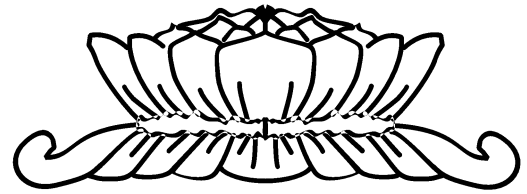


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Journal of the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara

Issue No. 32, Summer 2010



Invitation to Peace Pagoda 12th Anniversary



& Waso Robe Offering

25th July 2554BE/2010

We have pleasure in inviting you to celebrate the 12th anniversary of the Pagoda.

Programme

Morning

- 10:30 Offerings and chanting in the Pagoda
- 11:00 Alms meal for monks
- 11:30 Communal meal

Afternoon

- 13:00 Welcome and Pagoda report
- 13:10 Chanting by various Buddhist groups
- 13:30 Five Precepts and Paritta chanting
- 13:45 Dhamma talk by senior monks
- 14:15 Waso Robe offering and Book Sponsoring
- 14:45 Transfer of Merit
- 15:00 Refreshments

Junior Programme

There will also be a celebration for young people (age 6 and above) in English, which will run from 13:00 until 15:00 and be held in the Shrine room. The programme for this event will be flexible and although it will be guided to a degree by any questions raised it is expected the following topics will be covered:

- 1 Four Noble Truths – explained by stories such as the 5 mustard seeds.
- 2 Eightfold Path – will be talked about with some parts explained through stories.
- 3 The Buddha's teachings – it is not what you know but what you do with your knowledge, again explained through stories.



Dhamma Reflections - Practical Vipassana

Bhante Gunaratana

Your total attention should be coupled with wise attention. What is wise attention? It is attention accompanied by the three wholesome roots. What are the wholesome roots? They are **generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom.**

You may have heard that you should be mindful all the time, whether you are at home or in the office, or on the bus or in your car or in somebody else's car, etc. You may interpret this advice to mean that you should keep your mind focused all the time on your breath. While driving, if you simply keep your mind on the breath you probably will get into some problems, such as losing your attention to your driving or forgetting your driving and you may have an accidents.

Sometimes you may think "to be mindful all the time" means to pay attention only to what ever you are doing at that particular time. This, of course, is what any person who is serious enough in his/her work normally does. An artist, painter, writer, singer, composer, thinking, speaker, shooter, cook, etc. must pay attention to whatever they do at any time they are engaged in their work.

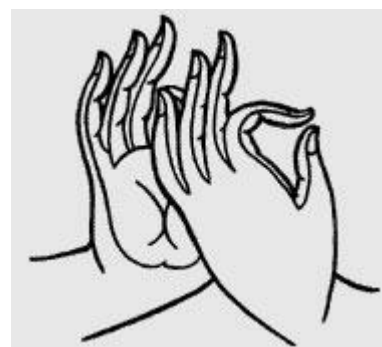
Not only human beings do this. You may have noticed cats paying total attention to their prey in order to catch them without disturbing their prey by making any mistakes. Tigers, lions and crocodiles pay total attention to what they are going to catch. You may have noticed cranes standing on one single spot for a long time to catch a fish. Sheep dogs pay total attention to the movements of sheep so they can run very quickly to direct the herd in the right direction. Unfortunately neither cat, crane, nor sheepdog can remove their greed, lust etc., or cultivate an iota of insight by merely paying total attention to their objects.

Paying attention to whatever you are doing at any time is not going to eliminate your greed, hatred, and ignorance. This, in fact, is exactly what you do in tranquillity meditation or concentration meditation. By paying attention to one thing at a time you cannot get rid of your psychic irritation. You may focus your mind on one single object for fifty years and still your psychic irritation will remain unchanged in your mind. One person may observe all the moral rules. Another may learn all the texts by heart. Someone else may gain concentration. Another may spend his/her entire life in solitude. All of them might think that they can experience supreme liberation from all psychic irritation, which no ordinary person can attain. But none of them can have that experience without destroying all the psychic irritation. Therefore in addition to all they practice they also must remove all their psychic impurities in order to experience the bliss of emancipation from all kinds of pain.

What is missing in focusing total attention to one single object all the time is wisdom. Your total attention should be coupled with wise attention. What is wise attention? It is attention accompanied by the three wholesome roots. What are the wholesome roots? They are generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom. This means that when you pay attention to something always attempt to pay attention without greed, hatred or delusion, but with the thought of generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom. These three are called wholesome roots; greed, hatred and delusion are called unwholesome roots. Don't let your mind be affected by unwholesome roots when you pay attention to something. Let the thought of generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom dominate your mind while paying attention to anything.

When you pay attention to pots and pans as you wash, you may not need any loving-kindness, generosity or wisdom towards them. You are cultivating mindfulness not for pots and pans, but for living beings. You should pay attention to any thought regarding yourself, or any other living beings. Have mindful reflection while wearing your clothes, eating your food, drinking your water, talking to someone, listening to sound, seeing an object, and walking or driving.

When you pay total attention with wise consideration or mindful reflection, your greed, hatred and delusion fade away, because in your wise attention generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom are active. Your thoughts of generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom have the power of minimizing your greed, hatred and delusion while you are engaged in any activity. While paying attention to something, without wise consideration or wise attention, you may inadvertently develop greed, hatred and confusion. You may see an object, for instance. That object may happen to be attractive, beautiful or pleasing to your eyes or it may be unattractive. At that time if you do not have wise attention, you may then end up cultivating greed or resentment for the object or you may get utterly confused ideas about the object. Or



you may think that the object is permanent instead of realizing that it is impermanent, satisfactory instead of unsatisfactory, or having a self instead of being selfless.

You may then ask how your generous thoughts can get rid of your greedy thoughts, because the greedy thoughts want to cling to the object, or grasp it. When you perceive the object with greed, your mind will cling to it and not open to any thought of letting go of greed. You may not want to take your eyes away from the object. In fact, at that time your mind temporarily becomes blind to any thought of generosity. Even if you wish to let go of the attachment to it you may do so with great reluctance. You may feel that you are generous. But your generosity is only to fulfil your greedy purpose, like gaining something in return, or gaining recognition or becoming famous by being generous. Greed has very strong super glue in it. At the very first contact with the desirable object the mind sticks fast to it. Letting go of that object is as painful as cutting off of a limb or some flesh of your body, and you cannot let go of that object from your mind.

This is where you really need your wise attention. This is where you must learn to see impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness in the object you are watching. Your wise consideration indicates that neither the object you perceive nor your feeling or sensation regarding the object remains the same even for two consecutive moments. You will not have the same sensation later on. You change, the object you perceive changes. With wise attention you will see that everything is impermanent. This knowledge of impermanence allows you to let go of your resentment. When you see with wisdom that everything that is unsatisfactory is impermanent, then you see the connection between unsatisfactoriness and greed. As you are attached to an impermanent object you will be disappointed with the change of the object that you are so attached to. When you have wise consideration you see that which is impermanent and unsatisfactory is without self.

Then you might think "Ah! Since this object is going to change, I must be quick and smart to take the advantage of this object right now and enjoy myself as quickly as possible before it disappears. Tomorrow it won't be there". Here you must remember haste makes waste. If you make a hasty decision and do something foolish, you will regret it later on. Sometimes you are attracted to a person, for instance, and grab hold of him/her without giving much consideration to him/her, and later on you will find many faults in that person. In any such hasty decision there is no mindfulness. You cannot beat the change nor can you stop it by making any foolish attempt.

When your mindfulness is well developed, then even in haste you make a right decision. The only thing that makes sense in rushing to beat impermanence is to step back and check your own mind and see whether or not you make the decision with wise consideration. When you are mindful you will know how to take the advantage of the current moment so that you will not regret it later on. Any mindful decision you make will make you happy and peaceful and never make you regret it later on.

Always remember that **mindfulness is the state of mind full of generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom together with compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. Any time you pay attention to anything you must ask whether your mind is full of these factors. If not you are not mindful.**

When you have generosity in the mind you will let go of any attractive sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought without any hesitation. You should certainly recognize them to be attractive in the conventional sense. Know that it is because of their attractiveness that people become attached to them and get involved in them. The deeper they get involved in them the deeper is their suffering. When you have loving-kindness in your mind you will not try to reject any sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought if they happen to be unattractive. Mindfully perceive them with the thought of impermanence. When any sight, sound, smell, taste, touch or thought appears to be identical with self, look at it as an unreal concept inculcated in your mind by conditioning through generations of wrong notions and look at it with wisdom.

Mindfulness is not carefulness. It is not smartness. Anybody can be careful and smart. A man walking on a wire three hundred feet above ground is careful. Remember those gymnasts performing all kinds of balancing feats. Numerous daredevils who climb very steep mountains, across rocks, slippery places, rivers, and so on are very careful. Many thieves are very smart and outwit the police. Many drug dealers, bank robbers, criminals are very smart. None of them can be considered to be mindful.

Mindfulness is that state of mind which reflects upon itself not to get caught in greed, hatred and ignorance, which cause suffering to yourself, to others or to both. When we ask people not to cultivate resentment some people ask us how can you live without resentment? This is the miracle of mindfulness. When you practice mindfulness you can learn to do most difficult things easily. Not

becoming resentful, lustful, or confused is very difficult. Through constant training in mindfulness you learn to live without resentment, lust or confusion. Moreover to be mindful is more difficult than to be unmindful, and you learn to do that more difficult one more easily than the easier one. For this reason the Buddha said:

Sukaram sadhuna sadhu - sadhu papena dukkaram
papam papena sukaram - papam ariyena dukkaram.

For the good to do what is good is easy
For the bad to do what is bad is easy
For the bad to do what is good is difficult
For the noble to do what is bad is difficult. (Udana 5.8)



‘An historical search for the Origins of Buddhism and its Eventual Influence on the World’

This essay looks initially at the early life of Siddhartha Gautama, born some 2500 BCE, who eventually became the Buddha. His birth was unusual with a blessing from a Holy man and his mother dying soon after. His father, who is believed to have been a king, protected Siddhartha as he might become a Holy man himself. On three occasions Siddhartha sees the effects of nature on man, of age, illness and death, these affected him greatly. He then ponders the extremes of riches and poverty, thinking by them he might find release from samsara. After much seeking he concludes that a middle way is what is needed and after perfect meditation he becomes the Buddha. His teaching is then expressed in several lists, as the four Noble truths and the Noble Eight fold path. Followers of these would eventually enable the Buddhist to obtain Nirvana. Buddhism spread through India and several countries in Asia and eventually into the West.

Looking back at the birth of Siddhartha Gautama, the name before he became the Buddha, it is suggested that he was born some 500 years BCE, and lived for about 80 years (Mitchell, 2002, p.11). The family was of the Sakyas of the clan of the Gotama, of the nobility, in the town now called Lumbini, Nepal. Little is known of his actual early life, except that he was believed to be passionate, rebellious and good looking. This was during a period of changing political complexity, and a chaotic expansion of cities along the Ganges Basin (Carrithers, 2001, pp.12-14).

Early records do not refer to Siddhartha as being married, though the following statement might have meant more, ‘it occurred to me that life in the home is cramped and dirty, while the life gone forth into homelessness is wide open; it is difficult to live a spiritual life completely perfect and pure in all its parts while cabined inside’ (M1241). (Carrithers, 2001, p.20). However, according to prevalent legend, Siddhartha’s father was a king who expected Siddhartha to eventually reign over the Country, but his unusual birth, and prophecy over him, including his mother’s death soon after, made the king very protective. Siddhartha is believed from childhood to have been blessed with great wisdom, and lived the life of luxury and splendour with every wish granted to him. He later married a beautiful princess and had a son. At a later date, his father allowed him to leave the palace on three occasions. On each, he saw a different picture of the world, an old man, one that was sick and latterly a dead person, each of which caused him great shock and confusion at the realisation of apparent powerlessness of man against the ravages of nature (Fowler, 2009, pp.14-15).

Siddhartha had many conflicts within himself, such as, on the one hand, the family’s aim of sexual relationships, having and bringing up children, the addition of possessions, and competition. On the other hand, the freedom of the open road of the ascetic, the latter albeit, with discomfort, privation and the outward show of inoffensiveness. These conflicts brought about a most profound realisation to Siddhartha, which was as follows; ‘Why, since I am myself subject to birth, aging, disease, death, sorrow and defilement, do I seek these things? Suppose, being myself subject to these things, seeing danger in them, I were to seek the unborn, unageing, undiseased, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled supreme surcease of bondage, the extinction of all these troubles?’ (Carrithers, 2001, p.21). Siddhartha continued his search into how to deal with the effects of karma. As Siddhartha is believed to have had great wisdom he will have realised that karma is neither good nor bad, but would have been a ‘cause of effect’ when

he left his wife and son, if indeed he was married. This action would have surely contradicted with his search for release to freedom, hence nirvana (Christmas, 1995, pp. 45-46).

Although the law of karma, 'Cause and Effect', were well known during the Upanishadic period and since, it was Siddhartha who approached the problem in a way that might resolve it. He thought that if one could live a life totally unable to cause an effect, then there was a possibility that one would escape from being reborn. Initially Siddhartha went to a number ascetic's who were spiritual teachers, they taught him as much as they could, but despite his ability to obtain the heights of their teaching, he found he was still limited to the natural feelings, desires and temptations of the world, of which he had many battles within his mind (Mitchell, 2002, pp.16-17).

Siddhartha eventually found that the path of ascetic rejection of everything, and the worldly attractions, both denied the way to the path of true awakening. On one occasion he remembered the state of calmness he had experienced when a boy, whilst sitting tranquilly in the shade. A feeling of great joy and freedom had come about when he had been in deep meditation, oblivious of all distractions. Through this remembrance he become aware of the need of some sort of balance, from the extremes of both the temptations of the world, which kept him from the spiritual journey and the near starvation of the body, as ascetic's intended, which virtually destroyed the mind. These opposites made him realise that there must be equilibrium, this he would eventually call the "Middle Way." Whilst pondering these thoughts, he found himself under a *Bodhi Tree*, ("Tree of awakening"), and during this time he sat, and would not move until he obtained Awakening (*Bodhi*), hence the term "*Buddha*", *conquering of the mind-budhi* (Mitchell, 2002, pp.17-18). Without great effort Siddhartha, concentrated his mind into seeking the truth of existence itself, and by this he rose to the utmost levels of insight. During one particular night, Siddhartha went through three important phases, the first was seeing all his past, the second seeing others rebirth according to karma, and thirdly, the total cleansing of all personal impurities. Through these important goals he came to the conclusion of the following Four Noble Truths, at which point he became 'Gautama the Buddha, the Awakened One' (Mitchell, 2002, p.19). Although it was originally called the Buddha's path of attainment, the modern name is Buddhism. Buddhism can 'lead to enlightened, insight through cultivation of morality, meditation, and wisdom... to take refuge in the three jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha' (Mitchell, 2001, pp.1-2).

One of Buddha's teaching was the realisation of constant change with all things, this is called *impermanence*. Another is *dissatisfactoriness (duhkha)*, which confirms that no matter how well one can be living a good life with the material things of the world, including enjoyment with family and friends, these will all change and pass away. Therefore lasting joy and happiness lived through the world will be short and disappointing with sadness setting in at some point. The latter often creates a feeling of great loss of what had been one's own, especially if by some accident had been the cause of the loss. This in turn can initiate anger, resentment and frustration against those who are thought to be blamed, and envy at others who appear to be doing well without any apparent difficulties. This is the third unwholesome effect on people, which has caused violence to erupt, and in some cases eventually wars (Mitchell, 2002, pp.35-37).

The Buddha spoke of five aggregates, as points to explain why he did not believe there was a soul or atman as the teachers of the Upanishadic era upheld, because Buddha maintained everything was forever changing. Therefore there could not be anything that could remain unchanged and continue such as a soul. The Buddha identified the first of the aggregates as the material body, sensation as the second, and the third perception, the fourth mental formations and lastly consciousness. These all had great influence on ones thoughts and actions and can therefore be the cause of good or evil in the material world (Mitchell, 2002, p.38).

'The *four Noble truths* are:

1. There is suffering.
2. There is cause for suffering.
3. There is cessation of suffering.
4. There is path leading to the cessation of suffering.

One does not have to read the Tipitaka from beginning to end to understand the *four noble truths*. Each chapter is a sutra (synopsis), which Buddha would have used to explain the same *four noble truths* to his audiences under different circumstances' (Calyaneratne, 2006). The Buddha's first conversions were five ascetics he had known previously. Through Buddha's teaching, they 'found wisdom, Awakening, and

Nirvana...referring to himself and these enlightened disciples as *arahats* (Pali *arahats'*), meaning “worthy ones” (Mitchell, 2001, pp. 20-21).

'Aim: To attain final liberation called Nibbana.

Instruments: Mind and Body (Nama-rupa).

Procedure: Follow the Noble eight-fold path i.e.

1. Right View- To understand wholesome deeds, unwholesome deeds and comprehend the law of Karma.
2. Right Intention- The intention of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion.
3. Right Speech- Abstaining from false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech and idle chatter.
4. Right Action- Abstaining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.
5. Right Livelihood- Abstaining from wrong and corrupt means of livelihood.
6. Right Effort- Awakening zeal for abandoning of unwholesome states and arising & sustaining of wholesome states.
7. Right Mindfulness- The four foundations of mindfulness (satipattana) namely contemplation on body, contemplation on feelings, contemplation on mind and contemplation on mind-objects.
8. Right Concentration- Abandoning of five hindrances namely lust, ill-will, sloth-torpor, worry-agitation and doubt through jhanas '(Calyaneratne, 2006,)

When one has achieved the application of the Noble eight fold path, as one finds them necessary, and all the positive attributes that means to the senses, so that all negative characteristics from self, as flames needing to be quenched, as Buddha puts it, then one is close to obtaining Nirvana, which means to 'blow out' all harmful affect's against the mind (Mitchell, 2002, pp. 50-51).

Siddhartha, as the Buddha is understood to have covered approximately 150 x 250 miles, from Savatti south to Kosambi and east to Campa. During his lifetime he came across all walks of existence, great and small, there was no area of society he was not aware of (Carrithers, 2001, pp.28-29). Buddhism has adapted to the culture wherein it has arrived, such as in the West. In Britain, there have been many accounts of people coming to the meetings suffering with stress and depression problems. Buddhism has shown them a way of release and how to obtain wholeness (Fowler, 2009, pp.78-79).

Takhar (2009, lecture notes) state that the two main schools of Buddhist thought are, Theravada and Mahayana beliefs, with the former being the most conservative. Over several hundred years Theravada Buddhism expanded from India, via Sri Lanka to Burma, Thailand, and beyond. Whereas in India there are multiple beliefs, in Burma and Thailand, Theravada Buddhism became the only way to salvation (Gombrich, 1994, pp. 28-29). Both schools used different historical languages for study, which caused striking differences in their Buddhist applications, in that Theravada Buddhism concentrated on Pali, which allowed the sayings of Buddha from particular manuscripts. Whereas, Mahayana Buddhism was more easily linked to the language of Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, which then led to other sacred Buddhist writings (Collins, 1994, pp. 22-23).

This essay has covered the initial period of Siddhartha's early life, and his search for release from samsara by finding the 'Middle Path' between riches and poverty. He eventually becomes the Buddha and obtains Nirvana through specific meditation and living a balanced life. Buddhism has eventually spread from India through parts of Asia to countries in the West.

G. Beale

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Buddha Day 2010

Once again Buddha day was a happy experience for all of us, even the weather was kind to us, and at least it didn't rain.

Dr Ottara Nyana had arranged a new additional ceremony to our usual ones. I was aware that something was happening but I didn't know what until all the over 80's were asked to take a seat in front of the gathering, where we were given many useful presents by a stream of happy smiling people. This act of kindness brought gratitude and happiness to the recipients and much merit I am sure to the givers, so a big thank you to Dr Ottara Nyana for arranging it.



I have been to many a Buddha day over the years and I have always been aware of the happiness engendered by the occasion. The meeting of old friends, the feeling of oneness with everyone. We are so fortunate to have found the Dhamma and to have the Peace Pagoda where we can hold a ceremony like this. Talking of ceremonies, I was talking to some friends recently about the acts that most Buddhists regularly perform such as anjali, making offerings and bowing. We agreed that these practices are meaningful only if done mindfully, for instance, bowing before a shrine can be done in perfunctory fashion just because it is the thing to do, then, with the other things I mentioned they become just something that is done and meaningless. Bowing can be very helpful to us if done mindfully; it can loosen our grip on this self which is blocking the light of true understanding.

There is something else I think we need which will help us to cope with the vicissitudes of samsara, and that is the ability to lighten up and smile a little, it's a good antidote for physical ailments and mental problems. Sometimes when I am confronted with my own inadequacies or stupidity (and that is getting more frequent with age!) I feel despondent but then I think "come on you old fool, get real," and I find I am laughing at myself, often out loud, and soon I am able to continue trying to walk the Dhamma path and be at peace with this old mind and body, warts and all.

Ps. I am sure that the Buddha had a sense of humour. All the best to everyone.

W. Strongman



Vihara News

Birthday Celebrations

28 March: Dr Ottara Nyanna, supported by Dr Aung Thein+Daw Than Than, March born families and all of our supporters (over a hundred visitors) celebrated Bhante's birthday with his giving of certificates to his Abhidhamma, Sutta and Pali long term students.

15th May: Dr Khin Aye Myint (Manchester) was joined for her birthday celebrations by members of her family and over 60 friends.

26 June: Shwe Han (Drs Tha Han+Shwe Zin's daughter) with over 50 friends and family attended her birthday celebrations.



Ordinations

19 April: Dr Htay Naung & John Michael

5 June: Dr Mine Ko Ko Thaug

Events

1 April: Councillor Michael Wilkes, Lord Mayor of Birmingham, was welcomed to the Pagoda by John Beard, Robert Black and Bhante, who presented a wall hanging of Lord Buddha's main teachings and several books.

24 April: Buddha day was celebrated at the BM&AG with chanting by sangha from Sri-Lanka, Thailand, India and Myanmar along with many other Buddhist groups: Zen, Tibetan, Samatha, etc. The event was also attended by over a hundred dhamma friends.

25 April: Buddha day in our Peace pagoda also included remembrance of Dr Rewata Dhamma's 6th Anniversary and the paying of respect to our senior members. (see Buddha Day 2010 article)

30 May: Dr Rewata Dhamma's memorial service was attended by over 80 supporters.



Dr Ottara Nyana's Activities

2 - 17 April: Bhante ran a 15 day retreat at the Dhammaramsi meditation centre, Belgium. Teaching each day included the Abhidhamma (Buddhist Cosmology – a study of you and the universe), the Mahasatipatthana Sutta and Abhidhamma (higher level).

In addition he gave a one day lecture in Leven (12 April) on loving-kindness in daily life.

30 April: Dr Ottara Nyana took part in the chanting by different faith leaders at Aston University for victims of the Chinese Earthquake.

17 May: Dr Ottara Nyana, U Nagasena, John Beard and Dr Mar Mar Lwin, along with over 60 faith members and visitor attended the Birmingham City of Culture 2012 meeting.

20 June: Bhante took part in the 20th Anniversary celebrations at Milton Keynes Peace Pagoda together with U Nagasena, Dr Mar Mar Lwin and Dhammajotika.

24 June: Bhante, accompanied by Sunny, attended Birmingham City University's 2010 International Student's Presentation.

Future Events

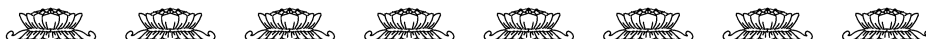
15 – 18 July : Bhante will attend the International Exhibition of the Buddha's Relics in Geneva, Switzerland.

20 - 29 Aug: 10-day retreat at the Vihara

9 – 12 Sep: English Heritage Open Days

20 - 26 Sep: Bhante will lead a meditation retreat at the Dhammarama Centre, CZ.

30 Oct - 10 Nov: Bhante will lead a Meditation retreat at the Dhammarasi Centre, Belgium.



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