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## "THE BUDDHA'S VISION AND MISSION"

by

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*Head of the London Buddhist Vihara*

**V**ision - Prince Siddhartha saw what we call the Heavenly Messengers - a sick person, an old person, a corpse and a homeless ascetic. This experience prompted him to look for a solution to the problem of human suffering. He tried following the practice of extreme asceticism and self-mortification, but found it produced no beneficial results. It was when he decided to investigate things for himself that he realised the Middle Path which leads to Enlightenment. He shared this wisdom with the world.

At the moment when he attained Enlightenment, the Buddha developed perfect wisdom and understanding of the way things really are. "So, bhikkhus, being myself subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement -- having seen the peril in what is subject to these things -- seeking the unborn, unaging, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled, supreme surcease of bondage, Nibbana -- I realised the unborn, unaging, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled, supreme surcease of bondage, Nibbana..... Knowledge and vision arose in me: unshakeable is my liberation, this is my last birth, there is now no renewed becoming." (MN 26.18 abridged) Vision means to see things as they really are (*yatha*

*bhuta nana dassanam*), not as they appear to be. It means to see the Three Characteristics of Existence (*tilakkhana*). "Whether the Tathagatas appear or not, it remains a fact, an established principle, a natural law that all conditioned things are transient (*anicca*), sorrowful (*dukkha*) and that everything is soulless (*anat-*



*ta*). This fact the Tathagata realises, understands, and when he has realised and understood it, announces, teaches, proclaims, establishes, discloses, analyses, and makes it clear, that all conditioned things are transient, sorrowful and that everything is soulless." (AN I, p.286) Everything that is subject to arising is also subject to ceasing. "The five aggregates, monks, are impermanent; whatever is impermanent, that is dukkha, un-

satisfactory; whatever is dukkha, that is without Self. What is without Self, that is not mine, that I am not, that is not my Self. Thus should it be seen by perfect wisdom as it really is. Who sees by perfect wisdom as it really is, his mind not grasping is detached from taints, he is liberated." (SN III. 44)

This teaching is closely connected with another doctrine which is unique to Buddhism: dependent origination (*paticcasamuppada*). This teaches that everything is inter-connected and inter-related. Everything is dependent on something else. Nothing can arise of its own accord, without a prior cause. Nothing exists independently, separately and free from causes. It is an explanation of how suffering arises and how it ceases. Because of the absence of a soul or self, only dukkha arises, dukkha exists, dukkha experiences, nothing other than dukkha arises, there is nothing other than dukkha that ceases. To emphasise that this doctrine is central to his teachings the Buddha said, "He who sees paticcasamuppada sees the dhamma, he who sees the dhamma sees paticcasamuppada." (MN 28.28)

The Buddha's pure vision enabled him to see the Four Noble Truths,

*Continued on page 2*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Practical Insight
- To Live with Dignity
- Transferring Merits to the Departed
- Activities & Obituaries
- Back to Basics
- A-Z of Buddhism
- Courses for the Year 2011

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*Continued from page 1*

which are at the heart of his teaching. "Monks, it is through not understanding, not penetrating the Four Noble Truths that we have run so long, wandered so long in samsara, in this cycle of continuity, both you and I....But when these Four Noble Truths are understood and penetrated, rooted out is the craving for existence, destroyed is that which leads to renewed becoming, and there is no more coming to be." (SN V.431) We call this Right View or Right Understanding, the first step of the Noble Eightfold Path. "What, O monks, is right understanding? To understand suffering, to understand the origination of suffering, to understand extinction of suffering, to understand the path leading to the extinction of suffering; this is called right understanding." (DN 2.312) In his first sermon the Buddha says repeatedly that it is the Noble Eightfold Path which gives vision. "Avoiding both these extremes, the Tathagata has realised the Middle Way, which gives vision, gives knowledge, and leads to peace, to higher knowledge, to awakening, to nibbana. (SN 56.11)

Unlike many religious teachings which place a creator god at the centre of the universe, a god who is to be worshipped and placated, the Buddha placed man at the centre. Man is given sole responsibility for his actions. He is the architect of his own future. This is the doctrine of kamma and vipaka, cause and effect. In the Culakammavibhanga Sutta, the Buddha explained that the diversity of our experiences is the result of kamma. Man is superior not as a result of his birth, but as a result of his actions. This meant the Buddha was teaching directly against the established caste system.

**Mission** - Having attained Enlightenment at the age of 35, the Buddha devoted the remaining 45 years of his life to his mission, which was to teach others what he had discovered

so that all beings could fulfill their potential and reach enlightenment. In the Parinibbana Sutta, the Buddha says, "Abide with oneself as an island, with oneself as a refuge..... Abide with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge. Seek not for external refuge." Furthermore, this state of enlightenment is attainable by all of us, and not necessarily at some distant and unknown date in the future. At the end of the Satipatthana Sutta the Buddha said very clearly that the results of the practice can be attained in this very life if we apply ourselves diligently.

His message was, at the same time, very simple and utterly profound. "Bhikkhus, both formerly and now what I teach is suffering and the cessation of suffering." (MN 22.38) This meant that he did not teach everything that he had realised. There is a story about a time when the Buddha was in a Simsapa forest near Kosambi with his monks. He picked up a handful of leaves and he asked the monks, "What do you think, monks, which is greater in quantity, the handful of simsapa leaves gathered by me, or what is in the forest overhead? Not many, trifling, Ven. Sir, are the leaves in the handful gathered by the Blessed One, many are the leaves in the forest overhead. Even so, monks, are the things I have fully realised, but not declared unto you; few are the things I have declared unto you. And why, monks, have I not declared them? They, monks, are indeed not useful, are not essential to the life of purity, they do not lead to disgust, to dispassion, to cessation, to tranquillity, to full understanding, to enlightenment, to Nibbana. That is why, monks, they are not declared by me." (S:V.437) At the same time, his teaching was open and available to everyone – not just members of one caste or one sex. He said, "There is no teacher's closed fist here", referring to the habit of some teachers who kept back a part of their teaching to make their pupils dependent upon them. All this teaching was

done with no cult of personality. He always emphasised that it was his teaching, not the teacher, which was supremely important. One evening he happened to share a potter's shed for the night with another wanderer, called Pukkusati. Pukkusati announced that he was a follower of the Buddha. Without revealing his own identity, the Buddha gave the young man a wonderful discourse at the end of which Pukkusati reached the first stage of sainthood. Only then did Pukkusati realise that it was none other than the Buddha himself who was teaching him.

The Buddha faced many challenges. He engaged in many debates, often with other religious teachers who did not agree with his teachings. When there were disagreements among his followers, the Buddha taught them to accept the Dhamma as their guide. He stressed the importance of individual effort. "You yourselves must make the effort. Buddhas are only teachers." (*Dhammapada* 276) He spoke often about the equality of men and women, which was not generally accepted at that time. Right up till the end of his life, he continued to teach. As he lay on his death bed he made his final conversion – Subhadda, the man who had come a long way just to hear him.

The Buddha founded an order of monks and nuns to whom he entrusted the continuation of his mission after his death. This has ensured that on the occasion of the 2,600th anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment we can still learn of his teachings and still benefit from the priceless knowledge which he understood and passed on to all of us. We are the inheritors of this wonderful tradition. It is incumbent on all of us to deepen our own understanding and ensure that the Dhamma continues to be preserved accurately and passed on correctly for the benefit of those who come after us.

# PRACTICAL INSIGHT

by *Bhante Henepola Gunaratana*

**Y**ou 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, etc. You may interpret this advice to mean that you should keep your mind focused all the time on your breath, but this may lead to problems. If you simply keep your mind on the breath while driving your car, you will probably get into accidents from not paying sufficient attention to driving.

Some of you may think that “to be mindful all the time” means to pay attention only to whatever you are doing at a particular time, but this is just what those who are seriously paying attention to their work normally do. A painter, writer, singer, composer, hunter, surgeon, cook, etc., must pay full attention to whatever they do when they are engaged in their work. Not only human beings do this. Cats pay total attention to their prey in order to catch them without startling the prey beforehand. Cranes stand still in one single spot for a long time, ready to catch a fish which swims by. 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 sheep dog cultivate an iota of insight; they don't remove the unwholesome roots (*akusala-mūla*) of greed, hatred, and delusion by merely paying total attention to objects.

So, just paying full attention to whatever you are doing at any time is not going to eliminate the unwholesome roots, which is the purpose of insight meditation. Paying attention to just one thing is what is done in concentration meditation: you may focus your mind on one single object for fifty years, yet the causes for the mental defilements will still remain unchanged in your mind.

Some think that they will experience supreme liberation from suffering by

means of a special practice such as observing all the moral rules, learning all the sacred texts by heart, gaining deep concentration, spending all the time in solitude, but none of them can experience that liberation without first completely destroying the unwholesome roots, the mental defilements. Therefore in addition to their practice they also must remove the unwholesome roots in order to experience the bliss of emancipation from all kinds of suffering.

What is missing in focusing total attention to one single object all the time is wisdom (*paññā*). Total attention should be coupled with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). What is wise attention? It is attention accompanied by the three wholesome roots (*kusala-mūla*). What are the wholesome roots? They are non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion, or, in other words, letting go or generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom. This means that when you pay attention to something you always attempt to pay attention without the unwholesome roots of greed, hatred or delusion, and instead with thoughts of relinquishing, loving-kindness and wisdom. So you don't let your mind be affected by the unwholesome roots when you pay attention to something and instead let thoughts of relinquishing, loving-kindness and wisdom dominate your mind.

You should pay wise attention to any thought, whether regarding yourself or other living beings or anything, and note whether it is wholesome or unwholesome. You should wisely reflect while you are engaged in any activity: wearing clothes, eating food, drinking water, talking to someone, listening to sound, seeing an object, and walking or driving, etc.

When you pay total attention with wise attention, your greed, hatred and delusion fade away, because the opposite qualities of relinquishing, loving-kindness and wisdom

are activated through wise attention. Thoughts of relinquishing, loving-kindness and wisdom have the power of minimizing greed, hatred and delusion while you are engaged in any activity. When paying attention to something without wise attention, you develop greed, hatred and confusion: for instance when you see an object that is attractive, beautiful or pleasing to your eyes, or an unattractive one, if you do not have wise attention, you may end up developing greed or resentment for the object. Or you may get deluded ideas about the object, thinking that it is permanent instead of realizing that it is impermanent, satisfactory instead of unsatisfactory, or having a self instead of being selfless.

You may ask how thoughts of letting go can get rid of greedy thoughts. When you perceive the object with greed, your mind will cling to it and not open to any thought of letting go of greed, of generosity. You do not want to take your eyes away from the object. Your mind temporarily becomes blind to any thought of relinquishing. Even if you wish to let go of the attachment to it, you may do so with great reluctance. Greed has very strong super glue in it. At the very first contact with the desirable object the mind sticks fast to it, and you cannot let go of that object from your mind. Letting go of that object can be as painful as cutting off a limb or some flesh from your body.

The object you are perceiving is where your wise attention needs to be. This is where you must learn to see impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness. Your wise attention 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

*Continued on page 4*

Continued from page 3

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 impermanent is unsatisfactory, 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 will not be there." Here you must remember that haste makes waste. If you make a hasty decision and do something foolish, you will regret it later on. For instance, sometimes you are attracted to a person without giving consideration, and later on you will find many faults in that person. In any such hasty decision there is no mindfulness.

When 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 will never make you regret it later on.

Always remember that mindfulness gives rise to a state of mind free from greed, hatred and delusion and full of relinquishment, loving-kindness, and wisdom. 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 thoughts of relinquishing, of non-greed in the mind,

you will let go of any attractive sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought without any hesitation. 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 you will perceive them as impermanent. When any sight, sound, smell, taste, touch or thought appears and is identified as self, you will see it is an unreal concept inculcated in your mind by conditioning through generations of wrong notions, and look at it with wisdom.

Mindfulness is not the same as 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. The numerous daredevils who climb very steep mountains, go across rocks, slippery places, rivers, and so on are very careful too. Many thieves are very smart and outwit the police. Many drug dealers, bank robbers, criminals are very smart. But none of them can be considered to be mindful.

Mindfulness is that mind state which reflects upon itself and takes care not to get caught in any states of greed, hatred and delusion which cause

## SERMONS OF THE BUDDHA

**10 meetings starting:  
Thursday 28th April 2011,  
7.00pm**

**This course examines some of the Buddha's most important discourses, especially those given to lay people, addressing the same worldly issues which are just as important today as they were 2,500 years ago.**

**Venue:**

**London Buddhist Vihara**

**Tutor: Julian Wall**

**Fees: Free** (donations are welcome)

**How to join:**

Enrol at the class on first day of attendance.

suffering to yourself, to others or to both.

When we ask people to abandon greed, some people ask us how one can live without greed. This is the miracle of mindfulness: When you practise mindfulness, you can learn to do the most difficult things easily. Not being greedy, resentful, or confused is very difficult, but through constant training in mindfulness you learn to live without greed, hatred and delusion. To be mindful is more difficult than to be unmindful, but you eventually learn to do the more difficult and wholesome things more easily than the easier, unwholesome things. For this reason the Buddha said:

***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.***

*(Udāna 5.8)*

This means that which is very difficult at the beginning becomes easy through constant practice.

### ***Scented Flower***

***The flower of mankind***

***Evolves once in many myriad years,***

***When the sanctified petal glorifies the world with wisdom cheers,***

***The fragrance pollinates***

***Bringing joy to the open mind.***

***The compassion delivered illumines***

***for the benefit of the fruition kind.***

***Battling light, avoiding the two extremes,***

***Self mortification and self indulgence,***

***The rational interpretation,***

***the truth and reality.***

***The middle path -***

***casket of the four noble truths,***

***and eightfold noble path,***

***Blossomed himself and***

***to the universe intensively***

***As "Samma Sambuddha",***

***fully enlightened one***

***similarised as a lotus, fair and lovely***

***not soiled by the water,***

***and not soiled by the world.***

***By Mrs Dipani Perusinghe***

## BACK TO BASICS

Like any other tree, the great tree of the meditative life requires roots. The roots of the meditative life are Purification of Virtue and Purification of Mind. Unless these two roots are nourished, there will be no progress in meditation.

The first and most fundamental of the roots is Purification of Virtue. Purification of Virtue consists in understanding and maintaining four types of restraint:

- (1) observing the precepts one has undertaken and protecting them like one's own life;
- (2) guarding the six sense-doors without allowing defilements to arise;
- (3) maintaining a righteous livelihood; and
- (4) making use of one's requisites of life with wise reflection. A meditative person who lives according to these four ways of restraint will find nothing to get attached to or resent. These four principles were originally prescribed for monks and nuns,

lay meditators should adapt them to their own situation.

Everyone must have a standard of virtue dedicated to the attainment of Nibbana. The standard is relative to his status in life. Monks and nuns are expected to observe the precepts of training given in the two codes of moral discipline making up their respective patimokkhas. Male and female novices have to keep the ten precepts as their standard of virtue. Male and female lay-devotees have five precepts as a permanent standard of virtue in their everyday life. If they are more enthusiastic, they can have eight precepts or ten precepts.

At the time of attaining the paths and fruits, both monk and layman should be equally developed in regard to the virtue of sense restraint. This virtue of sense restraint consists in mindfully guarding the six sense-doors: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. By means of mindfulness one must prevent the arising of all defile-

ments sparked off by sense experience - all forms of desires, major and minor conflicts, as well as those deceptions which are extremely subtle, rooted in delusion itself, in pure and simple ignorance. Deception is something difficult to understand. But is if one mindfully makes a mental note of every object "calling" at the six sense-doors, one can free oneself from deception.

Normally, one protects one's virtue impelled by conscience and shame (*hiri, ottappa*). A wise man, however, observes virtue purely with the aim of attaining Nibbana. Virtue has been defined as the bodily and verbal restraint which comes as a result of listening to and understanding the Dhamma.

Understanding the virtue of four-fold restraint mentioned above, one should protect one's virtue even at the cost of one's life, being guided by conscience and shame as well as by the idea of Nibbana.

## AN A - Z OF BUDDHISM

**KALAPA** – Group or unit

The real meaning of Anicca is that Impermanence or Decay is the inherent nature of everything that exists in the Universe — whether animate or inanimate. The Buddha taught His disciples that everything that exists at the material level is composed of "Kalapas." Kalapas are material units very much smaller than atoms, which die out immediately after they come into being. Each kalapa is a mass formed of the eight basic constituents of matter, the solid, liquid, calorific and oscillatory, together with color, smell, taste, and nutriment. The first four are called primary qualities, and are predominant in a kalapa. The other four are subsidiaries, dependent upon and springing from the former. A kalapa is the minutest particle in the physical plane

— still beyond the range of science today. It is only when the eight basic material constituents unite together that the kalapa is formed. In other words, the momentary collocation of these eight basic elements of behavior makes a man just for that moment, which in Buddhism is known as a kalapa. The life-span of a kalapa is termed a moment, and a trillion such moments are said to elapse during the wink of a man's eye. These kalapas are all in a state of perpetual change or flux. To a developed student in Vipassana Meditation they can be felt as a stream of energy.

The human body is not, as it may appear, a solid stable entity, but a continuum of matter (*rupa*) co-existing with mentality (*nama*). To know that our very body is tiny kalapas all in a state of change is to know the true nature of change or decay. This change or decay (*anicca*) occasioned by the continual breakdown and replacement of kalapas, all in a state of combustion, must necessarily be identified as Dukkha, the truth of

suffering. It is only when you experience impermanence (*anicca*) as suffering (*dukkha*) that you come to the realisation of the truth of suffering, the first of the Four Noble Truths basic to the doctrine of the Buddha. Why? Because when you realise the subtle nature of Dukkha from which you cannot escape for a moment, you become truly afraid of, disgusted with, and disinclined towards your very existence as mentality-materiality (*namarupa*), and look for a way of escape to a state beyond Dukkha, and so to Nibbana, the end of suffering. What that end of suffering is like, you will be able to taste, even as a human being, when you reach the level of sotapanna, a stream-enterer, and develop well enough by practice to attain to the unconditioned state of Nibbana, the Peace within. But even in terms of everyday, ordinary life, no sooner than you are able to keep up the awareness of Anicca in practice will you know for yourself that a change is taking place in you for the better, both physically and mentally.

**NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS - 2011**



*A large gathering participated to receive blessings for the New Year 2011. Throughout the day, Ven. Seelawimala Nayaka Thera, Head of the Vihara and resident monks chanted Buddhist suttas to bless the devotees.*

**NAVAM FULLMOON DAY CELEBRATION - 2011**



*Navam Full Moon Day poya was celebrated on 19th February 2011. There was a programme of sermons and dhamma discussions which were well attended by our devotees.*



**A SPECIAL PUJA TO COMMEMORATE TSUNAMI IN JAPAN**



*On 7th May a special puja was held to commemorate those who died in the tsunami which devastated parts of Japan on 11th March. Ven. Nagase from the Japanese Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park, and Rev. Prof. Kemmyo Taira Sato from Three Wheels Temple in Acton were invited to attend, together with representatives from many other faiths. Over £500 was raised to help the relief work.*

## RAHULA DHAMMA DAY CELEBRATIONS - 2011



*The annual Rahula Dhamma Day was held at the Vihara on 27th March 2011. It is inspiring to see the active role played by the children from the Dhamma and Sinhala language classes. They performed dance, drama, gave talks and sang devotional songs. Ven. Seelawimala Nayaka Thera administered the five precepts and gave Anusasana. Mr. P. M Amza, the Acting High Commissioner of Sri Lanka and Mr. Ranjith De Silva, Country Manager, Sri Lankan Airlines were the chief guests. Mr. & Mrs. Ranjith De Silva, Dr. Mrs. Subadra Siriwardena, & Dr. Daya Perera distributed presents and certificates to the children.*

# TO LIVE WITH DIGNITY

*By Bhikkhu Bodhi*

Is it possible to live with dignity in today's world, and if so, how can this be done? To raise such a question may sound strange in an age like our own, when our frantic struggle to make ends meet hardly allows us the leisure to ponder such abstract matters. But if we do pause long enough to give this question a little thought, we would realise soon enough that it is not merely the idle musing of someone with too much time on his hands. The question touches on the very meaning of our lives, and goes even beyond our personal quest for meaning to the very springs of contemporary culture. For if it isn't possible to live with dignity then life has no transcendent purpose, and our only aim in the brief time allotted to us should be to snatch whatever thrills we can before the lights go off for good. But if we can find a basis for living with dignity, then we need to consider whether we are actually living as we should and whether our culture as a whole supports a dignified lifestyle.

Though the idea of dignity seems simple enough at first sight, it is actually more complex than one might suppose. My Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1936!) defines it as "elevation of character, intrinsic worth, excellence, nobleness of manner, aspect, or style." My Roget's Thesaurus (1977) groups it with "prestige, esteem, repute, honour, glory, renown, fame" - evidence that over the last forty years the word's epicentre of meaning has undergone a shift. When we inquire about living with dignity, our focus should be on the word's older nuance. What I have in mind is living with the conviction that one's life has intrinsic worth, that we possess a potential for moral excellence that resonates with the hymn of the galaxies.

The conscious pursuit of dignity does not enjoy much popularity these days, having been crowded out by such stiff competitors as wealth

and power, success and fame. Behind this devaluation of dignity lies a series of developments in Western thought that emerged in reaction to the dogmatic certainties of Christian theology. The Darwinian theory of evolution, Freud's thesis of the Id, economic determinism, the computer model of the mind: all these trends, arisen more or less independently, have worked together to undermine the notion that our lives have inherent worth. When so many self-assured voices speak to the contrary, no longer can we view ourselves as the crowning glory of creation. Instead we have become convinced we are nothing but packets of protoplasm governed by selfish genes, clever monkeys with college degrees and business cards plying across highways rather than trees.

Such ideas, in however distorted a form, have seeped down from the halls of academia into popular culture, eroding our sense of human dignity on many fronts. The free-market economy, the task master of the modern social order, leads the way. For this system the primary form of human interaction is the contract and the sale, with people themselves reckoned simply as producers and consumers, sometimes even as commodities. In vast impersonal democracies the individual becomes a mere face in the crowd, to be manipulated by slogans, images, and promises into voting for this candidate or that. Cities have expanded into sprawling urban jungles, dirty and dangerous, whose dazed occupants seek to escape the pangs of wounded pride with the help of drugs and loveless sex. Escalation in crime, political corruption, upheavals in family life, the despoliation of the environment: these all speak to us as much of a deterioration in how we regard ourselves as in how we relate to others. Amidst this wreckage, can the Dharma help us recover our lost sense of dignity and thereby give new meaning to our lives? The answer to this

question is yes, and in two ways: first, by justifying our claim to innate dignity, and second, by showing us what we must do to actualise our potential dignity.

For Buddhism the innate dignity of human beings does not stem from our relationship to an all-mighty God or our endowment with an immortal soul. It stems, rather, from the exalted place of human life in the broad expanse of sentient existence. Far from reducing human beings to children of chance, the Buddha teaches that the human realm is a special realm standing squarely at the spiritual centre of the cosmos. What makes human life so special is that human beings have a capacity for moral choice that is not shared by other types of beings. Though this capacity is inevitably subject to limiting conditions, we always possess, in the immediate present, a margin of inner freedom that allows us to change ourselves and thereby to change the world.

But life in the human realm is far from cozy. It is, rather, inconceivably difficult and complex, rife with conflicts and moral ambiguities offering enormous potential for both good and evil. This moral complexity can make of human life a painful struggle indeed, but it also renders the human realm the most fertile ground for sowing the seeds of enlightenment. It is at this tauntingly ambiguous crossroads that we can either rise to the heights of spiritual greatness or fall to degrading depths. The two alternatives branch out from each present moment, and which one we take depends on ourselves.

While this unique capacity for moral choice and spiritual awakening confers intrinsic dignity on human life, the Buddha does not emphasise this so much as he does our ability to acquire active dignity. This ability is summed up by a word that lends its

*Continued on page 9*

Continued from page 8

flavour to the entire teaching, ariya or noble. The Buddha's teaching is the ariyadhamma, the noble doctrine, and its purpose is to change human beings from "ignorant worldlings" into noble disciples resplendent with noble wisdom. The change does not come about through mere faith and devotion but by treading the Buddhist path, which transmutes our frailties into invincible strengths and our ignorance into knowledge.

The notion of acquired dignity is closely connected with the idea of autonomy. Autonomy means self-control and self-mastery, freedom from the sway of passion and prejudice, the ability to actively determine oneself. To live with dignity means to be one's own master: to conduct one's affairs on the basis of one's own free choices instead of being pushed around by forces beyond one's control. The autonomous individual draws his or her strength from within, free from the dictates

of craving and bias, guided by an inward perception of righteousness and truth.

The person who represents the climax of dignity for Buddhism is the arahant, the liberated one, who has reached the pinnacle of spiritual autonomy: release from the dictates of greed, hatred, and delusion. The very word arahant suggests this sense of dignity: the word means "worthy one", one who deserves the offerings of gods and humans. Although in our present condition we might still be far from the stature of an arahant, this does not mean we are utterly lost, for the means of reaching the highest goal is already within our reach. The means is the Noble Eightfold Path with its twin pillars of right view and right conduct. Right view is the first factor of the path and the guide for all the others. To live with right view is to see that our decisions count, that our volitional actions have consequences that extend beyond themselves and conduce to

our long-term happiness or suffering. The active counterpart of right view is right conduct, action guided by the ideal of moral and spiritual excellence. Right conduct in body, speech, and mind brings to fulfilment the other seven factors of the eightfold path, culminating in true knowledge and deliverance.

In today's hectic world humankind is veering recklessly in two harmful directions. One is the path of violent struggle and confrontation, the other that of frivolous self-indulgence. Beneath their apparent contrasts, what unites these two vicious extremes is a shared disregard for human dignity: the former violates the dignity of other people, the latter undermines one's own dignity. The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path is a middle way that avoids all harmful extremes. To follow this path not only brings a quiet dignity into one's own life but also sounds an eloquent rejoinder to the cynicism and hollow pretensions of our age.

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## TRANSFERRING MERITS TO THE DEPARTED

by Ven. K. Ariyaratana

After making offerings to the monks Dhamma enthusiasts usually raise a common question. The question is whether their departed relatives really benefit from the merits they transfer on their commemorative days. This is not a new question. It is often asked by many people all over the world. I, myself, have answered this question hundreds of times.

This question is raised by most people since the objective of the transferring merits is abstract and profound which makes it difficult to understand. That is why it has often been misunderstood by many people. But those who know the original teachings of the Buddha should not have such complexities and misunderstanding as they know the very answer given by the Buddha to this question two thousand five hundred years ago.

One day a Brahmin named Janus-

soni comes to the Buddha and says, "Master Gotama, the Buddha, let me tell you we Brahmins give charitable gifts: we make the offerings to the dead, saying, May this gift to our blood relations who are dead and gone be of profit: May our relations who are dead and gone enjoy this offering. Please tell me, The Exalted One, does that gift profit our blood relations dead and gone? Do they really enjoy that gift?"

This is what the Buddha says to Janussoni. "Well, Brahmin, if there be ground for it, it does profit them, but not if there be no ground."

Here, the Buddha explains the difference between the ground and no ground. According to the discourse No. 177 Janussoni Sutta in the Numerical Basket, there are five places reliable for rebecoming (rebirth) of beings after death. They are:

1. The Hells (*apaya*)
2. The Animal World (*thirisan*)
3. The Human World (*manussa*)
4. The Heavens (*deva*)
5. The Hungry Ghosts' World (*peta*)

In the Peta World, here are four subtypes. Namely,

1. *Vantasika*, The petas that feed on vomit.
2. *Khuppipasino*, The petas that are constantly hungry.
3. *Nijjhamatanhika*, The petas that are consumed by thirst.
4. *Paradattupa-jivi*, The petas that depend on what others give.

Out of these four peta worlds, only the last type of petas, the *paradattupa-jivi*, can receive our merits and others cannot. The importance here is that if the targeted relative is not in a position to receive our merits any other relatives who have died and been born in this world can receive our merits.

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

There is another very good reference to explain this clearly in The Dhammapada Attakatha, where the act of transferring merits has come into practice in the time of the Buddha. One day King Bimbisara dreams a nightmare in which he sees some ugly figures and hears screaming noises, and he is very frightened. Then he calls upon his ministers for advice though none of them can explain his nightmare. So he is disappointed with his ministers and finally visits the Buddha in the Jethas Grove to clear this out of his mind. The Buddha tells the king not to be frightened with it at all but to organise a Dana (to give away food for monks) and transfer those merits to some of his deceased relatives in previous lives, who are now in the peta world, badly in need of merits. They have been waiting for his spiritual support throughout samsara. The figures who appeared in the dream were his peta relatives and the sounds he heard were the lamenting cries of their grief. The story proves that the deceased relatives of the king received the merits given by the king.

The Thirokudda Sutta in the Khud-daka Nikaya, which is expounded by the Buddha at King Bimbisara's dana ceremony mentioned above, explains this in detail. According to the discourse the petas in the *Paradattupajivi* peta world sometimes come to our door-steps and wait until we fulfil their needs. When we perform danas and transfer merits to them, they enjoy our merits and go to better lives with the help of the merits received. If not the merits remain with us for our well being.

In the book Milinda Panha, The Debates of King Milinda, we read the same information. The king asks the same question of Venerable Nagasena, the scholar monk.

"Is it possible for all deceased relatives to share in the merit of good deeds?"

"No, only those who are born as hungry ghosts who feed off the merit of others are able to share in the merit. Those born in hell, those in heaven,

animals and hungry ghosts who feed on vomit, or hungry ghosts who hunger and thirst, or hungry ghosts who are consumed by craving, do not derive any profit.

"Then the offerings in those cases are fruitless since those for whom they were given derive no profit?"

"No, O king they are not fruitless nor without result for the givers themselves derive benefit from it".

Ven. Nagasena here uses another example to explain this to the king. If some people prepared a meal and visited their relatives, but those relatives did not accept the gift the owners themselves would have it. In the same way those who organise the dana will themselves derive benefit from it.

Do not misunderstand this point. We usually transfer merits to the deities. And often we wish for the wellbeing and good luck of others after pujas. This is something different from the transferring merits. Whenever we wish others wellbeing they too share our merits but they don't come and wait for our support like petas and they do not go to other lives as petas do. They only share the merits and rejoice in their own realms.

The Sigalovada Sutta was specially taught to lay people. In it the Buddha shows the importance of transferring merits to the dead and gone. In this discourse one of the great duties of children towards their parents is to transfer merits after the death of their parents.

Out of ten meritorious deeds mentioned in the Dhamma books one is sharing merits with others. This is why it is customary to share our merits with others usually at the end of the religious services.

According to the evidence provided above, you can now understand the real meaning behind the act of transferring merits on behalf of deceased relatives. So it is always good to practise these traditions with right understanding. The most important thing we should remember is that Dana on behalf of one's dear departed is

different from other Dana which one practises on other days. When Dana is often practised it is basically enough to fulfill these three things:-

1. Readiness in thought, which means the reduction of greed, hate and delusion and employment of generosity, loving-kindness and understanding in one's thought process to purify the mind.
2. Availability of offerings, which means provision of suitable and acceptable alms food and other essential requisites for the monks.
3. Availability of Maha Sangha, the community of bhikkhus.

If these are well met one can perform a perfect Dana in which the merit one accrues is limitless. According to the teaching, the results of such a dana bring happiness in this samsaric existence until he/she attains the supreme bliss of Nibbana. But in a Dana ceremony to pass merit to certain specific relatives, one has specially to be compassionate and grateful to that relative. That is the most important feature in a memorial Dana. Then only is it certain to be fruitful. Then both parties benefit from the merit derived from it. So practise the act of giving dana whenever possible and pass the merits to your dead relatives as a habit. You will always get long life, comfort, happiness, strength and wisdom by dint of the merit of this dana.

## **BUDDHISM FOR BEGINNERS**

**8 meetings starting:  
Monday 06 June 2011, 7.00pm**

**The Life of the Buddha  
The Four Noble Truths  
The Noble Eightfold Path  
Kamma  
Dependent Origination  
Meditation**

**Venue:  
London Buddhist Vihara  
Tutor:**

**Ven. Seelawimala Nayaka Thera**

**Fees : Free (donations are welcome)**

**How to join:**

**Enrol at the class on first day of  
attendance.**

# VIHARA ACTIVITIES - 2011

## OBITUARY

### January

1 New Year Blessing Ceremony.

8 "Monthly Meditation" Dr. Matheesha Gunatilake

20 Mr. Zaki Cooper, Assistant Press Secretary to the H.M. The Queen, visited LBV

22 "Sambuddha Jayanthi Sinhala Sermon" Ven. K. Ariyaratana

26 Venerable Seelawimala participated in the Executive Committee Meeting of the Interfaith Network UK at Lower Grosvenor Place, London SW1

27 Holocaust Day Memorial Ceremony at London Heathrow Airport. LBV represented by Robert MacPhail, Buddhist Airport Chaplain

27 Holocaust Day Memorial Ceremony at Perceval House, Ealing Town Hall. LBV represented by Mr & Mrs Polpitiya

### February

2 Ven. Seelawimala gave a talk to pupils from Brackenbury Junior School, Hammersmith

4 Ven. Seelawimala attended the Independence Day ceremony at the Sri Lanka High Commission

5 Monthly Dhamma talk by Mr. Sumana Ratnayaka on "Man's position in the flux of obsessions".

6 Venerable Seelawimala participated in the special annual celebration of the new building at St. Michael and All Angel's Church, Turnham Green

8 School visit by pupils from Strand on the Green Infants School

9 Ven. Seelawimala visited Wellington Junior School, Hounslow, and gave a talk to the pupils

12 "Monthly Meditation" Dr. Matheesha Gunatilake

19 Navam Poya Programme

12 Ven. Seelawimala and Ven. Bandula participated in the annual chanting ceremony at the Sri Saddhatissa International Buddhist Centre

14/17 Ven. Seelawimala gave talks to Strand on the Green Infants and Junior School, Chiswick.

16 Venerable Seelawimala conducted the funeral service for Mrs. Kwan Sheung at Gunnersbury Cemetery

17 Ven. Bandula gave a talk at a training day at the Lakeside In-patient Unit organised by West London Mental Health Trust

26 Ven. Bandula attended the Founder's Day Ceremony at Samadhi Meditation Centre in Edmondton

### March

2 Ven. Bandula and Ven. Wimalajothi attended the funeral service of Mr. Edward Sellers at Hanworth Crematorium

5 Ven. Bandula and Ven. Wimalajothi attended the funeral service of Mrs. Magdaline Silva at Hendon Crematorium

5 Monthly Dhamma talk by Dr. Sunil Kariyakarawana on "Do Buddhists have to believe in Rebirth?"

4 Ven. Seelawimala gave a talk to students of Roehampton University at the London Buddhist Vihara

8 Ven. Seelawimala visited Norwood Green Infants School, Southall to give a talk

9 Ven. Seelawimala attended the Theravada Sangha Sabha at Buddhapadipa Temple, Wimbledon

12 Ven. monks of LBV attended Sambuddha-Jayanthi 2011 Organising Committee's meeting held at the LBV

12 "Monthly Meditation" Dr. Matheesha Gunatilake

14 Ven. Seelawimala, Ven. Ariyaratne and Robert MacPhail attended the Annual Commonwealth Day Service at Westminster Abbey

15 Ven. Wimalajothi attended a talk at Our Lady of Grace & St. Edward Church, Chiswick

16 Ven. Seelawimala attended a lecture given by the Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown at Lambeth Palace

17 Ven. Seelawimala and Ven. Bandula officiated at the funeral of Mr. Tusita Chandan Karunasekera

19 "Sambuddha Jayanthi Sinhala Sermon" Ven. W. Wimalajothi

27 Annual Rahula Dhamma Day (Children's Day) Programme was held at the Vihara

30 Canon Andrew Tremlett and Canon Robert Reiss (Westminster Abbey) visited the LBV

### April

2 Fundraising Dinner at the LBV

3 Ven. Seelawimala attended the Sri Lankan New Year Celebration organised by the past pupils of Ananda College at Kingsbury High School

3 "Monthly Dhamma Talk" Ven. Susara

9 "Monthly Meditation" Dr. Matheesha Gunatilake

9 Ven. Seelawimala attended a meeting of the Organising Committee of the Sambuddha-Jayanthi 2011 at the LBV

10 Ven. Seelawimala participated in the Nun's Ordination Ceremony at Amaravati Monastery, Hertfordshire

16 Ven. Dhammajiva, Abbot of Meetirigala Forest Monastery, gave a sermon in Sinhalese to commemorate the Sambuddha-Jayanthi

**With heavy hearts and deep sorrow we announce the passing away of the following devotees:-**

**Mr. Edward Sellers** Fomer, husband of Mrs. Sumana Sellers, passed away on 21 February and his funeral was held on 2nd March at Hanworth Crematorium.

**Mrs. Magdaline Silva** passed away on 26 February and her cremation was held on 5th March at Hendon Crematorium. She is survived by three children Indrani, Milithra & Jayantha.

**Mr. Ruwan Revatha Amarasinghe**, loving son of Mr. Diwin & Mrs. Ayoma Amarasinghe and loving brother of Sanjaya and Prasanna, passed away on 22nd February and his funeral was held on 5th March at Hanworth Crematorium.

**Mr. Thusitha Chandana Karunasekera**, loving son of Mr. & Mrs. Karunasekera, passed away on 6th March and his funeral was held on 17th March at North East Surrey Cemetery.

**Mr. Bandula Rajaratne**, passed away on 9th April and his funeral was held on 18th April at Croydon Crematorium amidst a large gathering. He was a very long-standing and loyal supporter of the Vihara. He is survived by his loving wife Kerthi and daughter Kanchana.

**Mr. Walter Hathhotuwa** passed away on 21st April and his funeral was held on 27th April at Golders Green Crematorium. He is survived by his four loving children Dharshana, Kamani, Ajith and Aruni.

**Miss Tusita Wimalasundera**, loving daughter of Dr. Herbat Wimalasundara and loving sister of Sunetra, Namali, Ruwan and Kapila passed away on 30th April and her funeral was held on 7th May at Mortlake Crematorium.

## May they all attain the bliss of Nibbana!

17 Ven. Dhammajiva, Abbot of Meetirigala Forest Monastery, led a full-day meditation workshop at the LBV

18 Ven. Seelawimala and Ven. Bandula officiated at the funeral of Mr. Bandula Rajaratne at Croydon Crematorium

29 Ven. Seelawimala attended the Wedding Ceremony of HRH Prince William and Miss Katherine Middleton at Westminster Abbey

### May

7 Ven. Monks attended the funeral service of Ms. Tusita Wimalasundera at Mortlake Crematorium

7 Ven. Wimalajothi attended the Buddha Bathing Ceremony at Fo Guansan Buddhist Temple

14/15 Vesak Celebrations at the Vihara

21 Monthly Dhamma talk by Ven. Susara

29 2600 Sambuddha Jayanthi Celebrations at the Hammersmith Town Hall.

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Buddha Vihara  
Risaldar Park,  
Lucknow-1, U. P.

## WEEKLY EVENTS

<b>Sundays</b>	2.00-3.00pm 3.00-4.15pm 5.00-6.00pm	Children's Sinhala Classes Children's Dhamma Classes Sermon and Pirith chanting
<b>Mondays</b>	7.00-9.00pm	Introduction to Buddhism (Eight-week course, repeated through the year)
<b>Tuesdays</b>	7.30-9.00pm	Advanced Buddhist Doctrine Class
<b>Wednesdays</b>	7.00-8.30pm	Meditation: Instruction & Practice
<b>Thursdays</b>	7.00-9.00pm	Theravada Buddhism
<b>Saturdays</b>	1.30-8.00pm	Monthly meditation retreat (Last Saturday of every month except August & December)

## ○ 2011 (FULL MOON) POYA DAYS

<b>May</b>	○	<b>17</b>
<b>June</b>	○	<b>15</b>
<b>July</b>	○	<b>14</b>
<b>August</b>	○	<b>13</b>
<b>September</b>	○	<b>11</b>
<b>October</b>	○	<b>11</b>
<b>November</b>	○	<b>10</b>
<b>December</b>	○	<b>10</b>

## 2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<b>May 15</b>	<b>VESAK - Buddha Day</b>
<b>June 05</b>	<b>Blood donation Session</b>
<b>June 19</b>	<b>POSON</b>
<b>July 17</b>	<b>ESALA - Dhamma Day</b>
<b>Sept. 17</b>	<b>FOUNDER'S DAY</b>
<b>Nov. 06</b>	<b>KATHINA</b>
<b>Dec. 11</b>	<b>SANGHAMITTA DAY</b>

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Thank you.

Our email address is:

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### PUNYANUMODANA

**Ven. B. Seelawimala, Head of the Vihara, wishes to express his sincere gratitude to all Co-ordinators and supporters for their help in making the Vihara's wide programme of activities a success.**

**May you be well, happy and attain Nibbana.**

### SAMADHI SPONSORS

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Mr. Charles Godwin Tillekeratne  
and  
Mrs. Sahra Tillekeratne.*

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