



Minnesota Buddhist

Minnesota Buddhist Vihara

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Message from Ven. Witiyala Seewalie Thera on the occasion of Katina Robe Offering Ceremony

On this occasion, as the abbot of Minnesota Buddhist Vihara, I wish to welcome all of you to the Kathina Robe offering ceremony. I take this opportunity to thank you for the support, encouragement and assistance rendered to us in various ways during the last four years.

For the last 2552 years, Buddhist monks and nuns have observed the tradition of retreating during the three rainy months or "vassana" period, to spend time meditating, learning Buddha's teachings, performing Buddha pooja and Dhamma sermons. At the end of the three months Buddhists celebrate this occasion offering robes to the Bhikkhus with great respect and devotion. This Katina Cheewara offering is marked as an act of great merit of all participants in Buddhism.

Our mission is to create an environment and opportunities for everyone, irrespective of their differences, to experience and understand mental peace and harmony through various meritorious deeds. We wish to share our knowledge and understanding of the Buddha's teachings and to create ways for all of you to take part in many religious, cultural, charitable and educational activities.

"Dhammo Have Rakkhati Dhamma Chāri"

The Dhamma protects those who live as per Dhamma
Wishing you all Peace and Happiness!

Ven. Witiyala Seewalie Thero

President/Abbot,
Minnesota Buddhist Vihara

Origin of Rain Retreat Practice (Vassāvāsa)

Prof. Kottegoda S. Warnasuriya
(University of the West, California)

It is clear that many Buddhist institutions came into existence after the establishment of Buddhist Sangha organization. In many cases the lay community's contribution can be seen as the main factor of initiating these institutions. The practice of rain retreat was not introduced by the Buddha along with the establishment of Buddhist liturgy. Other religious sects were already practicing rain retreat during the time of the Buddha. As an ascetic tradition Buddhist Sangha was non-sedentary and they did not have shelters for themselves. They were living under trees (Rukkhamūlasenāsanam nissāya pabbajjā) for life. Buddhist Sangha used to travel throughout the year even during the rainy season.¹ Other ascetics and people did not like this practice and they criticized Buddhist monks. They said that why these disciples of Sramana Gautama travel during winter, summer and rainy seasons (throughout the year). They destroy new born green plants; they destroy living plants (ekindriyam jīvam). They destroy small creatures and so forth by stepping on.² This criticism was informed to the Buddha and the Buddha took it seriously and said to monks that hereafter, you should not travel during rainy season and advised them to observe rain retreat.

According to Mahavaggapali of the Vinaya Pitaka, there are two methods of observing this practice:

¹ Tena kho pana samayen bhagavatā bhikkhunam vassāvāso apannatto hoti. Te'dha bhikkhu hemantam'pi gimham'pi vassampi carikam caranti. Vin. I. p. 137

² Katham hi nāma samana sakyaputtiya.... haritani tinani sammaddanta ekindriyam jivam vihethenta bahu khuddake pane apadenta. Vin. I. P. 137

the early observance (purimika) and late observance (pacchimika). In the month of July on the day of full-moon the early observance should be started. One month after July full-moon the late observance should be started. Now the problem of shelter came up. Buddhist monks had to adhere to the ascetic practice of living in the open air under trees. During rainy season this was an impossible task. Living under trees during rainy season created health problems too due to getting wet. Lay people started to build houses for the monks for this purpose. So the Sangha used to live in these houses temporarily, only during the rainy season. After the rainy retreat they abandoned these houses and started their usual travelling. This created another problem, that is to say the problem of neglecting property. Buddha advised monks to look after the properties built for monks. So monks had to stay in these houses permanently. This is the origin of Buddhist monasticism. So the Buddhist Sangha transformed from asceticism to monasticism. On the other hand, not observing rain retreat is a wrong doing too for the Buddhist Sangha.

It is extremely necessary the cooperation of lay community regarding this practice. In old days Sangha did not depend very much on lay community for food. They used to go alms round during the rainy season. But today this has changed as the lay community is ready to support the Sangha by offering alms. Sangha usually informs the lay community about the first day of the observance. Lay people invite formally the Sangha to stay in the monastery during the rainy season and pledge that they support the monks by offering the food medicine and robes.

Some minor problems may arise during the period of retreat. Monks may have to travel due to various important reasons. For example, if the teacher is sick the monk has to go and visit him. If the mother is sick he has to go and take care of her. If there is an important Sangha transaction (Sanghakamma) he should take part in that too. There are many such reasons pointed out in the Vassupanayikkhandhaka of Mahavagga Pali.³ For these, he has to go out from the monastery where he is observing the rain retreat. Buddha advised them to go in such cases in determining returning in seven days (Sattāhakaraniyena).⁴

Generally, Sangha should not break the observance of rain retreat. But there are some exceptional cases regarding the practice. If there is a threat to life, Buddha said that Sangha can go to a safer place to live. This move breaks the practice. According to Mahavagga Pali by breaking the practice in such cases Sangha does not do any wrong doing. Take for example if the monastery is full of venomous snakes it is a threat to life. So Sangha can break the practice and go to a safer place to live. If there is a threat from wild animals, thieves, fire, water and so forth they can break the practice and go to another village.

At the end of rain retreat monks have to dissociate from the practice. There is a formal procedure laid down by the Buddha to end the practice. This is called pavāra (invitation). The act of Pavāra is done at the end of Vassāna (rain) period. In the Pavāra monks are formally invited to review how the monks observed the practice. This review is done on the basis of what is seen, heard and suspected.⁵ This is done in a democratic way. First it has to be announced by a competent monk three times. Those who practiced rain retreat should request monks assembled for the purpose to inform them weather they had any wrongdoing during this period in order to correct it.

Offering of the Kathina robe was allowed by the Buddha after rainy retreat.⁶ There is an episode recorded in the Vinaya regarding some monks who came to see the Buddha immediately after the Pavāra. They had to walk to Sāvatti to see the Buddha. While they were coming there was a heavy rain. They came to the Buddha with drenched robes and Buddha saw their robes were wet. On this occasion Buddha approved the Kathina robe. Buddha said that Sangha can spread a Kathina robe after the rain retreat. This is the origin of offering the Kathina robe. This means that in addition to three robes a monk can have a Kathina robe which can be used in an emergency. In one Avasa only one Kathina robe is spread. The Sangha decides unanimously the appropriate monk who is going to receive the robe. This is also done in a kind of democratic way. First the competent monk has to inform the Sangha assembled that there is Kathina and it is the time for the Sangha to decide to grant the robe. After deciding the suitable monk his name is announced

³ Vin. I. p. 139

⁴ Vin. I. p. 139

⁵ Vin. I. p. 159

⁶ "Anujānāmi bhikkhave kathinam attharitam." Vin. I. p. 254

three times and the robe is offered by the Sangha to the nominated monk.

Today in Buddhist countries this ceremony is performed in an elaborate way. This ceremony is considered as a great meritorious deed. Probably there is nothing greater than this Kathina ceremony for Buddhist monks as well as Buddhist laity. This is once a year ceremony.

MINNESOTA BUDDHIST VIHARA MAIN ACTIVITIES

May 12 - Blessings and congratulations by devotees and Dhamma school kids to newly high ordained Bhikkhu Bisho Kirti Maharjan (Podi Hamuduruwo) from the Minnesota Buddhist Vihara.

May 19 to 21 - Participation of all the monks and nun with devotees in Kansas Buddhist Vihara Wesak Celebration – 2007, Wichita, Kansas and Dhamma talk by Ven. Witiyala Seewalie Thera.

May 27 - Participation in Thien An Buddhist Temple Vesak Celebration – 2007, Blaine, Minnesota. Special speech delivered by Ven. Witiyala Seewalie Thera.

June 24 - Perform Religious program in North Dakota.

June 25 - Ven. Witiyala Seewalie Thera starting a volunteer chaplain service to Minneapolis Police Department.

June 30 to July 1 - Blessing activities performs in the city of Breezy Point.

July 6 - Attend Opening Ceremony in the Cambodian Temple, Farmington.

July 7 - Special Meditation session by the Sumedha Shilmata at the MNBV.

July 12 - Attending full day volunteer program at the City View Community School.

July 28 - Rainy Season Retreat Invitation (Vas ārādhana)

July 28 - MNBV initiated an opportunity to study arts from a well-known Sri Lankan Artist Sumitra Wanduragala.

August 3 & 4 - Counseling as a volunteer chaplain at 35W Bridge collapse disaster families in Family Center.

August 9 to 13 - Special Buddhist lectures and discussions for Diploma in Buddhism Students by Prof. Kottegoda S. Warnasooriya, University of the West, California

August 11 - Public speech on early Buddhist Meditation by Prof. Kottegoda S. Warnasooriya at University of St. Thomas, St. Paul

August 14 - Donation of a property to space use for Minnesota Buddhist Vihara by Mr. James K. Bowers.

August 18 - Perform a religious activity in Ames, Iowa.

August 22 – Auspicious blessings upon our New Property for Meditation Retreat Center.

August 25 & 26 - Sri Lankan Embassy, Washington D.C. coordinates final exam of the Diploma in Buddhism held in St. Thomas University, St. Paul.

August 26, 2007 - Parent's Appreciation Day speech by Ven. Witiyala Seewalie Thera at the Vietnamese temple in Blaine.

September 15 - Get Together -2007 Program at the new property.

September 27 to Oct. 9 - Provide accommodation to Talgahagoda Dance Troupe from Sri Lanka.

October 6 - Tewawa at Vietnamese Temple, Blaine and MNBV by the Talgahagoda Dancing troupe

October 14 - Art Exhibition in MRC. Arts created by the students who took the MNBV art class taught by Ms. Sumitra Waduragala this summer were displayed.

October 27 - Meditation session and Dhamma discussion by Ven. D. Upananda Thera of Calgary, Canada

October 28 - Lectures by Prof. Tilak Kariyawasam, Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka for the Buddhist & Pali College Students

November 1 - Public Speech by Venerable Dhammaratana Thera at St. Cloud State University

November 2 - Bodhi pooja (Blessings) by Ven. Pallegage Chandasiri Thera, Chief Sangha Nayaka Maha Thera of North America

November 3 - Annual Kathina Robe Offering Ceremony at Minnesota Buddhist Vihara

November 4 - Full-Day Meditation Retreat at MRC by Ven. Dhammaratana Thera, West Virginia

Similes of the Raft and the Snake-catcher

By Ven. Dr. H. Gunaratana Nayaka Maha Thera
(Bhavana Society, West Virginia)

What is the use of a raft? It is used for crossing over a vast expanse of water which is difficult otherwise to cross over. The close scrutiny of the application of this simile used by the Buddha in Snake-simile (Alagaddupama) Sutta in Majjhima Nikaya elucidates how skillfully he chose it to illustrate precisely what people, who don't fully comprehend the meaning of religions, have been doing throughout the history of religion. In this simile the Buddha pointed out that if a man who, after crossing over the vast expanse of water by a raft, were to determine to carry the raft over his shoulders, thinking by doing so he would show his gratitude to the raft for helping him to save his life, he would be foolish.

The simile of snake-catcher used by the Buddha in the aforementioned Sutta is also equally indispensable in illustrating the danger of the wrong grasp of a religion. If a man who does not know how to catch a poisonous snake were to hold the snake either by his body or by his tail he may get bitten by the snake and consequently suffer severe injury or death. The message in these two similes once realized fully would facilitate better understanding of the tension stems from the increase of violence and crime in the name of religion in modern society.

The wrong grasp of religion can lead man to justify his greed, hatred and foolishness. His distorted views, distorted perception and distorted consciousness force him to grasp a religion wrongly and undermine its very

foundation, causing more pain and suffering—as does the wrong grasp of the snake.

A wrong grasp of religion can always be a passageway to defeat the very purpose of religion and encourage people to commit atrocities in the name of one's faith. People sometimes not only cling to religions but naively obey any man or woman who, being a persuasive speaker, may promote and justify violence and unethical practices in the name of religion. By supporting such a person with their time, skill or wealth, they only increase his or her greed and hatred and ignorance. Blinded by religious beliefs they may even try over-zealously to protect their religions not only by inculcating hatred and fear in many of their gullible followers' minds, but also by advocating even murder in the name of their beliefs.

If a man simply clings to the raft after using it to cross over the ocean, instead of leaving it on the shore for someone else to use it, he will not do the wise thing either. He rather makes the raft a heavy burden on his shoulder. The raft is made out of reeds, sticks, branches and foliage. They are bound by a rope or bark of a tree. Similarly this body is made up of form, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness which are bound together by ignorance and desire to make body-mind complexity. Just as this man clings to the raft made up of reeds, sticks, branches and foliage we may cling to the body and mind made up of form, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness bound by craving and ignorance. The man clinging to the raft which helped him to cross over the vast expanse of water may continue to carry the burden of the very same raft. Similarly by clinging to our mind-body complexity and our religious beliefs we continue to carry their burden. He remains bound to his raft and we to the mind-body. He is on the shore and we are in Samsara. This body and mind, together with the feelings, perception and mental formations, exist not for clinging but only for gaining knowledge and insight necessary for attaining liberation from Samsara. "Monks," said the

Buddha, “you should let go even (good) teaching, how much more false ones”. Good teaching benefits us only if we use it, just like the raft. No teaching, however good it is, can help us if we simply cling to it. Clinging even to good teaching can cause pain and suffering. Just imagine how much more painful it could be when we cling to bad things! The man who uses a raft to cross over the body of water has to be wise. Similarly one who uses this body-mind complexity to cross over the ocean of Samsara has to be wise. Therefore he will not cling to this body-mind complexity at all. If he does he cannot attain enlightenment.

Clinging to beliefs without practice can also easily make people religious fanatics who seek refuge in violence to resolve problems, for they are totally ignorant of what their religion teaches them. People who are unaware of the message of their religion may live in constant fear of criticism of their religion and wish to protect it by destroying people who have different beliefs. The fear of criticism arises in the mind ill-directed by the ambivalent belief system which cannot vouch for security and actuality. The Buddha said: “Your ill-directed mind can do you more harm than all your enemies in the world together can do”. Similarly, he said: “A well directed mind can do you more good than all your parents, friends and relatives together can do for you”. The real conqueror is not the one who conquers thousands upon thousands of people in a battle field but one who conquers himself.

Although Buddha never even implied causing harm to anybody, there are some even among the Buddhists who believe that they should protect their country, killing as many as they think necessary in order to protect Buddhism, the religion of peace, harmony, compassion and loving-kindness. Killing or even the thought of killing any living being, let alone human beings, is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the most compassionate and loving Buddha, who said: “He is called virtuous and wise who, wishing success, does

not commit crimes for the sake of oneself, for the sake of one’s own children, for the sake of others, for the sake of wealth, or even for the sake of the country” Buddha’s teaching stands above all notions of countries, cultures, languages, ethnic affiliations and everything else, for he taught only the truth which is permanent, eternal and bound by nothing in the world.

When you embark the raft you should check it very carefully to verify whether it is secure and properly put together, lest you may drown by using a defective raft. Similarly you should very carefully learn and critically examine any religion before accepting or rejecting it. Patient listening to someone criticizing the Buddha, Dhamma or the community of Sangha, is highly recommended in the teaching of the Buddha.

“If for that others revile, abuse, scold and insult the Perfect One (Buddha), on that account, O monks, the Perfect One will not feel annoyance, nor dejection, nor displeasure in His heart. And if for that others respect, revere, honor and venerate the Perfect One, on that account the Perfect One will not feel delight, or joy, or elation in His heart. If for that other respect, revere, honor and venerate the Perfect One, He will think: ‘It is towards this (mind-body aggregate) which was formerly fully comprehended, that they perform such acts.

Therefore, O monks, if you, too, are reviled, abused, scolded and insulted by others, you should on that account not entertain annoyance, or dejection, or displeasure in your hearts. And if others respect, revere, honor and venerate you, on that account you should not entertain delight or joy or elation in your hearts. If others respect, revere, honor and venerate you, you should think: ‘It is towards this (mind-body aggregate) which was formerly comprehended, that they perform such acts”.

Analytical investigation and critical knowledge of Dhamma are essential factors of enlightenment in

Buddhism. For if you know for sure that what you practice is true you should not be alarmed by criticism. You rather should be glad to welcome critical investigation of it so you can look at what you practice from different perspective. If you know gold as gold, for instance, you would without any hesitation let any well trained goldsmith test it by cutting, burning, rubbing and hammering it, for you are certain that he will not determine your gold to be copper. Only if you give him a gilded piece of lead saying that it is gold you would have reason to fear of his test.

The Buddha advised us not to be alarmed by criticism, but listen to criticism very carefully and mindfully without getting upset about what we hear and measure it by the text. After thorough investigation, we certainly find no fault in the Buddha, Dhamma or Sangha. However, we will find out that the criticism has come from anger, prejudice, frustration, fear, neuroses, paranoia, etc. Then, of course, instead of getting angry with the person who has all these problems, we should try to help him with loving-kindness. He deserves our loving-kindness and compassion rather than our hate. No hate is ever going to solve any problem in the world and it never did, for hate is never appeased by hatred in this world, but by love alone.

In the teaching of the Buddha, one finds no room for resolving any problem through violent means. A Buddhist who is full of greed, hatred and delusion and unmindful of the Buddha's real message, exercising his total freedom of choice and responsibility guaranteed in Buddhism, may kill someone, but he can never quote any Buddhist text to justify and support his killing.

We are supposed to use the Buddha Dhamma without clinging to it, but only to cross this cycle of birth and death-Samsara. He advised us to use his teaching like a raft which is used only to cross a body of water not to cling to it. It is the passionate clinging to what we believe, rather than understanding how we should use it

to guide our daily life in the right direction that arouses our deeply rooted hatred which may force us to solve our problems through violent means. It is the passionate clinging to things that creates all kinds of problems.

NAVIGATING THE NEW MILLENNIUM

By Bhikkhu Bodhi

Although our calculation of time's passage in years and centuries carries no more weight against the vastness of the cosmic process than a feather before a storm, still, being human, it is natural for us to nurture hope on reaching the threshold of a new millennium. Adherents of different religions also turn their thoughts toward the new millennium, and as Buddhists we might briefly ponder the question what the Dhamma can offer the world in the years ahead.

From one angle it could be said that what Buddhism can offer humankind today is exactly what it has been holding out for the past twenty-five centuries: an acute diagnosis of the human condition and a clear path to final liberation from suffering. But while this statement is correct as far as it goes, it is not yet sufficient; for it does not take account of the fact that in any age the aspects of the Dhamma to be emphasized, and the way they are to be expressed, must address the particular problems faced by the people living in that age. The Buddha's teaching acquires its incisive relevance, not merely by the cogency of its broad generalities, but by attuning its formulations to the precise problems that loom so large in the consciousness of the particular period in which it has taken root. Thus for the Dhamma to preserve its vitality and strength, it is not enough merely to repeat hallowed formulas inherited from the past, however true they might be in their own right. Rather, we must focus the lens of the Buddha's teaching on the deep problems faced by human beings today and determine how the teachings can help to resolve those problems as effectively as possible. If what the Buddha taught is "only

suffering and the cessation of suffering," then the starting point for any convincing presentation of the way to suffering's end must be the specific forms of suffering characteristic of our time.

In the decades of the twentieth century, two manifestations of suffering have become so prevalent that they seem almost the defining characteristics of the modern era. One is an invidious sense of meaninglessness, a feeling of alienation from life, now becoming almost as common in the more modernized quarters of Asia as in the West. The other, most marked in the Third World, is collective violence. The first problem has its locus in the individual consciousness, the second in the relationships among communities at different levels of social order. If the Dhamma is to benefit humanity in the coming years and decades, it must show us a way out of the abyss of meaninglessness and offer guidelines for reducing the frequency and severity of collective violence.

The sense of meaninglessness as a widespread social phenomenon set in with the rise of modern industrial civilization. As each new breakthrough in natural science dealt a fresh blow to the organic Christian world view that had prevailed during the medieval period, human beings could no longer regard themselves as the pinnacle of creation, the beloved children of an all-loving Father who had created the universe expressly as the stage for our unfolding march toward salvation. Instead, under the influence of the mechanistic sciences, we came to see ourselves as chance products of purely natural causes, born and dying in a universe cold and indifferent to our hopes. Our existence was inexplicable in terms of any objective source of meaning. It did not embody any higher purpose than the brute struggle to survive and propagate our genes before death draws the curtain closed on all our restless strivings.

The loss of meaning was further aggravated by the breakup of traditional forms of social order under the impact of industrial capitalism. The

rise of the city and the compulsive work routine of office and factory cut the bonds of social solidarity, so that each individual came to see himself or herself as an isolated entity pitted against others in stark competition for dominance. The individual ego thus became the ultimate center of experience and the sole determinant of value. But it was an isolated ego on which the other-regarding virtues inculcated by religious ethics, such as generosity and self-sacrifice, no longer had any claims. Altruism and restraint were eclipsed by the new creed of self-indulgence, which gave precedence to wealth, power, and conspicuous consumption as the supreme goals of life.

As Western technology and its offshoot, the consumerist culture, spread to the far corners of the world, the breakdown of meaning and the sense of self-alienation became endemic to many lands, and today this sense of meaninglessness has reached a truly global scale. The culture of narcissism, which exalts the reckless quest for self-aggrandizement, has spread its tentacles everywhere, leaving behind the same debris: agitated minds and hollow lives. Bent on quick and easy gratification, we pass our lives perpetually shadowed by a fear that all our achievements are worthless, unable to deliver any deep and stable satisfaction. And when this fear reveals itself, the abyss opens up, the realization that we have wasted our lives in the pursuit of empty dreams. Thus the high incidence of mental illness, drug dependence, alcoholism, and suicide, particularly in the more affluent parts of the world.

It is a telling sign that despite the impressive achievements of science and technology, a culture built on mere mastery over external nature is far from successful in meeting the deep demands of the human spirit. For those adrift in the sea of meaninglessness, the Buddha's teaching offers a sense of meaning stemming from a profound spiritual tradition that combines metaphysical depth with psychological astuteness and the highest ethical standards. Without calling for blind

faith in dogmatic creeds or speculative postulates, the Buddha points directly to the invariable universal laws that underlie happiness and suffering. He insists that we can discover these laws for ourselves, simply by clear reflection on our own immediate experience, and he offers us methods of practice by which we can gradually dig up the buried roots of suffering and cultivate the causes culminating in the highest happiness.

His appeal is to immediate experience. We can see for ourselves that suffering prevails in a mind driven by greed, hatred, and delusion, and that happiness grows when the mind is suffused by the virtues of generosity, kindness, and understanding. On the basis of this experimental test, which lies within the scope of any thinking person, we can extrapolate and see that for a mind fully liberated from all self-centered defilements and adorned with perfect detachment, love, and wisdom, happiness and peace will become boundless and irreversible. Thus by showing us the way to inner peace and happiness, the Dhamma offers us an outlet from the abyss of meaninglessness, a way to confer on our lives an exalted meaning and purpose.

The second type of suffering that has become so pervasive in our time is social violence, which still wreaks so much misery across the globe. To be sure, communal violence is by no means peculiar to our era or a product of modern civilization, but has infected human relations from time immemorial. But what has become so disturbing in the present-day world is the eruption of violence between different ethnic communities that in the past had managed to coexist in a relatively stable degree of mutual acceptance. We have witnessed these outbreaks of enmity recently in the Balkans, Russia, Indonesia, Central Africa, northern India, and sadly in our own Sri Lanka. Violence manifests itself, moreover, not only in the conflicts that rage between groups of different ethnic stocks and communal loyalties, but also in economic oppression, in the widening gap between rich and the poor, in the gargantuan arms

industries that thrive on violent conflict, in the sexual exploitation of women and children, in the drug trade, and also in the reckless devastation of the environment, by which we risk ripping away the life support systems that sustain our life on earth.

While Buddhism cannot pretend to offer a detailed solution to all the countless forms that violence takes in the present-day world, the values emphasized by the Dhamma show what is required to arrive at any lasting solution. What is necessary for true peace and harmony to prevail among human beings is not the hammering out of a comprehensive treaty by which the various parties to a conflict compromise their hard and volatile demands. What is truly required is a new mode of perception, the ascent to a universal consciousness that transcends the narrow standpoint of egocentric or ethnocentric self-interest. This is a consciousness that regards others as not essentially different from oneself, which detaches itself from the insistent voice of self-interest and rises up to a universal perspective from which the welfare of all appears as important as one's own good.

We can see the germ of this universal perspective in a principle that stands at the base of Buddhist ethics, even more fundamental to its ethical ideals than the Five Precepts or any other formal code of conduct. This is the principle of taking oneself as the criterion for determining how to treat others. When we apply this principle we can understand that just as we each wish to live happily and to be free from suffering, so all other beings wish to live happily and to be free from suffering; just as we are each averse to pain and hardship and want to live in peace, so all others are averse to pain and hardship and want to live in peace. When we have understood this common core of feeling that we share with all other beings, not as a mere idea but as a visceral experience born of deep reflection, we will treat others with the same kindness and care that we would wish them to treat us. And this must apply at a communal

level just as much as in our personal relations. We must learn to see other communities as essentially similar to our own, and entitled to the same benefits as we wish for the group to which we belong. Even if we cannot reach any expansive feelings of love and compassion for others, we will at least realize that the moral imperative requires that we treat them with justice and kindness.

Thus the message of the Dhamma to human beings in the next millennium might be briefly summed up in these twin gifts. In the personal domain it gives us a precisely defined path that confers on life a deep sense of purpose, a purpose grounded in the cosmic order but which can be actualized in one's own immediate experience. In the communal dimension of human existence it holds out an ethical guideline to right action which, if diligently applied, can arouse a conscientious commitment to a life of nonviolence. Though it is far too much to expect that these two blessings will become the common heritage of all humanity, we can at least hope that enough people will accept them to make the twenty-first century a brighter and happier century than the one we are about to leave behind.

OUR NEW RESIDENT MONK



Rajanganaye Nandawimala Thero

Rajanganaye Nandawimala Thero is from Sri Lanka. He became a monk when he was 12 and completed his monastic education and training in Pirivena. In addition, he received a B.A. and M.A. from a Sri Lankan University in Buddhist Studies. He was a former principal of Sri Dhammananda Pirivena, Kamburupitiya, Sri Lanka. Now, he is a resident monk at the Minnesota Buddhist Vihara.

He arrived to our temple on May 26, 2007. We welcome him to our temple.

Mental Development in Buddhism

By Bhikkhu T. Seelananda

(Samatha-Vipassana Meditation Centre Edmonton Canada)

Mind, in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha, is the most powerful energy in the whole universe. Mind cannot be separated from matter, but can be distinguished from matter. In this fathom long body of humans, mind reaches into each and every molecule. This so called man or woman is composed of nothing but the five aggregates namely:

Form aggregate
Feeling aggregate
Perception aggregate
Mental formation aggregate and
Consciousness aggregate.

(In other words nothing but mind and matter)

In the original discourses with reference to mind the Buddha has used three terms, citta, mano, and viññana respectively. When we study these three terms we can understand them as the three aspects of mind.

1. Emotional aspect of mind
2. Intellectual aspect of mind
3. Cognitive aspect of mind

When the mind is connected to heart it is called 'citta'. This is the emotional aspect of mind. According to Abhidhammic teaching, it is said that 'citta' is always connected with blood. It is not beyond truth because when the mind is connected to heart, certainly it is connected with blood. In the Dhammapada, giving a definition to mind, the Buddha said, "**Faring far, wandering alone, bodiless, lying in a cave, is the Mind**" (Dh.37). Here 'lying in a cave' means dwelling either in this body or heart. In contrast, whenever we have various of emotion such as lust, hate or sorrow, it is natural that we touch our chest (heart). There are also times when crying, wailing and weeping that we beat our chest because of unbearable emotional feelings.

In the Chachakka Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya, with reference to the abandonment of the underlying tendencies the Buddha says, "**Monks, dependent on the eye and forms, eye consciousness**

arises; the meeting of the three is contact; with contact as condition there arises a feeling, felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant. When one is touched by a pleasant feeling, if one does not delight in it, welcome it and remain holding to it, then the underlying tendency to lust does not lie within one. When one is touched by a painful feeling, if one does not sorrow, grieve and lament, does not weep beating one's breast and become distraught, the underlying tendency to aversion does not lie within one. When one is touched by a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, if one understands as it actually is; the origination, the disappearance, the gratification, the danger and the escape in regard to that feeling, then the underlying tendency to ignorance does not lie within one. Monks, that one shall here and now make an end of suffering by abandoning the underlying tendency to lust for pleasant feeling, by abolishing the underlying tendency to aversion towards painful feeling, by extirpating the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to neither painful-nor-pleasant feeling; by abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge-this is possible".

When the mind is connected to brain, it is called "mano", this means memory or the thinking part. Mind in this connection is the repository of memory and thinking power, which is technically called the intellectual aspect of mind. All data that we collect from the six senses are stored in the brain.

When the mind is connected to the six senses it is called "*viññāna*" which is translated as consciousness, thus, in consequence, consciousness becomes six-fold. The six folds are: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body consciousness, and mind-consciousness. Another possible translation for *viññāna* proposed by an erudite Buddhist monk living in the North America is 'perception'.

As the Buddha very clearly pointed out, in any situation we should understand there is always a language barrier. Language is certainly not sufficient to convey the real meaning of things. 'Reality', as the Buddha has expounded, is always beyond language, logic, time and space. In brief, we should understand the incompatibility of the language of the Buddha and our language. When we consider this further, we can understand that in English we have only two terms to

denote the above three terms used by the Buddha. The two terms that we use in our daily language are: 'mind' and 'consciousness', so these two would definitely not be enough to serve the purpose.

In order to understand mind and its concomitant factors we should cultivate and develop our mind. Once the Buddha said, "**Neither mother nor father, not any other relative can do one greater good than one's own well-directed mind**" (Dh.43). When the mind is developed and well guarded, it brings happiness; but, only the wise person guards the mind (Cittam rakkhetha medhavi).

In the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha said, "Monks, I know not of any other single thing so intractable as the untamed mind. The untamed mind is indeed a thing intractable. Monks, I know not of any other single thing so tractable as the tamed mind. The tamed mind is indeed a thing tractable."

In the first stanza of the Dhammapada the Buddha said, "Mind is the forerunner of all mental states, mind is the chief; all mental states are mind made if one speaks or acts with impure mind, and because of that suffering follows one as the wheel of the chariot follows the hoof of the draught-ox".

Mind is the indispensable factor to be understood and realized by each and every individual in society. It is because of not understanding this mind that people today are facing many difficulties in society, are afflicted with various types of mental problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, restlessness etc.

Once a certain deity came to the Buddha and asked:
 "By what is the world led around?
 By what is it dragged here and there?
 What is the one thing that has
 All under its control?"

The Buddha replied:
 "The world is led around by mind
 By mind it's dragged here and there
 Mind is the one thing that has
 All under its control". (S.N. 1. Devata Samyutta)

According to the teaching of the Buddha, there is clear path to the development of mind, to the purification of mind. That is a gradual process, gradual practice.

Once, while the Buddha was living at Savatthi in the Palace of Migara's Mother, an accountant came to the

Buddha. After having taken a proper seat, he said to the Buddha: "Master Gotama, in this Palace of Migara's Mother, there can be seen gradual training, gradual practice, and gradual progress, that is down to the last step of the staircase. Among these brahmins too, there can be seen gradual training, gradual practice, and gradual progress, that is in study (veda). Among archers too, there can be seen gradual training, gradual practice, and gradual progress that is, in archery. And also among accountants like us, who earn our living by accountancy, there can be seen gradual training, gradual practice, and gradual progress that is, in computation. So it is that when we get an apprentice first we make him count one one, two twos, three threes, four fours, five fives, six sixes, seven sevens, eight eights, nine nines, ten tens, and we make him count a hundred too. Now is it also possible Master Gotama, to describe gradual training, gradual practice, and gradual progress in this Dhamma and Discipline?"

Then the Buddha replied saying, "It is possible Brahmin, to describe gradual training, gradual practice, and gradual progress in the Dhamma and Discipline. Just as it is possible, Brahmin that when a clever horse-trainer obtains a fine thoroughbred colt, he first makes him get used to wearing the bit and afterwards trains him further. So when the Tathagata obtains a person to be tamed, he first disciplines him thus: "Come monk, be virtuous, restrained with the restraint of morality, be perfect in conduct and resort, and seeing fear in the slightest fault, train by undertaking the training precepts". (M.N. 107)

This is how the Buddha instructs us to develop mind in the Dispensation of the Buddha. First the Buddha admonishes to observe morality, to be virtuous and then restraining the senses. "Come monk, be guarded of the doors of the sense-organs; having seen a material shape with the eye do not be entranced with the general appearance, do not be entranced with the detail; for if one dwells with the organ of sight uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil unskillful states of mind may flow in. So along with controlling it, guard the organ of sight, achieve control over the organ of sight. Having heard a sound with the ear... Having smelt a smell with the nose... Having savored a taste with the tongue... Having felt a touch with the body... Having cognized a mental state with the mind, do not be entranced..."

Then the Buddha's admonition is moderation in eating, which itself is needed for the development of mind. Following this, the Buddha advises to be vigilant and wise, as with that one can be mindful. That mindfulness leads one to further maintain mindfulness and clear comprehension. Thus he practices the mindfulness of breathing. Then, gradually, he overcomes the five hindrances namely: sensual desires, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, and doubt. When these five hindrances are subdued five mental powers arise: initial thought, discursive thought, rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness of mind. As a consequence of subduing, the mind becomes more and more calm, tranquil, and comes to the state of being bright, malleable, wieldy, steady, and workable.

Now with this state, one can develop one's mind further and further to the jhanic experience. There are four jhanas and according to the teaching of the Buddha, this jhanic experience is not enough for the attainment of Enlightenment. One has to practice insight meditation that is the uniqueness in Buddhism. When one practices, one can realize the three characteristics of existence in the world which are: impermanence, un-satisfactoriness and soullessness. Then with the realization of this, one realizes the real nature of things in the world. That is the realization of the Noble Truths and the attainment of Enlightenment.

That is the Buddha's instruction for all of us. We should understand clearly that the Buddha is only a shower of the Way (maggakkhayi). It is our duty to tread the Path. There is a clear way to practice and develop mind. In the Anapanasati sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya the Buddha said, **"Monks, when mindfulness is developed and cultivated it fulfills the four foundations of mindfulness, when the four foundations of mindfulness are developed and cultivated they fulfill the seven factors of enlightenment. When the seven factors of enlightenment are developed and cultivated they fulfill the knowledge and liberation"**. However, it is true that when the Buddha advises in this manner only a few listen to this admonition and practice accordingly. Whose responsibility is that to do so?

In the Ganaka Moggallana Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha said, **"Nibbana does exist, the way leading to Nibbana exists and I exist as adviser. On being exhorted and instructed by**

me some of my disciples attain the unchanging goal-Nibbana, but some do not attain it. What can I, brahmin, do in this matter? Shower of the way, brahmin, is a Tathagata". So the Buddha, as the Greatest Master of the whole world system, has admonished us in the proper way to develop the mind so that we all can lead a happy life here and hereafter, and also for the attainment of Enlightenment.

Let us all understand this marvelous, wonderful teaching and strive on with diligence to attain Enlightenment within this very life.

May all beings attain Nibbana

Minnesota Buddhist Vihara Activity Photos



Vas Ārāghanā - 2007



Art Exhibition – 2007



Get Together – 2007

Creations of Dhamma School Students



MBV Summer Art Class -2007



Anaka Perera



Janani Ranatunga



Seth Perera

“Asewanā Ca Bālānam –Panditānancha Sewanā”

Do not associate with the fools, Associate with only the wise. (Mangala Sutta)

As this verse said that you should associate with the wise not the fools meant that if you associate with the fools such as: (bad friends, stupid people, violent people etc.) or else you will become one of them. People who do bad Karma will become bad people. If you associate with the wise you will do good Karma. People who are wise are: Helpful, Generous, Non-violent, talk kindly, are fair, are impartial, etc. If you associate with the wise you will have a better family. The family will become wealthy and healthy, your

family members will do good things and their teachings might pass on to the other families throughout the community and nation. If you associate with the fools your family will become horrible and violent. Your family might never get a job; you'll start taking drugs everything will be trashed but most of all the bad teachings will spread and you and your nation might even die.

So if you associate with the fools the family you have will become horrible but if you associate with the wise you'll have the most joyful family. This indicates that Buddha's words of Mangala Sutta help how the wise and the fools effect on the community.

By Kalana Kasun Ranatunga

CONTRIBUTIONS

The objective of MN Buddhist Vihara is to promote National, Cultural, and Religious activities of the Community.

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