



# Minnesota BUDDHIST

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## KATHINA AND ITS BENEFITS IN BRIEF

**K**athina is a special robe offering ceremony in Theravada Buddhist countries. This special robe is offered at the end of three months retreat. In Theravada Buddhist countries, all full-fledged monks and nuns have to observe rains retreat from July to October, every year. Kathina means solidity, firmness and durability. This solidity or firmness means not of the robe, but the merit that they acquired through this meritorious deed. The uniqueness of the ceremony is dedication of both monastics and the devotees. This special ceremony can be performed only once, per year. This is more than 2600 years old Buddhist tradition. The Buddha himself recommended this special offering to the monastics as a special gift.

### History

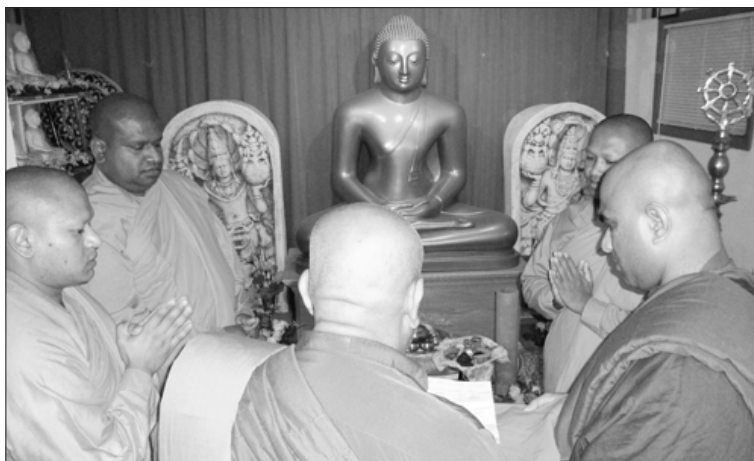
In the time of the Buddha, in India, there were two religious traditions; *sramana* tradition and *brahmana* tradition. In the *sramana* tradition, such as Jain observed extreme nonviolence. During the rains, many tender shoots spring up and many different tiny creatures appear on earth, they completely refrained from destroying them. For this purpose, they simply confined to their monasteries during the rainy season. At the same time, they expect this from other religious traditions as well. However, after the first sermon, the Buddha admonished his disciples to go from place to place and preach the Dhamma excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, and excellent in the end for the benefit of many, out of compassion for the multitudes. So, the monks started their missionary activities; regardless of day and night, rain or sun, they worked

almost all over India to disseminate the Dhamma. Ture, that they unintentionally had trampled tiny creatures and shoots. By seeing this, they were rebuked and vehemently criticized by other religious masters, their disciples and the followers as well. On hearing this, giving ear to the majority, the Buddha also imposed a rule for his disciples to observe three months rains retreat.

### Benefits of Kathina

Both monastics and lay people are beneficiaries of Kathina. The monastics are privileged to lessen some minor rules and get some extra benefits as the results of receiving this special robe.

For the lay community, they can reduce and eliminate minor unwholesome deeds done and develop wholesome deeds. They can be more and more happy, thinking repeatedly. As a result, they get cure some diseases and could live happy and peaceful life. It helps them to enhance their spiritual activities and reach the goal here in this very life by developing mindfulness and wisdom and/or otherwise, will be able to reborn in a happy destination after this life.



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# A THOROUGHBRED'S MEDITATION

By Venerable Bhikkhu T. Seelananda

(Vice president / Vice abbot, Bhavana Society, West Virginia)

**O**ur source or resource is always the Buddha himself. Buddha is our matchless teacher. His profound wisdom has no boundary. That is why we always depend on the teachings of this Samma Sambuddha (The Perfectly Self Awakened One).

One day, addressing Ven. Sandha the Buddha said, "Meditate with the meditation of thoroughbred, Sandha. Do not meditate with the meditation of a wild colt." Then the Buddha explained how a wild colt meditates. As he said, when a wild colt is tied up near the feeding trough he meditates, thinking, 'Fodder!, Fodder!'. Because it does not occur to him that what task would his trainer set for him on that day and what should he do for his trainer in return. He, therefore, just meditates, 'Fodder!, Fodder!'. "So too, Buddha says, a wild colt of a man, when gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree or to an empty hut, dwells with a mind obsessed and oppressed by sensual lust. Nurturing sensual lust within, he meditates to and meditates fro, meditates up and meditates down. Similarly, he dwells with a mind obsessed and oppressed by ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness & worry, and doubt, and does not understand the escape from them. Nurturing them within, he meditates to and meditates fro, meditates up and meditates down. He meditates in dependence on earth, in dependence of water, in dependence on fire, in dependence on air, in dependence on the base of the infinity of space, in dependence on the base of the infinity of consciousness, in dependence on the base of nothingness, in dependence on the base of neither-perception-nor-non perception, in dependence on the other world, in dependence on what is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, reached, sought after and examined by the mind. Such is the meditation of a wild colt of a man."

Then the Buddha explained to Ven. Sandha how a thoroughbred horse meditates. "When a good thoroughbred horse is tied up near the feeding trough he does not meditate, 'Fodder! Fodder!' For what reason? Because, when a good thoroughbred horse is tied up by the feeding trough it occurs to him, 'What task will my trainer set for me today, and what can I do for him in return?' He does not meditate 'Fodder! Fodder! For that good thoroughbred horse regards the application of the goad as debt, a bond, a fine and a

loss. So too, Sandha, a good thoroughbred of a man, when gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree or to an empty hut, does not dwell with a mind obsessed and oppressed by sensual lust, and he understands as it really is the escape from arisen sensual lust. Similarly, he does not meditate with a mind obsessed and oppressed by ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt and he understands as it really is the escape from them. He does not meditate in dependence on earth...in dependence of what is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, reached, sought after and examined by the mind, and yet he meditates. When he meditates thus, the devas along with Indra (the head of gods), Brahma (the head of brahmas) and pajapati (the head of that particular realm), worship him from afar saying:

Homage to you, O thoroughbred Man!  
Homage to you, O supreme man!  
We ourselves do not understand  
What you meditate in dependence on."

When the Buddha said this, Ven. Sandha asked, "Bhante if he does not meditate in dependence on earth or on anything else, how does he meditate so that the devas worship him from afar?" The Buddha said, "For the good thoroughbred man, the perception of earth has disappeared in relation to earth, the perception of water...the perception of whatever is seen, heard, sensed and cognized has disappeared there. Meditating in such a way, Sandha, the good thoroughbred of a man does not meditate in dependence on earth or in dependence on anything else, and yet he meditates. And as he mediates in such a way, the devas along with Indra, Brahma and Pajapati worship him from afar."

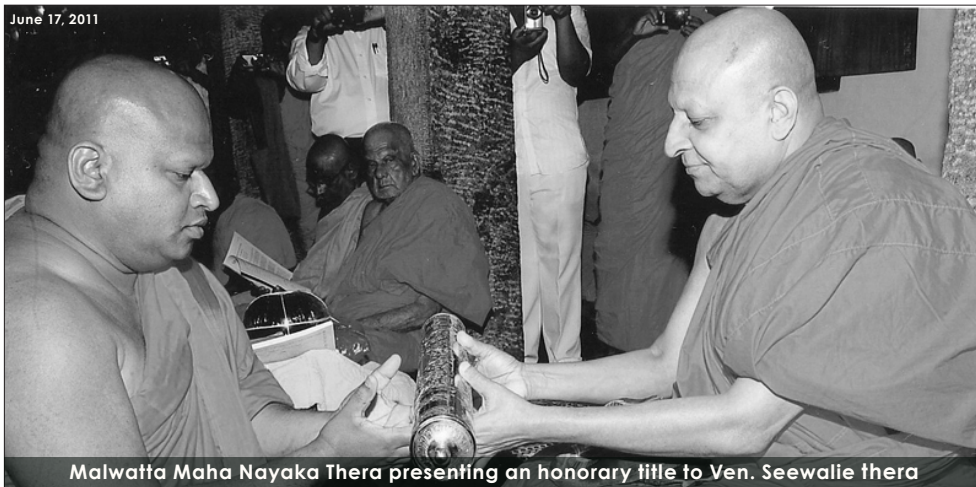
This wonderful simile from the Anguttara Nikaya is undoubtedly encouraging all of us. There are many meditation techniques today in the spiritual market. Consequently, there are many meditators as well. Whoever meditates, meditation is always appreciable and appreciated by the wise. But meditators should be mindful enough to understand whether they are practicing it properly using the right path. Right path begins with right understanding. If one has no right understanding what he/she is practicing it definitely heading to the

wrong end/s. Therefore, let us revise our own meditation technique and make sure whether we are cultivating and developing mindfulness, wisdom and clear comprehension. If not our meditation is not a thoroughbred's Meditation. Let us all practice as thoroughbred's persons.

**MEMORIES FROM VEN. WITIYALA SEEWALIE THERA'S APPOINTMENT AS DEPUTY CHIEF MONK OF NORTH AMERICA- JUNE 2011, SRI LANKA**

The Nayaka Ceremony of Venerable Witiyala Seewalie Thera was very successful and it is one of the most significant event for all of us. He was welcomed with wonderful ceremonies at many places in Sri Lanka such as Parama Dhamma Chetiya Pirivena - Ratmalana, Sri Matikarama Purana Vihara - Matara and Malinda Temple - Polonnaruwa. Also, he was invited to president's palace to honor Ven. Seewalie's new position. We wish him good health, peace and happiness. May he be able to disseminate the teachings of the Buddha to dhamma enthuaiasts for many more years.

Special Thanks to all the supporters who helped to make this event a success.



June 17, 2011

Malwatta Maha Nayaka Thera presenting an honorary title to Ven. Seewalie thera



June 23, 2011

President of Sri Lanka presenting a gift to newly appointed Deputy Chief monk Seewalie Thera



July 9, 2011

Ven Seewalie was warmly welcomed by devotees of Minnesota Buddhist Vihara, Minneapolis



June 17, 2011

Group photo of Ven Witiyala Seewalie with Maha Sangha and devotees after Nayaka Ceremony in Kandy

# THE BUDDHIST ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEATH

By Bhikkhuni Satima

**MARANA DHAMMOMHI MARANAM  
ANATITO TI  
ABHINNAM, PACCAVEKKHITTABBAM,  
ITTIYA VA, PURISENA VA, GAHATTHENA  
VA,  
PABBAJJITENA VA TI**

**T**his means; 'I am of the nature to die I have not gone beyond death. To be reflected many, many times a day, be it a female, a male, a house-holder or a renunciate.'

Lord Buddha's advice to everyone is to daily reflect on death. The reason why Lord Buddha wanted us to reflect on death is, most people in the world think of death as something morbid, repulsive and depressive. In this society of ours, we are always on the lookout for pleasure, the gratification of the five senses, the topic of death and dying is avoided. For most people today death is the 'Great Unmentionable.' It is an uncomfortable subject that no one wants to talk about. We think of death as though it were something unpleasant, depressing, morbid, to be avoided. Even a bad omen!

We try our best to forget it and pretend and act like we will live forever! We do this by being preoccupied with the world and the gratification of the five senses. Then when sickness or death arrives and strikes at us like a thunderbolt we do not know how to deal with it. We are very hurt, depressed, angry and very frightened.

The problem with us human beings is that we do not understand that death is a natural occurrence, as natural as our breathing in and out. That it is something that happens to all beings that are born. We do not know that we came to this world uninvited and that we leave the world without being asked. Life and death is a natural occurrence. It happens due to causes and conditions. It is the Law of Impermanence.

It is due to this law of impermanence that, those great buildings in the world that tower towards the sky totter and tumble; it is due to this law that all things disintegrate; it is due to this law that colors fade, iron rust, timber rot, leaves change color, fall away and die. It must have been such reflections like this that

must have inspired the poet Thomas Gray to write in his poem 'Country Church – yard';

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power  
All that beauty, all that wealth ever gave  
Await alike the inevitable hour  
The paths of glory leads but to the grave."

What most people don't understand is that death is the only thing we can be certain of. We all know for certain that some day we will die. What we don't know is when and where. This is something every sentient being, human, animal, celestial will have to face. In reality it is life that is uncertain. We do not know what will happen to us even in the next moment! However much we plan and prepare for the future we can never be certain that what we plan will happen. But whether we plan or not we can be certain that Death will happen.

Lord Buddha encouraged us to speak, to actually think about, and to contemplate and reflect on death regularly. Why this contemplation is necessary is because all beings fearing death have the tendency to avoid it, a reluctance to come face to face with this reality. But when we face death straight in the face, some of us get too preoccupied with it. Being preoccupied we then live in fear and have no energy and zest to live a happy life. Some on the other hand think they will never die and live a life indulging in the five cords of sense pleasure. Some of us think and believe life is eternal – eternalism; and some think this is it, at the end of this life every thing will be annihilated – annihilationism. These are the two extremes that Lord Buddha wanted to avoid. Avoiding the two extremes He teaches a middle way. His teachings help the ones who are preoccupied and obsessed with it to find a healthy balance and those who think that they will live forever, He shows them a reasonable approach to life and death. According to the teachings fear of death is an unwholesome mental state and has to be eliminated.

Another reason for constantly thinking about and reflecting upon it is to take the sting out of death, the pain out of it. Lord Buddha considered death contemplation very important because it makes us live

a peaceful life. We come to realize that death is very much apart of life. Life and death are two sides of the same coin. We cannot have one without the other. The moment we are born death is there right behind. That which is born will die. That is for certain. Lord Buddha said, 'Whether one is on top of a mountain, the middle of the sea or in the air no one can escape from death'. (Dhp.)

### **This is what Steve Jobs has to say about death:**

'Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything - all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure - these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart.'

No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new.'

Birth starts at conception, at that time a mind-body arise develop, grow and mature. This aging process is referred to at first, as growing up, then growing old, but it's just a single process of maturing, developing, evolving towards the inevitable death. Every living being, human, animal, or whatever is born must die. This is the Law of Nature.

Even though intellectually we all know we are going to die, we all live as if we are never going to die. This avoidance, this negation, is because of our fear of death. As long as there is this fear of death, life itself is not being lived at its best. So one of the very fundamental reasons for contemplating death is that of overcoming fear. The second reason is to change the way we live and our attitudes toward life. The values that we have in life will change quite drastically once we stop living as if we are going to live forever, and we will start living in a quite different way. The third reason is to develop the ability to approach death in the right way.

So the three benefits are:

1. Relieving fear
2. Bringing a new quality to our lives, enabling us to live our lives with proper values, changing our at-

titude and

3. Enabling us to die a good death.

Contemplation on death is one of the main contemplations in Buddhism.

'I am of the nature to age I have not gone beyond aging. I am of the nature to sicken I have not gone beyond sickness. I am of the nature to die I have not gone beyond dying. All that is mine, beloved and pleasing, will change, will become otherwise will become separated from me.'

This is one of the contemplations that Lord Buddha encouraged us to do. Through this contemplation, giving careful and wise attention and being consciously aware of it, we come to terms with death and are able to overcome the fear of death.

### **Buddhaghosa in the Visuddimagga wrote:**

'A bhikkhus devoted to mindfulness of death is constantly diligent. He acquires perception of disenchantment with all kinds of becoming (existence). He conquers attachment to life. He condemns evil. He avoids storing. He has not stain of avarice about requisites. Perception of impermanence grows in him, following upon which there appears the perceptions of pain and not-self. But while beings that have not developed mindfulness of death fall victims to fear, horror and confusion at the time of death as though suddenly seized by wild beasts, spirits, snakes, robbers, or murderers, he dies undeluded and fearless without falling into any such state. And if he does not attain the deathless here and now, he is at least headed for a happy destiny on the break up of the body.'

Now when a man is truly wise,

His constant task will surely be

This recollection about death

Blessed with such mighty potency.

The effect of contemplating this reality is that we take the grief out of loss, become free and open and find peace and contentment. Our attitude towards life change we become kind, gentle, loving caring compassionate generous beings towards everyone. This makes us happy. When we are happy that makes everyone around us happy, so there is peace and harmony in the society. Living a happy and peaceful life we are able to die happily in peace too. So by contemplating on death fear is eliminated, and we can live and die happily in peace. This is why Lord Buddha advised us to be prepared about death.

This contemplation also makes us live wisely, resolving our unfinished business without letting them drag on: the fights, the hatred, the conflicts, all these be-

come meaningless. It gives us the chance to get things in order. Helps us to live a fuller life, with gratitude. We don't let things drag on we don't leave unfinished business, but attend to them and resolve all conflicts. We don't look for death, but we don't fear it; we don't ask for death, but we're willing to accept when it comes.

Because of this fear, we avoid talking about it by pushing it way back into the dark recesses and shutting it off as it were out of our conscious mind. But when it actually happens we cry and weep and lament and mourn over it. We mourn death and we celebrate birth not understanding that we cannot have one without the other. As one great philosopher once said;

“Dying is nothing but a backward view of life, and birth is nothing but a forward view of death.” In truth, birth and death are phases of an unbroken process of grasping. Death is a departure to those whom the dying man leaves behind. It is also an arrival to the members of the new family into which he is re-born. It is death or birth according to the way we look at it, but we can only be one-way observers. If we observe the death process, we are not in a position to observe the birth process, and if we observe the birth process, we are not in a position to observe the death process. So, birth and death do not get co-coordinated in our minds as one connected process.’ For a Buddhist death is not the final end except for a Buddha or an Arahant. The others will be reborn according to their kamma.

### What is death?

According to the teachings of Lord Buddha there are three types of death.

1. Momentary death – this happens all the time. We die and are reborn every millisecond. One set of the five aggregates arises and fall giving place to the next. This is rebirth from moment to moment. Most of us are not even aware of this as it takes place so rapidly giving us the false idea of a continuous life.
2. The conventional death – this is the death we are all familiar with and the one that we all fear. It is the ending of the life faculty confined to a single life-time. No matter how long we live, once the life that we obtained from our past karma is finished, we will die. This is like a lamp. When the fuel is consumed, the light will go out. If the “karmic fuel” for our life is for one hundred years, then, at the end of one hundred years, we will die, that is for sure!
3. The third type of death is the death of a Buddha or an Arahant. It is the death that brings with it

the end of all individual existences – no more re-becoming - This is the final attainment of Nibbana.

Understanding Dhamma and living Dhamma there is nothing sad about dying. When one learns to love without any attachments – just opening one's heart to one and all no matter what they do – unconditional selfless love then it is freeing, liberating both parties.

Through the understanding that comes we can live a good life with skilful values, with true appreciation, and we can die a good death, peacefully. As Leonardo Da Vinci once wrote; ‘Just as a well spent day brings happy sleep, so a life well spent brings a happy death.’

I would like to end this with a short verse written by Sami, a little budding sage:

‘No one knows when death will come

It's good to be prepared

And so I say to you my friends

Don't be sad and don't be scared.’

With right understanding and wise reflection contemplate on this and see what it is for you!

SADHU! SADHU!! SADHU!!!

May all beings be well and happy!



Vesak Lantern was made by Aken

# MNBV EVENTS JOURNAL

## —MAY TO OCT. 2011—

- May 16*  
Students from Academy of HolyAngels to discuss regarding comparative religions
- May 24*  
Talk on Buddhism at Parkway Church
- June 9*  
Sri Lanka Tour for Nayaka Ceremony
- July 9*  
Welcome ceremony and Vas Aradhana
- July 24*  
Dhamma talk and meditation at Butterfly Rainbow Center, SD
- July 25*  
Dhamma talk and meditation at South Dakota State Penitentiary, SD
- July 31*  
One Day Meditation Retreat at MRC, Rosemount
- Aug 7*  
Buddhist event in Thien Anh Buddhist Temple, Blaine
- Aug 21*  
Dhamma talk and meditation at BRC, SD
- Aug 22*  
Dhamma talk and meditation at SDSP, SD
- Aug 28*  
Meditation program for Kids and Adults at MRC, Rosemount
- Sept 4*  
Religious Program at Lincoln, NE
- Sept 11*  
Meditation Retreat at MRC, Rosemount
- Sept 23*  
Buddhist Talk at Buffalo High School
- Sept 25*  
Student from Normandale Community College to discuss about World Religion
- Sept 25*  
Dhamma talk and meditation at BRC, SD
- Sept 26*  
Dhamma talk and meditation at SDSP, SD
- Oct 9*  
Meditation Retreat at MRC, Rosemount
- Oct 10*  
Student from Axia College to discuss about World Religion
- Oct 11*  
Students from University of Minnesota to discuss regarding family studies
- Oct 14*  
MBV Pirith Chanting
- Oct 15*  
Kathina Robe Offering Ceremony
- Oct 16*  
Meditation Retreat at MRC, Rosemount
- Oct 18*  
Buddhist talk and Meditation at University of Minnesota
- Oct 19*  
Buddhist talk and meditation at St. Cloud State University
- Oct. 20*  
Buddhist talk and meditation at North Dakota State University
- Oct 22*  
Spiritual Day for Kids at MBV
- Oct 23*  
Dhamma talk and meditation at BRC, SD
- Oct 24*  
Dhamma talk and meditation at SDSP, SD
- Oct 26*  
Buddhist talk and Meditation at Iowa State University



Ven. Witiyala Seewalie Thera with resident and guest monastics receiving alms from Devotees on Vesak Celebration Day

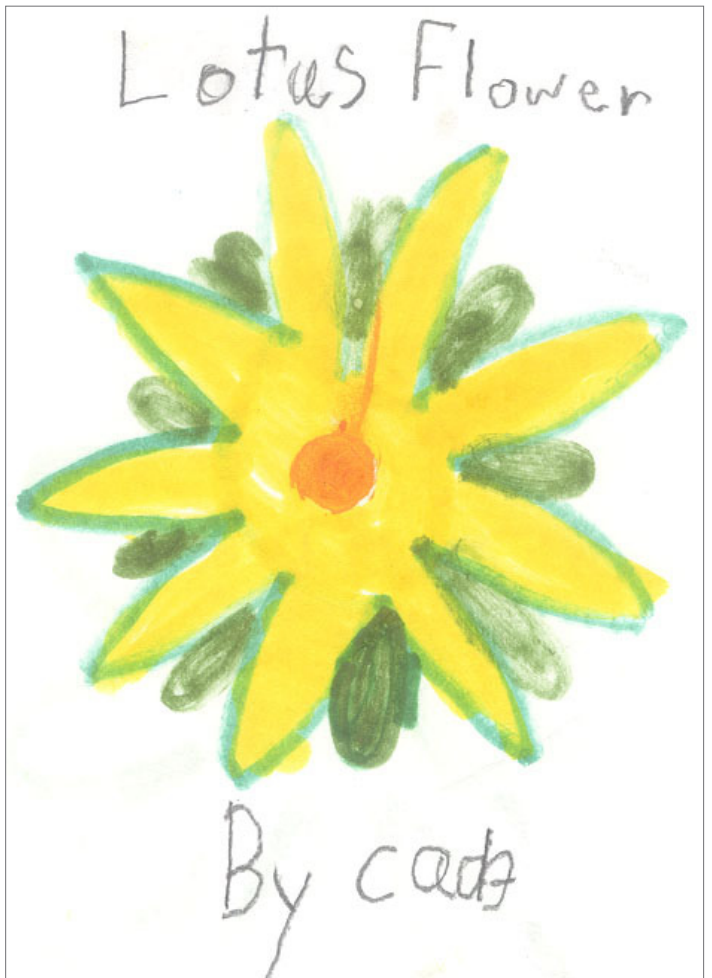
# CREATIONS OF DHAMMA SCHOOL KIDS

The Buddha



ANDREW

Lotus Flower



By cads

CADE

ALEXIS



Mihintale



# PARABHAVA SUTTA: DISCOURSE ON DOWNFALL

Translated by Piyadassi Thera

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Blessed One was living near Savatthi, at Jetavana, at Anathapindika's monastery. Now when the night was far advanced, a certain deity, whose surpassing radiance illuminated the whole of Jetavana, came to the presence of the Blessed One, respectfully saluted him, and stood beside him. Standing thus he addressed the Blessed One in verse:

[The Deity:]

1. About the declining man we question thee, Gotama. We have come to ask the Blessed One: What is the cause of his downfall?

[The Buddha:]

2. Easily known is the progressive one, easily known is the declining one. The lover of the Dhamma prospers. The hater of the Dhamma declines.

3. We understand this as explained (by thee); this is the first cause of his downfall. Tell us the second, O Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

4. The vicious are dear to him. He likes not the virtuous; he approves the teachings of the ill-natured — this is the cause of his downfall.

5. We understand this as explained by thee; this is the second cause of his downfall. Tell us the third, O Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

6. The man who is fond of sleep and company, inactive and lazy, and manifesting anger — this is the cause of his downfall.

7. We understand this as explained by thee; this is the third cause of his downfall. Tell us the fourth, O Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

8. Whoever being affluent, does not support his mother and father who are old, and past their prime — this is the cause of his downfall.

9. We understand this as explained by thee; this is the

fourth cause of his downfall. Tell us the fifth, O Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

10. Whoever by falsehood deceives either a brahmana, or a samana (a holy man), or any other mendicant — this is the cause of his downfall.

11. We understand this as explained by thee; this is the fifth cause of his downfall. Tell us the six, O Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

12. The person who is possessed of much wealth, who has gold, and who has an abundance of food, but enjoys his delicacies all by himself — this is the cause of his downfall.

13. We understand this as explained by thee; this is the sixth cause of his downfall. Tell us the seventh, O Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

14. The man who, proud of his birth, of his wealth, and of his clan, despises his relations — this is the cause of his downfall.

15. We understand this as explained by thee; this is the seventh cause of his downfall. Tell us the eighth, O Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

16. The man who is addicted to women (given to a life of debauchery), is a drunkard, a gambler, and a squanderer of his earnings — this is the cause of his downfall.

17. We understand this as explained by thee; this is the eighth cause of his downfall. Tell us the ninth, O Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

18. Not satisfied with one's own wives,[2] he is seen among the whores and the wives of others — this is the cause of his downfall.

19. We understand this as explained by thee; this is the ninth cause of his downfall. Tell us the tenth, O Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

20. A person past his youth takes as wife, a girl in her teens, and sleeps not being jealous of her[3] — this is the cause of his downfall.

21. We understand this as explained by thee; this is the tenth cause of his downfall. Tell us the eleventh, O Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

22. He who places in authority a woman given to drink and squandering, or a man of similar nature — this is the cause of his downfall.

23. We understand this as explained by thee; this is the eleventh cause of his downfall. Tell us the twelfth, O

Blessed One. What is the cause of his downfall?

24. He who having but little possessions but great ambition (greed), is of warrior birth and aspires selfishly to (an unattainable) sovereignty — this is the cause of his downfall.

25. Fully realizing these (twelve) causes of downfall in the world, the sage, endowed with ariyan insight, shares a realm of security (Nibbana).

“Parabhava Sutta: Discourse on Downfall” (Snp 1.6), translated from the Pali by Piyadassi Thera. Access to Insight, 11 July 2010, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.06.piya.html>.

The objective of MN Buddhist Vihara is to provide Spiritual, Cultural, Scientific, and Educational activities to 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.



Detach yourself from the past,  
The future and the present,  
And go beyond existence  
by freeing yourself from all  
attachment,  
So that you will not come to  
birth and decay again.

*Dhammapada 348*

**You are most welcome to join our:**

Dhamma School • Daily Morning Meditation • Sutta Discussion Class  
Weekly Meditation group • Monthly Sil Observance • Volunteer Activities