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SĪLAVANTA SUTTA

OR

Discourse on dhamma concerning full accomplishment of morality

FOREWORD

It would appear appropriate and proper to regard the *Sīlavanta Sutta Dhamma* as a standardized Rule of Procedure to be invariably practised by those who are either meditating or are inclined to take up meditation practice with seriousness of purpose for the attainment of *Magga-Phala-Nibbāna*.

The reason being that in this *Sutta*, it has been fully and precisely preached that an ordinary worldlying accomplished with the virtues of morality will undoubtedly become a *Sotāpanna*, if he contemplates with earnest devotion the nature of *Upādānakkhandhās* and truly realizes them as *Anicca* (impermanence), *Dukkha* (suffering), and *Anatta* (Not-Self). In the same manner, if a *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Winner) proceeds with the practice of insight meditation diligently, realization

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of the truth of the *dhamma* will be achieved which will elevate him onto the stage of *Sagādāgāmi*. The Once-Returner (*Sagādāgāmi*) will again move up to the next stage as a Non-Returner (*Anāgāmi*) if he continues to go on with the practice of insight meditation with all heart and soul. Then again, an *Anāgāmi* continuing the practice of meditation with proper mindfulness will, if true realization is developed, become an *Arahat*. Hence, it is obvious that one cannot even aspire to become a *Sotāpanna* if the procedure or guideline as stated is not strictly adhered to. More significantly, if morality or rule of conduct is not properly observed, or, even with the full accomplishment of morality, if no contemplation is made with mindfulness on the conspicuous *Upādānakkhandhās* at the moment of seeing, hearing, etc., or, if there is no knowing of the fact or awareness that they are in reality *Anicca, Dukkha* and *Anatta*, the stage of *Sotāpanna* cannot possibly be reached.

The salient feature herein emphasized is to note with constant mindfulness on the reality of the nature of Five *Upādānakkhandhās* by which the truth of the

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dhamma with the characteristics of *Anicca, Dukkha* and *Anatta* will be distinctly known leading to insight-wisdom of varying degrees.

Mention has been made in this *Sutta* that if bent upon contemplating the dhamma with an all out endeavour, a person should first of all, be accomplished with *Sīla Visuddhi* (purified conduct), which out of the seven kinds of *Visuddhi*, is initially the fundamental requisite for the purpose of insight meditation.

The light has been shown in this *Sutta* by way of imparting knowledge relating to the erroneous concept which goes to say in contradiction as: "It is not at all necessary to meditate and contemplate since *Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta* have been known to us. It would be sheer misery if contemplation is made, and only if the mind is given respite without resorting to contemplation, mental peace and tranquility can be achieved." The elucidation given by the author in respect of such an irrational concept as being definitely wrong amounts to giving a firm ruling in consonance with the noble wish

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of the Blessed One. The decision given is a dire necessity particularly at the present day as there has been a number of dissentient views entertained by different sects that had sprung up from the time immediately after the conclusion of the Third Great Buddhist Council-*Saṅgāyanā*. For lack of such a ruling in the distant past, *Ashin Mahāmoggliputtātissa Thera* had, at that time, preached the great *Kathā Vutthu Dhamma* eradicating *Micchā-diṭṭhi* of all sorts, such as, the doctrine of Individuality or the like which was deep in the heretical view of *Atta*, etc. In those old days however, no false beliefs had appeared that prohibited the method of practicing the Noble Eightfold Path and the practices connected with the *Samatha-Vipassanā*. Now that false doctrines have gone to the extent of prohibiting or preventing the practical exercise of meditation on the lines of the Noble Eightfold Path. Hence, if such heresies cannot be deterred or nipped in the bud, the three divisions of *Sāsana*, namely, *Pariyatti* (pursuit of scriptural knowledge), *Patipatti* (Practical exercise of

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*Vipassanā* meditation) and *Pativeda* (Insight Knowledge leading to *Magga-Phala*) may soon be faded out.

As contained in its original teachings, *Sīlavanta Sutta* reveals, in particular, the right method of practical meditation and is preventing the springing-up of these false beliefs and heretical concepts. This *Sutta Dhamma* expounded and written by the Venerable *Mahāsī Sayādaw* will no doubt prove to be an asset to those who are honestly desirous of following the true and Noble Path leading to *Magga-Phala-Nibbāna*.

The Discourse on *Sīlavanta Sutta* is the Dhamma that was originally delivered by the Venerable *Ashin Sāriputtarā*, the First Apostle of the Lord Buddha in response to the query made by the Venerable *Ashin Koṭṭhika*, an eminent Thera endowed with the special knowledge of *Patisambhidhā* to enable such noble-minded people to distinguish between right and wrong. The *Sutta Dhamma* is now elucidated and presented by the Venerable *Mahāsī Sayādaw* adorned with beautiful expressions couched in pithy, simple and easy language.

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In especial, the peculiar feature of this *Sutta* is the strikingly rare revelation of the noble and distinctive qualities inherent in a *Sotāpanna*. This would not only benefit *yogīs* in many ways but will make it possible for them to measure up the degree of their own respective spiritual attainments and reject any fallible misgivings one might have inadvertently entertained. This is, indeed, a blessing. Moreover, it is a magnificent exposition of the practical Dhamma in accord with the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, relating to the basic exercise of contemplating the manifestations of the Five *Upādānakkhandhās*, aggregates of clinging or grasping; the development of mental consciousness of the marks of *anicca* and *dukkha*; the Law of Dependent Origination; the behaviour of *rūpa* seen realistically through mind's eye; the doctrine of *anatta*; cause for appearance of sense of cravings and the way to eradicate craving instincts by means of insight-wisdom achieved through the practice of *Vipassanā*; and how, with the application of right concentration and mindfulness, *Sotāpanna* and higher stages of progressive insight can

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be achieved. Briefly put, this *Sutta* inspiringly discloses the undoubted reliability of the Method of Mindfulness contemplation on the phenomena of the Five *Upādānakkhandhās* for the dramatic achievement of the different stages of insight-wisdom up to *Arahatta-Magga-Phala* after having equipped oneself with the purity of good conduct or morality.

Furthermore, a variety of strength of a saintly *Arahat* have been vividly described, e.g., as to what kind of mental disposition he is endowed with; how his physical behaviour can be judged; and how he is devoid of *āsavas*, depravities of the mind. An *Arahat* who has automatically swept away all *nīvaraṇas*, obstructions in the way leading to higher consciousness and insight wisdom, always remains mentally alert. The revelation of such noble attributes of an *Arahat* is really informative and interesting. The guiding principles mentioned in this book are authoritative and precious for those who are really keen in practicing *Vipassanā* meditation.

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May you all be able to inexorably contemplate on the right lines of *Vipassanā* meditation in the present existence foreseeing the unavoidable perils and miseries that lie ahead in the incessant rounds of life existence, *Samsāra*, and expeditiously attain spiritual enlightenment leading to the blissful state of *Nibbāna*.

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