



Minnesota Buddhist

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Kathina Robes Offering

By Sayadaw U Silananda

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You are going to offer Kathina robes to the Sangha in a moment. As you probably know, this is an annual ceremony, where individuals and groups offer Kathina robes to the Sangha. I hope you remember what's special about Kathina robes.

First of all, Kathina robes can be offered to the Sangha in a monastery only once in a year. That means you cannot offer Kathina robes to the Sangha at a monastery twice in the same year.

Secondly, the Kathina robes can be offered only during a specified period, which starts from the end of Vassa to the next full moon day. In other words, Kathina robes can be offered between the day following the full moon of October (Thadinkyut) to the full moon day of November (Tazaungmon). Even during this one month, you can offer Kathina robes to a monastery only once. So offering Kathina robes to the Sangha is indeed a rare opportunity that only comes once in a year.

Thirdly, Kathina robes are to be offered to the Sangha, and not to an individual. So, you should know the meaning of the word 'Sangha.' You all know that Sangha means the community of Bhikkhus or monks. But, you should be aware that Sangha according to Vinaya is different from Sangha according to Sutta and Abhidhamma.

Vinaya means the Buddhist dispensation for monks or the rules laid down by the Buddha for monks to fol-

low. In Vinaya, Sangha means a group of four monks. In Vinaya, if there is only one monk, it is referred to as an individual monk. If there are two or three monks, they are called 'Group', but not 'Sangha.' If there are four or more monks, perhaps hundreds or thousands, they are called 'Sangha.' So, when you offer the Kathina robes to the Sangha, you are offering not just an individual, or a group, but to the vast collection of monks all over the world. That's why offering Kathina robes is special.

There are two kinds of Sangha. When we say "Sangha saranam gacchami - I go to Sangha for my refuge or I take Sangha as my refuge," we mean all disciples of the Buddha that had attained enlightenment. But when we say "I offer this robe to the Sangha." we mean all the Sangha in the world including both those who gained enlightenment and also those who are not yet enlightened. Today, when you offer the Kathina robes, you will offer them to the Sangha; that means all monks, all noble disciples of the Buddha - not only the Enlightened Ones but also the yet unenlightened monks.

In Theravada Buddhism, the word 'Sangha' means the community of monks only. It is never used for lay people. I want you to understand this. Nowadays the word 'Sangha' is used for lay people also.

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I was not aware of that usage of the word 'Sangha' until I came to this country. Here, they call themselves 'Sangha, Sangha' and so on. A group of lay people, who practice meditation, are also called 'Sangha'. But I think that can create confusion in the future. What does 'Sangha' mean? Lay people or monks? In Theravada Buddhism, Sangha is a technical term that means only the community of monks.

Today you will offer the Kathina robes to the Sangha. The Sangha must have some qualities or some fulfillment to be able to accept the Kathina robes. The Sangha must have spent the Vassa or three months of rainy season at one monastery. During that period of three months, the monks must stay in that monastery and they must not go out overnight unless they are invited. Even when they are invited, they cannot stay more than seven days or six mornings outside the monastery. They must come back to the monastery within days. At the end of three months rainy season period, the Sangha perform a ceremony called 'Invitation Ceremony.' Invitation means inviting the members of the Sangha to point out offenses or wrong doings if there are any, and to promise to correct the wrong doings promptly and dutifully. Only those who stay in a monastery for the whole three months without breaking their stay and who perform the invitation ceremony are entitled to accept Kathina. What do we mean by "breaking the stay"? If during the three months, a monk goes out the monastery and stays outside for more than seven days, his Vassa is said to be broken, and he is not entitled to receive the Kathina.

The Sangha that accept the Kathina robes must have spent the whole three months in the monastery. They must also have performed the invitation ceremony. Remember that today you are offering Kathina robes to the Sangha, and not to the monks individually. At other times, you may offer robes to individual monk if you want to or you may offer the robes to two or three monks as a group or you can offer to the Sangha.

But this time, you

have to offer to the Sangha.

Why do you have to offer Kathina robes to the Sangha? Kathina is a formal act of Sangha, which also involves the act of the individual. There are two activities involved in Kathina. One is the act of Sangha - that means a formal act there is to be performed by the Sangha - not by one monk or two monks or three monks. But, there is another activity that an individual monk must do. So there are two activities involved in the act of Kathina. That is why you have to offer the robe to the Sangha, not to a monk individually.

Nowadays we are very lucky because people offer ready-made robes. It these were not ready-made robes, then we would have to do something to turn them into robes. All monks must help to make the robe, some stitching, some preparing to dye, and so on. There is a lot of work. That is why, during the days of the Buddha, people offered Kathina robes not at this time of day. They came early so that monks got enough time to make robes. When they brought material for robes, they must also bring food for monks because on that day monks may not be able to go out for alms round. They have to do some work at the monastery, and so they brought food and other things required for the monks. There were lots of activities at the monastery on the Kathina day. But nowadays people just come and offer robes, and the Sangha just accept the robes when they perform the Kathina ceremony. It is very convenient nowadays.

Since Kathina robes can be offered to the Sangha only once in a year, it is rare opportunity. And since it is rare to get the opportunity to offer Kathina robes to the Sangha, offering of Kathina robes is said to be of great merit. And also it is unique because it is this offering of Kathina robes only that can give the recipient monks five other benefits. If you do some offering - you offer meals to the monks or you offer robes to the individual monk and so on - you get merit. When you offer robes, they get the robes, but nothing else. But this offering of Kathina robes can give monks five benefits.

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Monks can obtain these five benefits only through the performance of Kathina. If the monks do not perform the Kathina, they will not get these five benefits. And they can perform Kathina only when they get Kathina robes offered by lay people.

So the offering of the Kathina robes is a rare opportunity for lay people and also it is beneficial to monks in more than one way. So they get these five benefits also; we may call them 'Fringe Benefits.' These five benefits Sangha and all the monks will enjoy until the full moon of March.

You may want to know what these five benefits are. Then I must refer you to the Vinaya book. You can read the book, or you can ask a monk later. I will just give you a hint. Monks have to keep - you know how many rules? 227 rules. You know - even to keep five precepts and to keep them intact is not easy. So when you have to keep a hundred rules, two hundred rules or 227 rules, it is very difficult. Sometimes we wish that we would be free from some rules. This offering of Kathina, performance of Kathina can give us this wish. So it can give us freedom from four Vinaya rules temporarily or until full moon of March. Until that time, we are free from four Vinaya rules.

Then there is another benefit that is to have authority over the robes offered to the Sangha during that time. That means when the robes are offered to the Sangha, the Sangha will keep the robes. When they get enough robes to share, to distribute, then Sangha must distribute to individual monks. When they distribute, they must distribute to all monks present at that time of distributing. Not only those who perform the Kathina ceremony, but there may be guest monks from other monasteries or other countries and if they are here at the time of distributing, they also have the right to a share. If we are distributing here, we must give them one share. If we have performed the Kathina, and we have these five benefits, we may keep the robes to

ourselves only and we may not distribute to the guest monks. That is one authority over the distribution of the Sanghika robes. So altogether we get five benefits: freedom from four Vinaya rules and authority over the distribution of robes offered to the Sangha.

So, isn't it good to offer to the Sangha? Yes. When you offer Kathina robes, you virtually offer the five benefits. No other act of Dana can give these five privileges to the receiving Sangha. That is why, it is called a unique act of Dana. A Dana that can also give five benefits or a special privilege to the recipients. So now you know that Kathina robes must be offered to the Sangha so that Sangha can perform the Kathina ceremony.

Now there is another reason. Why you offer robes to the Sangha? Although it is not really connected to the Kathina, it is also noteworthy. That is a teaching that offering to the Sangha brings more abundant results than offering to an individual. In order for your Dana to bring more abundant results, you make Dana to the Sangha.

You may have heard of Buddha's aunt and step-mother or foster mother called MahA PajA-patigotami. She wanted to offer robes to the Buddha. It is said in the book that she spun the yarn herself, she wove the cloth herself, and she made the robe herself. After she had finished making, she offered a pair of robes, maybe two robes, to the Buddha. When she offered to the Buddha, saying "This is, like in these days it may be said, as home-made or hand-made." She said, "I spun the yarn myself. I wove the cloth myself. I made the robe myself. Please accept these robes." But Buddha refused. Buddha said, "Offer it to the Sangha. If you offer to the Sangha, I will also be virtually offered." The second time, Gotami requested to the Buddha to accept and the second time Buddha refused. And the third time again Buddha refused.

Now there is Venerable Ananda. Ananda could not stay silent. So he intervened and then said, "Bhante, please accept the robes offered by Gotami because Gotami is very helpful to you.

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Continued from page 3 When your mother died, you are a child seven days old. She adopted you and she gave her own milk to you while she assigned her own son to other wet nurses. She had done a lot for you. So please accept the robes. And also you are beneficial to Gotami because through your Dhamma talks, Gotami had become a *SotApanna*." He pleaded like that with the Buddha. And then Buddha talked about other things. What is not satisfactory about the story is that it ended it then and there. We do not know whether Gotami offered the robes to the Sangha or to the Buddha. We may say that Gotami offered the robes to the Sangha.

Why did Buddha tell Gotami to offer the robes not to Himself but to the Sangha? One answer is that Buddha wanted Gotami to get more merit. If she offers to Buddha, then she gets one merit. If she offers to the Sangha including the Buddha, she gets more merit. In order for Gotami to get more merit, Buddha said, "Offer it to the Sangha." When Buddha said, "Offer the robes to the Sangha. If you offer the robes to the Sangha, I will also be honored."

This statement left us with one problem. Was the Buddha included in the Sangha? Or was He different or separate? Can we put Buddha in Sangha? Or is Buddha separate? When you took precepts, what did you say? *Buddham saranam gacchAmi. Dhammam saranam gacchAmi. And Sangham saranam gacchAmi.* If Buddha were included in the Sangha, there would be only two refuges for you. There would be two gems in Buddhism. So Buddha is different or separate from the Sangha. That is okay.

Now there is another question. Why did Buddha tell Gotami to offer to the Sangha? A little later after teaching Ananda about some kinds of Dana, Buddha said, "On no account do I say that offering to an individual brings more abundant results than offering to the Sangha." If we take that statement seriously, then it may mean offering to the Sangha is better than offering to the Buddha. Because if we offer to the

Buddha, it is Buddha as an individual we offer to. But in this case the commentary says, "Buddha was the best of those who are recipients of the Dana. So offering to the Buddha is more beneficial." But following that statement of the Buddha, I think we can say that offering to the Sangha is also of great benefit.

In many other places, in many cases Buddha talked that the offering made to the Sangha brings much results. Whenever we can, we are to make offering to the Sangha. Because when we make offering to an individual, we have to attend to some other thing. When you plant a tree, you will plant a tree in the soil that is rich - good soil so that the tree can grow and big and so on. So the soil should be free from blemishes, the soil should be free from trash and it must be rich so that it can give abundant fruits. When you plant a fruit tree, you will choose the soil where you will plant the trees. In the same way, when you do a Dana, you need to choose the recipient of the Dana. The more virtuous recipient is, the more abundant results you get as a result of that Dana. An individual is never sure. You may be very pleased with one individual, you have much faith to that individual. As we say, you cannot go into his Dhamma, and see what he really is. So there is possibility that he might not be really pure or something like that. But as the Sangha, because Sangha means the whole community there can be non-virtuous Sangha. Because we cannot say the whole Sangha is not virtuous. There are many members of the Sangha: some are virtuous, other non-virtuous. But as a whole, there is no such thing as non-virtuous Sangha. That is why, the offering made to the Sangha brings more abundant results than to an individual.

Today also you will get to offer the Kathina robes to the Sangha. So you can be mindful that too when you offer the robes. Now you offer to the Sangha, and as a Sangha is pure. Sangha means the community of monks beginning with Venerable Sariputta and Moggallana and so on until today. There can be no un-virtuous Sangha, no impure Sangha. And so the offering made to that pure Sangha will bring abundant results.

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That is why also, you offer to the Sangha. But the main thing is that Kathina robes are offered to the Sangha, so that Kathina ceremony can be performed by the Sangha. Along with it, you should understand that offering to the Sangha brings more abundant results than offering to an individual. So, you will offer to the Sangha with this understanding in your mind, so that the Sangha will be able to perform the Kathina ceremony, and the monks can get the five benefits. Also, your offering or your Dana will bring more abundant results.

I believe that you are not convinced that offering made to the Sangha is better than offering made to an individual. Suppose you want to make an offering to the Sangha. And, suppose there is only one monk at the monastery. How would you do it? You want to make offering to the Sangha, but there is only one monk, so it seems that there is no Sangha at the monastery. But you can still make offering to the Sangha to that one person. Have in mind the whole Sangha, not that particular individual. You may be offering to that individual, you may be handing the offerings to that individual, but in your mind, have the whole of Sangha. Imagine that you are offering to the whole community of monks and this person is just a representative of the whole community. In that way, even if you make offering to one monk, you make offering to the whole Sangha. Your Dana is to the Sangha although it is to just one individual you offer. After that, that monk because he is alone and it is offered to the Sangha, he is entitled to make use of that because he is a member of the Sangha. And so he is entitled to use the offering. That is his concern, and not your concern. Your concern is you have offered your offering to the Sangha, and you get the merit of offering to the Sangha. So your offering or your Dana will bring abundant results. Even though there is only one monk or two, three monks, you can still make offering to the Sangha. It is always good to have the Sangha in mind when you offer something to the

Sangha or to the monks. Suppose you offer meals to the monks, then you may say, "I offer the meal to the Sangha" or something like that. So today with this understanding, you will offer Kathina robes to the Sangha.

May this offering, may this act of merit be a strong support for you to gain enlightenment.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

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Vesak program in Vietnamese Temple



Community Outreach Programs conducted by Minnesota Buddhist Vihara

- Volunteer Teaching Service at City View School, Mpls.
- Member of the Board of Directors of McKinley Neighborhood Association.
- Spiritual Guidance Service for Students at University of Minnesota, St. Cloud State Univ., North Dakota State Univ., Iowa State Univ., etc.
- Involvement in Refugee Healing Resources working Group, Minnesota Council of Churches.
- Involvement in Interfaith Dialogue at Bethel Univ.
- Minneapolis Police Dept. Volunteer Chaplain Service.

මගේ ලංකා ස්මාරය

මම ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ නිවාඩුවට ලංකාවට ගියෙමි. තාක්කා මටයි මල්ලිටයි සල්ලි දුන්න බාටහර් උදව් කරන්න කියල. ආච්චිගෙ ගෙවල් උසා ලමා නිවාසයක් තිබුනා. දවසක් මම ගෙදර ආගන් යාලුවෝ කීප දෙනෙක් සමග ඒ ලමා නිවාසයට ගියෙමි. ආපි කන බොන දේවල් සහ කෙල්ලම් බඩු අරගෙන ගියෙමි. ඒ ලමා නිවාසයේ පොඩි ලමයි විස්සක් විතර සිටියා. ආපි දවල් කෑම සකස් කරදුන්නෙල. ඒ ලමයි සතුටින් කෑම කෑවා. කෙල්ලම් බඩු ලබා ගොඩක් සතුටු වූහ. ඒ ලමයින්ගේ සතුට ඉහලු බලා ආපිත් ඉතා සතුටු වුනෙල. තිතර තිතර මේ චිදියේ සන් ක්‍රියාවත් කර්මට මම තරයේ සිතා ගත්තෙමි.

ඉන්ද්‍රි හෙරත්

By Shanudi Herath

Helping the Homeless

In Sri Lanka we helped make food for some homeless children in Sri Lanka. We made cake and we gave them a small bag full of cutlets and some toys. Me and my friend helped to put the cutlets into the bag and arranged them neatly. Once we were all ready with the food, we all crammed into two three-wheelers. It was a very uncomfortable ride. We soon got to the homeless shelter. We went downstairs and we took out the food and poured out the drinks. Soon all the children came without talking and took their spots on the table. They all had very good manners. I went around and passed out the food to all the children. Once all of them got their food we expected them to start eating. None of them did. We thought that maybe they couldn't open their bags. So I went around and cut all the bags open for them. Still, none of them would eat their food. We just stood there and watched expecting them to start eating. After about 5 minutes of this they all suddenly stood up and pushed in their chairs and said their thanks. Then they all walked out. We soon left the children's home wondering why they didn't eat their food. When we got back we decided that they will eat their food later. We were all happy that we could help these children.

By Chanuda Herath

MBV Major Events-- June-November 2009

- June 6, 2008 Poson Celebration:
Ven. P. Chandrasiri Mahathera, Chief Sangha Nayake of North America, and Abbot of Oregon Buddhist Vihara, delivered the main sermon and conducted a special Buddha Puja.
- June 20, 2009 Garage Sale Fund Raiser:
In order to raise funds in aid of the Temple Mortgage Fund, the event was held.
- June 27, 2009 Vas Aradhana:
The Venerable Sangha of the Minnesota Buddhist Vihara was invited by the lay congregants for the observance of the Rainy (Vassana) Retreat.
- June 28, 2009 Participation in Parents Appreciation Day:
The Resident Sangha of Minnesota Buddhist Vihara participated in this event that took place at the Vietnamese Temple.
- July 7, 2009 The Resident Sangha started the Rainy Observance.
- July 11, 2009 The Resident Sangha, conducted a blessing service for the Vietnamese Buddhist Community in Rochester.
- July 12, 2009 The July Full Moon Day (Eight Precepts) Retreat was held at the Temple.
- Aug. 14, 2009 The Resident Sangha officiated the Buddha-relics worship at the Cambodian Temple. The Buddha's bone relics were brought from Sri Lanka.
- Aug. 30, 2009 The Resident Sangha conducted blessing and teaching sessions in Grand Forks, North Dakota.
- Sept. 5, 2009 The September Full Moon Day (Eight Precepts) Retreat was held at the Temple.

Photos of MBV Activities



Regular Dhamma Class conducted by Bhikkhu T. Seelananda



Vas Aradhana - 2009



Wesak Bethi Gee (spiritual songs)



Meditation Retreat - May 2009

Contributions

The objective of MN Buddhist Vihara provides Spiritual, Cultural, Scientific, and Educational activities of the Community.

The Minnesota Buddhist Vihara is a 501 C (3) charity registered with the State of Minnesota since March 30, 2004.

Development of the Vihara and its activities depend solely on your support. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

All your donations are Federal and State tax deductible. The MN Buddhist Vihara will issue receipts for all your donations at the end of year.

You can join to our:

- Dhamma School
- Diploma in Buddhism
- Abhidhamma, Pali & Dhammapada class
- Weekly meditation group
- Monthly Sil Observance
- Volunteer activities