

Minnesota BUDDHIST

Bi-Annual Buddhist Newsletter in the Midwest

Volume 8, Issue 2

Fall 2012 • Vap 2556

WISH YOU ALL A HAPPY KATHINA

Dear Dhamma Friends,

On behalf of the Minnesota Buddhist Vihara, I would like to welcome all of you to participate in celebrating our Annual Kathina Robe Offering Ceremony. It is one of the most important celebrations for the Theravada Buddhist monastics around the world. The Buddhist community celebrates this robe-offering ceremony with profound respect and devotion to the sangha, who have just spent three months in the monastery observing the Vassa. We need to participate in this event with understanding the importance of the meaning. When it is done with right understanding the benefit is immense. The Kathina ceremony provides one of the most popular occasions for merit-making to the whole community.

What is the meaning of Kathina? Why is it an occasion for merit-making?

Kathina simply means strong, hard, solid or durable. It is not the robe that one offers that is durable or solid but the result or merit that one receives from this meritorious deed that is solid and durable. This will be a supporting condition for your happiness here and now and in the future. This day is also considered as a "Sangha Day" because it is a day of offering, not only the special robe but all the requisites to the sangha. This way the whole community is able to benefit from this very meritorious acts.

Kathina is a significant event because it can be celebrated only one time a year in a particular temple and it brings much merit to both the sangha as well as to the devotees.

There are certain conditions that need to be fulfilled to make this event meritorious. First the devotees need to invite the sangha to observe the three months rains retreat from July full moon to October Full moon. This year on behalf of the whole Buddhist community, the Samaratunga family did the invitation. Then for the benefit of many devotees and dhamma practitioners they pledged to support the sangha in the four requisites. Then the sangha needs to

complete the three months retreat paying more attention to their practice. This gives an opportunity to build mutual relationship between the sangha and the lay devotees. While the sangha dedicated their time to practice, the devotees and dhamma practitioners too were given the opportunity to dedicate their time to the practice. This was done by having weekend meditation and sutta discussion session, monthly day long retreats, monthly poya observance and weekly Atavisi Buddha Puja to develop inner peace, joy and happiness.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all supporters, contributors and volunteers for renovating the temple. Without your support, we would not have been able to install a new wood-floor in the Shrine room and ceramic tile-floor in kitchen area, landscaping around temple,

painting the whole building, installing ten new windows on the second floor and adding the new deck at the entrance. Thank you all.

May the blessing of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha be with you always. May you all have good health, peace and happiness.

With metta,
Venerable Witiyala Seewalie Nayaka Thera
Abbot / President,
Minnesota Buddhist Vihara

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Wish you all a happy Kathina</i>	1
<i>The flood and meditation</i>	2
<i>Thank you volunteers and contributors</i>	3
<i>Noble Eightfold Path</i>	4
<i>MBV Major Events Journal</i>	7
<i>Mangala Sutta: Discourse on Blessings</i>	9
<i>Bhoomi Puja Project</i>	10
<i>Objectives of MN Buddhist Vihara</i>	10

THE FLOOD AND MEDITATION

By Venerable Bhikkhu T. Seelananda

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

The flood is everywhere. What is this flood? It is noting but defilements. The Buddha has compared defilements to a flood. The Pāli term that he used for flood is “ogha”. There are four kinds of flood. The four kinds of flood are:

1. Flood of sensuality
2. Flood of existence
3. Flood of views
4. Flood of ignorance.

All these four are in our mind and they all are equally dangerous. These four are like four rivers, which are to be dried out by wise persons with vipassanā. One day a certain student asked the Buddha how should one restrain these streams and how should one completely stop these streams? The Buddha said, with mindfulness one should restrain these streams and with wisdom should one completely stop them.

In order to restrain and completely dry out these four rivers one should practice meditation. and Then, one can build four dams across the rivers. The four are the four establishments of mindfulness. When one develops and cultivates the four establishments of mindfulness, one can build a secure place for oneself. The Buddha said that it was an island that one could build for oneself. The Buddha time and again instructed us to make an island for our own protection from these floods. This is that island. The island of the establishment of mindfulness (Satipatthāna). This is how and why we practice bhavana (meditation).

When we practice meditation the most important thing is practicing the middle path. The middle path is the unique path that the Buddha discovered and declared. The middle path is not only the eight factors but also the middle way of avoiding extremes. When we practice we should avoid all extremes. Some practitioners strive hard with pain. If you wrestle with severe pain, be more and more mindful to understand that it was not what the Buddha expected from us. We can follow different methods for easy access to concentration rather than torturing ourselves in the name of meditation. Meditation means not only sitting. One can practice while standing walking, sitting or even lying down. Those are the four postures of mediation. Med-

itation means not developing your body but developing and cultivating your mind.

One day a certain deity came to the Buddha and said: “Venerable sir, how did you cross the flood?” The Buddha said, “By not halting, friend, and by not straining I crossed the flood.” The deity then asked, “But Sir, how is it that by not halting and by not straining you crossed the flood?” The Buddha then answered, “When I came to a standstill, friend, then I sank; when I struggled, then I got swept away. It is in this way, friend, that by not halting and by not straining I crossed the flood.” On hearing this wonderful answer of the Buddha, elated, he recited the following stanza:

“After a long time, at last see
A brahmin who is fully quenched
Who by not halting, not straining,
Has crossed over attachment to the world.”

This is the way to practice meditation. If we strive to force ourselves, then we cannot continue our meditation properly. We may even grow sick. At the same time, if we are too lazy to practice meditation, then we never get the benefit of this wonderful Dhamma taught by the Exalted One. We should avoid both these extremes and practice mindfulness as the means of developing both serenity and insight so that we can live happily, peacefully in society and eventually, attain different stages of the holy life as we gradually, systematically, one-by-one achieve the highest goal of Nibbāna (No fire).

Therefore, let us be more and more intelligent, patient and wise to understand the teachings of the Buddha as given in the original discourses. Let us practice accordingly, with full confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. If our confidence is unwavering, and our morality is pristine pure, that is the way to enter the path as a stream winner who can cut off his/her samsaric journey in seven lifetimes and never be born in hell.

May we all be able to cut off samsaric journey pretty soon and attain Supreme Bliss of Nibbana!

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

During the Rains Retreat period, we were able to renovate our temple with the help of many generous contributors, supporters and volunteers. Thank you all.



THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

By Bhikkhuni Satima

The Noble Eightfold Path is a unique path. It is also referred to as the Middle Path and is the one and only straight path that leads to Nibbana. This is the very first teaching of the Blessed One that was given to the group of five ascetics in the Deer Park and also the very last teaching given to the wanderer Subhadda just before His passing away. This is what the Blessed One taught for the most part to most of His disciples during the forty years of His teaching. This Noble Eightfold Path is the only practice that the Blessed One taught that leads one towards final liberation. This is the most important teaching and the practice that the Blessed One gave us.

The path is called the Middle Path as it avoids the two extremes of: indulgence in sensual pleasure, and indulgence in self-mortification. Both these extremes the Blessed One has avoided and has found the Middle Path which makes one both to see and to know, which leads to peace, to discernment, to enlightenment, to Nibbana.’ (Samyutta Nikaya) ‘It is called Noble because when all the factors come together in a fully developed form, they stand on the threshold to stream-entry.’ (The Wings to Awakening)

The Noble Eightfold Path is the core of the Blessed One’s teachings and is the entire practice. It consists of eight factors. They are:

1. Right View
2. Right Intention
3. Right speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

By these eight steps the entire teachings of the Blessed One is covered. He has explained this path in various ways in almost all the suttas.

Right View is the beginning and the end of the path. It is given the first place because and initial understanding of Dukkha is needed for a person to get started in the practice. Then by gradually developing this understanding with the other factors of the

path one gains wisdom and attains final liberation. Right View is to see and to know phenomena as they really are; understanding of the Law of Kamma or cause and effect; understand that doing wholesome actions bring wholesome results and doing unwholesome actions bring unwholesome results. Right view is also the understanding of the Four Noble Truths – the existence of Dukkha, the cause of Dukkha, the cessation of Dukkha and the path leading to the cessation of Dukkha. Right view refers to the cognitive aspect of wisdom.

Right Intention refers to the volitional aspect. It is a kind of mental energy that controls our actions.

Right Intention is of three types:

1. The intention of renunciation – *Nekkhamma Sankappa*
2. The intention of benevolence – *Aryapada Sankappa*
3. The intention of harmlessness – *Avihimsa Sankappa*

Simply put – be kind, be gentle and make peace.

The purpose of Right Intention is twofold – to eliminate unwholesome evil thoughts and to develop wholesome pure thoughts.

Right Intention is of two kinds:

1. ‘Mundane Right Intention’ - thoughts free from lust, ill-will and cruelty which leads worldly fruits and brings good results.
2. ‘Supramundane Right Intention’, which is not of the world but is supramundane and conjoined with the path. (MN 117)

Morality is a very important teaching of Buddhism. It emphasizes the importance of a virtuous life. The teachings stress on the necessity of cultivating virtues such as non – violence, love and compassion.

Right Speech:

1. To abstain from false speech - not to lie and not to be deceitful,

2. To abstain from speech that is slanderous and malicious
3. To abstain from speech that is offensive or hurt others – harsh, rude & impolite speech
4. To abstain from gossip, idle chatter, and foolish talk
5. Positively put, this means to speak the truth, to be friendly, warm, and gentle and to talk only when necessary.

Right Speech is of two kinds:

1. 'Mundane Right Speech' which yields worldly fruits and brings good results.
2. 'Supramundane Right Speech' which is not of the world, but is supramundane and conjoined with the path.' (MN 117)

Right Action:

1. To abstain from killing living beings,
2. To abstain from stealing,
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct.

Positively stated, right action means to act kindly and compassionately, to be honest, to respect the belongings of others, and to keep sexual relationships that are harmless to others.

Right Action is of two kinds:

1. 'Mundane Right Action' which yields worldly fruits and brings good results.
2. 'Supramundane Right Action', which is not of the world, but is supramundane and conjoined with the path. (MN 117)

PHOTOS FROM VESAK CELEBRATION 2012

The commemoration of Vesak was very successful. Many devotees and dhamma practitioners participated to dedicate their day to spend in temple by observing Eight precepts, practicing meditation and listening to insightful talks and discussion. It was wonderful to have Bhante Wimalasara on this occasion to give talks and conduct meditation sessions.



Right Livelihood means that one should earn one's living in a righteous way and that wealth should be gained legally and honestly. The teachings advise to refrain from being involved in professions that bring harm to other living beings directly or indirectly. The five trades that are prohibited are: dealing in weapons, killing animals for food, prostitution and slave trade, selling poisons and dealing in drugs and intoxicants.

Right Livelihood is of two kinds:

1. 'Mundane Right Livelihood', which yields worldly fruits and brings good results.
2. 'Supramundane Right livelihood', which is not of the world but is supramundane and conjoined with the path. (MN117)

Right Effort is a prerequisite for the other principles of the path. Without effort, which is an act of will, nothing can be achieved. Right effort is of four types. They are:

1. To prevent the arising of un-arisen unwholesome states
2. To abandon unwholesome states that have already arisen
3. To cultivate wholesome states that have not yet arisen
4. To maintain and perfect wholesome states already arisen.

Right Mindfulness is the mental ability to see things as they really are, with clear consciousness. With the practice of mindfulness, the mind is deliberately kept at a level of bare attention. The mind is trained to remain in the present, open quiet and alert contemplating the present event. Right mindfulness is an experience that is not accompanied by any conceptions or ideas. Right Mindfulness is fourfold. It is The Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

1. Mindfulness of the body
2. Mindfulness of Feelings
3. Mindfulness of Thoughts
4. Mindfulness of Mental-phenomena

Right Samadhi is mental culture or mental discipline. A stilled mind becomes very pliable and easy to work with. It is the one-pointed-ness of the mind. When the mind is thus stilled making it collected and one-pointed it becomes calm and pure and acts as a powerful tool to see things as they really are. This leads to true wisdom by direct experience. Right Samadhi is:

1. When one attains to and abides in the first

meditative absorption - jhana, which is detachment-born and accompanied by applied thought, sustained thought, joy, and bliss.

2. By letting go of applied and sustained thought one attains to, and abides in the second jhana, which is inner tranquility, one-pointed-ness of mind and which has joy and bliss.
3. By detachment from joy one dwells in equanimity, mindful, and with clear comprehension and enjoys bliss in body, and attains to the third jhana, "dwelling in equanimity, mindfulness, and bliss".
4. By giving up of bliss and suffering, one attains to, and abides in the fourth jhana, which is neither suffering nor bliss, and which is the purity of equanimity.

The Blessed One said: "Now what, monks, is Noble Right Samadhi with its supports and requisite conditions? Any singleness of mind equipped with these seven factors — right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness — is called noble right samadhi with its supports and requisite conditions. (Mahacattarisaka Sutta)

THE ACQUIRED FACTORS – in the Mahacattarisaka sutta the Blessed One explains that when the Noble Eightfold Path is developed and cultivated it leads to the development of two more factors. These are:

1. Right Knowledge or insight – *Samma Nanna*
2. Right Liberation or release – *Samma Vimutti*

It is these two factors that fall under the category of wisdom – panna .

RIGHT KNOWLEDGE is seeing things as they really are by direct experience NOT as they appear to be. This is the deep insight that arises into the ultimate realities.

RIGHT LIBERATION is the last to arise. This is the arising of the knowledge that one has awakened. It is the reaching of the pinnacle of the practice. These two are the end result of correctly practicing the Noble Eightfold Path.

SADHU! SADHU!! SADHU!!!

May all beings be well and happy! May you be well and happy!

MNBV EVENTS JOURNAL

—MAY TO OCT. 2012—

<i>May 13</i> Students from University of Minnesota to discuss regarding Buddhism	<i>mount</i> <i>July 22</i> Students from MCTC to discuss regarding Buddhism	<i>September 9</i> One Day Meditation Retreat at MRC	Bhavana Society, West Virginia
<i>May 27</i> Dhamma talk and Meditation for local community at Butterfly Rainbow Center, South Dakota	<i>July 22</i> Dhamma talk and Meditation at BRC, SD	<i>September 19</i> Students from St. Thomas University to discuss regarding World religion.	<i>October 9</i> Dhamma talk and meditation at St. Cloud State University
<i>May 28</i> Dhamma talk and Meditation for Inmates at South Dakota State Penitentiary, South Dakota	<i>July 23</i> Dhamma talk and meditation at SDSP, SD	<i>September 21</i> Students from Bethany College to discuss regarding Buddhism	<i>October 11</i> Dhamma talk and meditation at University of Minnesota
<i>July 1</i> Vas Aradhana (Rains Retreat Invitation)	<i>August 3</i> Students from Yale University to discuss regarding Buddhism	<i>September 23</i> Dhamma talk and meditation at BRC, SD	<i>October 12</i> Maha Pirith Chanting at Minnesota Buddhist Vihara
<i>July 6</i> Students from MCTC to discuss regarding Buddhism	<i>August 5</i> Students from Bethel University to discuss regarding cross cultures	<i>September 24</i> Dhamma talk and meditation at SDSP, SD	<i>October 13</i> Kathina Ceremony at Minnesota Buddhist Vihara
<i>July 15</i> One Day Meditation Retreat at Meditation Retreat Center, Rose-	<i>August 12</i> One Day Meditation Retreat at MRC	<i>October 4</i> Discussion with students at Bethel University	<i>October 14</i> Dhamma talk and meditation at BRC, SD
	<i>August 26</i> Dhamma talk and meditation at BRC, SD	<i>October 6 & 7</i> Participation to Maha Pirith Chanting and Kathina Ceremony at	<i>October 15</i> Dhamma talk and meditation at SDSP, SD
	<i>August 27</i> Dhamma talk and meditation at SDSP, SD		<i>October 20</i> One Day Meditation Retreat at MRC

VAS ARADHANA 2012

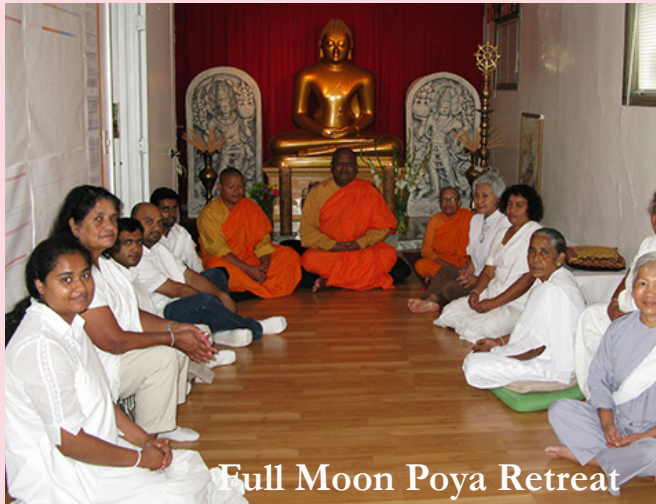
This year, Piyumi & Priyantha Samaratunga and their family invited monks to observe Rains Retreat at Minnesota Buddhist Vihara on behalf of all devotees. During these three month retreats, many activities were conducted such as weekly Atavisi Buddha puja, monthly one day meditation retreats, monthly full moon poya observance and weekly meditation and sutta discussions. Thank you for your support and dedication.



PHOTOS FROM OTHER EVENTS



Dhamma School



Full Moon Poya Retreat



Sunday Sutta Class

PHOTOS FROM GET TOGETHER 2012

This event was held at MRC, Rosemount. Many people participated and enjoyed the day as the nature permitted to do. It was sunny, and bright to be out there. Thanks to all the event coordinators and participants for making this event a success.



MANGALA SUTTA: DISCOURSE ON BLESSINGS

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, approached the Blessed One, respectfully saluted him, and stood beside him. Standing thus, he addressed the Blessed One in verse:

1. "Many deities and men longing for happiness have pondered on (the question of) blessings. Pray tell me what the highest blessings are.

2. "Not to associate with the foolish, but to associate with the wise, and to honor those worthy of honor — this is the highest blessing.

3. "To reside in a suitable locality, to have performed meritorious actions in the past, and to set oneself in the right direction — this is the highest blessing.

4. "Vast learning, skill in handicrafts, well grounded in discipline, and pleasant speech — this is the highest blessing.

5. "To support one's father and mother; to cherish one's wife and children, and to be engaged in peaceful occupations — this is the highest blessing.

6. "Liberality, righteous conduct, rendering

assistance to relatives, and performance of blameless deeds — this is the highest blessing.

7. "To cease and abstain from evil, to abstain from intoxicating drinks, and diligent in performing righteous acts — this is the highest blessing.

8. "Reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude, and the timely hearing of the Dhamma, the teaching of the Buddha — this is the highest blessing.

9. "Patience, obedience, meeting the Samanas (holy men), and timely discussions on the Dhamma — this is the highest blessing.

10. "Self-control, chastity, comprehension of the Noble Truths, and the realization of Nibbana — this is the highest blessing.

11. "The mind that is not touched by the vicissitudes of life,[1] the mind that is free from sorrow, stainless, and secure — this is the highest blessing.

12. "Those who have fulfilled the conditions (for such blessings) are victorious everywhere, and attain happiness everywhere — To them these are the highest blessings."

"Maha-mangala Sutta: Blessings" (Sn 2.4), translated from the Pali by Piyadassi Thera. Access to Insight, 30 August 2012, <http://www.access-toinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.04.piya.html>



PHOTO FROM ONE DAY MEDITATION RETREAT 2012

BHOOMI PUJA PROJECT

We initiated the “Bhoomi Puja Project” in 2010 to pay off the principle of temple mortgage and continue to the present day. We would like to convey our thanks to all those who have supported and continuously supporting whenever possible. We also encourage others to be part of this project to fulfill our dream in near future.

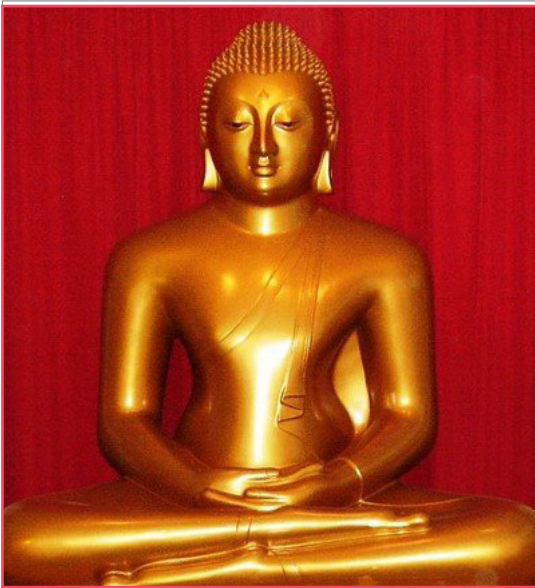
For more information, please visit our website: www.mnbv.org
or contact us by email: mnbuddhist@gmail.com
or by phone @ 612-522-1811

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.



The best of paths is the
Noble Eightfold path;
the best of truths are the
Four Noble Truths.
Of all states, non-attachment
is the best.
The best of men is the
Enlightened One.

Dhammapada 273

You are most welcome to join our:

Dhamma School • Weekly Meditation Group • Sutta Discussion Class
Meditation Retreats • Monthly Sil Observance • Volunteer Activities