However it should be noted that *akusala kamma* bad effects could be expressed when the *kusala kamma* good effects wear off. These could push *devas* down to the four *apaya realms* of *neya*, *peta*, animal, and *asuya*. Hence the final goal of Buddhists is not the *deva* world but *nibbana*. *Vipassana* practice is imperative for insight development leading to *nibbana*.

### Story 2.

During Vipasi Buddha’s time, 91 world cycles before the present world, there was a very poor man who looked after his blind parents. He was extremely sad at being unable to perform *kusala kamma* like donating to the Triple Gems or keeping *silā* (good conduct). Owing to a stroke of luck (or maybe due to his ardent wish) a monk came and performed the refuge taking ceremony. This “transported” him to the *deva* realm when he died. As a result of this refuge taking he was reborn many times in the upper existence levels without even once down in the four *apayas*. Such is the power of taking refuge in the Triple Gems. Finally he became a *samanera* in Gotama Buddha’s time and gained *nibbana*.

### Story 3.

There was a man named Damika who was a fisherman for 50 years. One day he became critically ill. It happened that a monk came by and offered to perform the *silā*

keeping process for him. He reluctantly agreed. He died at the refuge taking step, without being able to complete the full *silā* keeping procedure. However this was sufficient to “transport” him to the *deva* world. The power of taking refuge in the Triple Gems is really strong.

### Responses

**Response A** (Engineer from Sydney, involved in Sassana work)

Dear Dhamma Friend,

Thanks for the response. My replies are embedded in your message below. Metta, DTW.

Dear DTW,

*Good to read and learn about it.*

*It is a coincidence that we were talking about the same thing “tharanagon and dana” for the dead person, as one Burmese old lady passed away last week. What is the benefit of dana for the dead person: what we concluded is, in case of “when if the dead person were at peta life and nearby by chance”, that person may get benefits out of sharing merit of the dana offered by the remaining relatives.*

*I think it is not a compulsory but necessary thing to do dana and to share merit with the dead person (who may be in peta life), isn’t it?*

Yes, I agree. It’s necessary. That’s why

---

<sup>8</sup>This should not be taken literally as it is a language limitation. It is not *Sarana Upasaka* traveling to the *deva* world. There is no trajectory as such. It has to be taken as, his old human *rupa/nama* stream ends and the “data” (in the form of *kamma* potential) is immediately transferred to the new *deva rupa/nama* stream.

I have the line “but there’s no harm in doing it” in the document. Yes we have to do it on the off chance that the dead person has become a *peta*, nearby.

But people need to be alerted to the fact that such a *dana* after death is not sure. Can’t be sure that the dead person will benefit the *dana kusala kamma*.

So people need to do it now; and what better way than this most cost-effective one. Of course people who have already started on *vipassana* (insight meditation) path may not need it. But it should be invaluable for seniors who haven’t done any real religious practice throughout life. I believe it is a real **life-line** for them (and maybe even us?)

*If I remembered correctly that, mentioned in one sayadaw’s dhamma talk, “tharagon tin” ceremony is not for the dead person but only for the people who attend the funeral to be in the “tharnagon tee” state. And then, if the ones, who were in the “tharagon tee” state, will be able to share their merits to the dead person (who may be in peta life) more effectively, something like that.*

I’m not familiar with this, but it’s logical.

*And another thing came to my mind is “donating one self’s dead body” (when he/she dies) to medical school or research etc. How will the benefit of that *dana* work? You won’t even know that your dead body will be useful for that purpose or not. I do not mean that *dana* is not practical, but I try to understand how it works. I think the benefit only comes from the willingness to donate your dead body*

*and you will get it before you die but not after you were dead.*

*Please correct me if what I think were wrong. With metta,...*

I think you’re right. *Cetana* (volition) of doing good for others via providing one’s body for medical research is *kusala kamma* that the person gets immediately here and now. Also, there’s detachment from *khandas*<sup>9</sup>, which promotes *pahana parinna* (total discard of attachment) by developing “**not I**” “**not mine**” knowledge. This may be even more beneficial than the *cetana*. Better if the detachment factor can be made to “grow”. Best if the *cetana* factor is included as well. Metta, DTW

**Response B** (Practicing medical doctor from Sydney, Dr. C.T)

Dear ...,

Nice to hear from you. Replies are embedded below. Metta, DTW

Dear Saya,

*Thanks for sharing Saranagama with us. I find it a bit difficult when dealing with those patients who are terminally ill and those who do not belong to Buddhism. I normally advise them to focus on their breathing/ArNarParNa when I visit them at the hospital [in order to be at least free from Lawba, Mawha and Dortha during that transition period].*

This is a very appropriate action on your part.

*Some are quite lucid and some are drowsy from sickness as well as from medication like morphine.*

---

<sup>9</sup>Roughly it is body and mind. Technically there are 5 *khandas* or agglomerates (One physical - rupakhandas + 4 functional - namakhandas. Collectively = rupa/nama)

*I feel frustrated and helpless a number of times seeing the suffering of these patients during their final days.*

Yes it can be difficult even when in good health; like when we have physical or mental stress.

*Anything else I can do apart from suggesting patients to meditate?*

I don't have any other suggestion yet. I may have one later - after going through some Sayadaw's **death management** advice. I think Taungpulu and Yaw Sayadaws and Shin Sandadika have talked about it.

I know it's going to be difficult trying to adapt it for non-buddhists, since they have a different frame of reference. Compiling this topic in English has been on my mind for some years, ever since a friend from the States in NJ suggested it. Something like "Tibetan book of the dead".

I remember one way mentioned by Taungpulu Sayadaw. He said near death, **pain increases** to a pitch and then **fades off** (release of some chemicals. Porphyrins?)

Now starts the dangerous part. **Panic sets in**. Fear of having to let go of life. This could push people down to apayas (four lower realms). The solution - **death management** - how?

By **repeatedly contemplating** thus - This **body is not I - not mine; Riches & relatives - not mine**.

As said above, how do we convey this **anatta** idea to non-buddhists (especially at that crucial moment). Let's hope I can dig up something suitable. Let me know if you find something too.

Metta, DTW

(Reply to the above mail)

*Many thanks Saya for the suggestion. I try to instill non self [anatta], law of impermanence and suffering due to owning KhanDar/body, cause and effect during consultations so most of my non- Burmese patients are familiar with these concepts. But the problems arise during the transition period before they cross over. I guess that is something we all have to constantly prepare ourselves for that moment [ArrThar NaKan?]. What would you do if you are fortunate enough to have some time to prepare before crossing over? Best regards,.....*

Dear .....

I think we all have to instill the "suffering (**effect**) due to owning KhanDar/body (**cause**)" concept well before the transition point; (*asennakam*) so that it becomes automatic at that point.

One **may panic** at that point. I think we got to **practice** to **control panic**, so that our effort is allowed to channel onto "anatta". That's why we need the *asennakam*<sup>10</sup>.

In other words I think we got to develop whatever is necessary **now** in preparation for automatic application of "anatta" at that crucial point.

I believe we have to depend on the "Not I" "Not Mine" procedure at that point. Or alternatively, as you pointed out, focusing on the body as the **cause** of suffering (**effect**) - *Ahbinna sutta*. No harm in doing both, right?

---

<sup>10</sup>Regular daily practice so that it becomes a sort of second nature

Allow me to share what I do now, practice-wise. I usually do these after the usual initial procedures: prayers, refuge, sila, forgiveness, metta<sup>11</sup>, etc.

(1) With eyes closed I point *manasikara* (attention) on the body and contemplate thus:

**“It is not I, It is not mine”**.

Then I do **“Rupa/nama is not I, not mine”**.

After some time, I transfer my attention to *loba citta* caused by attachment to parents, family, property, life, etc... For example, consider a parent - watch if there is attachment.

The *loba citta* usually appear some place inside the ribs or womb. So I look inside. (Knowing roughly where is enough. No need to try and pin-point the location; it's not important. That detracts attention away by being location conscious, rather than *loba* conscious).

If I hit one - I **categorize (Intense/Mid/Weak)**.

While keeping it **under observation**, I **contemplate** on the *loba citta* for some time:

**“This is not I, not mine”** (you realize, of course, this is going for *anatta*).

This is preliminary shedding of *ditthi* (wrong view) at the primary level

(*nyataparinna*<sup>12</sup>) that will lead to *ditthi* shedding at the mid level *tiranaparinna*<sup>13</sup> and high level (*pahanaparinna*<sup>14</sup>). According to Mogok Sayadaw (a well known enlightened Burmese monk) this is a prerequisite for vipassana practice.

Then I **focus** on the *loba citta*

**“loba citta is present”** (*loba saik paw de*)<sup>15</sup>;

**“presence is known”** (*shi dar thi de*);

**“zoom on it”** (*shu de*) - the **CAUSE** = **“loba citta gone”** (*pyet de*) - the **EFFECT**.

(As you know the *loba citta* is replaced by the watching (*shu*) *citta*. (**Appear/disappear**) *Phyit/pyet*. Going for *anicca*. The process is [**Appear - know presence - watch - disappear**], *Paw-shi thi- shu - pyet*).

This is repeated until the *loba citta* weakens or disappears altogether. The “void” made by *loba* absence is noted.

*Note:* if the *loba* intensity is **strong**, the *Paw-shi- shu - pyet* result is not dominant. Instead I do the **“direct confrontation”** - looking intensely at the *loba citta*, saying **“loba citta”** repeatedly. Identifying it as *loba citta*, pulse by pulse. The *loba citta* wears away after some time. Then I go on to the next *loba*. I find that “Life attachment” is strongest. It is very difficult to manage even as a temporary measure; and difficult even with the “direct confrontation”.

---

<sup>11</sup>These serve as platforms on which *vipassana panna* (insight knowledge) is developed. Forgiveness, often overlooked, is an important factor. Grudge held, is embracing mental stress; it prevents insight. Actually Sayadaws identify four “platform” practices called *caturarakkha kamathana*. They are *Buddha nusati*, *metta*, *marana sati*, and *asuva*. At least one platform has to be present to serve as a base for insight development.

<sup>12</sup>Accurate knowledge

<sup>13</sup>Profound knowledge: full comprehension

<sup>14</sup>Discerning knowledge

<sup>15</sup>These are Burmese words that correspond to the sentences in front. They can be skipped.

I haven't been successful yet. Then I go on to *dosa*, *moha*, *aloba* (not wanting or *dana citta*); *adosa* (*metta citta*).

Actually I do not follow the sequence as such; I latch onto whichever is presented or whichever is dominant at that moment. After a while I go on to (A) and (B), below.

(A) I do the *anapana* - watching the touch of breath - appear (at the start) and disappear (at the end) - both when inhaling and exhaling without noting in or out and ignoring the nose. Specifically I focus on **KNOWLEDGE** of wind touch - the *citta* that knows the touch, and not the touch sensation. Alternatively the *citta* of breathing in (or wanting to breathe in) and the *citta* of breathing out (or wanting to breathe out) may be watched.

(B) Then I move on to the **KNOWLEDGE** of transients and not so transients on the body ("shown by the body" as Sayadaws usually say). ie. Watching the **ON/OFF of *citta*** (the *nama that knows the ahyone*<sup>16</sup>; **not the ahyone**). The former *citta* is *paramatta* and *ahyone* is *panatti* (*pyit-nyat*). Watching *paramatta* is *vipassana*<sup>17</sup>; watching *panatti* is still in *samatha*<sup>18</sup>. I'm strong on watching *sota vinanna* (hearing consciousness) more than others, like taste, itching, pin-pricks, etc.

I continue by oscillating between the two, (A) and (B). U Thunanda gives a detailed account of this procedure. According

to him sticking to one (A) or (B) for long will induce drowsiness by loss of interest. He identifies the markers along the path to enlightenment and gives detailed instructions. And whenever my *sati*<sup>19</sup> comes up (not much, I must admit) I keep a **general awareness of anicca in everything I experience**, like hearing, seeing, wind impinging, etc. Yes we need to develop *sati*. It is said that *sati* can never be in excess. We must remind ourselves to have *sati*! Metta, DTW.

**Response C** (Physiology Professor from Malaysia)

Dear ... ,

*Thank you for this valuable piece. I've forwarded to a few people who I know will value it. The Sayadaws admonish us to practice so that we can confidently say, "Ngar thay yin sranagam ma tin nair"*<sup>20</sup>. *But who would be so confident?! Even a momentary thought can channel you to the peta realms! Metta, ...*

Dear ... ,

Thanks for your response and your kindness for forwarding it to potentially interested persons. Yes we can't be confident unless the lowest *ariya* stage of *Sotapanna* is reached. Otherwise negatives at the last moment can push us to lower realms.

<sup>16</sup>Burmese for sensation

<sup>17</sup>Insight development

<sup>18</sup>Tranquility (calm) development

<sup>19</sup>Mindfulness

<sup>20</sup>"Do not perform the Saranagamma ceremony when I die". The ceremony is not needed if the person has achieved the lowest *ariya* stage (*Sotapanna* - first of four stages to full enlightenment) as a minimum.

So we need earnest and diligent practice. It is heartening to listen to Sayadaws sermons where they say that *Sulasotapanna*<sup>21</sup> stage prevents the path to the four lower realms for the next immediate life. It is further stated that this good potential will prevail in that life and provide opportunities and paths for achieving the full-fledged *sotapanna* stage. As you know once the *sotapanna* stage is reached the path to lower realms is closed forever. The *sotapanna* will develop further and achieve the three higher stages within a maximum of seven existences. Metta, DTW

**Response D** (Medical doctor from Sydney)

Dear .....,.....

*This topic has been nagging me for a few years. It's all very clear now. Thank you. Metta,...* Dear ....., I'm glad it is useful to you. Metta, DTW.

**Response E** (Medical liaison officer from Bangkok - by phone)

*Would it be okay if I do the Rupa/Nama donation for a specified period, say while meditating or praying? What's your opinion on this?*

I think doing the *dana* without setting a limiting time frame and shedding *tanha* (attachment) as much as possible, is better. It covers all times until death without any real extra effort required. However it will certainly be beneficial if you do the time frame

limitation this way. Do the *dana* without specifying a time frame and then set a time period during which you vow to keep your *rupa* and *nama* (*citta*) as pure and as clean as possible - like **strictly keeping** the five precepts during that period. Keep in mind that since your *rupa/nama* has been donated to the Triple gems, you have a responsibility to keep them pure and clean so as to be suitable for the noblest ones. Then you do the pure/clean process wholeheartedly and earnestly with full energy, keeping stringent watch on all possible *akusala* (bad) actions: words, deeds and thought; during the specified period.

**Feedback F** (Friend from U.S.A. - by phone)

*There's one thing that's worrying me: the "art hnan" (Burmese - presenting for safe keeping) bit. It's like giving the rupa/nama for safe-keeping. Wouldn't that be rupa/nama attachment? To me it seems better if we just "hlu-dan" (Burmese - offering / donating).*

Yes I think so. I've been doing the "hlu-dan" bit exclusively for some time.

*Another thing. When you focus on loba cittas or other cittas, aren't you looking at phenomena that you select? My understanding of vipassana is that we look at what the body shows and not what we want to observe.*

I think we need to differentiate *searching* and *scanning*. Searching is looking for phenomena of your choice. Scanning is dif-

---

<sup>21</sup>A pseudo *sotapanna* stage reached by being taught the ultimate reality and further understood by reasoning and contemplating.

ferent in that it is not looking for some specific phenomena, but looking without any anticipation.

If we don't bend our attention onto something, we won't "see" that something. For example, *Phasa* (contact) between sound and ear (or sound sensor) causes hearing consciousness (*sota vinanna*). But hearing sensation will not be apparent unless *manasikara* (attention) is there. Generally *phasa* between *bahidayattana* (external stimuli) and *aijatyattana* (inner sensors) cause *vinanna* (consciousness); but sensation will not be present if *manasikara* is absent.

By "focusing on various cittas", I don't mean intense searching, but **effortless scanning** by slowly imposing *manasikara* in a sweeping manner. Yes I select the sweeping areas like *loba citta*, *dosa citta* etc.; but it is not searching. Sayadaws teach us to watch phenomena shown by the body with **detachment** and some **aloofness**.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is not certain that the dead person will get the *kusala kamm*s done specially via the two Myanmar traditional functions. It is definitely preferable to get the *kusala kamma* merits while still alive. The procedure of donating rupa/nama "stream" to the **Triple Gems** (*Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha*) with full confidence (*Sadha*) in them, as described by Taungpulu Sayadaw is highly commendable. It is simple and covers both refuge taking and giving (*dana*) aspects. It is in fact, DO ONE GET TWO!

## REFERENCES

- Taungpulu Kaba-aye Sayadaw. *The Benefits of Saranagamma*, The Union of Burma Buddha Sassana Press, Rangoon, 1971.
- Taungpulu Kapiya Karaka, *Taungpulu Sayadaw Biography* 3B Khemar Rd., Yangon, 1995.
- Ashin Gawthiga, *One Sassana, One Life - Mogok Sayadaw Biography*, Mogok Vipassana Dhamma Series and Activity Propagation Unit, 82 Natmauk Rd., Bahan, Yangon. 2005
- Luangpor Teean, *To One that Feels*, (Pali Terms), Luangpor Teean Foundation, 52 Moo 5 Tumbol, Taveewattana, Bangkok 10170, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., 2005. Free Distribution.