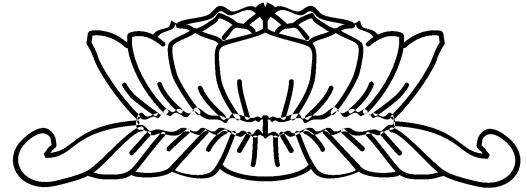


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Journal of the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara

Issue No. 35, Autumn 2011



The Four Noble Truths and Right View



During Vassa, the Rains retreat, according to our tradition, on Monday evenings after Meditation, Dr. Ottara Nyana has been explaining to us the Four Noble Truths: with special emphasis on Right View. On consecutive Monday nights Bhante asked us to read out loud from the chanting leaflet that we use. For example at the beginning of the series of Bhante's talks we read the First Noble Truth from Dhammacakka- ppavattana Sutta, "This is the Noble Truth of suffering. Birth is suffering; aging is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering; association with the unpleasant is suffering; separation from the pleasant is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates of clinging are suffering". Bhante discussed the suffering of the foetus in the womb, of the mother giving birth, of aging with cracking of teeth, white hair, stooped body, then of sickness and death when we must lose our beloved relatives and possessions. He also explained to us that the five aggregates of clinging are material form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness, [what we think of as our mind and body] and that Lord Buddha refers to them as suffering because they are impermanent and constantly changing. If we think they are permanent and have attachment to them [which is craving], they only cause us suffering.

Another Monday night we read the Second Noble Truth, "This is the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering. It is this craving which produces repeated existence, is bound up with delight and lust, and seeks pleasure here and there, namely, craving for sense pleasures, craving for existence, and craving for non-existence". Bhante explained the more sensual pleasure beings crave for the more suffering they get. He said, 'If you are really brave you can try more sensual pleasure. For example when people overeat they spoil their physical health. Then if they indulge in alcohol and drugs they lose control of their behaviour. The alcohol and drugs also destroy their mental and physical health. Also if people are not satisfied with only one partner, then they get HIV and AIDS. All this suffering is caused by sensual craving.

Then we read the third Noble Truth, 'this is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering. It is the complete fading away and cessation of this craving, its forsaking and abandonment, liberation and detachment from it'. Bhante explained that Monk's life is designed to get rid of craving. He took off his hat and beneath he has no hair. Then he pointed to the monks robe, and explained he must wear it all twenty-four hours, even when taking a shower. This is to cut craving for fashionable appearance. Then he explained how monks do not eat in evening. This is to cut craving for food. All these things are impermanent. We cannot hold on to them. Therefore to be free of suffering monks try to cut craving for them. But Bhante said Monks still have craving. For a layperson craving may be for his car, his house or his wife. For the Monk it is for his Dhamma book. He may say to another monk, "that is my Dhamma book. Don't use my

book!" Bhante explained that Nibbāna is the complete destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion. Only when we attain the perfect peace of Nibbāna we will be free from suffering and the craving that causes it.

Then we read the fourth Noble Truth. "This is the Noble Truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. It is the noble eight-fold path namely, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Bhante taught us that for the purpose of working towards liberation, Lord Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path is divided into three groups: [1] Morality Group, which is right speech, right action, and right livelihood; [2] Concentration Group, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration; and [3] Wisdom Group, which is made up of right view and right thought. Bhante explained that the factors of the path are divided in this way because we need to have purified morality in order to get good concentration. Otherwise when we meditate we will be distracted by worry and regret about the wrong things we have done, and we need good concentration in order to penetrate wisdom and see things as they really are. Yet when we look at the Fourth Noble Truth we see that Right View is the first factor of the noble 8-fold path. How can this be? Bhante explained to us that there are two levels of right view, Mundane right view and Supramundane right view. If we develop Mundane right view, we can have the happiness resulting from good morality, and a good rebirth, but we will still be within the round of rebecoming with all the suffering that brings. If we can attain Supramundane right view, this will lead to our complete liberation from the cycle of recurring rebirth, suffering and death.

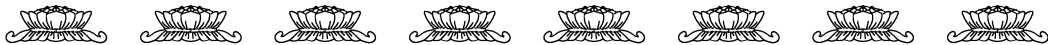
Bhante told us that Mundane Right View means accepting Kamma and the result of Kamma. It is understanding that unwholesome actions are to be blamed and bring about bad results in this life and future lives, while wholesome actions are to be praised and bring about good results throughout the round of rebirth too. Once someone develops this Mundane Right View, he avoids evil actions and performs good ones. He understands that his own actions in this life or a past life make his present life miserable or happy. This is a natural law of cause and effect. There is no need for a lawgiver, or a God to punish evil actions or reward virtuous actions. The actions themselves, through their good or bad nature, quite naturally bring into being the appropriate favourable or unfavourable results. As Bhante often says, 'we are our own God. Whatever we think or act now we are creating our own character, our own future'. This Mundane Right View lays the foundation for developing Supramundane Right View. The Supramundane right view, which leads to liberation, is the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths. Bhante quoted in Pāli language from the Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta and then explained it to us in English where Lord Buddha says "And what monks is Right View? It is monks, the knowledge of suffering, the knowledge of the origin of suffering, the knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and the knowledge of the way of practice leading to the cessation to suffering. This is called Right View".

Bhante explained we have practiced the Morality group because earlier we took the five precepts. Then when we practiced loving-kindness meditation, this is the Samadhi Group. But to reach Nibbāna, the complete destruction of greed hatred and delusion we need to practice Vipassana. Bhante quoted the four foundations of mindfulness from Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta in Pāli language, then explained to us in English, that when we sit in meditation time, watching the breath that is Kāyānupassanā [Mindfulness of the body]. Then Bhante said, when we notice our sensations, cold, hot, itch or pain we must know it. That is Vedanā -nupassanā [Mindfulness of the feelings or sensations]. Then when greed hatred or delusion arises we should know it. This is Cittānupassanā [Mindfulness of the mind], and when drowsiness arises causing us to fall asleep, or when restlessness arises making us want to stop meditating, we should know that these are the hindrances. This is Dhammānupassanā. They are Insight Meditation, Lord Buddha's medicine to get us out of suffering.

Bhante explained that Supramundane right view is also to understand things as they really are, not as they appear. It is to apply Insight Meditation to the five aggregates of clinging [what we think of as our mind and body], and to understand their true nature as impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self.

Bhante asked a new meditator 'Do you have pain when you sit for meditation?' She replied, 'Only when I sit on the floor I have pain, so I sit on a chair'. Bhante said, 'Please sit on the floor to meditate and enjoy the pain'. [We all laughed]. Bhante continued, "That is how we can come to understand the Noble Truth of Suffering. Know the pain. Don't move immediately if there is pain. Know it. If you watch it, putting all your attention on it, you will see that it changes, sometimes it is sharp, sometimes throbbing, or sometimes fading away: that is how you will get to know impermanence. Then understanding it is painful and impermanent, we can know not-self, because the body is not under our control. There is no controller, no self inside. The pain will stop or continue according to its own nature. This is Supramundane right view".

That's why we need a Meditation Teacher. Without Bhante's instructions, if we have pain when sitting we may move immediately, or give up meditating and miss the chance to experience impermanence, suffering and not-self. Or if during Meditation time, we have a memory that upsets us or find we are thinking about what we want to eat after meditation is over, without Bhante's guidance, we may think it's just a distraction and give up. We would miss the chance to know that angry mind or greedy mind has arisen. Or if we have fed up meditating and want to stop, without Bhante's guidance we may not realise that its one of the hindrances and we may give up. We would have missed the Insight knowledge that leads to supramundane right view, which can bring us to the end of suffering and to Nibbāna.



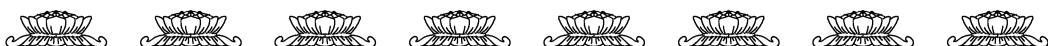
The Light of the Dhamma

Many people approach Buddhism from an intellectual point of view and of course this approach is very useful in understanding much of the Dhamma but it seems to me that to understand and benefit from the Dhamma we need to see more deeply into it, to absorb the essence of Lord Buddha's teaching with the help of regular meditation and developing a lifestyle that is conducive to living without violence, anger, greed and ill will, a thoughtful life that gradually brings insight into the realities that are hidden behind our concepts.

It can be likened to having lived in a dark cave all our lives where our only knowledge of our immediate environment is by our sense of touch, then for a moment there is light and we see clearly and although the light is quickly extinguished we will never forget (this is the way it is) and with this knowing we can relax into peace and contentment.

It doesn't of course prevent us from feeling pain, sadness, worry etc but we are a little more able to accept them and deal with them with love, compassion, gentleness and kindness toward ourselves and others, having friends on our journey is a great help, having friends in the Dhamma is our wonderful good fortune, a friendship which we all experienced on Kathina day. My family and I were happily meeting friends old and new. The weather was very kind to us, there was a wonderful friendly atmosphere, the food was superb, we especially liked the many vegetarian options all of which were tempting (we ate too much). Our thanks to everyone concerned.

Bill & family.



Vihara News

A ten days meditation Retreat was held from 19th to 28th of August 2011 in our Vihara. In addition, Dr Ottara Nyana explained Vipassanā in accordance with the Abhidhamma. All the meditators were happy with the meditation practice and Abhidhamma teaching. A special mention is given for the families listed below, for taking part in the retreat, and for supporting lunch dāna for the meditators and Saṅgha.

1. Dr Kyaw Myint Oo + Daw Than Than Yew and family
2. Dr Po (niece May Nanda's birthday) Wolverhampton.
3. Dr Katagoda +Dr Mallika and family, Birmingham.
4. Dhamma jotika and family, Birmingham
5. Dr Htey Naing + Daw So Thiri Thant and family
6. Dr Mar Mar Lwin, Birmingham
7. Dr Chit Ko Ko + Dr Khin Mar Aye, Birmingham
8. Dr Wunna +Dr Barbara and family Wakefield
9. Ko Moe Aung + Ma Shwe Sin and family, Wolverhampton

Abhidhamma day and Lighting ceremony

The Full Moon day celebration of Thadingyut, known as Abhidhamma day, commemorates the Buddha's return to earth following his teaching of the higher Dhamma in Tāvātimsa, the Celestial Kingdom, to his mother Queen Mahā Mayā who had become Santusita deity. It was the Festival of Lights in our Peace Pagoda on the Full Moon night of 12th October. Our supporters were very devoted by making their offerings to Lord Buddha, of hundreds of lighted candles, incense sticks, flowers and fruits. Finally, our supporters listened to the Paṭṭhāna (Abhidhamma) peacefully chanted by the Saṅgha.

Kathina Ceremony

The Kathina Robe Offering ceremony was celebrated in our Vihara on the 16th Oct. (Sunday).

In the morning programme, all of our supporters offered a special meal, flowers, fruit and light to Lord Buddha. At 10.30 am our supporters offered lunch dāna to the Saṅgha as well as to all of the visitors. Then at 1pm, the traditional ceremony of Kathina Robe Offering and merit sharing took place in the Peace Pagoda.

The Kathina supporters for 2011 are: 'In remembrance of and with respect to our grandparents and parents', Dr Win Myint Aung + Dr Khin Thin Han and daughters Dr. Wynn Thandar and Ma Lynn Kathy Win, Wolverhampton.

Over two hundred supporters attended the Kathina ceremony including some from Myanmar, Singapore and USA.



Slide Projector Donation

Dr Khin Maung Htun + Mrs Naw Than Cho (sons) Saw Lin Ko and Dr Thurein Htun from London donated a slide projector for the Buddhist Academy teaching hall.

Donation for Buildings' Painting

It is time for the repainting of the wooden carvings including the doors and window surrounds in our buildings: Pagoda, Vihara and Dhamma hall to protect it from the effects of a severe winter. The supporter is Dr Kyaw Myint Oo + Daw Than Than Ywe and family of Wakefield. We would like to say thank you to Birmingham City Council for their road repairs in Ladywood including Osler Street, especially for work done to our Vihara main gate.

Ordinations

As a Myanmar Buddhist tradition, the teenager children have their 'coming of age' by taking ordination as a novice monk or nun.

On the 24th July, U Nyunt Win+ Daw HlaHla Win, U Myint Win + Daw Htay Htay Myint, U Aung Myint+ Daw Ohmmar Cho of Sheffield and U Aung Gyi+ Daw NiNi Lwin of London celebrated ordination and Ear-boring ceremony for their children in our Vihara. Over two hundreds friends attended this ceremony and provided lunch dāna to the Saṅgha and to all of the visitors.

Novice monks were:

1. Maung Rarjar Tun
2. Maung Min Thwin Aung
3. Maung Saw Win War
4. Maung Rar jar Win
5. Maung Thant Thura Aung

Nuns were:

1. Ma Thin Thin Win (Sitala Marlar)
2. Ma Htat Htat Khine (Gandha Marlar)
3. Ma Aye Mon Htwe



The Novices and Nuns stayed together for two weeks in our Vihara, according to our Buddhist tradition, and studied Buddhism and Buddhist civilization.

Again, Mr John Michael of B'ham ordained as a temporary monk for two weeks to study Buddhism and meditation. He also gave lunch dāna to the Saṅgha and visitors, and over one hundred friends supported his ordination in our Vihara.

Birthday

May Nandar (niece of Dr Po) of Wol'ton, offered lunch dāna to the Saṅgha on the 21st Aug. in our Vihara and over 50 friends attended her birthday dāna. Dr Ottara Nyana explained SAṆKHĀRĀ from various points of view to the supporters at Dr Po's request.

Wedding Ceremony

Parodeep Birdi and Meena Dhanda's Wedding Blessing took place on 8th Oct. in our Vihara. The ceremony was celebrated in the Peace pagoda and lunch dāna was offered to the Saṅgha at the end of the ceremony. Over a hundred relatives and friends attended the ceremony.

Wedding Anniversary

Mr Hlwam Moe + Mrs Nan Newne Myint offered lunch dāna to the Saṅgha on 22nd Oct. in our Vihara. Over 30 friends and family members attended that anniversary happily. After finishing the Anniversary Dr Ottara Nyana and U Ghosaka together with Dr Mar Mar Lwin attended a Civil Service in the Bhddhist Maha Vihara and then the following day, 23th Oct, they attended the Kathina ceremony at the same Vihara. U Nagasena also attended the Kathina ceremonies in the Buddhist Vihara and Sasanaramsi Vihara in London together with U Ratthapala.

On 13th Nov. a Myanmar traditional (Htamane = Harvest) festival celebration, together with a Food Fair, took place in our Peace Pagoda, organized by Myanmar Doctors. Over a hundred visitors attended the events and the visitors and organizers donate £350 for the Buddhist Academy.



Dr Ottara Nyana's Activities

Bhante has visited Brazil several times since 2005 to lead meditation retreats at the invitation of Nalanda Brazil.

In 2011 bhante visited four cities in Brazil: Aracaju, Curitiba St. Paulo and Belo Horizonte; for a total of one month leading retreats from 28th May to 29th June. Most of the meditators come from other cities taking flights of up to 4 hours in order to attend. There were two programmes in each city: a public talk on Thursday and retreat from Friday to Sunday; either in a convent or in a Nalanda centre. In addition to leading the meditation bhante also taught the Mangala sutta, Metta sutta, Dhatuvibhanga sutta and Abhidhamma. In addition to teaching the suttas bhante also blessed the meditators with the replica of Lord Buddha's tooth which was donated to our Peace Pagoda by the President Sayadaw of the State Sangha council of Myanmar.



Following his successful visit the Nalanda Brazil dhamma group have invited bhante to visit Brazil in June 2012. The organizers are Antonio, Andre + Katharine in Aracaju, David + Melian in Curitiba, Indriyana + Gee in St. Paulo and Ricardo Sasaki+Georgia in Belo Horizonte and Ricardo Sasaki (Mahasadhmma Jotikadhaja); translator, author, conductor, organizer and founder of Nalanda Brazil.

From the 9th to 11th Sept Dr Ottara Nyana visited the Dhamma Ramsi centre in Belgium to lead a Metta (Loving-kindness) meditation retreat. It was the first time this had been done and attracted over 30 meditators. Bhante explained Metta meditation through the Metta sutta and Metta Bhavana through the Patisambhidamagga. The meditators were very happy with the Metta meditation saying they felt it was of more practical use than Vipassana in their daily lives.

In fact both are useful for peace and happiness in one's daily life if applied together. Bhante gave blessings to all of the meditators with Lord Buddha's replica tooth. The Dhammaramsi group also invited bhante to lead another Metta retreat during the Easter holiday in 2012.

Bhante visited Belgium again to lead 10 days meditation retreat from 28th Oct. to 6th Nov. in the Dhammaramsi centre. All together 35 meditators attended the retreat and under bhante's guidance studied the Dhatuvibhanga sutta and Abhidhamma both in theory and practice. Finally, at the end of the retreat, on Sunday 6th Nov, there were birthday celebrations in the Dhammaramsi centre for a two year old boy which was attended by family friends/relatives and meditators.

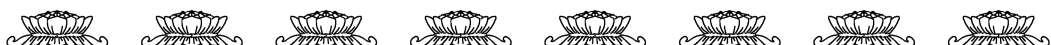


On 12 Sept members of the Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group attended the 10th Anniversary event of 9/11. They took breakfast at 8.30am at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara before visiting several religious sites in Birmingham: Black Led Churches, Peace Pagoda, Central Mosque, Progressive Synagogue and Peace garden. Finally, the Faith Leader group enjoyed lunch with the Lord Mayor in the Council House. Bhante and John Beard attended the anniversary events representing the Buddhist faith.

On Wednesday, 23/11/11, at 2pm bhante together with U Ghosaka and U Nagasena attended the installation ceremony of new Buddhist artefacts in the Buddha Gallery of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



If you receive your Lotus magazine by Royal Mail but would like to receive it, plus other announcements, electronically please email your name and postal address to paduma8-lotus@yahoo.co.uk.



2556 BE/2012 Events Calendar

BIRMINGHAM BUDDHIST VIHARA & DHAMMATALAKA PEACE PAGODA

29 Osler Street, Ladywood, Birmingham B16 9EU

Tel: 0121 454 6591

e-mail: ottama2000@yahoo.co.uk

website: www.bbvt.org.uk

Festivals

Buddha Day (Visakha) Sat. 5 May 10:30am
Buddha Day (BM&AG) to be confirmed
Dhammacakka Day & Pagoda Anniversary Sun. 29 July 10:30am
Abhidhamma Tue. 30 Oct. 7:00pm
(Pavarana) Day
Kathina Day Sun. 4 Nov. 10:30am

Full Moon

Chanting in the Pagoda at 7:30pm except on festival days.

8 January,	7 February,	7 March,
6 April,	5 May,	4 June,
3 July,	2 August,	30 September,
30 October,	28 November,	28 December

Retreats

Weekend (suitable for all) 9 December
Led by Bhikkhu Bodhidhamma
Classic Mahasi insight technique specifically designed for the Western mind and taught in a popular dynamic fashion.

10-Day (experienced) 17-26 August
Led by Dr Ottaranyana
Designed to enable meditators to experience the characteristic of impermanence and nature of non-selfhood as part of the process of insight meditation.

Abhidhamma Studies Dr Ottara Nyana
Every Wednesday 2:00-3:00pm

Devotee Days

An opportunity for devotees to offer Dana Lunch to the resident monks of the vihara. After lunch everyone may take part in a short meditation session followed by a Dhamma talk by one of the resident monks.

The event will take place on the 1st Sunday of each month. For further details please contact bhikkhu Nagasena or Bill Strongman.

Children's Class

U. Ghosaka

Every Sunday from 1:00 - 3:00pm, except Christmas Day and New Years Day. Suitable for 5+ years but all welcome with or without children.

For further details please contact Ellen
mobile: 07814 972 460
e-mail: ellen06_121@yahoo.co.uk

Meditation Classes

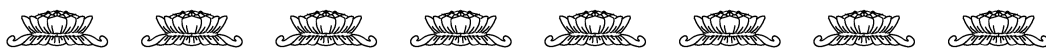
Beginners: Thurs. 7:30pm
Advanced: Mon. 7:30pm

Pagoda Opening

Summer 9am – 7pm

Winter 9am – 5pm

The Pagoda is open most days but to avoid disappointment please call or e-mail first to ensure there will be someone available to welcome you and show you around (see above).



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