



# Minnesota Buddhist

Minnesota Buddhist Vihara  
3401 North 4th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55412  
Tel: 612-522-1811  
mnbvusa@yahoo.com  
www.mnbv.org

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## *Practicing Dhamma in Ordinary Life: Generosity*

**By Bhante Rahula**

The main question for a lot of people is how to practice meditation in daily life. How to practice the Dhamma in daily life. The practice of formal meditation in a retreat is primarily intensive training in a very structured environment. This is helpful and important, but the real practice of meditation, if meditation is to be of any real value, is in our daily lives.

In daily life, the full path and the other aspects of cultivating the mind have to be undertaken and practiced as well. It's really in our daily lives, in our day-to-day situations that we need skill and understanding to meet all the challenges that come up: all the conflicting situations, the chaos, the the daily ups and downs.

We have to have a game plan for meeting and facing the defilements that come up within our own minds as well as the negativities and defilements that come at us from others. We have to develop qualities of the mind in addition to meditation.

Many people want to meditate and find peace of mind. But some of those people don't want to really change the rest of their life style. They want to have their cake and eat it too-be able to meditate and get the "bennies," such as peace of mind, but still be able to do whatever comes into their mind according to their whims and their fancies. But the process doesn't really work that way. For most of us, the mind we en-

counter as we sit in meditation- all the states that come up, the difficult emotions, other negative mental states, and even the condition of our body, pains and the like- is basically the sum total of what we have been accumulating all of our life. These accumulations are the consequences of our life-long habit patterns, life style, and even of our viewpoints.

There are practices, in addition to meditation, that we can cultivate to help us bring the Dhamma into our habit patterns, our life styles, and our viewpoints. Let's explore some of these other aspects of the Dhamma practice which we have to put into effect in our daily lives as the appropriate situations come up.

We know that the second Noble Truth is that the source of suffering is craving and clinging, unbridled desire. Because of this, one of the main practices in the Dhamma is called Dana. Dana means the practice of giving or sharing with others. It is an antidote to attachment, to holding on tightly, to really holding on to our things. We find this greed and attachment everywhere. We hold on tightly to our possessions, don't want to let go of them. The problem is, the more that we have, the more of a burden it becomes. But the practice of giving helps. It's an antidote to stinginess,

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and by sharing things that we have with others, or letting go of our own selfish self-centeredness, it also helps to open up our minds in loving kindness and compassion. It is an antidote to clinging and craving.

Giving has different forms. You might say there are three degrees of giving. One is called one-handed giving. With this degree of giving, you give things away because people ask you, or because you are pressured into it, or because people are looking. But you are also holding on with one hand. You may not really want to give, but, reluctantly, you do. Let's say that a beggar keeps on badgering you. To get rid of him, you give him something. If you've ever traveled in India, you've probably encountered situations where beggars follow you around like a shadow and won't let you go until you finally give them something. That is a form of giving, of sharing with others. But it has a limited value, because, of course, the whole spirit of giving is really letting go. This is letting go to some degree, but not fully.

***It's really in our daily lives, in our day-to-day situations that we need skill and understanding to meet all the challenges that come up: all the conflicting situations, the chaos, the daily ups and downs.***

The second degree of giving is friendly giving. That means you give because you like to give. It feels good. You don't have to be pressured into it. Whenever you see somebody in a situation of need, if you have enough for yourself, if you have two of something, you give it out of friendliness. If you have two bananas and somebody is hungry, you usually give them one. That's a higher form of giving because you're not being pressured into it—it's coming from your own friendliness, and you're not tightly holding on.

The third degree is called kingly giving. In kingly giving, you give anything at any time. You give the shirt off your back. You give the last food you have to someone who is hungrier. Be-

cause there's no thought—you give the best that you have. There's no holding on nor even thought of an "I" involved in the giving.

Giving material things may be the easiest form of giving, especially if you have more than enough. Most people, especially in the West, have more than enough. We have closets and garages full of stuff; we have clothes that we don't use. Perhaps we clear things out once a year and give them to the Salvation Army or Good Will as a form of giving and generosity. Of course a lot of times, we're clearing our closets of things we don't need because we've got to make room for more things that we're going to accumulate. Giving material things, giving food, giving money to charity, that's all a form of material giving or sharing.

Another form of giving is the giving of your time. That goes a little bit deeper, because your own time is closer to your ego. It's fairly easy to give a beggar a dollar or some extra food if you have enough, but to share your time might be a little bit more difficult. Imagine that your neighbor comes over and says, "Oh, you know, I'm really in a jam, I really need your help this Saturday to help

me paint my house."

"Saturday! Oh, my God. That's the football game, the soccer match. Can't we do it on Sunday?" Or, "I'll hire my nephew. I'll give him ten dollars and send him on down to help you."

We cling to our own precious time and to our desire to do only what we want. Letting go of our own desires and time to help a person in need is a deeper form of giving.

Sharing our knowledge or talents with others is another way of giving. All these forms of giving— from the material to the mental— are ways of letting go.

Meditation is also a form of giving, of giving up. You might actually say that when we meditate,

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that's the highest form of giving, because we're giving up whatever is coming through our senses, especially in mindfulness meditation. We're giving up the sound coming to our ear, whether it's a pleasant sound or it's a painful sound, we're just letting it arise and vanish without holding on. If we do cling to it, we try to let go. We try to let go of our thoughts, let go of the pains in our bodies. And of course, ultimately, each of us tries to let go of the self. We let go of the feeling of self in order to realize unconditioned Dhamma and true liberation of mind. For this, even the sense of self has to be let go.

Surely if we cannot let go of material things, of mental things, of emotions such as anger, of other negative states or even of positive states, then when it comes time for it, we won't be able to let go of the self in meditation, to make that quantum leap to the unconditioned experience. Therefore the practice of giving is a whole and complete practice in itself.

In your daily lives you can find many opportunities for practicing giving. You can be especially giving of your time when somebody is in need, for example somebody at work say: "Can you show me how to work this stupid computer?" Show him how to do this, or help her do that, or give in other ways.

There are three foundations of the Dhamma that help us as we practice giving. They are Right Understanding, the first aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path; Right Mindfulness, the seventh aspect, Right Effort, the sixth aspect. All those three work together.

Right understanding understands selfishness and miserliness as being negative states. Right Mindfulness ensures that when selfishness comes back or intervenes, we see it; we notice when our minds are holding on tightly to things. Having become mindful of selfishness and attachment as unwholesome states of mind, we use Right Effort to abandon them when they arise. Practicing Right Effort, we

make the effort to prevent and abandon unwholesome states, the effort to cultivate and perfect wholesome states.

[www.bhavanasociety.org](http://www.bhavanasociety.org)

## Infant Blessing



Blessing ceremony for new born baby, Brennan, for protection and healthy life.

**Caran ce nadhigaccheyya  
Seyyam sadisamattano  
Ekacariyam dalham kayira  
Natthi bale sahayata**

*If a person does not get a companion who is better or equal (in virtue), he should resolve to live alone, for, there should not be companionship with the lowly.*

*-Dhammapada 61*

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## Avoiding Depression, and Overcoming it Without Medication

By Ven. Maitiye Wimalasara

The subject of depression is a serious one. If any of you suffer from this disease, and are on prescribed medication, please don't stop taking your meds. This discussion is meant to put depression into proper perspective – and it will offer Buddhist “life tools” for handling it under normal circumstances. Even if you *are* taking medication, these tools will be valuable supplements.

The origin of all religions is an attempt to cure depression. Since the beginning of time man has sought to find a reason for his mental suffering, and a way to alleviate the basic human phenomenon of depression. We were programmed to believe that depression comes from “external forces,” but Buddhism teaches that it starts in the interior world of the mind.

Developing wholesome habits and a wholesome lifestyle are keys to avoiding and overcoming depression - even though the temptation is very strong in modern society to develop unwholesome habits and an unwholesome lifestyle. We are programmed to develop high levels of material, mental, and emotional expectations, and we exert intense efforts toward their fulfillment – even though they lead to suffering rather than happiness. The Buddha said that happiness is the greatest wealth, but wealth is not the greatest happiness.

Remember that everything – including depression – is impermanent and subject to change. “This too shall pass.” Appearances make it very difficult to believe that everything is impermanent, and as long as we only believe in appearances the agony of depression will continue. Remember also that “staying in the present moment” is where happiness is found,

and where depression cannot be found.

Don't take your thoughts and emotions too seriously. They are only real to you – and not to anyone else. It is human nature to try to blame something or someone for the way we feel. In reality, however, we are all responsible for our wholesome and unwholesome choices – each one bringing either suffering or happiness.

Always use discernment when choosing your associates. Remember the value of noble friends. In fact, the Buddha said that achieving enlightenment or *Nibbana* can only come by associating with noble friends.

Remember: “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” We're all subject to depression if we don't catch those states of mind that cause it – and eliminate them immediately by choosing other thoughts, feelings, and patterns of behavior. Despite the vast amount of monies spent on research, modern scientific pharmaceuticals still don't cure depression, and never will.

Mindfulness and meditation are the Buddhist tools for curing depression when it inevitably occurs. There is no substitute for a simple, self-contained life – lived in a peaceful environment where we avoid distracting temptations, use our resources carefully, and faithfully and consistently develop our internal culture.

### Kathina Ceremony 2009



Ven. Witiyala Seewalie Thera and other monks are receiving alms.

This Kathina Ceremony was sponsored by Hemamala Samaratunga Family. We had nearly 15 monks including Ven. D. Upananda Thera. It was a wonderful event of that year in which many monks participated.

**MBV Major Events-- Sept. 2009 to May 2010**

Sept. 26, 2009 Spiritual service for North Dakota State University students

Oct. 10, 2009 Kathina ceremony – sponsored by Hemamala Samaratunga

Oct. 11, 2009 Full Day Meditation Retreat at MRC, Rosemount

Oct. 12, 2009 Sermon and meditation session at Iowa State University

Oct. 13, 2009 Sermon and Meditation session at St. Cloud State University

Oct. 14, 2009 Discussion with Bethel University Students and staff

Oct. 14, 2009 Sermon and Meditation session at University of Minnesota

Oct. 27, 2009 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from Concordia College St Paul

Nov. 03, 2009 Religious Symposium at Bethel University, St. Paul

Nov. 06, 2009 Sermon and Meditation session at Air Force Military Base, Grand Forks, ND

Nov. 09, 2009 Representing a steering committee, City of Minneapolis

Nov. 17, 2009 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from Anoka-Ramsey CC

Nov. 22, 2009 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from Hamline University

Nov. 23, 2009 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from Northwestern University

Nov. 24, 2009 Representing for mental health resource for refugee program at Minnesota Council of Churches

Dec. 04, 2009 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from University of Minnesota

Dec. 13, 2009 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from Totino-Grace High School, Fridley, MN

Dec. 13, 2009 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from St. Anthony College

Dec. 15, 2009 Spiritual Service at Iowa, Ames

Jan. 1, 2010 New Year Blessings

Jan. 17, 2010 Spiritual Service for students from St. Cloud State University

Jan. 23, 2010 Spiritual Service for students from Winona State University

Feb. 25, 2010 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from Northern Light Comm. School, Warba, MN

Mar. 20, 2010 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from Northwestern Middle School

Mar. 27, 2010 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from University of Phoenix

Apr. 9, 2010 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with students from Augsburg College

Apr. 17, 2010 Sri Lankan New Year Celebration

Apr. 17, 2010 Buddhist Art, Guidance and interviews with students from Macalester College, St. Paul

Apr. 22, 2010 Sermon and Meditation session at University of Minnesota

Apr. 23, 2010 Sermon and Meditation session at St. Cloud State University

Apr. 24, 2010 Sermon and Meditation session at NDSU, Fargo

Apr. 27, 2010 Sermon and Meditation session at ISU, Ames

Apr. 28, 2010 Buddhist discussion with American group at Excelsior, MN

Apr. 30, 2010 Spiritual blessings at St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud

May, 1, 2010 Full Day meditation retreat at Meditation Retreat Center, Rosemount

May, 5, 2010 Sermon and Meditation session at Northern Light Community School

May, 13, 2010 Buddhist Guidance and interviews with student from University of St. Thomas

May, 18, 2010 Full Day Monastic Retreat at Meditation Retreat Center, Rosemount

May 18, 2010 Sermon and meditation session with guest monk Venerable Uda Iriyagama Dhammajeeva at MBV Vesak Celebration

May 22, 2010

**Sri Lankan New Year Celebration 2010**



*Lightening Traditional Oil lamp*

It was a nice and sunny day. Many people were participated to this event. We had a traditional dance performed by Dhamma Kids. It was very successful and thanks to Ven. Maha Sangha and Organizers of this event.

## Sri Lankan New Year Celebration - 2010 -



*Raban Geseema  
by Susantha, Sumitra, Indu & Chintaka*

### 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*
- *Morning meditation*
- *Pali & Sutta Study Class*
- *Weekly meditation group*
- *Monthly Sil Observance*
- *Volunteer activities*

## HAPPY VESAK 2553



## MINNESOTA BUDDHIST VIHARA