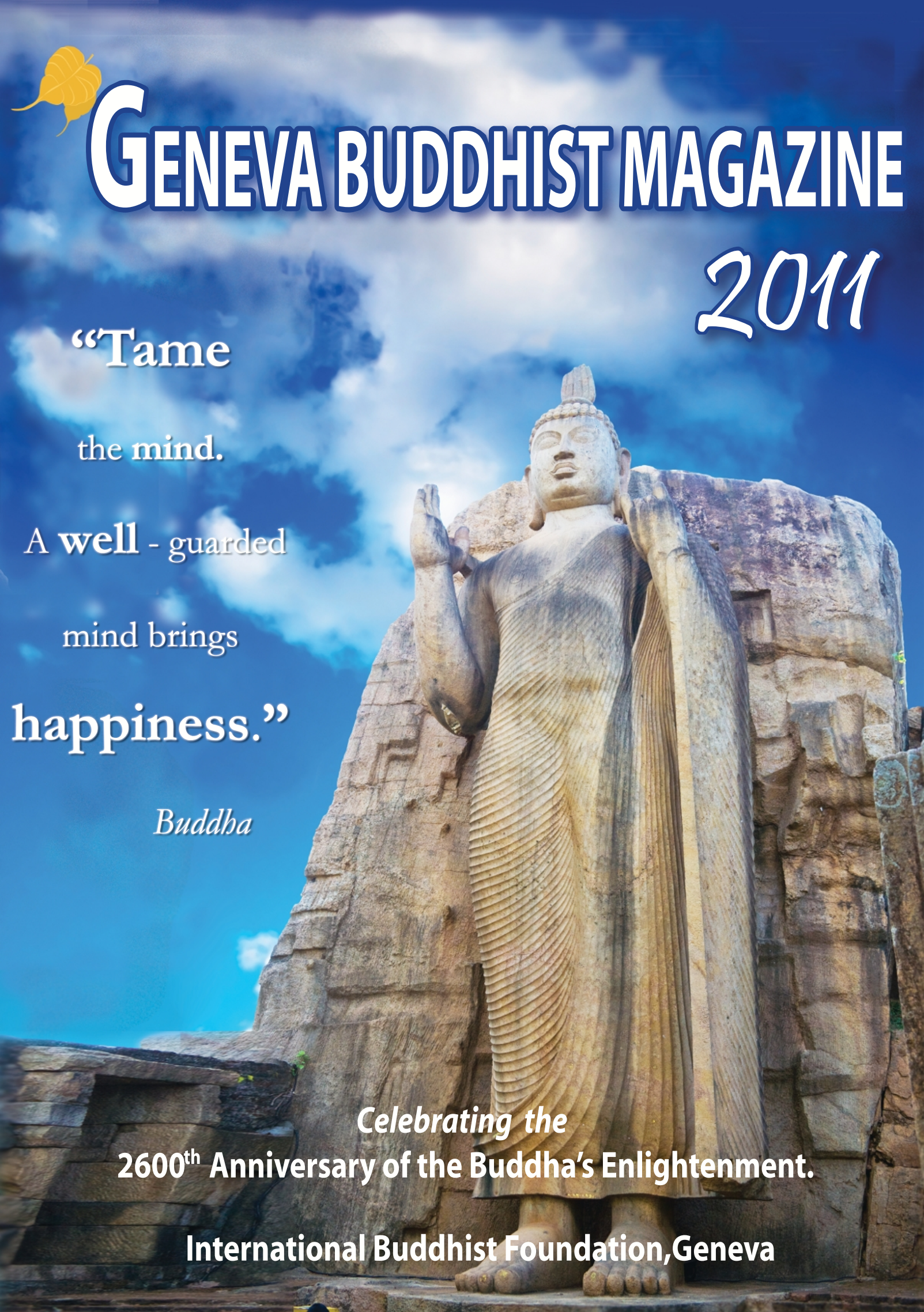
GENEVA BUDDHIST MAGAZINE

2011



Celebrating the
2600th Anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment.

International Buddhist Foundation,Geneva

The Geneva Buddhist Magazine

International Buddhist Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland.

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Special Commemorative issue to mark the

2600th Anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment

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The Geneva Buddhist Magazine is published by the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF). Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the IBF strives to serve the Buddhist community in their spiritual development and to help those from all faiths and belief systems to understand the teachings of the Lord Buddha as a way to true and lasting peace and happiness.

This first annual publication will be launched as part of the Wesak celebrations in the month of May 2011, which marks the 2600th anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment. The publication contains articles in English and French, art and poetry submitted by the Buddhist community in Geneva and from around the world. The views expressed in these articles are solely those of the authors and IBF makes no endorsement or validation of their contents. The magazine aims merely to stimulate discussion, discourse and reflection on Buddhism and contribute to wellbeing of all.

Cover photo: An image familiar to Buddhists in Sri Lanka: the Aukana Buddha. Sculptured out of the jungle rock face in the North Central Sri Lanka in the 5th Century AD, it is the tallest stone Buddha statue in the world today - after the destruction of the Bamian statues in Afghanistan . The statue depicts the Buddha serene and standing with his hand in the *Asisa mudra* - the blessing position. The position of the Buddha hand in statues depict different actions. In the many images you will see in this magazine, look out for different gestures and find out what they mean.

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The Buddha advised his disciples to go forth in every direction and spread his teaching by using the local language. Most Buddhist scriptures exist in the two ancient languages of India:*Pali* and *Sanskrit*. In this magazine, we've put these words in italic font and added their meaning as well whenever possible.

Editorial

This year, we have the great fortune to celebrate 2,600 years of Buddhism. To mark this remarkable event, the International Buddhist Foundation, IBF - based in Geneva, Switzerland- launches the first edition of an annual Buddhist publication to serve as a point of reflection and discussion amongst Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.

Buddhism is not only for Buddhists. This magazine is for anyone who wishes for happiness and peace. The messages of Buddhism are universal, timeless and open for scrutiny, reflection and discussion. You will not find blind faith in Buddhism. Instead followers of Buddhism develop confidence - *saddha*- as a result of self exploration and reflection.

Why in this age of information overload do we need yet another magazine? The answer is simple. The same compassion that drove the Buddha to share his insight with the world 26 centuries ago is energizing the Buddhist community in Geneva. As part of our reflections, we have often felt the need to widen our circle of discussions and to place within easier reach of the international and local community around us, the timeless teachings of the Buddha.

As we struggle with our daily lives, and watch with heavy hearts the multiple calamities, which threaten our world, it becomes all the more important to find the spirituality within us. Turn on the news and everything seems to be a crisis. The inequalities between rich and poor, have and have not, are widening. Climate change, global politics driven by a battle for the world's natural resources, and fuelled by our unending desires for material things are threatening the planet and human life.

But most of us look outside ourselves for peace and happiness. Some of us look to our wealth and social security, others look to our governments, and yet others look for divine help. Buddhism invites you to look within yourself to discover for yourself true happiness and peace. That is the gift of Buddhism and it is a gift that should be shared. Hence this magazine.

When Ven Halyale Wimalaratne, incumbent Abbot of the International Buddhist Foundation in Geneva, Switzerland invited us, to become the editors of this magazine, we were taken by surprise and perhaps even a little hesitant. We are very busy, with our work, bringing up children, as well as trying to find time for charity and generous acts. But from the little we know of him, we understood how deeply committed he is to sharing the Dharma - the teachings of the Buddha - so we could not decline. We embarked on a journey to make the magazine a reality, stealing time from our lives, somehow finding the hours we needed to finish this honourable, yet challenging task. The Buddhist community and friends were quick to respond with articles, ideas as well as ways to raise the money needed for the printing. It was as if floodgates had flung open and the kindness and compassion for others that are hallmarks of Buddhism came pouring out.

As we put the finishing touches on the first ever Geneva Buddhist Magazine published by the International Buddhist Foundation, the excitement is building up. On reflection, we realize that we needed this task as much as the task needed us. We are changed as a result of the reading, researching and editing we had to do with these wonderful articles and contributions. Every article touched us in a different way, from the wisdom of the words of the ordained Buddhist clergy to the simple sincerity of the words written by our youth and teenagers. We are transformed and know that you will be too. Read on and reflect.

Dr Gaya Gamhewage
Dr Samantha Karunajeewa

President of IBF

"*Sukho Buddhanan Uppado* – The birth of a Buddha is a bliss."

It is hard to find a man with a great wisdom and such men are born rarely into this world. The greatest happiness to humankind is the birth of such noble persons because they bring relief to a suffering world.

In the Buddhist calendar, *Wesak*, the full moon day of May, is a sacred day marking three specific occasions of the Buddha's life; the Noble Birth of Prince Siddhartha, the Enlightenment of ascetic Gautama as *Samma Sambuddha* and the Buddha's passing away or *parinibbana*. This year marks the 2600th anniversary of Buddha's Enlightenment.

The Buddha is honoured because of his incomparable service to the world spanning 45 years. His wisdom is the sun for this blind world. His noble philosophy - The Middle Path - is totally open for investigation and is resplendent with the absolute truth defying conventional truth. This sublime teaching is the way for insight, purification and for creating perfect peace and happiness in our minds.

Those who have developed wholesome powers receive successful births. It is a rare fortune to be born as a human being. It is even more rare to have a birth during a period when the teachings of the Buddha exist. However, very few understand the importance of birth as a human being because the ordinary human mind is governed by cravings and clouded by ignorance. The Buddha explains the nature of the human mind: "not by a shower of gold coins does contentment arise; in sensual pleasures of little sweetness there is pain." Knowing this, the wise man finds no delight even in heavenly pleasures.

The advice of Buddha is: "Do no evil, cultivate good, and purify the mind". This is because life is neither eternal nor is there any assurance for its protection. The world is governed by impermanence. Life is subject to change, decay, sickness and death. No one has power to overcome this nature. The noble Eight-fold path is the only way to purify in mind.

The International Buddhist Foundation in Geneva is pleased to organize the following Buddhist activities during the month of May to venerate the Buddha and to commemorate the 2600th Anniversary of Buddha's Enlightenment, as a blessing for the world.

21 May 2011: Traditional Wesak Celebration, at the public space in front of the United Nations Organization in Geneva (UNOG)

29 May 2011: Sil (Observing of Eight Percepts) & Meditation Programme at 99 Espace de Quartier Service Social de la Ville de Genève, Rue de Lyon 99, 1203 Genève.

It is with great respect I pay my gratitude to **Ven. Walpola Kalyana Thissa Thero,** the spiritual advisor of the IBF and to those who assisted in many ways to make these activities possible.

This publication - the Geneva Buddhist Magazine- is part of IBF's activities to mark this momentous anniversary. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to all our Dhamma friends who made donations and contributions to make the magazine a reality. Finally, I thank all the members of the IBF for their efforts in organizing these meritorious activities.

May all beings be happy! May all beings be well! May all beings be peaceful!

Ven. Halyale Wimalarathana Thero

Mahanayake Thero of Asgiri Chapter- Sri Lanka

It is with pleasure, that I send this message and good wishes to the "Geneva Buddhist Magazine" issued by the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF) in Geneva Switzerland, to mark the 2600th anniversary of Lord Buddha's Enlightenment.

Prince Siddartha was born in the sixth century B.C. at Kapilawasthu as the son of King Suddhodana. At the age of 35, he finally attained enlightenment and became *Samma Sambudda*, under the Bo tree at Buddhagaya. The world Buddhist community is planning to celebrate the 2600th anniversary of Buddha's enlightenment on a grand scale, by organising special religious ceremonies and Dhamma sermons. The celebrations are to be held, not only in countries of Therawada Buddhism, but also in countries of Mhayana Buddhism as well.

The theme of these celebrations is, 'Let us participate in celebrating the 2600th Sambuddhathva Jayanthi'.

Even in Sri Lanka, Buddhists are planning to celebrate this 2600th anniversary on a mammoth scale. The President of Sri Lanka has appointed a *Sambuddhathva Jayanthi* steering committee chaired by the Anu Nayaka thero of the Malwatte Chapter to organise this meritorious event. The committee would focus on encouraging religious and Pali Studies, observing *sil*, giving alms and ensuring the welfare of the religion through ordaining and providing training for Bhikkus and renovation of temples in commemoration of the *Sambuddhathva Jayanthi.*

To conclude my message, I would like to express my good wishes to the IBF of Geneva, for their great effort to celebrate the 2600th *Sambuddhatva Jayanthi.*

May the Triple Gem bless you!

Most Ven. Udugama Saddharma Keerthi Sri Dhammadassi Rathnapala Buddharakkithabhidhana

Sri Lankan Ambassador to Switzerland

It is with great pleasure that I write this message to the first publication of the 'Geneva Buddhist Magazine' on the occasion of the 2600 *Sambuddhathwa* Anniversary which falls on the Vesak day of the year 2011.

Wesak, the day of the full moon in the month of May is the most sacred day for the Buddhists all over the world. On the day, to commemorate the birth of the Buddha, attainment of his enlightenment or *Sambuddhathwa* and passing away into *Parinibbhana*, the Buddhists devote themselves to various religious activities.

The human beings as well as their social lives and behaviour are determined by a variety of conditions, the Nobel Eightfold Path, which is the Buddhist way of life will guide the behaviour and the aspiration of human kind for a better world.

It is in this context, I greatly appreciate, the Geneva International Buddhist Foundation for organizing major programmes to mark this important event in the month of May 2011.

I consider it is a privilege to send this message to the first publication of the Geneva Buddhist Foundation. I have no doubt that this annual publication will immensely be beneficial to the Buddhists and non-Buddhists in Switzerland.

I take this opportunity to extend my sincere best wishes for the success of this annual publication.

May the Blessings of Nobel Triple Gem be with all !

His Excellency Ambassador T.B. Maduwegedera



The Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Office at Geneva

It is indeed humbling to send a message to the commemorative publication of the International Buddhist Foundation on the significant occasion of the 2600th *Sri Sambuddhatva Jayanthiya* which falls on the Wesak day of 2011.

It is befitting to recall and pay tribute to the teachings of Guatama Buddha on this 2600th anniversary of his attaining Enlightenment. The ethico-philosophical system known worldwide as Buddhism and founded by the Buddha, is contained in the voluminous Buddhist canon, popularly known as the *'Tripitaka'*. The *'Tripitaka'* comprises three major sections, called the *'Sutta'* which are popular discourses, *'Abhidhamma'*- discourses on ultimate truths and *'Vinaya'* which are discourses on injunctions.

As we know the Buddha preached the dhamma to lay persons using familiar terminology, which are known as popular discourses. Going to the next level, *Abhidhamma,* constitutes studies based on causal genesis, analyzing thoughts, co-efficients of thoughts , matter and the ultimate goal-nibbana. These infact constitute the essence of the Buddha's teachings. The omniscience of the Buddha, the true nature of things as they have come to be, the real purpose of the teachings and its universal applicability irrespective of time, are given by the *Abhidhamma.* The *Vinaya* has all aspects pertaining to the conduct of the Order of *bhikkus.*

Considering that different circumstances and challenges confront us today, being a time when the sense of humanity is being shattered, I believe that the Buddha's teachings are of much value and relevance to modern society. Buddhism is known to be a practical philosophy to life, guiding mankind towards peaceful co-existence. It is conquering the mind of all its cravings through supreme kindness which underlies the tenets of the Buddha *Dharma* and renders its discussions relevant to the world community at large across the borders of race, religion, ethnicity and power. As we look around the world today, the very foundation of peaceful co-existence is under enormous threat with the different factions heedlessly pursuing agendas which do not seem to be in the pure interest of the concerned nationals.

In this context a teaching of the Guatama Buddha comes to mind, where in a verse from the *'Sahassa Vagga'* chapter of the *Dhammapada* states:

> " To conquer oneself is nobler than conquering thousands of men in battlefield. Such a man, who conquers himself, is the greatest of conquerors"

This is a timeless message of the Lord Buddha, which should be paid heed to by the adversarial factions in the contemporary world.

On this occasion of the *Sri Sambuddhatva Jayanthiya,* we must all bow in veneration of the Gautama Buddha and his teachings, which are irreplaceable as evident from the following of his philosophy since time immemorial.

Her Excellency Ambassador Kshenuka Senewiratne





Words of the Elders

Those who receive the Higher Ordination in Buddhism are called *"Thero"* or Elder. In this section we present a series of articles by Elders from different countries, backgrounds and cultures, who serve communities in the four corners of the earth. Despite the diversity of these Elders, their words resonate with all the beauty and clarity of the *Dhamma* - the teachings of the Buddha - which remain as relevant today as when they were first uttered 26 centuries ago.

Wisdom and its Significance

by Ven. Vinayananda Bhikkhu

The Buddha was the Fully Enlightened One. He was a unique being, an extra-ordinary person, a wonderful man, giver of the "Highest Truth", a teacher to "gods" and men.

Buddhism is the religion of Enlightenment, where the emphasis is on great compassion and great wisdom. Wisdom is key in Buddhism. Buddhism rejects blind faith, dispels fear of the supernatural, gives freedom to think, encourages questioning, promotes reasoning and discourages dogma. Buddhism is a way of life full of loving kindness, tolerance and good will, bringing peace and happiness to all beings. The real heart of Buddhism is wisdom (*panna)*. It is very significant for human life.

Wisdom is not knowledge. Listening, reading and observing many things in this world lead to knowledge, not wisdom. Wisdom only appears in the mind when mental hindrances, obstructions and impurities are not active in the mind.

Obstruction of wisdom:

A rising of moral consciousness with lust is the first cause in human life. This lust can be identified as attachment, amorous desire, covetousness, intention, love and affection. When lust overpowers the human mind, it loses the sense of right or wrong. At that stage, a mind is devoid of conscience and so it comes across the deep darkness all around, the darkness of the night of the new moon.

Hatred is created if desires are unfulfilled. The hateful mind creates spite, dispute, controversy, fighting and violence. Delusion (*moha*) is the latent power of lust and hatred; it is the root of all evil. The blind characteristic of consciousness comes from delusion. The name of delusion is ignorance (*avijja*).

Photo: There were no statues of the Buddha until the 2nd century CE. Until that time, the Dhamma Wheel, or a footprint was the artistic representation of the Buddha. The physical characteristics of the Buddha as described in the "*Lakkahan Sutta*" in the *Digha Nikaya* are thought to have inspired early statues. Deep blue eyes, long eyelashes and golden-hued skin are just three of the 32 signs that are described. Buddha statues have taken on the stylization of different cultures as Buddhism spread from country to country. Common to all statues is the look of serenity and peace. Buddhist use Buddha statues to recollect the qualities and the teachings of the Buddha and to focus the mind for meditation.

Vijjamanam avijjapeti
Avijjamanam vijjapetiti avijja.

Ignorance creates the non-existence in the existence and the existence in the non-existence. Ignorance does not allow one to know the exact nature of the objects. Ignorance is the lack of understanding of the real nature of mind and matters, which are impermanence, suffering, and non-existence of the eternal soul. Desire is the main cause of suffering in life. Not to realize the purpose of rooting out desire is ignorance. Ignorance prevents us using the power of practice to purify body, mind and speech. Just as the darkness makes it difficult to see, ignorance conceals the true nature of life and the world. The Holy *Tripitaka* scripture contains eighty-four thousand ideals and principles which are shortened to 37 constituents of true knowledge (*Bodhipakshiya Dharma*). These constituents are in brief called the Eightfold Noble Path, which has three stages: morality (*sila*), concentration (*samadhi*) and wisdom (*panna*).

The main purpose of Buddhist meditation is to reach to the ultimate goal of perfection. Ignorance and delusion are obstacles to wisdom.

The Nature of Wisdom

The root of '*Jna*' means to understand. *Jna* has three stages: perception (*Sanna*); consciousness (*Vinnana*); and wisdom (*Panna).*

Perception (*Sanna*) means collection of data through the sensory organs. By perception one is able to differentiate objects or to recognize them again. Perception is the first knowledge of an object. It helps one to identify the colour, but not the utility, necessity or nature of the object. This is the limit of perception.

Consciousness (*Vinnana*) appears in Pali texts as the perceptual awareness of the respective senses prior to conceptualization. Consciousness allows one to ascertain the colour of an object and ascertain its utility, necessity and impermanence. This is the limit of consciousness.

After acquiring perfect knowledge of the exact colour, utility and necessity of an object, one is able to attain the ultimate perfect idea of impermanence, suffering and non-existence of the eternal soul. This is wisdom.

Let us give example concerning the gradual development of perception, consciousness and wisdom. Suppose there are three people: an immature boy, a villager and a jeweller, who see a heap of coins. An immature boy sees the size, length, breadth, design and appearance of the coins. He cannot understand the value of the coins, nor how they can be used. The villager, however, can understand the value of the coins and what he can do with them. Yet he cannot understand whether the coins are made of gold or silver, pure or impure and when, where, or by whom they are made. The jeweller knows everything about the coins, and he does so by looking at them, listening to the sounds they make when struck, and smelling, tasting and weighing them in his hand. He knows where they were made and by whom. Perception is like the immature boy, consciousness is like the villager and wisdom is like the jeweller.

Classification of Wisdom

According to the description of *Visuddhimarga*, the criterion of wisdom is to cut off and illuminate. The real nature of life and the world, which is impermanence, suffering and non-existence of soul, is realized rightly by spiritual wisdom. The direct effect of wisdom is not to be restless, unconscious, moved or intoxicated by any means. The direct cause of wisdom is concentration through meditation, devotion to anything without any restlessness. Wisdom is classified into three kinds. Wisdom can be developed from knowledge based on:
1. Thinking (*Cinta-maya-panna*),
2. Learning (*Suta-maya-panna*),
3. Mental Development (*bhavana-maya-panna*).

'Based on Thinking' is that knowledge which one has acquired through one's own thinking, without having learned from others. 'Based on Learning' is that knowledge which one has heard from others and thus acquired through learning. 'Based on Mental Development' is that knowledge which one has acquired through mental development in this or that way, and which has reached the stage of Full Concentration.'
The knowledge that is acquired by continuous practices is wisdom, inner realization or spiritual insight (*Vipassana*). Through spiritual insight, the knowledge of self-realization, self-inside, realization of impermanence, suffering of life and non-existence of soul is acquired. The power of direct realization of the Noble Truth is a profound experience. It is like testing the ripeness of an apple by putting it on the tongue. The attainment of this knowledge is not expressible to anybody.

By rooting out delusion and ignorance completely, the power of opening the real nature of an object lies in the wisdom derived from inner realization. It is imperishable, immutable, eternal and inexpressible. Wisdom always exists in the concentrating and controlling mind. Wisdom dispels delusion.

The way to acquire wisdom

Wisdom does not arise without keeping the steadfast mindfulness advanced or without the energetic culture of memory with firm faith. Be constantly steadfast and aware, and be mindful of every physical activity in the movement of every part of the body. If meditation is done continuously, wisdom can awaken. Just as fire is produced by continuous friction between bamboo trees; when sense organs and memory remain keen, vigilant and on guard, then wisdom is aroused. Wisdom is born from the good deeds of previous lives. Although the perfection does not come, strong meritorious actions are formed. When wisdom and meditation are harmonized together, enlightened is attained.

The Majesty of wisdom

Wisdom possesses the best position among all systems of meditation, perfection, sciences, rules and regulations. If the mind is purified and concentrated rightly, spiritual wisdom is produced. The other perfections are like the family members of wisdom. The purpose of all good deeds is to achieve wisdom. It is the main principle of Buddhism. So in order to root out all the sufferings of life, the practice of wisdom and its creation is most necessary. If generosity, morality or any other religious practices are not purified, no good deeds can be considered as perfection (*Paramita*)except wisdom. Sinful desire, anger and afflictions, which are created from delusion and ignorance, are antagonistic to the emancipation of life. The cultures of generosity, morality, loving-kindness etc. are directed and purified by wisdom and become the cause of attainment of spiritual truth to uproot evil. Just as the Sun's mightiness illuminates the earth, wisdom also enlightens all religious practices. Perfection (*Paramita*) cannot be attained without wisdom, just as a blind man cannot walk without a guide. The whole world is covered with delusion, the absence of inner insight. Samadhi is called the concentration of mind. A rightly concentrated mind

is illuminated in the state of wisdom. The attainment of spiritual truth is dependent on the practice of wisdom.

In Buddhism, there are stages of development of wisdom. *Sotapatti* (the first stage of Enlightenment), *Sakadagamin* (the second), *Anagamin* (the third), and *Arahanta* (the fourth) are ascended and extended gradually because of the uprooting of all afflictions. The last stage of wisdom, or the last enlightenment, is beyond decrepitude, birth, death and afflictions. Nirvana means the ultimate goal of the ever-lasting peace.
In the Buddhahood, there is a combination of the spiritual enlightenment or wisdom, universal brotherhood and great compassion. After attaining Nirvana all desires and sufferings are extinguished. Tathagata Buddha, by His spiritual wisdom, was always engaged in serving all beings of the world with loving-kindness and friendship.

The Buddha's teaching - *Dhamma*

The Buddha's teaching is based on the Four Noble Truths. It is because we fail to understand the Four Noble Truths that we have continued to go round in the cycle of birth and death, said the Buddha.

The very first Sermon of the Buddha, the *Dhamma Chakka Sutta*, which He gave to the five monks at the Deer Park in Saranath, was on the Four Noble Truths and the Eight Fold Path. An outstanding aspect of the Buddha's Teaching is the adoption of the Eight Fold Path as a Noble Way of life. It is also known as the Middle Way, as it avoids extreme self-mortification and extreme sensual pleasures. The Noble Eight Fold Path taught by the Buddha leads to calm, insight, enlightenment and supreme happiness, and has the following:

1. Right Understanding: This is the cornerstone of Buddhism. It is the proper understanding of things as they really are; the Four Noble Truths, the theory of Dependent Origination, *Karma*, the three universal characteristics etc.

2. Right Thought: This is the development of good thoughts and elimination of evil thoughts. It is free from lust (*Nekkhamma Sankappa*), cruelty (*Avihimsa*), illwill (*Avyapada)*, hate, anger, greed, selfishness, revenge etc. and the nurturing of good thoughts such as loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

3. Right Speech: This involves respect for truth and respect for the welfare for others. This is to refrain from lying, slandering, use of harsh words and gossiping. Use wholesome, well-spoken words which are timely, true, gentle, purposeful and spoken kind-heartedly. Even the truth should not be uttered if it is not conducive to the good and happiness of others.

4.Right Action: It is to abstain from: i) killing or harming any living being, ii) stealing or dishonest dealings, and iii) sexual misconduct or misuse of the senses. The positive side has to be developed: i) show respect for life and kindness and compassion to all beings, ii) be honest respecting the property rights of others, and iii) be morally good and control the senses.

5. Right Livelihood: This is to engage in occupations, which are not harmful to others. The five kinds of occupations to be avoided are trading in : slavery of human beings, arms, flesh, intoxicating drink and drugs, and poisons.

6. Right Effort: This means that we cultivate a positive attitude and have enthusiasm in the things we do, whether in our careers, our studies, or our practice of the *Dharma*. It has four aspects: discard evil that has already arisen; prevent unarisen evil; develop the unarisen good; and promote the good that has already arisen.

7. Right Mindfulness: This is the quality of awareness of constant diligence with regard to activities of the body, activities of the mind; awareness of feeling, thoughts and mind objects. It is the awareness of everything that we think, say and do in daily lives. The Buddha said that mindfulness is the one way to achieve the end of suffering.

8. Right Concentration: This is the development of one focus of the mind, preventing the mind from wandering about. An extremely high level of concentration leads to the ability to see things as they truly are. The practice of mediation helps to develop concentration.

The Noble Eight Fold Path can be considered in three stages. Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood make one virtuous and enables a life with morality. Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration bring mental discipline. Right Thought and Right Understanding bring wisdom.

The Eight Factors are interdependent and mutually supporting. When one is morally good or virtuous, concentration becomes easier, and this helps develop wisdom which enables one to see things as they truly are - with realization of Nirvana or supreme happiness.

Scientific points of view:

The message of the Buddha is systematic and scientific; there is no myth or mystery. Buddhism is like practising medicine. *Dukkha* (suffering or dissatisfaction) is the 'disease' affecting all beings. Craving is the cause of the disease. Nirvana is the cure. The Noble Eight Fold Path is the medicine one needs to take to be cured.

"The best path is the Noble Eight Fold Path; the best truths are the Four Truths; the best state is Nirvana; the best of men is the Enlightened One."
Dhammapada, verse 273

" Buddhist or Non-Buddhist, I have examined every one of the great religious systems of the world. In none of them I have found anything to surpass in beauty and comprehensiveness the Noble Eight Fold Path and the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha."
British Philosopher Prof. T.W Rhys - Davids

" The Buddha's moral code is the most perfect which the world has ever known." The Noble Eight Fold Path is one of them."
Prof. Max Muller

"Again and again you are born and die, again and again you are taken to the grave, but one who sees clearly, having followed the path (Noble Eightfold Path), which leads to Nirvana - does not rise again."
Samyutta Nikaya vii 2.2

"To avoid all evil, cultivate the good and purify the mind. This is the teaching of all Buddhas."
The Buddha, *Dhammapada* verses 183:

Meditation is the psychological approach to mental culture, training and purification. Most of the troubles that we are confronting today are due to the untrained and uncultured mind. Man can do

the highest service to society by simply abstaining from evils. The cultured mind that is developed through meditation performs a most useful service to others.

So morality, concentration and wisdom are essential and one must practise them keeping a balance. We can see there is a relationship between each one, like an equilateral triangle. If one line is shorter than the others then it is no longer equilateral. In the same way, if we leave out any one of the three stairs to the final and highest goal of Buddhism, it will not be possible for us to continue in that Path.

Take another example. If an alum is dropped into a glass of dirty water, the dirt will automatically settle down at the bottom of the glass, and the water will be clean and drinkable. In the same way, the alum that has been made by the Buddha (*Ariyaatthangikamagga: sila, samadhi, panna*) cleans out all kinds of mental dirt and defilement, and purifies the mind so that it can see things as they are.

"A wise man removes impurities in him by little by little every moment by practising meditation, like a silversmith purifying silver"
Dhammapada verse 239

I conclude that a life so beautiful, a heart so pure and kind, a mind so deep and enlightened, a personality so inspiring and selfless - such a perfect life, such a compassionate heart, such a calm mind, such a serene personality - is really worthy of respect, honour and offering. The Buddha is the highest perfection of mankind and the flower of humanity.

Stress Management through Meditation

by Ven. Olande Ananda

Stress is a kind of conflict, which is caused by factors both from the outside world and from the inside of our own minds.

When we look at the world outside, things seem to be speeding up, life is becoming faster and faster, while more demands are being made of people in society. Industrialization, the increase of communication, and constant news items bombard us from the media through our senses. These are some of the outside factors that can lead to stress. The demands that are being made on us nowadays in the industrialized and commercialized societies are greater than when people were living peacefully in small villages and agricultural societies. However, the inner causes of stress were there even in the times of the agricultural societies, in fact as long as human beings have been living on this earth.

Very often stress comes from being in a hurry, thinking that things have to be done fast; not taking things one by one but taking them all together into one's mind and looking at things in a distorted fashion. Not being able to handle things one by one but being overwhelmed by tasks that are before us; that is one inner cause of stress. Not to really handle situations from moment to moment but to be a little bit ahead of time, to live in hope and fear of the future are all causes of stress.

Another cause is that we have expectations of how things should be rather than accepting them as they really are. The conflict between what actually is and what we think it should be is another cause of stress. **Being unsatisfied** is a kind of conflict that also comes from not seeing things are they really are.





The Buddha's first sermon was in the Isipathana deer park near modern day Benares, India soon after he attained enlightenment. His first audience was made up of five former fellow ascetics who were still skeptical of the new path undertaken by him. This magnificent statue is modeled on that first sermon where the Buddha uses a unique hand gesture (*mudra*) with both hands close to his heart, which is used to depict only this first sermon, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, which set in motion the Wheel of the *Dhamma* or Truth.

Another cause of stress is the kind of worry that we have by thinking about things that were left undone or the things that we have done wrongly. We worry about the past, about things not done well or left undone; worrying about how we are going to handle the future, how we are going to act in situations, which have not yet arrived, and we project our mind and live in hope, fear and worry about the future. So all that actually comes not from situations outside but from the attitude of our mind towards life and situations.

This is in a way a part of *Dukkha* (dissatisfaction or suffering) and conflict. Now the fact that it is possible to end *Dukkha*, which has been shown by the Buddha himself and by many of his followers, makes us think that we should also find ways to overcome stress and conflict and "**unsatisfactoriness**." By learning of ways to deal with things which come to us from outside and from our own minds, we can live more peacefully and harmoniously, with less conflict, worry and stress. That would be the ending of stress.

Are there ways, which lead to the ending of this stress? I will just try to mention a few ways of looking at things, perhaps simple meditation techniques, which can help us to overcome this form of stress.

One way of dealing with things from moment to moment is to do things now. **DIN** means **Do It Now,** and not to postpone things or delay (*Appamadena*). But it is not always possible to do everything right now because of physical limitations and unexpected situations. In that case one has to store something in to the memory; it is either **DIN - do it now-** or **SIM** meaning **store in memory,** and when the time comes, **DIN.**

People try to do everything before things actually happen and end up doing nothing perfectly well, whereas if one does things completely from moment to moment, things will take care of themselves, if they are finished one by one. So remember this simple formula: **DIN** and if you cannot **DIN,** then **SIM** (store in memory) and, when the times comes, **DIN.**

Another way is to slow down just a bit, not to be hurried, to have an attitude of watchful relaxation. That means to keep the mind steady, observing things and, when the time comes, to act. If you anticipate things with hope and fear or other expectations and when the time comes to do something, you still have hopes and fears. Then you will never be able to do things properly. So slow down activities whenever possible. This does not mean that if you have to catch a train you say: "I am going to slow down". You will actually miss the train! Where the hurry is unnecessary, have a look at that very hurried step and realize that although you are in a hurry, there is no need at that moment. Have an attitude of bare attention. Be mindful of your own state of hurry and then, when the actual moment comes, do whatever is necessary.

When we are actually looking at our own mind, it is very often in a reactive mode, meaning it reacts according to its own conditioned past factors; its likes and dislikes, attractions and repulsions, greed and hatred.

We are usually not acting but rather reacting to a situation. Now, when we use mindfulness or bare attention, slowing down and having a good look, then we can look at our own reactions but not immediately act in thought, word or deed to that conditioned part of the word but rather let it be for what it is and then act out of another kind of mode, which is the wisdom mode. If we can have that wisdom, to see what is actually necessary, that is mindfulness and clear comprehension - *Sathi* and *Sampajanna* - then we will be able to act more according to the need of the situation than to our own conditioned mind of like and dislike or prejudice or whatever it may be.

What happens in our mind very often is that images are built up. Image-making leads to prejudice, conflict and stress, and pollutes the environment. In our mind, images build up about people and situations according to our past experiences.

Associating with a certain person for a number of meetings, we build up an image about the person, and when we meet that person the next time this image come to our mind, instead of seeing the other person afresh and anew. That image then stands in the way of us and the other person, and it can lead to some unnecessary conflict.

If a person has hurt me, has been scolded me, has been bad to me, I will meet that person with a prejudiced mind. When I meet that person with that frame of mind, I will actually not be able to see that person for what he or she really is. That is because the image stands in the way. If a person has been flattering me, has been kind to me, then I may see that person through the prism of that experience, and then I approach him or her with a different attitude, based on that flattery, which is also not seeing that person as they really are.

Thus, in general, the building up of image is another form of conflict. If we are able to watch the image making in our own minds, and again use that quality of paying attention and mindfulness, see the image as image and realize it is just a form of thought projection, and let go of that image and see that person with real mindfulness and an attitude of friendliness and compassion, realize that they are suffering in the same way as everyone else including ourselves and see that person also as one of our own relatives or a friend, then with that mindfulness and compassion, right action will follow. These are ways of overcoming stress and conflict.

One of the hardest things for people is to let go, to release from their own attachments, ideas, and images,. This is illustrated by the way that people used to catch monkeys. There is a famous story that to catch a monkey, one prepares a coconut, puts a hole the size of the monkey's hand in the coconut, inserts a sweet attached to the coconut with some string, and wait for the monkey to come for the sweet. The monkey puts the hand into the coconut, grasps the sweet and then finds it cannot get out of the hole. It is so eager to get that sweet, and it is so attached to that sweet, that it clings to that sweet and cannot get out. It does not realize that by just letting go, its hand would be released. This is similar to what happens to our minds when they get attached to something, and that attachment is actually leading to suffering and conflict. The simple solution would be just to let go.

But we are under illusion or delusion or "*Moha*", and therefore do not realize our own attachment to possessions, people, images, ideas or some ideal. We do not see the way of release through letting go. This letting go is one way of overcoming tension, conflict, stress and suffering.

All these things, the conflict between what is and what should be, the mind running from one thing to another, from the past to the future - worrying about the past and hoping and fearing for the future - rather than staying in the moment, these are all causes of conflict. So to end this conflict, what one can do is to bring the mind into the present moment instead of letting it run all over the

place unnecessarily.

Of course, we need to think about being in the busy business of life. To plan or build something we have to use thought, but the problematic thought is the psychological planning. How am I going to do this? How am I going to behave? What will happen if and or why? Why did I choose to do like this? I could have done it like this... This is a burden.

Technical memory is necessary for day-to-day living. Technical planning is necessary to achieve something in the world. But psychological memory filled with remorse and regret and other hurts and flatteries, plus the psychological planning based on hope and fear, are burdens that can be lifted once one sees that which is happening in the moment. The only time that we can actually be aware of is the present moment. We cannot really be aware of what has happened in the past, except through thought, but the thought is taking place in the present. The future also has not yet taken place, but we think about the future and we do not realize that the thinking is no longer in the present.

So once we realize that all past and future in the form of thought takes place in the present, what we should do is to become aware of the present, bringing the mind to one point and that is here and now.

So the Buddha has actually taught ways of bringing the mind in to the present moment. One way of doing this is the "*Anapanasathi Bhavana*" - to become aware of the breath going in and out of one's body through the nostrils. When the air is touching our nostrils, it is actually not the past breath which is already gone, it is not the future breath which is not yet here; it is the present breath which is going in and out. That is the breath that we become aware of, and if we are aware of that particular part of that breath then we are in the present moment and if the mind is then so clear, it can deal with other objects that will arise in the mind through the senses.

Hearing things, seeing things, even with the eyes closed, mental thoughts arise, feelings arise in the body, all those things will come, perhaps as disturbances to our concentration, on the objects which are taking place from moment to moment and things to become aware of, and things to let go. Let go of things that we are not to be attached to, get upset or angry about, or have any relation to.

So to practise mindfulness on the breathing with mindfulness of mental objects, sounds, signs smells, tastes and touch sensations, that is actually anything and everything which has to do with our *Panchaskandha* or five constituents: parts of body, feelings, perceptions, intentions and consciousness. If we are mindful of these from moment to moment with the breath in mind, keeping the breath as a sort of anchor to be raised in the present, from moment to moment, then we are learning to live mindfully from moment to moment in the present, and also penetrate reality.

When we do not visualize and we do not interpret, and we do not feel right and think about it because we actually look at it, then vision comes of things as they really are, which is not based on some concept or idea, but is a direct perception of things is as they are. A seeing of things as they really are is a realistic view of things. It is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Both optimism and pessimism lead to conflict, but realism is to see things as they really are - a way of seeing things without conflict. That comes by paying attention - "*Sathi*" - and having a clear comprehension of what is happening.

Now this may not be so easy for a mind which is too much in conflict, a mind which is restless, a mind which is running all over the place. So here Buddha gives us techniques to quieten the mind. These techniques are called "*Samatha Bhavana*", and they give us some contemplation or a thing to dwell on, for instance *metta* or *karuna* or the *qualities of Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha* which will help to cover our mind, a kind of *Samatha Bhavana*, a tranquility.

Metta Bhavana is a way to prepare our mind, get rid of the distracting thoughts and come to a state of calm and clarity that will prepare the mind for deeper levels of insight. But tranquility does not necessarily lead to insight or wisdom or liberation of the mind, it also calls for the qualities of mindfulness, awareness and attention. Before we do the mindfulness meditation we should practise a little bit of tranquility meditation in the form of *Metta Bhavana.* This will give us a sense of peace and tranquility, and then it is easier to practise mindfulness of breathing, mindfulness of the states of mind, mindfulness of feelings, etc.

So the Buddha in his great wisdom and compassion was teaching only two things: basically that there is conflict or *Dukka* and there is a way out of *Dukka,* which we can find ourselves. Nobody is going to do it for us. We are responsible for our own suffering as well as the ending of our suffering. Then we have to do something with the very cause of the *Dukka*, which is basically the wrong view in our mind. If we find the right view, which is not a concept or an idea but the right seeing through mindfulness, then we will have the means of overcoming the suffering and conflict.

Ven. Olande Ananda of Dutch nationality has been serving the Buddhist community in Sri Lanka for three decades. For many people who lead busy lives, his pansala or Buddhist temple in the Colombo suburb of Nugegoda is a haven of peace and tranquility.

The Great Awakening

by Venerable Seelawimala Thero, Head of the London Buddhist Vihara

This year, 2011, is the 2600th anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment - *Sambuddha-Jayanti.* All over the world, some 500 million Buddhists are celebrating this momentous event by paying their respects and showing their gratitude for all the many insights given to them by the Buddha. We all know that the Buddha's qualities are immeasurable but his compassionate wisdom is paramount. I would like to take this opportunity of looking in some depth at the whole concept of compassionate wisdom in the context of the *Sambuddha-Jayanti.*

Once a learned Brahamin called Sela heard the news of the arrival of the Buddha at his village, and he decided to pay him a visit. On his arrival, Sela asked "Honourable Gotama how can one be called a Buddha, an Enlightened one?" The Buddha pointed out the three characteristics of his Enlightenment concisely, in verse.

"What has to be known, that I have known
What has to be abandoned, that I have abandoned;
What has to be developed; that I have developed
Therefore, O Brahamin, I am the Buddha." ***(Sela Sutta, Sutta- Nipata).***

These are not the only characteristics of the Buddha, but actually they are also the three objectives of all those who follow the Buddha's path. If we reflect for a while on the purpose of the practising the *Dhamma*, we can see our aims through these lines.

According to the Pali canonical texts, we see how the Buddha discovered the path to enlightenment. In these texts, the Buddha distinguished between two kinds of search: one noble and the other not. A search for that which is subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, subject to sorrow, subject to defilement is not noble. On the other hand, the noble search is called "*Ariyapariyesana*" and can be found in the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*. The noble search seeks the incomparable security of Nibbana. This is the ultimate goal of the Buddhist path. Here, the Buddha is speaking to his monks about his own search. At the start, just like all of us, Prince Siddhartha was still an unenlightened being, was living in a state of ignorance and was engaged in worldly material search. The Pali word used here for "ignorance" is "*Moha*". *Moha* acts like a veil or a cloud, which prevents us from seeing things as they really are. We live in a state of non-understanding. When Prince Siddhartha awakened to the truth he penetrated this veil of "*Moha*". This awakening was the culmination of tremendous dedication and perseverance continuing throughout countless lifetimes.

Throughout this inconceivably long period of lifetimes, the *Bodhisatta* - the aspiring Buddha- practises what we call the Ten Perfections (*parami*): generosity (*dana*), morality (*sila*), renunciation (*nekkhamma*), wisdom (*panna*), energy (*viriya*), patience (*khanti*), truthfulness (*sacca*), determination (*adhitthana*), loving-kindness (*metta*), and equanimity (*upekkha*). The cultivation of these perfections is a completely unselfish act, performed solely out of compassion for other beings. The motivation is pure and without the wish for personal gain, dedicated completely to the service of other beings.

Even in his last life, Prince Siddhartha as a *bodhisatta* did not have an easy journey. He suffered disappointments, reverses and failures. When he left the palace and renounced his life of luxury at the age of 29, he went in search of a teacher. First he approached Alara Kalama, who was widely respected and had his own body of pupils. Alara Kalama taught him everything that he knew and the *Bodhisatta* reached the highest state that Alara Kalama could teach, the state of nothingness (*akincannayatana*). However, he found this unsatisfactory as it did not lead to higher knowledge (*abhinna*) and the stilling of desires. He said that this attainment "does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana." (MN 26.15) So he left Alara Kalama and went in search of another teacher. He approached Uddaka Ramaputta, who was also widely respected. By applying himself to his teachings, the *Bodhisatta* realised the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*n'eva sanna n'asannayatana*), but this too he found to be unsatisfactory as it did not lead to realisation of the highest truth. Someone who is skilled and proficient in the practice of jhanas can attain both these states. They are such pleasant attainments that mediators can believe sincerely that they have attained ultimate happiness. However, for the *Bodhisatta* these states were ultimately unsatisfactory, because they were only temporary and he was searching for the permanent eradication of suffering in all its forms and release from conditioned existence. Both these teachers had many excellent qualities. The Buddha says that they had faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom, which are all great attainments. However, they both lacked insight, knowledge or wisdom, which was something that the *Bodhisatta* had yet to discover for himself, and which is the Buddha's unique discovery.

For the next six years the Buddha practised many forms of strict asceticism and severe mortification. Based on his own personal experience, he rejected both these extremes as unproductive. Eventually he sat down under a banyan tree by the side of the river Neranjara and resolved not to move from that spot until he had attained his goal. He said, "This is an agreeable piece of ground, this is a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort …… and I sat down there thinking: This will serve for striving." (MN 26.17)

First, there was a struggle with Mara, the Evil One. The Nidanakata of the Jataka Commentary contains a very lively and detailed description of the temptation of the *Bodhisatta* by Mara as he sat under the Bodhi tree immediately before his Enlightenment. These accounts describe how Mara the Devaputta saw the *Bodhisatta* seated, with the firm resolve of becoming a Buddha, and how Mara summoned up all his forces and advanced against him. Mara's army is described as being tenfold: 1. sense desires (*Kama*), 2. aversion to the holy life (*Arathi*), 3. hunger and thirst (*Kuppi-pasa*), 4. craving (*Tanha*), 5. sloth and torpor (*Thina middha*), 6. fear (*Bhiru*) 7. doubt (*Vicikicca*). 8. distraction and obstinacy (*Makka thamba*). 9. gain (*Labha*), praise (*siloka*), honour (*sakkara*), ill-gotten fame (*Yasa*), and 10. extolling oneself and contempt for others (*Attukamsana-paravambana*).

But the *Bodhisatta* would not be deterred by Mara's army, declaring, "I would rather die in this conflict than be alive but defeated … Even though the whole world, inclusive of its gods, cannot beat that army of yours, I am going to destroy it with the power of wisdom like an unfired clay pot with a stone." (*Sutta Nipata, Padhana Sutta* v.443) Please note the importance he attaches to wisdom as the way to overcome ignorance.

He began to practise mindfulness of breathing and, now that his body had become strengthened by the food he had eaten, he attained all the jhanic states and perfect one-pointedness of mind. This led to the development of *pubbenivasanussati nana* (knowledge of his past lives). He recalled all his previous lives, where he had been born, how he had lived and how he had died. This knowledge was acquired during the first watch of the night.

The *Bodhisatta* continued with his meditations, and next he developed *Cutupapata nana* (knowledge of the disappearance and reappearance of beings in accordance with their *kamma*). This was the power of clairvoyant vision, by which he could see the arising and passing away of all beings, how they are born in different states, how they pass away and how they are born again in the endless cycle of existence. This knowledge was acquired during the second watch of the night.

Then the *Bodhisatta* developed *asavakkhaya nana* (the knowledge of the eradication of the corruptions). There are four *asavas*, the defilement of sense desires (*kama*), becoming (*bhava*), wrong view (*ditthi*) and ignorance (*avijja*). This led to the realisation of the Four Noble Truths - this is *dukkha*, this is the origin of *dukkha*, this is the cessation of *dukkha*, and this is the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*. This was the knowledge, which was acquired during the third watch of the night. Ignorance had been overcome. Enlightenment had been attained. He said, "Rebirth is ended; fulfilled the Holy Life; done what was to be done; there is no more of this state again." Ignorance was dispelled and wisdom arose.

In his first sermon the Buddha emphasized that it was the understanding of the Four Noble Truths that was central to his enlightenment. "As long, O Bhikkhus, as the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Four Noble truths under their three aspects, the twelve modes was not perfectly clear to me, so long I did not acknowledge in the world inclusive of gods, maras, and



Brahmas and among the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment. (*anuttharam samma Sambodim*). When, O Bhikkhus, the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these four Noble Truths under their three aspects and twelve modes, became perfectly clear to me, only then did I acknowledge in this world inclusive of gods, Maras, Brahmas, amongst the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment." What are these four noble truths under their three aspects and twelve modes? The three aspects, which relate to each of the four noble truths, are the knowledge of the truth (*sacca nana*), knowledge of the function of the truth (*kicca nana*), and knowledge of the function of the truth that has been performed (*kata nana*). The first truth has to be understood, the second truth has to be abandoned, the third truth has to be realised, and the fourth truth has to be developed.

The Buddha said his search for Enlightenment and the path he had to travel was like going on an ancient path, heavily overgrown, leading to a city, which was obscured from view. "Bhikkhus, it is just as if a person wandering through the jungle, the great forest, should see an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled along by men of former times. And as if he should go along it and going along it should see an ancient town, an ancient royal city, inhabited by men of former times, having parks, groves, ponds and walls - a delightful place. And then that person should inform the King or the King's chief minister, saying, 'My lord, you should know that when wandering through the jungle, the great forest, I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled along by men of former times. I went along it and saw an ancient town, an ancient royal city inhabited by men of former times, having parks, groves, ponds and walls - a delightful place. Sire, rebuild that city.' And then the king or the king's chief minister were to rebuild that city, so that in time it became rich, prosperous and well populated, expanded and developed. So also, Bhikkhus, have I seen an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled along by fully Enlightened Ones of former times. And what is that ancient path, that ancient road, travelled along by fully Enlightened Ones of former times? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path." (A.XII.65) The city was there the whole time, it did not need to be invented, but it did need to be discovered. That is the achievement of the Buddha on the full moon day of the month of Wesak 2600 years ago this year.

Photo: Buddhists of the 20th century created a new symbol of Buddhism in the form of a flag which in modern times is immediately identifiable by the world community of Buddhists. The flag was developed in its current form by Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, an American journalist who was the founder and first president of the Theosophical Society. It was first hoisted on Vesak day 1886 in Sri Lanka. The five colours of the flag represent the colours of the aura which Buddhists believe emanated from the body of the Buddha when he attained Enlightenment.

Blue signifies the concept of loving kindness and peace in Buddhism. Yellow signifies the Middle Path. Red signifies achievement, wisdom, virtue, fortune and dignity. White signifies purity, emancipation, and that the Dharma will always exist regardless of time or space. Orange is the essence of Buddhism which is full of wisdom, strength and dignity. The combination of these five colours symbolizes the one Truth.



Different *mudras* or hand gestures are seen in these statues. On the statue on the front left, the gesture of the right hand over the right knee and the left hand palm up on the lap, *Bhumisparsa mudra*, meaning calling the earth to witness, symbolizes enlightenment, steadfastness and imperturbability. This is a common gesture on Thai statues. On the statue on the right, the *vitarka mudra*, shows the palm faced outwards and the index finger and the thumb making a circle. This gesture depicts the Buddha in his teaching mode. Several of the statues show the Buddha in the *dhyana mudra* or meditation pose.



Views on Buddhism

The Buddha said: "Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it, simply because it is spoken and rumored by many, simply because it is found written in your religious books, or merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."

In line with this advice, Buddhists try to cultivate an investigative mind and spend time reflecting on the teachings of the Buddha, guided by the wisdom offered by Buddhist teachers. In this section we look at how some lay Buddhists view the Buddha and his teachings.

Frequently Asked Questions about Buddhism

Compiled by Dr Gaya Gamhewage

As a Buddhist who has lived in non-Buddhists countries for most of my life, I am often asked questions about Buddhism by friends and colleagues. Here are some of the most common questions I receive and some of the answers I have found based on the education I've had, the books I've read and the teachers I've had the good fortune to meet. These questions have also prompted me to find out more for myself. There is a great deal of information in print and on the web on Buddhism, but the information below may help you.

1. What is Buddhism?

Many people consider Buddhism to be a religion while others consider it to be a philosophy or a way of life based on the teachings of the Gautama Buddha who lived in India 2,600 years ago. The word comes from *'budhi'*, meaning "to awaken". The Buddha is the awakened or enlightened one. Buddhism views life as permeated with suffering caused by desire. Enlightenment - obtained through right conduct, wisdom and meditation - releases one from desire, suffering and rebirth. There are around 300-500 million Buddhists in the world, with numbers increasing in the West.

2. What does a Buddhist believe in ?

There is no belief or blind faith in Buddhism as such. In its place is the concept of *Saddha* or confidence based on knowledge, self-discovery and reflection. The confidence that Buddhist followers have in the Buddha is similar to the confidence that a patient has in a competent physician. No more, no less. The Buddha, as teacher, instructs us, but we ourselves are directly responsible for our purification. Although a Buddhist seeks refuge in the Buddha, s/he does not make any self-surrender or sacrifice their freedom of thought. One can exercise one's own free will and develop knowledge even to the extent of becoming a Buddha oneself.

3. What does a Buddhist do?

A Buddhist walks the path to enlightenment through the Noble Eightfold Path: right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Buddhists are either lay followers (leading a normal family life) or ordained as celibate monks and nuns. There are varying intensities of the rules or "precepts" one can follow. Lay followers traditionally follow five rules (do not kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie or consume intoxicating drinks or drugs). On special religious days, every full moon day of each month, lay devotees may add another three rules to follow the 8 precepts. Ordained clergy have hundreds of rules to follow, all with

the aim of developing ethical conduct, mindfulness and wisdom.

4. Do Buddhists pray?

Buddhists do not pray to a personal or creator God but recite stanzas and scriptures to remind themselves of various aspects of the *Dhamma* or Buddha's teachings. These stanzas are recited in the ancient Indian languages of *Pali* or *Sanskrit*. Buddhists bring their hands together as if in prayer during recitals. Buddhists also meditate to improve mindfulness and develop the right concentration and insight. This can be done either seated with hands in their laps or by walking. In Buddhism, there is no asking for favours from a God or supernatural being. Buddhists strive to find peace and happiness in themselves.

5. How can Buddhism help me?

Buddhism explains there is a purpose to life. It explains apparent injustice and inequality around the world, and it provides a code of practice or way of life that leads to true happiness. It can help deal with the stresses and challenges of modern life and create peace within ourselves, our families and in society at large. It can be practiced by anyone, anywhere.

6. Why is Buddhism becoming popular?

Buddhism is becoming popular in western countries for a number of reasons. Firstly, it provides meaningful answers to many of the problems faced by modern, materialistic societies. It also includes a deep understanding of the human mind. Prominent psychologists around the world are now discovering the effectiveness of the natural therapies embraced by Buddhism.

7. Who was the Buddha?

Siddhartha Gotama was born into a royal family in Lumbini (then north-east India, and now in Nepal) in 563 BC. At the age of 29, he realized that wealth and luxury did not guarantee happiness, so he explored the different religious teachings and philosophies of the day in an attempt to find the key to human happiness. After six years of study and meditation he finally found 'the middle path' - the Noble Eightfold path mentioned above - and was enlightened. After enlightenment, the Buddha spent the rest of his life teaching the principles of Buddhism — called the *Dhamma*, or Truth — until he passed away at the age of 80.

"There are two mistakes one can make along the road to truth - not going all the way,
and not starting."

Buddha

8. Was the Buddha a God? Do Buddhists worship idols?

The Buddha was not a God, nor did he claim to be. He was a man who taught a path to enlightenment from his own experience. He developed his mind and achieved very high mental states which enabled him to carry out acts which many find magical.

Buddhists sometimes pay respect to images of the Buddha, not in worship, nor to ask for favours. A statue of the Buddha with hands resting gently in its lap and a compassionate smile reminds us to strive to develop peace and love within ourselves. Bowing to the statue is an expression of gratitude for the Buddha's teachings and is part of the way many Asian cultures pay respect to elders and teachers. For many, statues of the Buddha help to concentrate the mind before meditation.

9. Are There different types of Buddhism?

Buddhism was never spread through invasion or violence. It took several hundred years to go from India to Iran and Tajikistan in the west and to China, Japan and Korea in the east. As it spread it took on the cultural aspects of each country: as a result, there are many different schools of Buddhism. The two main schools today are: Theravada and Mahayana.

Theravada - the teaching of the elders- is practiced in the Buddhist countries of southern Asia - Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, Burma and Thailand. It is the most orthodox or unchanged form of Buddhism. The earliest available teachings of the Buddha are found in *Pali* literature and belong to the school of the Theravada. This school acknowledges the human characteristics of the Buddha, is characterized by a psychological understanding of human nature, and emphasizes a meditative approach to the transformation of consciousness.

Mahayana is more of an umbrella for a great variety of schools, from the Tantra school well represented in Tibet and Nepal to the Pure Land sect, which is more common in China, Korea and Japan. Ch'an and Zen Buddhism, found in China and Japan, are meditation schools. According to these schools, to look inward and not outwards is the only way to achieve enlightenment.

The Buddha's teaching or *Dhamma*, however, does not change essentially regardless of the school.

10. Is Buddhism scientific?

Science is knowledge which can be made into a system, which depends upon seeing and testing facts and stating general natural laws. The core of Buddhism fits into this definition, because the Four Noble Truths can be tested and proven by anyone. In fact, the Buddha himself asked his followers to test the teaching rather than accept his word as true. Buddhism depends more on understanding than faith.

"The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion... a religion which based on experience, which refuses dogmatic. If there's any religion that would cope with the scientific needs it will be Buddhism...."

Albert Einstein 1879-1955
Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921

11. What is Karma?

Karma is the natural law that every cause has an effect. This means that our actions have results. Good begets good. Bad begets bad. This simple law explains that all individuals are responsible for their past and present actions. To test the karmic effect of our actions, we need to answer three questions: what is the intention behind the action, what are the effects of the action on oneself, and what are its effects on others. Some karma acts in this life, either immediately or with some delay. Some karma is effective in the next life, and some karma is delayed for many lifetimes, while other karma can be offset by good or wholesome deeds. Buddhism emphasizes how we are masters of our destiny, and how we can change our existing karma or influence our future karma.

12. Do Buddhists believe in re-incarnation?

No. To be re-incarnated, one needs a soul. Buddhism does not subscribe to the notion of a soul. Instead, Buddhism acknowledges rebirth and describes how the stream of consciousness upon death becomes the contributing factor to a new aggregation or life. Other words used to describe this are "metempsychosis" and "transmigration". The new life is neither identical nor entirely

different from the deceased. The two form a continuum or stream. The new life can be in human or animal form, or in several supernatural realms. The objective of Buddhism is to escape from this continuous, never-ending process of death and re-birth with all its associated dissatisfaction, suffering and sorrow, to a state of not being born called *Nirvana*. Nirvana means "blowing out" - the blowing out of the fires of greed, hatred and delusion.

The Well-spoken One (Sugata)

by Huu-Loc Le

In Buddhist chanting, we reflect on the nine Qualities of Lord Buddha in the Pali language.

Itipi so bhagava araham, samma-sambuddho,
vijja-carana ***sampano, sugato, lokavidu,***
anuttaro purisa dhamma ***sarathi,***
sattha deva-manussanam, buddho, bhagava.

1. The accomplished one (*Arahan*)
2. The perfectly enlightened one (*Sammasambuddho*)
3. The one endowed with knowledge and conduct (*Vijjacaranaasampanno*)
4. The well-gone one or the well-spoken one (*Sugata*)
5. The knower of the worlds (*Lokavidu*)
6. The incomparable leader of men to be tamed (*Anuttaro purisadammasarathi*)
7. The teacher of celestial and human beings (*Sattha devamanussanan*)
8. The enlightened one (*Buddho*)
9. The blessed one (*Bhagava*)

If we recite this with concentrated mind and mindfulness, we get lots of merits.

The term "Sugata", the 4th Qualities of Lord Buddha, has two definitions:

1. One who has gone to the deathless, Nibbana and
2. One who speaks rightly, (It means that the Lord Buddha speaks only fitting speech in the fitting place).

The Six Kinds of Speech are as follows:

1. Untrue, incorrect, unbeneficial, unwelcome and disagreeable to others;
2. True and correct, but unbeneficial, unwelcome and disagreeable to others;
3. True, correct, and beneficial, but unwelcome and disagreeable to others;
4. Untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial, but welcome and agreeable to others;
5. True and correct but unbeneficial, and welcome and agreeable to others; and
6. True and correct, beneficial, welcome and agreeable to others.

Of these, only the third and sixth are the two kinds of speech that the Lord Buddha speaks because those are true, correct, and beneficial. (Majjhi-manikaya, Vol. 2, Abhayaraja-kumara Sutta)

For further information readers can find in http://www.tbsa.org/articles/BuddhaQualities.html
The Nine Special Qualities of the Buddha By U Jota Lankra and www.usamyanmar.net/Buddha/Article/The Nine Qualities of Buddha.pdf

The Moment

by Vivanne Dubach

At the moment I work for Helvetas Bhutan. Just over four months ago, my flight landed in the narrow valley of Paro and my feet touched the floor of this exciting country for the first time. I chose to go abroad for this "practical work experience" as part of my masters study in environmental sciences of ETH Zurich. Having now spent more than four month in Bhutan, I feel nothing than happiness to have come here.

Working for the Participatory Forest Management Project (PFMP), which advises the Bhutanese Social Forestry Division in community forest matters, I happen to travel through the amazing environment of eastern Bhutan to so called remote areas without roads and often without electricity as well. More than once I was the first Westerner entering a village. The quiet and peaceful life I could experience in those remote villages stands in great contrast to the restless and noisy world in the capital Thimphu. Having had the chance to see both worlds, I was able to gain a deep insight into Bhutanese society.

Adapting was one of the important abilities I had to prove during this time. But adaption actually does not exist when you live the moment. Instead of counting all the differences, I experienced every single moment as it was, soon realising that there were less differences than I had thought. What does it matter which language you speak if the smile is the same? What does it matter how the house, in which you stay, looks like when the gathering inside is as warm as it is in your own country? The music, consisting of all the sounds and noises of this Bhutanese world, was unfamiliar to me when I arrived. But this music silently became more and more known as longer as I was surrounded by it. Adapting doesn't mean one has to become a local. It only means to get familiar with all those new sounds. And this familiarisation happens without any effort. It happens by just listening to them, by not hiding behind prejudices or other thoughts that can only be kept by not really touching the new culture. One will then be able to understand and interpret those sounds that contain the same meanings as you find in your country.

At the moment I am sitting in one of the living rooms in the far south-east of Bhutan, drinking a cup of watery coffee which I don't like. I am surrounded by the noise of the football match that fills the hearts of the three men around me. Birmingham versus Arsenal. Arsenal leads three zero in the sixty-fifth minute. I am not at all interested. But my two Bhutanese counterparts always take over the TV whenever and wherever they can turn it on. I gave the wish up to see something that would catch my interest a long time ago. The challenge I now face is not to be too disturbed by the football-noise in my ear: the comments, mixed with screams, horns and clapping.

I take another sip of the milky water with coffee taste, already preparing myself to take the next one. It wouldn't be polite to leave it. My thoughts are lazily floating through the day that is now slowly ending. The minutes pass by without me noticing them coming and going. I will spend the whole evening in the same way, sitting on the couch, letting the time pass. I am still listening to the football noises streaming out of television even if my mind is floating. Pictures showing western babies surrounded by flowers in too shiny colours greet me from the walls. A Buddhist monk and a picture of the fourth and of the fifth king complete the collection. Kings belong especially to the Bhutanese living rooms. One can find them in every household, smiling or simply watching the inhabitants and guests coming and going.

At the moment I feel great. A steady happiness inside of me keeps me healthy and calm, protects me from undesirable thoughts. Like an ocean of steadiness it floats inside my heart, letting me feel the same love for every moment. Letting me appreciate every situation, may it be an unfamiliar or a familiar one. Letting me stay present, watching my surrounding actively and interested, concentrated or with a lazily floating mind

I am happy to be here in Bhutan. To learn from this culture, from the people I meet, from the noises and sounds that surround me. I know, when I return to my own country, I will continue to watch all this. I will stay present in every moment, appreciating the lessons that it offers me. There is so much that can be seen, even in a world you think you already know.

A Journey from Darkness to Reality

by P. C.

When I got the request for an article for a proposed publication by the International Buddhist Foundation I was a bit embarrassed. In the plethora of books and writings by eminent authors, Rimpoches and poets on the Buddha, what could I add to the existing literature? Pondering over these apprehensions, it occurred to me that writing about my personal experience on Buddhist precepts and their impact on me could usefully be considered as a humble tribute and *pranam* (show of respect and reverence) to this great human being and spiritual teacher who, after his enlightenment, 2600 years ago trod this earth and whose teachings are as relevant and practical these days as they were in his time. He never claimed to be a guru or incarnation of God, but led an exemplary life in Dharma which was his credo.

I was born into Hinduism – a term coined by the British in the XIXth century – or *Sanatana Dharma* (eternal law). The Buddha too was born in a Hindu family and although he found his own way discarding rituals and sacrifices, he developed his own technique to achieve lofty results. He controlled his sense organs, quietened his mind and turned his energies inward in search of the immortal and achieved *bodhi,* enlightenment.

Compassion or karuna

In my childhood I had heard about Dharma without paying much attention to it, but stories of Gautama Buddha fascinated me. It took me many years before realising the meaning of renunciation. My first encounter with Buddhist principles of love and compassion was when I had to learn a small poem by Leigh Hunt .

The poem was summarised by the author as follows : "Abou Ben Adhem awakened from a dream, found an angel, writing in a book of gold the name of those whom love of God has blessed. 'And is mine there ?' he asked. But the angel answered. 'Nay'. 'I pray thee, then,' he said 'write me as one who loves his fellow men', The angel wrote and vanished. The next night it came again, with a great awakening light, and showed the names whom love of God had blessed. And lo ! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."
My young mind was impressed by the compassion or karuna (part of the spiritual path of Buddism) inherent in the poem and it had a calming influence on my rebellious nature in condemning blind faith and devotion of family members which never appealed to me even though I accepted going to temples and attending *pujas*, as I was tolerant and respectful enough towards other people's beliefs, despite my lack of faith.

This was indeed, as I realised much later, the discovery and cultivation of *mettha bhavana* or meditation on loving-kindness. It is a pity that in the South of India where I come from, there were no Buddhist temples or discourses that I could attend and learn more about *metta* meditation. It is only thanks to the internet and Mr Goenka that, at the end of my life (nearly 80), I was drawn to *vipassana* (insight meditation) and indeed gained experience, although from the practical point of view I lack the discipline and diligence to cultivate loving-kindness at all times. The path for me is, I realise, long, but may be in one of my future lives I hope to reach the goal.

Sri Narayana Guru

As I grew up, I came to appreciate the work done by Sri Narayana Guru, a social reformer in caste-ridden Kerala. He stressed the need for spiritual and social upliftment of the downtrodden by their own efforts through the establishment of temples and educational institutions open to all. Consecrating a temple and in reply to the challenges from brahmins, he famously said : "This is not a Brahmin Siva, but an ezhava Siva (ezhava or thiya, a lower caste to which I belong)". The motto on the temple wall reads:

Devoid of dividing walls of caste
Or hatred of rival faith,
We all live here
In Brotherhood

Despite the respect I owe to this great social reformer and seeker of truth – he was likened to a second Buddha- I find his attempt to establish places of worship in parallel to the existing ones with the same gods of the Hindu pantheon, flawed. On the other hand, he did follow Buddha's principles of five purities – body, food, mind, word, and deed called *Pancha Dharma* when the *Sivagiri* pilgrimage was conceived. It is amusing to note that he urged that there should be no shouting (a very common feature in India) and pilgrims should scrupulously avoid trappings of ostentation!

Light of Asia

In my adolescent years, I had the occasion to read Sir Edwin Arnold's "The Light of Asia ", which depicts in verse the life, philosophy and teachings of Prince Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. The book exercised considerable influence on my own thoughts. As the author puts it in the book's preface, "this venerable religion has in it the immortality of boundless love, an indestructible element of faith in final good, and the proudest assertion ever made of human freedom".

Buddham charanam gachami

With this backdrop of my own experience, I find that the Buddha convinces the mind. No belief is required to travel with Buddha, accepting as truth only what one finds through one's own direct experience, that which is beneficial and good for all, harmful to none. Self-dependence and wisdom gained from direct experience is the essence of *vipassana* which has no dogma or guru. It is merely a technique of self-observation to experience the quintessence of Buddha's teachings. I had the opportunity to attend a ten-day course, which guided me to insight meditation. I now know a lot about meditation and its benefits, but to my dismay its practice eludes my will power. I will end this short account of the influence exercised by Buddhism on me by quoting from an introductory part of the *Dhammapada* as translated by Eknath Easwaran. Needless to

say that I would be quite happy if I could achieve a fraction of what Buddha said in my present lifetime, the rest will linger in hope.



Someone once asked the Buddha sceptically, "what have you gained through meditation ?"
The Buddha replied, "nothing at all"

"Then Blessed One, what good is it?"

"Let me tell you what I lost through meditation: sickness, anger, depression, insecurity, the burden of old age, and the fear of death. That is the good of meditation, which leads to nirvana."

Loving Kindness

by Ani Khachatryan

What we all need in this world, is love, pure love…As I grow older, I understand one thing, that without love nothing can be done, that love is the basis of all good things, love gives birth to kindness, compassion, devotion. I was born and brought up in the realm of love, care, and devotion. My parents always taught me, that whatever I do, I should put love in it, because love is the essence of our existence.

In Buddhism, what are the Four Limitless States are four themes for contemplation? They are love, compassion, rejoicing in the joy of others and equality of view. This is the order that they are usually given. I pondered over a lot, and decided to write about loving kindness, because what I feel and what I see is that our world lacks love, true, unconditional love.

"just as a mother loves her only child, we should cultivate boundless love to offer to all ..."

When I was growing up, my brother, sister and I always asked our mother 'which one of us do you love most?', and she always said 'I love you equally. If I cut any of my fingers, the pain will be the same.' This is true spiritual love, equality of view. Not dependent on conditions, on time or place, it is not the ego's love. It's greater than ego. I always ask myself: Who am I? What do I live for? What makes me different from others? So far, I have come to the point, that I am the one, who always cares for others' happiness. I' m the one, who lives to give love and a smile to those who need it and what makes us different from others is our culture, language and religion. But what is surprising, we can understand each other even without speaking. That is because even though we belong to different cultures, yet we have a heart to feel, we all are people of blood and flesh.

"We can live without religion and meditation, but we cannot survive without human affection."

Through our meditations on love and compassion we have the feeling that we are not alone in this world. By practicing loving kindness we develop positive powers in our mind. Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring. A kind word is like a Spring day. Something very tiny even can bring smile to people's face. Never miss an opportunity to make others happy! Don't wait for people to be friendly and kind to you, be kind first. Kindness, like a boomerang, always returns. Open your heart - open it wide; someone is standing outside, who needs your help, your care, your love and kindness. Love someone who doesn't deserve it. Love can win over evil. Be kind to all creatures, they all need our love and care. Beginning today, treat everyone you meet as if they were going to be dead by midnight. Extend to them all the care, kindness and understanding you can, and do it with no

thought of any reward. The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit.

You can develop loving-kindness towards everyone:

- a respected, beloved person - such as a spiritual teacher;
- a most beloved one - a close family member or a friend;
- a neutral person - somebody you know, but have no special feelings towards,
  e.g. a person who serves you in the shop;
- a hostile person - someone you are currently having difficulty with.

Starting with yourself, then systematically sending loving-kindness from person to person in the above order will have the effect of breaking down the barriers between the four types of people and yourself. Imagine, how beautiful a day can be when kindness touches it!

…When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people….

Peace of Mind

by Lakshman Lokumarambage

Once we are born to this world, we pass through several stages of life. As a baby, one will be under one's mother's care and guidance until we are old enough to go to school. School life will end up at different ages and one may finally end up with finishing a university education. The next stage of life is the working life. Getting married and starting a new family comes next. This is the general path of a layperson until he dies. As human beings we are endowed with a powerful mind, which has enormous potentials to make our life worth living. Although all the other living beings don't have this potential to make their lives successful the way they want, they will all be subject to the law of nature. Human beings are also subject to the law of nature, but thanks to their powerful mind they can come to terms with life's difficulties and could be at peace.

When we are born to this world what is guaranteed is being subject to eight worldly conditions (or vicissitudes of life). They are profit and loss; fame and defame; blame and praise and happiness and pain. Most of us know that all the above are part and parcel of life but when we face one of the situations either we are overwhelmed or frustrated. This is because we are unable to face the situation with a balance mind. We know the fact that all worldly happenings are transient in nature and they will not remain permanently in the same state or form. So why are we hanging on to negative conditions and lamenting? If we know how to let go of these negative conditions or feelings, there we will find peace of mind and happiness. Unfortunately, to let go of negative feelings is an arduous process as we have misconceptions of things. Do we know how to find the success in our lives? In fact the success of life relates to the extent to which some one has peace of mind.

To understand what peace of mind is, we have to know how the mind operates. The mind is solely responsible for our happiness or sadness. The mind either likes an object or dislike it. The mind operates on three conditions: *loba* (greed or craving), *dosa* (aversion or hatred) and *moha* (delusion). Out of the above three conditions "*moha*" or delusion is the important factor which triggers the other conditions. Delusion is not understanding the conditioned phenomena of things or beings i.e. "*anicca*" (impermanence),"*dukka*" (suffering) and "*anatta*" (absence of an enduring soul). Understanding of these conditioned phenomena is referred to as "*panna*" or the wisdom. This is of paramount importance to find peace of mind in oneself. It is not difficult to reflect on impermanence, suffering and selflessness when we are confronted with a difficult situation; to see the positive aspect of the thing or happening and let go of negativity.

With a mind infused with wisdom, one would deal with daily life with a balanced mind. He, who acquires things and gains achievements without any attachment; keeps away from things and beings without any hatred. When the mind is developed to such a level of understanding one would be peaceful and pleasant in appearance, and may practice generosity, forgiveness and compassion. Forgiveness is part of generosity but it is a higher-level of generosity. If one can forgive misdeeds of one's partner, child or close associates then there is no space for anger and revenge, there will be harmony and peace.

Being a layperson we are duty bound to look after ourselves, our family and to be of service to society. To accomplish these tasks we need to earn and acquire wealth. Do we earn and acquire wealth to fulfil our needs so that we can lead a reasonable comfortable life? Very often we keep acquiring more wealth than we need, even to the extent that we could not spend all we amassed during our lifetime. Earning and acquiring wealth for our needs is not "*loba*". But when we go beyond our needs, then we fall into the trap of greediness and attachment. There we loose our balance of mind and eventually peace of mind. This is phenomenon applies for "*dosa*" as well. If we don't like an object or person we can refuse the object or refrain indulging with the person whom we dislike. Sometime act of refraining may be misunderstood as an act of cowardliness. But for a balanced mind it's an act of tolerance, which leads to peace of mind. If a person, enraged with anger, scolds another for whatever reason, the anger eats on the mind of the person scolding. If the other person responds in the same manner, which is often the case, then he too will be a victim of moral degradation. If you are mindful you will recognize this situation and let go the invasion of hatred into your mind. How peaceful your mind would be then! Knowing these facts is not enough. We must apply it to our life to see the real benefit.

Another important aspect of achieving peace of mind is to let go of the pain of the past and stop speculating on the future. How many of us are repenting the misdeeds of the past? Everybody knows that we can't correct the wrong actions committed due to ignorance in the past. So why worry? It is you who can forgive yourself for wrong doings in the past. The future is uncertain. Make peace with yourself that will make huge difference in your life to move forward. According to Buddha's teaching criminals, murderers, prostitutes can all attain supreme goal of Nirvana: There are many instances where they did attain Nirvana. They did this provided they develop "*panna*" or the wisdom and trod along the eightfold path and practices "*sathara sathipattana*"(the four foundations of mindfulness). That is the highest point of peace of mind one could achieve. The road to peace of mind and to Nirvana is wide open for all walks of life irrespective of cast, creed, colour or ethnicity. Most of us know what wisdom is as expounded in

Buddhism and it is very often limited to knowledge. We do not dwell in it or make it a part of our life in dealing daily activities. If you develop wisdom, will notice that a huge load of pain leave you and you will able taste the bliss of peace of mind right there.

Reaching the End of the World

By Jayawardene Dharamasiri

At that time, the Blessed One was staying at the Jethavana monastery, built by Anathapindika in the city of Sravasthi,. In His daily routine, a time had been allocated for the benefit of *devas* (divine beings) to see Him and ask questions to clarify certain matters related to Dhamma. On that particular night, a deva by the name Rohitassa, lighting up the entire Jethavana monastery by the radiance of his body, appeared before the Blessed One. Rohitassa, having paid his respects, stood on one side and asked the following question.

Rohitassa's Question

"Is it possible, Venerable Sir, to arrive by walking, at the end of the world where there is no birth, old age, decay, death and rebirth?"

"Friend Rohitassa, it is not possible to know or to see or to arrive at the end of the world where there is no birth, old age, decay, death and rebirth by walking".

Rohitassa was thrilled on hearing this answer to his question from the Blessed One. He exclaimed " How marvelous, how true is the Blessed one's answer to my question". Rohitassa praised the Blessed One's answer because he knew it through his own experience.Then Rohitassa went on to narrate the following story from his past life."In a previous life a long time ago, I used to be an ascetic by the name Rohitassa, endowed with great psychic power. My speed was so fast like the movement of a light arrow shot by the fastest shooter. My stride was so huge that I could set one foot on the eastern ocean and the other on the western ocean. Endowed with such powers, I wanted to reach the end of the world where there was no birth, old age, decay, death and rebirth by walking. Only stopping for meals, going to the toilet, resting and sleeping, I walked for 100 years and died on the way, without coming to see or to know or to arrive at that end of the world."

Then the Blessed One declared: " I would say that one is not able to reach the end of the world where there is no birth, old age, decay, death and rebirth, one has to come to the end of the world to realize the end of suffering." The Blessed One then followed that statement with this profound, momentous declaration next: "I also declare that within this fathom-long body, with its perceptions and mind, the arising of the world, its cause, its ending and the path to practice leading to achieve that end can be found."

Rohitassa, the deva, was pleased with the Blessed One's words.This extract was taken from *Rohitassa Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikaya* in the *Sutta Pitaka*. Let us have a closer look at the meaning of this *sutta* and its implications as applicable to today's world. Are these words still valid and true in the modern, scientifically advanced world of today?

Meaning of the word 'world' in Buddhism

To the ordinary person living in the world (a world-ling), everything external comprises his world. The trees, rivers, mountains with its creatures form the world for him. His outlook is always directed outside. It has a distinctly different meaning in the teachings of the Blessed One. In the discipline of the Noble ones, the outlook is internal. He declared that the 'world' arises at the six sense bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and the mind. Therefore, a world-ling sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches and thinks of a world out there and take it for real. The Noble one sees an arising and passing away of the world at the six sense bases dependent on various causes.

This definition of the world by the Blessed One is very important in realizing the things the way they really are. What went wrong for Rohitassa was that he took the world with him to see that end where there is no birth, old age, decay and death. In other words, he went looking for an end taking the six senses along with him. Where ever he went, the world arose for him. The modern sciences are also looking for solutions to end sickness, old age and if feasible death itself. In the Blessed one's teachings, death is unavoidable as long as there is birth. Anything that has dependently arisen also has the nature to pass away.

Just take for instance an astronomer looking through his highly advanced telescope in search of galaxies, black holes, comets and meteorites. Whatever out there in the universe makes an object for the eye, even though he uses his telescope. At the small end of the telescope there is an human eye. These two, the object in outer space and the eye itself cause the eye consciousness to arise. The three come together for the eye contact to arise. The eye contact conditions feeling, perception and thought proliferation giving rise to complex theories about his experience. There, his world of astronomy arises for him.

If someone is to look through the larger end towards the smaller end to see who is looking, that wise man arrives at the world as it arises at the eye. Now we are dealing with that world as defined by the Blessed One, the inner world of the mind with its mirage-like perception. The Blessed One's statement consisting "within the fathom-long body with its perceptions and mind" is the totality of the world in the noble one's discipline. That world for the wise man has arisen due to causes and as the causes cease, its result, the world itself, ceases. This is the law of dependent origination declared by the Blessed One. Therefore, that six-fold contact has to cease for the world to cease. That is where one finds the end of the world without birth, old age, decay and death.

This momentous declaration by the Blessed One brings us face to face with the Buddha with his infinite qualities as summarized in the stanza: *Ithipiso Baghava araham*.....etc. One finds the quality of '*Lokavidu*', meaning the knower of the worlds. This teaching also gives us another glimpse into His knowledge and understanding as described by the quality of '*Lokavidu*' as well as the timeless (*Akaliko*) quality of His teachings. It is also an eye opener for all modern day Rohitassas.

The author has just explained the word of the Buddha as he understood it in this article. He is grateful to Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero whose spiritual friendship, guidance and explanation of deep Dhamma in his writings titled: Nibbana – the mind stilled. The priceless books written by the Thero are not for sale and can be obtained free by writing to him directly. His address: Pothgulgala Aranyaya, Pahan Kanuwa, Kandegedara, Devalegama, Sri Lanka.

"There is no fire like passion,
there is no shark like hatred, there is no snare like folly,
there is no torrent like greed."



One of Buddhism's greatest champions was a once-brutal Indian emperor from the Maura dynasty of India, Asoka, who ruled a couple of centuries after the Buddha had passed away. Repenting his bloodthirsty rule, he found refuge in Buddhism and helped its spread as far as Rome and Egypt; as well as making it the state religion. His son Ven. *Mahinda* and his daughter *Sangamitta* were sent to Ceylon (modern day Sri Lanka) and established Buddhism there. At Ven Mahinda's request, the Sri Lankan King *Devanampiyatissa* built the *Thuparamaya* (shown in the picture) in which was enshrined the collarbone of the Buddha. It is considered to be the first *dagaba* built in the country and is considered to be the earliest Buddhist construction chronicled Sri Lanka. The name Thuparamaya comes from "*stupa*" meaning a heap or mound with Buddhist relics; and "*aramaya*" which is a and residential complex for monks. Many Buddhist temples have such structures, more modern and of varying sizes, which form part of Buddhist rituals and discipline.

The Great Compassion of the Buddha for the World

by Dr Chandra Pinngoda

Soon after His Enlightenment, the Buddha declared that: " … out of **compassion** for beings I surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha…"…… and exclaimed that-

"Open for them are the doors to the Deathless,
Let those with ears now show their faith…."

On another occasion the Buddha has stated that: "A being not subject to delusion has appeared in the world for the welfare and happiness of many, out of **compassion for the world**…, it is of me indeed that rightly speaking that this should be said."

There is a striking difference between what we understand by compassion and the interpretation given by the Buddha to that word. The "eye of a Buddha" signifies Supreme Knowledge *(mahä* ***panna****)* or perfection of the Right View (*sammä* ***ditti***)- the insubstantiality of all material things in the world that is subject to perpetual change, including one's body-mind process; the so called I, me, mine, my-self or soul. Belief in one's soul or self as a non-changing entity (*sakkaya ditti*) blocks one's mental capacity to appreciate the meaning of real compassion (*karunä*).

Commonly, one tends to show compassion towards those who are in need of food, shelter, clothing, medicine, educational opportunities and other similar situations. Those donors are usually prosperous, healthy and happy persons. Society identifies them as the unselfish and compassionate people. They are honoured and praised; regrettably, these unfortunate people expect such gratitude and become remorseful otherwise. Such compassion is far from the Buddha's dispensation, and can be termed as **narcissism**.

The word narcissism originates from the Greek myth in which **Narcissus**, a beautiful young man, fell in love with his own reflection in a pool. He died and was changed into the flower which bears his name. Thus, narcissism is the habit of admiring oneself too much, especially one's appearance. While such people donate acquire much merit and honour from their causes according to the Buddha's proclamation (the *Dhamma*) or the Universal Law of cause and effect (good actions render good results), such action alone does not yield to the Buddha's Path to the Deathless or the cessation of suffering.

The Buddha began His Noble Search for the Deathless state as an unenlightened *Bodhisatta* (one aspiring to be a Buddha) contemplating thus: " Suppose that, being myself subject to birth, I seek the unborn supreme security from bondage, …. being myself subject to ageing, sickness, death and sorrow and defilement, I seek the un-ageing, un-ailing, deathlessness, sorrowless, and undefiled supreme security from bondage, *Nibbäna*. Then as "a young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life…..went forth into homelessness" with unsurpassed endeavour.

With His Enlightenment, He was endowed with all encompassing True Knowledge (*Sammä näna*) and security from bondage, (*Sammä vimukti),* which is *Nibbäna*. It was from then on that He became the **Great Compassionate One** (mahä kärunika) and exclaimed, out of compassion to beings, that: *"Open for them are the doors to the Deathless.*

Only the *mahä kärunika* had the power of *maha panna* to deliver Angulimäla (a deluded youth driven to lunacy by his tutor, out of hatred and revenge to kill 1000 men and fashion a necklace of human fingers, by which he acquired his name) from human suffering and assure him the supreme security from bondage, *Nibbäna*.

From the above explanations it can be seen that any person who claims that he or she possesses compassion (*karunä*) devoid of wisdom (*pannä*) is practising trickery. Therefore we need to understand the meaning of wisdom (*panna*) as proclaimed by the Buddha to benefit from the great compassion of the Buddha that the modern society and the world at large clamour for.

Compassion (*karunä*), a conditioned mental state (*sankhära*) along with three other states- loving kindness (*mettä*), altruistic joy (*muditä*) and equanimity (*upekhä*) are called the four sublime or divine states (*brahma vihära*). These mental states have to be acquired through mind-development (*bhävanä*) and a devotee develops a mind "pervading the whole world with a mind full of *mettä* (or *karunä*, or *muditä,* or *upekhä*), with mind wide, developed unbounded, free from hate (*dösha*) and ill-will (*viyäpäda*)".

In the Buddha's dispensation, mind-development *(bhävanä*) should supersede the stage of *brahma vihära* or divinity. The Buddha admonished his disciples to develop wisdom (*pannä*). What is *pannä*? The following are a few examples to elaborate the meaning.

- The Buddha told the murderer Angulimäla to pluck a leaf from a tree and then to replace it in its original condition. That simple suggestion was sufficient to bring a lunatic back to his senses. Angulimäla realised that the lives he destroyed were in vain. He realised that all conditioned things are impermanent.

- Chullapanthaka, a young disciple was about to return to lay life as could not memorise stanzas. The Buddha gave him a white piece of cloth and asked him to rub it while repeatedly reciting only two words: "removing defilements". The exercise was sufficient for the youth to realise that defilements (in the mind) are conditioned.

- Suniita and Söpàka, two illiterate destitute children, were picked up, as disciples, by the Buddha out of great compassion. They gained supreme security from bondage, *Nibbäna*, after realising the impermanence of all conditioned things in the world.

- Kisà Gotami, a mother who had become insane with the grief of the death of her only child was subdued, when she was made to realise that death is the natural consequence of birth; the Buddha, out of great compassion, asked her to find some mustard seeds from a house where there was no death within the family circle of such a house.

Thus it is quite clear that wisdom (*pannä*) required to realise the Teaching of the Buddha is to develop a mind free from delusion or ignorance (*avijjä*). The Buddha admonished His disciples to accept His Teaching (the *Dhamma*) as His Successor (or the Teacher), after He passed away. The *Dhamma* in its pristine purity is available to those who seek it.

Worldlings engrossed in sensual pleasures, who spend time and money to satisfy their six sense bases, believe in finding happiness in the human sphere; failing to realise that they are running behind a mirage. The Enlightened One, seeing that all living beings are

subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and an endless cycle of suffering, and **out of Great Compassion,** gave the *Dhamma* for liberation from all ignorance (*avijjä*) and suffering. It is the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya Atthàngika Magga*).

While the exploration of the eight steps on the path should be the subject for another essay, some understanding of the first step is necessary for those who aspire to learn to practice compassion rightfully.

The first step in the Path-the Right View (*sammä **ditti***) is the knowledge of the insubstantiality of all conditioned things in the universe, and consequently, the knowledge that whatever subject to perpetual change causes an unsatisfactory state of mind and it leads to suffering. The belief in the existence of an eternal soul (*sakkaya ditti*) is accompanied with craving (*thanha*), wrong view (*miccha ditti*) and self esteem (*mana*). As such, to practise compassion, it is necessary to establish *sammä **ditti*** within oneself by the gradual development of *pannä* and the eradication of *sakkaya ditti.*

Let us commemorate the 2600th year of the Enlightenment with a firm determination to develop *pannä* through the practise of the Path to reap the benefits of the **Great Compassionate Leader** to enable us to contribute to lasting peace on Earth.

May All Beings be Happy !

Buddhist Teaching is Applicable to Me

by Illika Shyamalie Goonetilleke

Buddhist teaching, or the "Dhamma," is universal. It is applicable to Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike and to people in all walks of life. The Enlightened One had uncountable births of *su visi asankeyya kalpalaksha* to realize, to understand and to teach humankind with compassion about the nature of all things. He explained how *Samsara* (the cycle of life and death) takes us from one birth to another because of *avijja* (ignorance) and *tanha* (craving) that brings us internal suffering. The Noble One also taught us that the path to cessation of suffering is the **eightfold path,** right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Dhamma teaches us the wholesome way of life, and how to live a meaningful and peaceful life. The expectation of every human being is to be safe from harm and evil. The Buddha taught us how to make this possible. "*Dhamme Hawe Rakkhathi Dhamma Chari*", the Buddha said, meaning that the one he who lives with the Dhamma is protected by the Dhamma.

Buddha's teachings have different precepts for *Arrya (Arihaths/ Bikkhu* or clergy*)* and for the layperson. It is not difficult for a lay person to live with Dhamma and lead a successful life. One, who makes an effort to practice the precepts and develop mindfulness while spreading *Mettha* (loving kindness)*, Mudhitha* (sympathetic joy)*, Karuna* (compassion) and *Upekh*a (equanimity), is the one who lives a meaningful and a happy life.

The five basic precepts a Buddhist chooses to follow are:

1. **Refraining from destroying living creatures.** A trained mind will know that the right thing to do when a mosquito bites you is to blow the insect away without harming or killing it, whereas an untrained mind without a second thought will smash the insect into pulp. Compassion also comes along with the trained mind. If a person with compassion sees a wounded animal on the road, without just walking by, that person will pick up the animal and place it in a safe place, and if possible will attend to its needs.

2. **Refraining from taking that which is not given**. If a person who meditates and has a developed mind sees a wallet fallen on the road, they will try to figure out how to get it to the owner by using any information that can be found in it. A non-spiritual person would take the valuables in it and throw the wallet away. This falls into the category of stealing even though the person did not go looking for this wallet. This act will bring this person bad karma and will result one day in him losing his own valuable belongings. This bad karma can take place in this birth or later in another *bhavaya* (existence).

3. **Refraining from sexual misconduct**. This includes unwholesome conduct due to craving and passion that is not accepted in the law of nature and norms of life. Having an affair with another person's spouse or forceful advances towards children are examples.

4. **Refraining from incorrect speech.** A mindful person will always think before speaking. Is what I am going to say now a lie? Will it hurt some one? Will it disrepute some one? A person with a developed mind will not want to put another person in a position that he or she would not want to be in. A person with an untrained mind will not have second thoughts about what he or she is going to say. They would just say whatever comes to his or her mind without considering the damage it would do to another person.

5. **Refraining from using intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.**

Karuna is compassion which anyone can adhere to in their day to day life. In its simplest form, it is being thoughtful and nice to others. Blowing away the mosquito that stings you is spreading Karuna towards the insect. While getting onto the bus you can help an elderly or differently-abled person to enter or to find a seat. Help a colleague in a difficult task or situation. Say a kind word to someone you meet on your way to office and smile. Compassion and kindness purifies your thoughts and make others happy too.

Someone may bump in to you while walking to work. Without getting irritated and scolding that person you could think, "I should have been more careful and walked more cautiously so that I could have avoided the collision". These are little ways that you can spread *Mettha* towards others in every day life. *Mettha* purifies your blood and make your skin glow.

Be happy for others. When your colleague gets a raise or a promotion, be happy instead of thinking, "I should have got it, or she or he doesn't deserve it." Jealousy and contempt will only make you unhappy and ugly. *Mudhitha* will make the environment a pleasant place for every body.

Upekha means having equanimity and having calmness in one's mind. When good or bad things happen to you, you should be able to react in a calm and composed manner without overreacting. Understanding impermanency of life and matter and understanding the reality of things will help you to face life with equanimity. To

achieve this state of mind you need to train and develop your mind and do away with egoism and *sakkayaditti*. This is why you should practice meditation.

One can meditate daily as a practice. To begin with, select the best time for yourself and meditate a few minutes a day. Most people believe the best time is early in the morning when your mind is fresh and free from any defilement. There are various meditation methods. *Anapana, Maithri, Buddhanussathi, Vipassana, Marananussathi, Sakman bhavana* are a few. Different people find different meditation methods suitable and easy for them. One should seek help from a teacher initially.

Anapana Sathi, is observing your breathing mindfully. Sitting in an upright manner in a calm and quiet place, you start observing inhalation and exhalation touching the lower part of your nostril. It may be difficult to concentrate at the beginning as your mind start running to the past or to sounds you hear or things that you have to do in the future. You should not let anger or frustrations overcome you when your mind roams. Knowing that your mind ran away, bring it back mindfully to your breathing again. Practicing and increasing the time you sit meditating each day will train you to have control of your wild mind.

With prolonged practice you will begin to gain *panna* (wisdom). This is what you need in your daily life to spread *mettha, mudhitha, karuna and upekha* in the things you do. When you are angry your mind will know that you are angry and you can stop reacting in a manner that you will regret later. When you are jealous your mind will tell you are being jealous and correct you. When you have craving or lust you will know and can take measures not to react in an unwholesome manner. A person without a developed mind will not know how to overcome anger, jealousy, craving or lust and will have no hesitation in reacting with bad thoughts and unwholesome deeds, thereby breaking the precepts and accumulating bad karma. A being without *panna* (wisdom) gathers a lot of bad karma due to ignorance. Lying, gossiping, talking ill of others and harsh speech are some of the unwholesome deeds we commit every day, not realizing that we are accumulating bad karma.

Desire, hatred, sloth, restlessness, and *doubt* are the five hindrances that prevent a person from following the path of the Dhamma. One who can overcome these hindrances and continue meditation with "*wiriya*" (determination) will be following the **eightfold path**.

Practicing Dhamma is not difficult or time consuming. We should make dhamma and meditation a part of our daily life in order to make life pleasant for oneself as well as for other beings, making this world a better place to live.

Can Buddhism Help Us in Modern Society?

by Udyanee Unantanne

I am the owner of my karma.
I inherit my Karma.
I am related to my Karma.
I live supported by my Karma.
What ever Karma I create, whether good or evil, that I shall inherit.

The Buddha, *Anguttara Nikaya* V.57 *-upajjahathana sutta*

Karma (Kamma both these words mean the same thing) means action or deed of one's own doing that reacts on ones own self, which gives happiness and unhappiness to our lives without the intervention of an independent force.

The idea behind Karma is; whatever you do intentionally to others a similar thing will happen to your self in future. The reaction or result of our actions show up with a time delay, and so it is hard to explain which action leads to which result.
The *Samma Sambuddha* preached at Jethavànà rama in Savaththi city the operation of Karma in the life of the individual. It is known as the *Culla kammavibhanga Sutta* and is found in the *Majjhima Nikaya* of the Pali cannon.

A young man called Subha approached Buddha and asked the reason for the differences that exists among human beings. The Buddha s reply was all living beings have deeds as their own and their inheritance. Karma as their own kinsman and their refuge. It is the Karma that differentiates being into low and high states. Some people with higher religious states perform religious functions, but they were not able to gain sainthood. There are many such people in our society, even if much effort is taken in life that alone is not enough to achieve the desired end. For A happy life two factors are important: Good deeds done in the past life and effort. There are some other factors also involved for a successful life.

Parents: Children inherit some qualities from their parents. The Buddha pointed out this fact about 2,600 years ago. Queen Maha Maya ,when she conceived, she started to perform charity, observe the eight precepts, thus began to cultivate more and more virtues. Wise parents engage themselves in religious activities. As a result of good deeds, such parents benefit by having good children. Parents with evil deeds get "bad" children however much they wish to get good children. Thus they are forced to suffer.

Friends: Once Buddha told Ven. Anada that whatever good things a human being gets depend almost always on the association of good friends. Buddha Explained clearly ,for your own welfare, there are two things which are important a suitable place to live and the association with wise while keeping away fools and wicked.

Why do we believe in Karma?

Some people observe virtues and cultivate meditation, thus lead a good life and think that they will be safe. There is a Buddhist saying that the Dhamma protects the person who practices it. But all of a sudden they fall into unexpected situations like illness or some other problem. Then they wonder why such things happen to them as they are behaving righteously. At the same time people who are bad and wicked, always doing evil things don't meet any problems. This is an important matter we must give a thought to.

Verily, an evil deed committed does not immediately bear fruit,
Just as milk curdles not at once; Smouldering, it follows the fools
like fire covered with ashes.

Dhammapada (71)

Also found in the *Dhammapada*;

As sweet as honey is an evil deed ,so thinks the fool ,
so long as ripens not ; but when it ripens he comes to grief; (69)

When an evil deed is done it is sweet as honey but when experienced, it is like fire. The law of Karma does not look for a reason outside ourselves for our good or bad fortune. It explains our own sufferings as a result of our negative deeds towards others, and happiness as a result of our positive actions to help others. Science it self comes with another argument for Karma. In physics,

there is a direct casual relationship between action and reaction. How scientific this sounds. As Buddhas taught;

Do not think a small sin will not return in your future lives.
Just as falling drops of water fill a large container.
The little sins that steadfast accumulate will completely overwhelm you.
Do not think a small virtue will not return in your future lives.
Just as falling drops of water will fill a large container.
The little virtues that steadfast accumulate will completely overwhelm you.

The development of virtue, practice of good conduct, and if we practice virtues and avoid all types of evil behaviour, done through body and mouth, leads to betterment of entire society. Never utter hash words to anyone. One uttering harsh words, the receivers would abuse you with harsh words in return. The resulting exchange would lead to suffering. Similarly, if you assault anyone, you would be assaulted in return *Dhammapada* (133)

Subbapàpassa akaranam
Kusalassa upasampada
Sacittapariyodapanam
Etam Buddhanasasanam
(That one should), refrain from all sins ,enhance merit, purity mind are Buddha-Dispensations.

Dammapadaya

May all beings be happy !

Buddhist Traditions, Rituals and Ceremonies for Wesak Poya

by Shirani Dias

The foundations of Buddhist tradition and practice are the Buddha, Dhama and the Sangha. Buddhism is a religion and philosophy including a variety of traditions, beliefs and practices. The two major branches of Buddhism are Theravada and Mahayana. Buddhist traditions include Holy days, Monks and the Rains Retreat.

The 12 months in the Sri Lankan Sinhala calendar are known as Duruthu, Navam, Medin, Bak, Wesak, Poson, Esala, Nikini, Binara, Vap, Il and Uduvap. The Rains Retreat (*Kathina* Ceremony) is held on any convenient date within one month of the conclusion of the Vassa Retreat, which is the three month rains retreat season for the monastic order. It is the time of the year when new robes and other requisites may be offered by the laity to the monks.

Ordination of monks is a Theravada Buddhist tradition. Theravada tradition was the way of living that was introduced by Buddha, 2600 years ago. There are two steps Ordination. The first step or stage is the Samanera Ordination. The second step is the full ordination. According to Theravada Buddhist tradition Bhikkus are recognized as Buddhist teachers. Only Bhikkus are permitted to perform ritualistic Buddhist activities.

In Buddhism rituals involve the recitation of stanzas (prayers) and meditation. Prayer offering is a mean of devotion, which leads to higher spiritual level. On the *Buddha Jayanthi* (anniversary) Buddhist monasteries all over the world celebrate with prayers, sermons and recitation of Buddhist scriptures. Buddhist monks read the holy scriptures all throughout the day before the Buddha statue.

There are many special holy days in the Buddhist community. The most significant celebration happens in the month of May on the night of the full moon which is "Wesak Poya". Buddhist all over the world celebrate the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha over 2600 years ago. Buddhist festivals are joyful occasions. On festival days Buddhist people go to the local temple, offer food to the monks, take the five precepts and listen to Dharma talk.

Wesak day is a national holiday in Sri Lanka, Tibet and China. Celebrations and religious observances are held in honour of this Triple Holy Day. On Wesak day, lay people put aside their regular duties and take a religious observance known as "*Sil*". Devotees go to temples, or to other places of worship or find a quiet place at home and sit in meditation. They listen to Dhamma talks given by monks. In Sri Lanka people also make pilgrimages to holy sites. One such popular place is the Sri Maha Bodiya in the city of Anuradhapura. Here people observe "*Sil*" in the vicinity of the sacred Bodhi Tree. This Bodhi Tree is a sapling from the tree at Bodh Gaya in India under which the Buddha is said to have meditated on the full moon night of his awakening. The third event celebrated on Wesak Day is the final passing away of *Parinibbana* of the Buddha, which occurred after forty five years of teaching the Buddha Dhamma.

The lighting of Wesak lanterns happens in almost every home. Light symbolizes "awakening". Wesak lanters are beautiful works of art, made of coloured paper and adorned with either candles or electric bulbs. Cities, towns, and villages are all blaze with the colour of the Wesak buckets lamps that light up trees. Another feature of the festival decoration are large decoration structures known as "*Wesak Pandal*" they are erected and lit up very colourfully. All these lights glimmering on the full moon night creates an awesome mood of happiness and holiness. Some "*pandals*" depict stories of Lord Buddha's past lives. There are depictions of Buddha gently but dramatically depict how the Buddha encourages criminals to give up their bad ways. Some show very graphically how those who do not live virtuous lives suffer in lower worlds as animals and demons. Crowds of people walk by observing these and enjoy themselves. Charitable people donate food and drink to the passers by (*Dansala*). The Wesak night is magical and beautiful.

Liberation through Practise

by Sudath Madugalle,
Joint Secretary of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress

For countless eons the *Boddhisatva* practised to achieve the 10 perfections of *dana* (generosity), *sila* (virtue), *nekkhamma* (renunciation), *pnagnga* (wisdom), *viriya* (effort), *kshanthi* (tolerance), *satya* (truthfulness), *adittana* (determination), *metta* (compassion) and *upekkha* (imperturbability). These perfections provided support in his realization of the four Noble Truths. When *Mara,* the Lord of Death, appeared to distract the determined and meditating ascetic seated under the Bodhi tree, these perfections enabled the Bodhisattva to vanquish him. Because he realized the Noble Truths for himself and without outside help, the Buddha is known as *Samma Sambuddha* - the supreme being who realized the truth through his own efforts. The Buddha was no messenger of another's knowledge or realization. He was the knower of all things that needed to be known in the entire world. His teachings were based on his own, authentic experience.

The process of the *Bodhisatva's* realization of the truth highlights one key ingredient in the path to cessation of all suffering. The

determination, commitment and effort to cease all suffering must be personal. The enthusiasm, effort and commitment of others do not lead to personal liberation. However, the significant advantage and support available to us is his living teachings, *the Dhamma* , which the Buddha expounded.

Undoubtedly the Buddha is the most influential teacher of this world. His intention was to enable all beings to realize the truth that he himself had realized. He emphasized the importance of practising the Dhamma so that it became a personal experience. As such the Buddha never imposed restrictions on the faculty of thinking of those who wished to understand the Dhamma. He was only a guide and only offered the guidance that while treading the path, making the right effort was the responsibility of the individual.

Contemporary India boasted of many eminent teachers besides the Buddha. Some even claimed to be the Buddha themselves. However as they had not realized the Four Noble Truths, in explaining their teachings they had to impose restrictions and prevent followers from asking questions. If followers had been granted full freedom of questioning, they would not have been able to maintain their position in society enjoying the worldly comforts offered by their followers.

In complete contrast to these teachers, the Buddha always maintained a policy of open inquiry with everyone who wished to speak with him. The Buddha said that one must follow only the teachings that one had tested by practising and understood to be wholesome. To the Kalamas of Kesaputta who questioned the Buddha as to how they may know the truth as all teachers maintained that each one of them expounded the truth, the Buddha responded, "Kalamas under no circumstance should one believe something because it was said to one by an eminent teacher or it was traditional knowledge or commonsense. Nor should one believe something because it was found in a holy book or it seemed like the truth and it suited one's own theories. Should one realize an action to be wholesome through one's own experience, then only should one believe such to be the truth. How could one know an action to be wholesome and skilful? Should one realize an action to be beneficial to self and others, non harmful to self and others, only such actions are wholesome and skilful. Only in such actions should one engage".

The Buddha said that the Dhamma had the quality of being able to be held under scrutiny and be proven as the truth. This *ehi passiko* quality of the Dhamma invited inquiry, examination and scrutiny. The truth and the purity of the teachings can be known only through experience. Experience is possible only through practice. That which is heard and told and seen must be tested through practice to be experienced as wholesome and skilful.

The teaching of the Buddha, the Dhamma, does not encourage blind faith or belief. The truth of the teaching is realized only through experience. Leadership for one's life lies with each individual being. It is not a power or responsibility that can be vested on an outside source. As such the Buddha's teaching encourages beings to exercise wisdom and apply the lessons of experience in leading daily life.

The Buddha allowed unsurpassable freedom to question, debate and discuss the teachings. The *Upali Sutta* is a good example of this freedom granted to people to question and interact with the Dhamma. Upali was a staunch lay follower and supporter of Mahaweera, the Jain teacher of eminence. Once he approached the Buddha claiming to the world that he would vanquish the Buddha through arguments. However, being a very intelligent man, upon discussion with the Buddha, he realized the futility of the Jain practice of extreme asceticism and begged to be allowed to be a robed disciple of the Buddha. The Buddha however discouraged Upali of becoming a monk, reminding him of his position within the Jain community and the impact of his decision on the Jain religion and his teacher Mahaweera.

In the *Chullahattipadopama Sutta*, the Buddha used the simile of the footprint of the elephant to encourage inquiry and further inquiry before accepting something as the truth. The Buddha said just by seeing the footprint of an elephant one must not decide on its size and power, that one must see the elephant before one decides on the size and nature of the elephant. Similarly with the teachings too, the Buddha said only inquiry and direct experience would enable the realization, the seeing which ultimately lead to liberation.

The Buddha allowed inquiry and scrutiny of the teachings as a means of eradicating doubt. Even on his death bed on the occasion of the *parinibbana*, the Buddha invited any monk with doubts in the Dhamma to come forward. He advised the monks that should any doubt or confusion occur regarding the Dhamma, that such doubts should be eradicated through discussion with Noble ones who had experienced the truth.

In the *Maha parinibbana Sutta* in the *Digha Nikaya*, the Buddha specified 4 ways in which doubt in the teaching should be eradicated. "Should a monk claim that this is the truth I heard from the Buddha himself…… do not believe him. Practise the teachings yourself, test the teachings against your own experience. If you realize it as beneficial to self and others, non harmful to self and others, accept and further practise until it leads you to the ultimate realization and cessation of all suffering".

It is clear from this advice given by the Buddha on his dead bed, that realization of the truth can be achieved only through practising the teaching. Wholesome inquiry leads to the eradication of doubt allowing wholesome practice. Logic, arguments, analysis and preconceived notions are not the means by which the truth can be realized. It is only by experiencing the teaching through one's practice that the realization of the truth that leads to ultimate liberation can be achieved.

In this year of *sambuddha jayanthi*, celebrating the 2600th year of Enlightenment of the Buddha, the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering should be a priority for all Buddhists.

"Teach this triple truth to all:
A generous heart, kind speech,
and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity."

"Just as treasures are uncovered from the earth,
so virtue appears from good deeds, and wisdom appears from a pure and peaceful mind.
To walk safely through the maze of human life,
one needs the light of wisdom
and the guidance of virtue."

"Better than a thousand hollow words, is one word that brings peace."



The Buddha is respected and venerated as a great teacher by lay and ordained followers. The Buddha statue has a place of honour in Buddhist homes and temples. The statues provide a reminder to recollect the teachings of the Buddha and the Dhamma; acts as point of focus and tranquillity during meditation; and provides inspiration to follow the Noble Eightfold Path prescribed by the Buddha as a lasting cure for the ills of the world. Statues are placed in high places and Buddhists try to avoid pointing the soles of their feet at at images of the Buddha as this is considered a mark of disrespect in many Asian cultures.



The Practice of Meditation

Mediation, *bhavana*, is the name given to developing or growing the mind through conscious effort. In Buddhism, meditation plays a central role in the Eightfold Path to Enlightenment. There are many types of meditation. Tranquillity meditation, *samatha bhavana*, stills the mind and trains it to concentrate. Many of the skills learned in tranquility meditation can be applied to other types of meditation. As its name suggests, the purpose of insight meditation *(vipassana bhavana)* is the realization of important truths of impermanence, suffering and "no-self." Loving-kindness is a central virtue of Buddhism, and loving-kindness meditation (*metta bhavana*) is a way of developing this virtue. This practice, which is seen as complementary to other forms of meditation and aims to develop the mental habit of altruistic love for one's self and others. It is said to "sweeten the mind." Increasingly, meditation is practised by non-Buddhists, and recommended by psychologists and psychiatrists, as a way of dealing with anxiety, depression, and other conditions. Read this section to find out how Buddhist meditation is viewed and practised.

Ten Days

by Susanne Staub

Born in Germany in 1962 of German parents, I grew up in Brussels as the middle child of four siblings. At the age of 21, I married a Swiss man with whom I raised our twin daughters. I work at Geneva airport, and love gardening and discovering other cultures. I am attracted by Buddhism but afraid I do not have enough discipline to be a Buddhist.

Stressed by my daily life and obligations, I was nervous and slept badly until a dear friend from Sri Lanka told me about *Vipassana* meditation. I had always admired the Buddha and wondered how people meditated. What went through their minds? How could they sit for hours in an uncomfortable position without pain, or falling asleep? For me this was less a challenge, more an impossible aim. Didn't my mind jump from idea to idea like a monkey from tree to tree? Didn't my brain work like a computer where I can't find the off button? How can we face problems and daily tensions with a calm and balanced attitude? How can we avoid overreacting to unpleasant situations and conflict in our private life or at work? Our lifestyle is difficult to handle, with continuous information from the media, an endless flow of new items created to cover our supposed needs, and the increasing competition in every situation. We can't escape our obligations and engagements except during vacations. Even then we stay within reach and end up being tired after the holidays, with too many e-mails to answer and matters to catch up on. This leads to a lack of patience and compassion. We end up feeling like victims instead of being grateful for having so much in our lives.

Seeing the charisma of my friend, a very strong wish overwhelmed me. Soon, I took time off from work and family obligations and subscribed to a 10-day meditation retreat. This did not take place in a luxury hotel on the seaside, nor did I meditate by walking in the desert or practising yoga. Instead, I went to a meditation centre near Geneva, in St-Imier on the Mont-Soleil. The centre teaches *Vipassana* meditation, meaning 'insight' in the ancient Pali language of India - in other words, 'seeing things like they really are' and not as we would like them to be. This meditation is a universal remedy applicable to universal problems. It requires being present at every instant. By learning to be aware of every sensation of our body, our mind calms down and accepts our emotions without getting involved with them. This brings us to understand ourselves clearly and deeply.

And it was and still is a long path! And a difficult one! One must be ready to work hard, make serious efforts and follow the discipline. Ten days without a mobile phone, computer, book or other distraction. Ten days observing the noble silence, without talking, reading, writing or observing our companions. The aim is to work as if we were alone. But thankfully we are guided. A recorded voice explains to us step by step how to learn the long way of meditation. In the event of a serious problem we are allowed to talk with our manager, and if we do not understand the meditation technique we can request an interview with our meditation master. We are guided during long hours, silently sitting on our little cushion. To begin with we are taught how to focus our attention on our breathing. In doing this we need to concentrate again and again, as our attention tends to slip away to other preoccupations as a litany of ideas arises. With practice our mind will calm down and we develop the capacity to rest in awareness. When thoughts and images come again, we learn how to let them come and go without struggle or resistance. We experience pleasant and unpleasant moments but, like clouds in the sky, they don't stay, they move on and we just let them go. This way we realise that nothing stays the same, everything in our life changes constantly.

A typical day starts at 4 o'clock in the morning. A wonderful, rich breakfast is served after two hours of meditation. Lunch follows at 11 o'clock, with tea and fruits at 5 o'clock. The food, prepared with love, is vegetarian and delicious. Instead of dinner, there is an evening talk about the Buddha's life, how to apply meditation in our daily life, and little Indian stories: food for the soul!

Rooms are shared and the bathroom is in the corridor. All this is free of charge. Only after having completed the 10-day meditation course can you give a voluntary donation. All meditation masters, managers, cooks and helpers are volunteers. Men and women are segregated.

Ten days of constant practising may seem like a long time, but it is certainly a short time in which to learn the meditation technique, attain deep levels of unconsciousness, and eliminate the complex roots. It is clear that the aim is to eliminate suffering, as we learn in our body how pain comes and goes. The practice helps us develop clear seeing and helps cultivate compassion, patience, joy and equanimity. It is an art of living that allows us to play a positive role in our society. It helps us to not overreact but instead to face problems in a calm and balanced way.

In the beginning, as we learn self-observation, the experience is likely to be unpleasant and, at times, we find agitation and sadness instead of inner peace. But, like all things, these difficulties pass. At the end of the 10 days, my mind was as calm as a mountain lake and I had the impression that nothing and no-one could shake it.

Many things in our lives and world are critical: the environment, the economy; politicians who do not care enough about the vast majority of the population. It is not surprising that many people are depressed. Therefore it is essential that we renew our connection to ourselves, to nature and to life itself, thanks to silence and mindful attention.

Without this meditation course and the technique I learned, I would not be the happy person I am. I do not practise a lot - frankly, I do not practise enough - but I miss it, and this summer I will return to St Imier for a second retreat. Once you have completed a 10-day course, you can go for a shorter time. You really understand after 9 days why you have to stay 10 days the first time. But shhh…, you will discover on your own. For further information, please check: www.sumeru.dhamma.org or www.dhamma.org There are *Vipassana* meditation centres in nearly every country.

Today, as always, our world needs people who practise compassion, are generous, and have a peaceful mind. Be one of them!

On the Way

by Vivanne Dubach

The trees outside the window disappear as soon as I spot them. The road is full of holes and rocks which force the bus into a strange dance through the sub-tropical jungle, leaving traces of dust in the air behind us. Inside the bus, the music is loud and fancy and not really my style. My legs are stuck between my sleeping bag, a rucksack and a bag full of oranges. It's the third day I am travelling like this. The bus departs early in the morning, at 5 or 6 am; as soon as it starts, the music blows away every thought one could possibly have. The same few songs then follow each other till the end of the day, when the passengers unfold themselves out of their seats and pour out of the vehicle, too tired to look for anything other than some comfortable accommodation for the next few hours.

Inside the bus, I am sitting lazily in my seat, accepting that there are no new positions that would make me feel comfortable me for a while. There are still many hours to go before the bus stops for the day. Why am I so happy then? Why does my soul feel free, relaxed and steady? I was working hard during the last weeks, travelling from one place to another between days full of challenging tasks. I didn't get enough sleep for three nights. In earlier days, this would have knocked me out of any comfort zone. My mood would have trembled, searching for something to hold on to. But now my thoughts are calm, happily surrounded by that simple, repetitive music. My brain is not focusing, just floating in what feels like an ocean of steadiness and silence. I wonder what has happened to me, why I feel nothing but an everlasting happiness following me wherever I go, whatever I do.

Actually, happiness might not even be the right word. An ocean of silence and cheerful steadiness, secure in its gentle moves, including everything in this world, seems too soft to be called by a loud word like happiness. If I try to catch that feeling with my brain, I cannot find a single hint of it. But if I accept that I can trace nothing, I am surrounded by the totality given by what I cannot catch. So I trustfully lay my mind in the waters of this ocean, knowing that nothing is able to disturb its being since it already contains everything.

I still remember the moment when I first looked at this ocean. I was exhausted from never ending and stressful work, disturbed by every sound that struck my mind. I felt so tired I could not longer bear to stay in this world. My soul wanted to escape from all those things that penetrated it without a second of a break. One more noise, and the limit I could take would be reached. Somehow it felt like I imploded and exploded at the same time and there it was, that silently floating water, into which I fell without any hesitation. The effect was amazing. I took one deep breath and there I was again, surrounded by noises I didn't want to hear, tired from weeks and weeks of hard brain work, exhausted and worried. But now, my mind was calm. I felt like watching all those feelings from far away, realising how unnecessary they all were. I had made myself tired, listening to all those noises. I had made myself exhausted through my attachment to the work I did. It was all me. New choices I

now had, feeling the steady waves of the ocean inside of me. I knew that I never had to go back to this stressful something that occupied my whole being. The only thing I had to do was go into that ocean, giving myself permission to stay there.

After a while I realized that it was easy to stay undisturbed. My trust in my ability to float in the ocean grew with every noisy situation I mastered successfully. I observed that for many people, the access to that ocean is blocked. They know and sometimes even feel that they should live the moment, that they should stay present and never attach but they cannot live it in every minute. Some of them attach to this knowledge, focus on it, experience it for some time, and lose it again. The whole magic behind that "stay present" and "don't attach" is trust. If you trust in the presence of the ocean, you relax. And if you relax, you will be able to see, feel, smell and hear its waves in every moment, every movement, every sound. Accepting that it is easy was the entrance for me. Now, sitting in that bus, I smile at a tree with a strange shape, allowing a thought to strike my mind. You are already that happy?

Yes, I am happy. Every moment I feel this steady calmness inside of me. Sometimes I am on the way to getting attached to a situation, losing contact, but I always realise before it happens because the call of this ocean is so strong that I simply cannot force myself to leave it. You don't have to be focused all the time, neither should you let your mind float in its waves twenty four hours a day. Everything can be done as you did before. Only the presence of the water makes the difference. You can stress, you can be worried, you can think hard or let your mind relax. Everything is included in the waters and you are free to watch yourself doing all you want. It sets you free. It allows you to be distanced, safe from attachment, calm and cheerful.

Breath

by Lalani Lokumarabage

When you are born into this world the only thing, other than your Karmic action, that accompanies you is your breath. Interestingly, when you are born, the first thing you do is breathe. If you are born with good looks but no breath, will there be any value in you? Your mother who carried you for nine months so preciously, your father who has been waiting for your arrival so impatiently, your grandparents, brothers and sisters, friends, everyone who has been waiting to welcome you, would not keep you. Why? Because you are not breathing. Your body will be discarded, because a body without breath has no value. The value of a human being lasts only as long as their last breath.

Or if you are not breathing at birth the doctor will give you a good smack on the buttocks to get you to breathe. If you still do not breathe, we all know what will happen to you. Even if you were breathing at birth, your breath may leave you the next day, month, year or many more years down the line. In the meantime, you will be looked after attentively and affectionately by your parents during your childhood, youth and adulthood. Then you would lead a wonderful life surrounded by your parents, husband or wife, children, relatives, and friends until the day you stop breathing. No matter how much they loved you or how elite, rich or great a person you are, they will dispose of your body as soon as you stop breathing, as there is no value in the body without the breath.

Have you ever thought about how important the breath is? We overlook breathing because it happens naturally, automatically. So one may think: why bother about the breath as the body is breathing without any interference of our consciousness?
A person may ask another: how was your day ? A common answer is: I have been so busy at work and have had no time even to breathe. But this person has been continuously breathing and is still breathing but has not given any attention to their breath. How ignorant and mindlessness we can be.

What I am trying to say here is: be aware of your breath. Be mindfulness of your breath. Live with it, be friends with it. Breath is so precious. It is more important than anything else in the world.
Have you ever given a thought to your breath? Someone may say yes, I do. I meditate on breath every evening or I meditate on breath once a week. Maybe another person would say, I have no time so I go once a month to practise my breath.

Why wait until this evening, next week, next month to be with your breath? Your breath and your mind are always with you. Hence , without waiting until you finish the work which you have decided is your top priority, try to be with your breath every single moment. Mind and breath are great friends, but unfortunately, knowingly or unknowingly, we have destroyed their friendship. We have separated these two good friends. In other words, let these two good friends be together and let them play together every moment. The team work of Mind and Breath together is capable of turning you into wonderful person.

Do not postpone this. You know why. Although your breath has been with you so faithfully, keeping you alive and allowing you to be with others and enjoy your life, it can leave you at anytime without telling you.

"In separateness lies the world's great misery, in compassion lies the world's true strength."

"Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love; this is the eternal rule."

"To live a pure unselfish life, one must count nothing as one's own in the midst of abundance. "

"All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think, we become."

"The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, not to worry about the future, or not to anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly."

The Buddha



The Buddha, Dhamma (teachings) and Sangha(the community of followers) form the "triple gem" in Buddhism. The community is made up of Buddhist clergy referred to as *Bhikku* (male) or *Bhikkuni* (female) and collectively they are know as the *Sangha* or "the community". In ancient *Pali,* the names denotes a beggar or "someone who lives by alms (or charity). Buddhagosa , the 5th century Indian Buddhist scholar, interpreted this as "the person who sees danger (in the cycle of birth and death) and who seeks ordination to release from it." Even today, a Theravada *Bikkhu* retains a monastic and celibate lifestyle and is expected to obey the *Pattimokka*, the rules of monastic conduct (typically around 227 for a male, and 311 for a female) as set out in the *Vinaya Pitaka*. *Bikkhus* are immediately identifiable by their simple saffron or red robes. They have shaved heads and carry the a single hollow bowl to receive alms. The Thervada lineages of *Bikkshunis* died out six centuries ago but some Buddhist women lead a monastic life even without a formal ordination.



Buddhism and the Modern World

Fast forward from the first sermon of the Buddha, in a deer park near modern day Benares in India, to 2600 years later to today. Can an ancient philosophy be relevant for modern life? Can the wisdom of a former prince living in ancient India be applied to a globalized and sophisticated world? Can Buddhism stand the tests of time, technology and development? In this section we share with you thoughts of people from our modern world including from a Buddhist monk who himself was a former scientist from a world-renowned university, and several lay members of the Buddhist community.

A Buddhist Approach to Political Conflict and Peace Development

by Ajahn Brahm, Perth, Australia
Adapted from an address given in March 2009

A few years ago, the then Premier of Western Australia, Dr. Geoff Gallop, interrupted an argument during a cabinet meeting. According to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure at that time, Dr. Gallop thumped the table to quieten his cabinet ministers and proclaimed "We should be more Buddhist about this !"

So, even in modern Western democratic governments, senior politicians have some idea of a "Buddhist" approach to political conflict. In this presentation, I will describe what I think that approach is, and how it can produce a political leadership with less conflict and more peace.

In particular, I will explain how Mindful Listening is the first step to overcoming conflict by discovering the causes of the conflict. Then I will continue by describing Wise Listening where one joins one's own views with the views of others, rather than using them as a basis for conflict. Combining instead of contrasting opinions leads to a more accurate understanding and, consequently, a great reduction in conflict. Next, I will introduce the Buddhist practice of Metta Meditation as a means of putting Compassion in Politics. Following on from compassion, I point out that Justice Does Not Mean Revenge, thereby remedying a common confusion that perpetuates conflict, and I will also emphasize the rare but effective method of Learning from the Successes of the Past rather than learning from mistakes. The paragraphs on Solving Conflict by Establishing Other Priorities will show another traditional Buddhist method of transcending conflict by pointing out other, more important, issues. Lastly, I will deal with strategies for Preventing Political Conflict in the future, such as by Electing Effective Leaders. In this way, I aim to make some contribution, a Buddhist contribution, to healing the sickness of political conflict and developing a sustainable peace.

Mindful Listening

One day, I was passing by our monastery's kitchen just before the morning meal. I looked in the window and saw six Thai ladies all talking while preparing our lunch. There were only six people in that kitchen, and all had their mouths open, talking. I wondered who was left to do the listening. No-one was doing any listening. All were doing the talking. What a waste of time that talking was!

The first contribution that Buddhism can offer for solving political conflict is sharing its unique meditation methods for developing mindfulness. The mental training that forms a large part of Buddhist meditation practice, teaches one how to keep one's awareness in the present moment; and how to establish inner silence, where one abides in a state of knowing that is undistracted

by any inner thoughts. Such a level of mindfulness allows one to "Totally Listen", fully receiving the message being conveyed, not only by the words but also by their tone and their accompanying body-language. Too often conflict arises because we don't know how to listen to one another.

Two sisters were arguing over an orange. "You had the previous orange, so this one is mine!" "No way! You had the previous two oranges, so I deserve this one." Their reasonable arguments over who deserved the orange were going nowhere, so they decided on a compromise. They cut the orange in half. The first sister peeled her half, threw the peel in the trash can, and ate the delicious flesh. The second sister peeled her half of the orange, threw the flesh into the trash can, and used the peel as an ingredient in the cake that she was baking. If they had only listened to why each wanted the orange, one sister could have eaten twice as much orange flesh and the other could have got twice as much peel for her cake! And they would have avoided the pain of an argument too.

Only when we listen mindfully, that is in silence in the present moment, can we hear what the other person really wants.

Wise Listening

When we learn how to listen mindfully, we obtain a fuller picture of the problem. At a recent leadership conference in Australia attended by the Australian Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Treasurer, two State Premiers, plus a host of influential CEOs and Professors, the Australian academic who gave the welcoming address related the famous Buddhist simile of the "Elephant and the Seven Blind Men". I will tell this story again, putting it in a new context:

A country was in political turmoil with their leaders spending too much time arguing and their followers destroying their economy with strikes and demonstrations. So the King arranged a special TV show. He had a kangaroo brought into the studio and then had seven men, who had been blind since birth, feel that kangaroo and tell the audience what a kangaroo was. They had all heard the word "kangaroo", but none had ever felt one, let alone seen one. The first blind man felt that there were two heads! (Because the kangaroo had a Joey in her pouch) "Aaagh!" he screamed, a kangaroo is a two-headed monster. The second blind man felt the kangaroo's body and it was so soft he said that a kangaroo is a large soft cushion upholstered in fine cashmere. The third blind man put his hand in the kangeroo's pouch and declared that a "kangaroo" is a ladies designer handbag, probably Louis Vuitton. The fourth blind man felt the kangaroo's tail and smiled knowingly. "Ah-Ha! I felt something like this before, at a similar test when I lived in India a long time ago. On that occasion I said it was a snake, but later I found out that it was the trunk of an elephant. You can't fool me twice! A kangaroo is an Australian elephant." The fifth blind man felt the kangeroo's legs. "Hmm, he pondered. I know a kangaroo comes from Australia and these things that I'm feeling are bent. I know! A kangaroo is a type of Australian boomerang" "No Way!" shouted the sixth blind man feeling the sharp paws, "a kangaroo is a back scratcher". The seventh blind man who felt the kangaroo's independently rotating ears decided they fitted the description he had heard of Yoda, the Jedi, from Star Wars and insisted a kangaroo was an Australian Jedi Knight. Then they all argued insisting that they alone were correct.

This story, in one form or another, needs to be told again and again to remind those in power that personal experience is never sufficient as proof of truth. Instead we must listen to one another, embrace with respect each other's wisdom, and combine it to form a bigger and better picture. Most political conflict would cease if adversaries would mindfully listen, with genuine respect, to their opponents. Also, combining their wisdom would produce more effective solutions. Just like those seven blind men above, who eventually stopped arguing and combined their knowledge, coming to the conclusion that a "kangaroo" is like a large cashmere covered cushion on two big boomerang legs, with two back scratcher like paws in front and an elephant like trunk at the back, a handbag like opening at the front from which appears one small head, a larger head in the usual place with two "Jedi Knight" ears on top. That is not a bad description of a kangaroo for one who will never see one.

Compassion in Politics

The Buddhist principle of compassionate wisdom is rarely used to settle political conflicts. When it is employed, it is very effective. The former Prime Minister of Thailand, Dr Sannya Thammasak, once told me that during his time in the highest office, there was never a problem that couldn't be solved when he approached his political opponent alone, as a friend, and discussed the matter amicably. A large proportion of conflict in politics is not about policy but about persons. When one generates genuine compassion, especially through traditional Buddhist *Metta* Meditation, then agreement becomes more likely. The following anecdote is about an Australian Buddhist using Metta Meditation to win a lucrative business deal, but the method applies just as well to winning a difficult political deal.

Julie from Sydney had her own business in the fashion industry. She had been negotiating a deal with a large company in England and they invited her to London for the final discussions about the contract. When she arrived at Heathrow, she had barely enough time to check in at her hotel, shower and change, before taking a taxi to the company's head office. When she entered the boardroom, tired and jet-lagged, the other directors told her that the CEO was in a very, very bad mood, having shouted at everyone that morning, and that there was no way he was going to sign her contract. They advised her to take the next plane back to Sydney. She refused and sat in a corner of the boardroom, practising her Metta Meditation while she waited for the arrival of the CEO. A few minutes later the CEO burst in, glared at Julie, and screamed "Who is she? And what does she want?!" Julie got up, went up to the furious CEO, and said "You've got such beautiful blue eyes, just like my baby Holly back in Sydney!" She later told me that she didn't know from where these words came, they just "fell out of my mouth". The CEO was stunned. His anger evaporated and he replied politely "Really?" Within the next ten minutes the contract had been signed and the CEO left the room. Julie, however, was not allowed to leave yet. The other directors crowded around her asking "How did you do that? Teach us what you just did."

If our World Leaders would learn Metta Meditation and practise it just before their next summit meeting, then there would be fewer arguments and more agreements signed.

Justice Does Not Mean Revenge

Because positions of power rotate regularly in many countries, incoming administrations are often pressured to right the wrongs of the previous Ministers. Too often, this takes up time and resources that are desperately needed elsewhere. All too often, the call for Justice is but a disguise for seeking revenge.

Buddhist teachings specifically reject the desire for revenge as unhelpful and unnecessary. As they say here in Australia, *"Why seek for revenge when Karma will get the bastards anyway!"* If Buddhists would put their understanding of the Law of Karma into daily practice, then they would not waste so much energy and time seeking to punish the corrupt and incompetent of former regimes. No one gets away with bad deeds, said the Lord Buddha, so why don't we Buddhists accept these wise words of our Teacher, let the past go, and allow the incorruptible Law of Karma to settle these matters in good time.

A middle-aged Australian prisoner in my meditation class in jail asked to see me after the session. He'd been attending for several weeks and I'd got to know him quite well. "Ajahn Brahm," he said, "I wanted to tell you that I did not commit the crime for which I was locked up in this jail. I am innocent and I'm

telling the truth. I wouldn't lie to you, Ajahn Brahm, not to you." I believed him. His manner convinced me he was telling the truth. I started thinking how unfair this was and began contemplating how I could undo this terrible injustice. Then the prisoner interrupted me. With a mischievous grin he announced "But, Ajahn Brahm, there were so many other crimes where I wasn't caught that I guess this is fair!" He understood how the Law of Karma settles things.

Justice would then mean learning from the past, and not wasting time punishing the players from the past. Our priority should be establishing safeguards and strategies so that those problems are less likely to occur again. In short, justice is to be sought in creating a better future, not in settling scores from the past.

Learning From the Successes of the Past

When we look back upon the past, we mostly gaze at what went wrong. We become obsessed with the corruption, mismanagement and incompetence of our leaders, and this makes us very angry. We attempt to overcome our own anger by pursuing those responsible and punishing them. However, in our pursuit of retribution, we do not settle our anger but only make it worse. We make more conflict, and move even further away from peace. The fundamental psychological mistake is that we are focussing on the *wrong* lessons from the past.

Ajahn Chah would often relate the story of the two chicken farmers, but before I proceed with this enlightening metaphor, I must warn my audience about the coarseness of the language to be used. Ajahn Chah would use the coarse and earthy language of the Northeast Thai villagers, which is why he could communicate with them so effectively. I will do the same. I justify the use of such language by referring my listeners to the Aranavibhanga Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya No. 139) and the Vinayapitaka (Vin II p139) where the Buddha said that the Dhamma should be taught in the local language.

Once there were two chicken farmers. The first chicken farmer went into his chicken shed early one morning to collect the produce of the night before. Having entered the shed with a basket, he then filled his basket with chicken shit and left the eggs in the shed to rot. He then took the shit-filled basket back into his home, whereupon he made the whole house stink. His family were not happy. He was a very stupid chicken farmer.

The second chicken farmer also went into his chicken shed early one morning to collect the produce of the night before. However, he filled his basket with chicken eggs. He left the shit in the shed to rot. It would become valuable fertilizer later, but you don't store it in your own house! He then took the egg-filled basket back into his house, made a delicious omelette for his family, and later sold the rest of the eggs at the market for cash. His family were very happy. He was a very wise chicken farmer.

The meaning of this simile is this: When you go into your past, "to collect the produce of the days before", what do you put into your "basket" and bring home with you? Are you shit collectors, or egg collectors? Do you remember the things which went wrong and carry that into your present, or do you let the mistakes rot in the past and, instead, bring all that went right into your present?

Ask any psychologist. When you remember what went wrong in the past, you get frustrated, then angry, then, finally, depressed. Bad energy turns to no energy, as one drowns in despair. On the other hand, when we let go of the mistakes of the past, our own as well as those of others, and focus on all that was done well and brought success, then we get inspired, motivated and happy. We are encouraged to go forward. It should be obvious to you now that **we learn much more from what went right than we ever learn from what went wrong**. In this way, we are more likely to repeat the strategies that produced success in the past. We become more successful, and happier. Moreover, the bitterness that is the cause of so much conflict in the world is avoided. Much conflict can be solved in this very Buddhist way.

Solving Conflict by Establishing Other Priorities

The violent conflict between Christians and Muslims in the Indonesian province of Aceh was interrupted by the devastating 2006 Tsunami. The immediate needs that arose from the tragedy took priority over the conflict, giving both sides the opportunity to work together to restore the basic necessities of life. When adversaries saw something more important than their reasons for conflict, a peace agreement was drafted and soon signed.

This is but one example of how conflict can be solved and peace restored if we can establish concerns that are clearly more important than the reasons for conflict. In the Buddhist tradition, The Lord Buddha stopped a war over irrigation rights to the Rohini River by asking the question "What is more valuable, blood or water?" Both parties, prepared for war, answered that human blood was far more valuable. "Then why are you about to waste so much valuable blood on something much less precious like water?", asked the Lord Buddha, and that ended the conflict.

Ajahn Chah would often tell the story of "The Chicken and the Duck" as a simple but profound example of how hostilities may be avoided by recollecting something far more important than conflict. The simile has been successfully used to prevent many arguments in marriage, but it is also applicable to resolving conflict in politics.

A newly married couple went for a walk together in a wood, one fine summer's evening after dinner. They were having such a wonderful time being together until they heard a sound in the distance: 'Quack! Quack!'

'Listen,' said the wife, 'that must be a chicken.'

'No, no. That was a duck,' said the husband.

'No, I'm sure that was a chicken,' she said.

'Impossible.

Chickens go "Cock-a-doodle-doo", ducks go "Quack! Quack!"

That's a duck, darling,' he said, with the first signs of irritation.

'Quack! Quack!' it went again.

'See! It's a duck,' he said.

'No, dear. That's a chicken. I'm positive,' she asserted, digging in her heels.

'Listen wife! That…is…a…duck. D-U-C-K, duck! Got it?' he said angrily.

'But it's a chicken', she protested.

'It's a blooming duck, you, you…'

And it went 'Quack! Quack!' again before he said something he oughtn't.

The wife was almost in tears. 'But it's a chicken.'

The husband saw the tears welling up in his wife's eyes and, at last, remembered why he had married her.

His face softened and he said gently, 'Sorry, darling. I think you must be right. That is a chicken.'

Thank you, darling,' she said and she squeezed his hand.

'Quack! Quack!' came the sound through the woods, as they continued their walk together in love.

The point of the story that the husband finally awakened to was, who cares whether it is a chicken or a duck? What was much more important was their harmony together; that they could enjoy their walk on such a fine summer's evening. How many marriages are broken over unimportant matters? How many divorces cite 'chicken or duck' stuff?

When we understand this story, we will remember our priorities. The marriage is more important than being right about whether it is a chicken or a duck. Anyway, how many times have we been absolutely, certainly and positively convinced we are right, only to find out we were wrong later? Who knows? That could have been a genetically modified chicken made to sound like a duck!

(For the sake of gender equality and a peaceful life as a monk, each time I tell the story I usually switch around the one who says it's a chicken and the one who says it's a duck.)

Conflict is solved by realizing that there is something far more important, also by remembering that we are not always right. Just as in the story, above, about the seven blind men and the kangaroo, giving ourselves space to be wrong, also undermines the causes of conflict. Another humorous anecdote was told to me by a friend who resided in the Laotian city of Luang Prabang during the time of the Vietnam War:

My friend was taking his lunch at a particularly good little restaurant on the outskirts of the city. He noticed some government soldiers taking a leisurely lunch at a nearby table, with their M16 guns leaning against the bamboo wall. One can imagine his terror on seeing some communist fighters, members of the Pathet Lao, also enter the restaurant carrying their guns in their hands. Before he could dive under the table for safety, the communist soldiers simply sat at another table, put their guns against the restaurant wall, and ordered lunch! He told me that in those days in Laos, lunch took priority over war.

When we argue convincingly that revenge is counter-productive, and establish that there are mutual concerns that take priority over the causes of a conflict, then peace becomes possible. For example, mutual concerns such as the future security of our children, the scourge of illegal drugs, or the sustainability of our common home, Planet Earth. If these were given the importance I think they deserve, then many political conflicts would be put aside. Nothing unites erstwhile adversaries as effectively as a common enemy.

Preventing Political Conflict

The Lord Buddha remarked that when a community meets together regularly, with mutual respect, then harmony can be expected to grow. Much political and social conflict in the world arise because we don't meet together regularly with mutual respect. Many sections of society don't meet at all! They are effectively segregated by religious affiliation, income level, social status, political leanings, and other barriers.

The violent conflict in Northern Ireland between the Protestant Christians and the Catholic Christians lasted many centuries. Happily, there now seems to be an end in sight, although many barriers between the two communities remain. One of the strangest of physical barriers, I was told, lies buried beneath a road that separates two cemeteries. On one side of the road is the Catholic graveyard, and on the other side the Protestants are buried. Underneath the road lies a two metre deep brick wall, presumably so that the worms that eat the Protestant corpses won't be able to crawl over to the Catholic cadavers and contaminate them, and vice versa!

I was fortunate to have been born into a relatively poor family in a part of West London with many immigrants. I went to a school with people from all backgrounds. I soon became "colour blind", by which I mean that I didn't care what the colour of their skin was, or their religion; if they were good at football then I wanted them in my team! I realized from those early life experiences that it is almost impossible to have any serious conflict with a person that you have grown up with.

Understanding this, perhaps it is time to do away with all religious schools and universities. They only perpetuate the divisions that cause distrust. Even elite schools that segregate the rich children from the poor kids might also be pressured to give even more scholarships to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, for the sake of better social cohesion in the future. Our children are the politicians and generals of the future, and exposing them throughout their school life to a representative cross-section of our world's population might remove the sheer ignorance and prejudice, that are the cause of so many conflicts today.

Promoting Cooperation over Competition

Our leaders are far too competitive and lack the required the skills for effective cooperation. I recall an illuminating cartoon in a newspaper featuring two dogs.

The dogs had their collars tied together with a 2-metre long rope, and they were struggling to reach their own food bowls, full of delicious meat, but placed 3 metres apart. There was a desperate tug–of–war as each dog used all of its might to pull the other dog away from their bowl, so he could reach his own bowl. In the next frame of the cartoon, both dogs had an insight. They both went together to one of the dog's bowls and shared it. Then they went to the other bowl and shared that one too. In the final frame of the cartoon both dogs were curled up together, with full stomachs, happily asleep. If we cooperate, we all get more.

Unfortunately husbands and wives don't cooperate. Children don't cooperate with their parents. Workers in the same office waste time competing instead of cooperating. And political parties find it impossible to cooperate and end up ruining their economy and destroying their national prestige.

Perhaps this is because we are not trained from an early age in the skills of cooperation. Having taught in a high school in England before I became a monk, I remember with dismay how competitive school children were. So I propose a change to the education system. At the end-of-the-year exams, each pupil's personal score should only contribute 70% to their final grade. The remaining 30% would be made up of the average score of the whole class to which they belong. That way, our school children would be rewarded for helping each other. It would be in the interest of the gifted children to help those in their class who were having difficulty with a subject. By rewarding cooperation, we would be promoting the skills required for effectively working together later in life. When some of those children become leaders, they will be able to bring harmony and peace into the world.

A monk developed such deep meditation that he could visit the Hell Realms. He was surprised to see the hell beings sitting at a large table in front of a sumptuous banquet of the most delicious of foods. However, their spoons, forks and chopsticks were over a metre in length and they could not manage to put the food on the end of their utensils into their mouths. It was torture! They could see the food, they could smell the food, but they could not eat the food.

Then the monk went up to heaven. He was even more surprised to see the heavenly beings sitting at a similar table in front of another sumptuous feast, also with spoons, forks and chopsticks over a metre in length. But they were all happy and well fed. Because, you see, they were feeding each other! Cooperation is heaven.

Electing Effective Leaders

We delegate responsibility to solve inter-communal conflicts, preserve the peace, and maintain good order in society, to our elected representatives. Without effective leaders, conflicts and other problems will continue to threaten our world.

One problem in some modern democracies is that leaders are elected on the strength of what they promise, not on their proven record. This results in the most convincing "salesmen" or "saleswomen" (some would say con- artists) getting elected to government. This was not always the way. A person standing for political office in an election is called a "candidate". The term comes from the Latin word for "white". This is because in ancient Rome, a person standing for election to the Roman Senate would wear white garments as a symbol of the purity of their past conduct. How many candidates in democratic elections today could honestly wear

white as a symbol of their spotless record of virtue?

> *The senior members of a political party in a Western democracy were choosing the candidate for an upcoming election.*
> *The final three applicants were asked the same question: "What is two plus two?"*
> *The first applicant thought for a while and answered "Five."*
> *The second applicant took out a pocket calculator and, after pressing a few buttons, answered "Four."*
> *The third applicant simply answered "What is two plus two? Whatever you tell me it is, Boss!"*
> *Who do you think was selected to be the politician?*

Thus, it would be better to choose our future political leaders not on the basis of what they promise to do for us, but solely on their past record of ethical leadership. As the Buddha often remarked, the future is uncertain, so how can anyone trust such sweeping political promises? A far more reliable guide, a Buddhist guide, would be to look at their past conduct. "One becomes an honourable person (a "brahmin") due to one's past virtuous conduct, not because of one's family", and certainly not because of one's promises! (Dhammapāda, verse 393)

Conclusion

I hope I have demonstrated that Buddhist teachings, psychology and attitudes have much to offer in the modern political arena. They have yet to be tried. Even in countries with a Buddhist majority, most of the leaders were educated in elite Christian schools and then attended Western, Christian-based universities. Authentic Buddhist principles were largely absent during their most impressionable years. In these critical times of economic uncertainty, climate threat, and sectarian terrorism, a new way of doing politics is desperately needed.

Perhaps that new way is the Buddhist way, a sample of which has been outlined above. I am confident that Buddhism will indeed play a more prominent role in the future of world affairs.

Can Buddhism Adhere to Globalization?

by Arjuna and Narada Mallawaarachchi

The word of Lord Gautama Buddha spread to the whole of Asia but failed to reach other continents. This is understandable, for we know that words can only go so far without losing their essence and sense. Nowadays, information travels at the speed of light through phones, computers and satellites. And yet a great number of human beings are living miserable lives.

Here we find ourselves, a Buddhist family from Sri Lanka, living in the strong Christian Protestant country of Switzerland and experiencing a collision between religion, culture and lifestyle. This modern society uses globalization as an ideology that supposedly will bring all populations together. But is it compatible with Buddhism? What are the difficulties encountered? Is it even possible for a Buddhist to adhere to globalization?

Globalization is a system which allows easier and faster communication and transportation of goods; an ideology that makes life more comfortable, with ample pleasures. Isn't that what all humans desire? Globalization has made everything more accessible and easy to use for everyone. Reports claim that globalization is good for both the rich and the poor. They show that both classes have been growing tremendously. Growth is life, life is beautiful, and so growth is beautiful. It seems that the system closely adheres to what the Lord Buddha said about how there should be an equilibrium in the "common *Sangha*" which is the community.

It is great that information can now be accessed from anywhere in the world thanks to modern technology, an essential part of the globalization engine. Lord Buddha's message can be seen and heard around the world, making it easier to educate millions of people. We would imagine that this is the correct path towards living an equal balanced life with everyone.

On the other hand, the system forces us to live in an infinite growth paradigm. This means that we need to consume non-stop if we want to live in our society; this strongly contradicts the Lord Buddha's advice on individual well-being. How can you cut down desires and eventually let them go completely when your whole life revolves around making and consuming more and more? The system not only gives value to objects but now even humans have a price. Labour can be bought, making people with money lazier. This creates an unseen imbalance where the strong middle class is left to believe that they are working and living in a free society while the owners of the system prepare to create a new world order.

More importantly, it shouldn't be forgotten that culture and ethnicity make it possible for us to relate to each other as human beings. They are a source of social bonding and understanding. Globalization ignores this and forces us to forget our background, our culture, basically our ability to relate to each other. As a result, people are very susceptible to what others think of them; in order to maintain status they cling on to the system.

Last but not least, the environment is the most important factor that will help us Buddhists decide how we really feel about our globalized society. The society that we have built uses resources from our mother earth. Is there any limit to how much we are going to use? No. So this creates a clear imbalance, which Buddhists cannot adhere to. Industries and private corporations make everything in and around society. Thus, people growing up in cities and towns are missing a vital link: the link to nature. We have gone way beyond what a Buddhist could tolerate. All the trees that have been cut, all the oil that has been burnt, all the minerals that have been used will take tens of thousands of years to grow back. No-one seems to care and even if someone does they soon are more preoccupied by irrelevant matters.

In an effort to conclude this debate there are three things to keep in mind. The first would be that globalization is only an ideology that represents our own desires, and gives only the illusion of individual well being. Secondly, Buddhists have a particular goal of giving up all worldly desires and living on the strictly essential. Thirdly, globalization affects the community in which all Buddhists must live and respect all other living beings. Lastly, we can clearly see that Buddhism cannot adhere to globalization but could teach a thing or two about building a perfect society. Now an important question arises: isn't it already too late? Have we gone so far destroying the world that we've become resistant, like a virus? Are we still capable of change? The answer will only be seen with time.

The Limitations of Scientific Knowledge

by Nadeesha Wickramage

What is Science?

The word "science" brings to mind many different pictures: big text books, people with white lab coats and microscopes, complicated equations, an astronomer peering through a telescope, the launch of the space shuttle ……. All those images reflect some aspect of science, but none of them provides a full picture because science has so many faces. Here I would like to give you a concise definition. Science is the study of the reality of the universe based on observed facts and systematic research, analysis and experimentation. Science

provides the basis of modern technology that improves the living standards of human beings.

What has science contributed to the welfare of human beings?

One of the main characteristics of science is the great emphasis placed upon gathering, analysing and researching facts. During this process of investigating right and wrong, true and false, science has made many valuable findings and discoveries that have helped advance the human race. It has helped to dispel thousand-year old myths, ignorance and unfounded ideas. Things that were completely unknown to mankind have now become daily necessities - for example, domestic electrical appliances without which no household can function today. Computers and the modern communication systems without which the world would come to a virtual standstill and economies would collapse is yet another glaring example of the sheer power and influence of science in today's world.

Take the case of modern day air travel. You decide to fly to a far away place at the other end of the world. All you have to do is book a seat on a plane using your computer, turn up at the airport, board the plane, sit down, relax and enjoy the journey. Within a matter of hours you have crossed from one time zone to another or from the southern to the northern hemisphere. Doesn't this simple example show us the great strides that science has made during the last century? Our forefathers living in developing countries had to rely on animals and animal-driven carts to take them on long journeys. For them, travelling by jet planes zooming across space at unbelievable speeds was simply unimaginable.

Advancements in communications technology are too good to be true. You can simply stand on a street corner or take a leisurely stroll along the beach with your mobile phone in your hand and you can talk to someone 5000 miles away. Their voice comes across loud and clear, as if they were standing right next to you. Forty years ago this would have not been out of place in a science fiction novel, but today practically everyone has a mobile phone. The Moon is no longer the great mystery it was during the time of our ancestors. Spaceships are launched to explore it. Deep seas have become bases for submarines. These few examples just go to show the massive strides made by science and technology in recent years.

The Classification of Sciences

Though the scope of science is very wide, it can be basically classified into three branches:
1. Natural science: the study of the structure and properties of all matters. Based on generally agreed axioms and the methods of deduction and induction, new theories are developed. Examples are astronomy, physics, chemistry, zoology, botany and mineralogy.
2. Applied science: the study of applications of the natural sciences such as applied chemistry, applied mathematics, applied zoology and applied botany.
3. Social sciences: the study of all phenomena in human society. It focuses on human relationships and interactions, attempting to develop patterns of human behaviour. Examples are economics, political science, law and sociology.

Natural Science and Buddhism

One of the most important topics of natural science is the formation and destruction of the universe. Though astronomers realize that the Earth, Sun and other planets in the Solar System will eventually be destroyed, they are unable to say with any degree of certainty whether the Earth and any other planets and stars will be reborn. This is the subject of ongoing debates and will be for many centuries to come.

To this state of confusion and uncertainty, a new dimension is added when we try to seek answers on the spiritual plane and look with hope towards religion. One of the greatest religious leaders the world has ever seen, the Buddha in his enlightened state of mind, gave the world the answer to this problem over two thousand years ago. This he did when he discovered the Law of Dependent Origination. This is an important law of the universe. It looks simple but in fact it is very deep and profound, especially when applied to our daily life. It deals with the concept of interdependency of existence. According to this concept, although the Earth will one day be destroyed, there is a chance that it will be re-formed. This is because all phenomena (material and spiritual) change continuously in the cycle of manifestation and extinction. What we encounter and see is the summation of all transient phenomena. All matters are interdependent and interact with each other, resulting in numerous and continuous causes and effects. It is this interactive law of cause and effect that is called the Law of Dependent Origination in Buddhism.

All phenomena, including our Earth, cannot violate this principle. It is formed when the causes and conditions come together and it becomes extinct when the causes and conditions are apart. Governed by this principle, the world and the Earth have to undergo four stages, namely formation, dwelling, decaying and emptiness, in a continuous cycle. From this point of view, the study in natural science is one step behind Buddhism.

Applied Science and Buddhism

With the many modern technologies arising from the research of applied sciences, some people may think that we can totally rely on versatile scientific knowledge to satisfy the desirous demand of human beings. However, no matter how advanced science is, the desire of human beings is boundless. Moreover, the development of modern technology inclining towards satisfying material desires further aggravates the imbalance of the material versus the spiritual cultures.

With the rapid development of science and technology, people always neglect the value of internal spirit. The richer they are in a material sense, the more lonely, anxious and desperate they feel. Prosperity often brings along worries that cannot be expressed in words. Therefore, the Buddha teaches us to give up seeking material desires, and instead to build up our spiritual wealth, so that we have no suffering or disappointment.

Social Science and Buddhism

The purposes of social sciences are to improve the morality of society, to build up a wealthy and strong country, and to promote worldly peace and harmony. However, in an era when culture is biased towards materialism, society is overwhelmed with materialistic desires. People are concerned only with their own interests, without righteousness. Despite all the defensive and security measures that exist, without building up the spiritual life, there are bound to be conflicts in families, struggles, conspiracy and murder in society, and wars between different countries fighting for land and power. It is so miserable that many people suffer and die.

Just relying on material civilization cannot solve social problems. We must follow what the Buddha says. Firstly, our mind needs to be purified so that we understand that to benefit others is benefiting ourselves; to harm others is harming ourselves. We have

to protect ourselves from excessive desires; only then can we love, care for and help each other. Only then can our families be happy, our societies stable and prosperous, and our countries friendly and peaceful, achieving great harmony in our world.

Le Bouddhisme et l'Occident

de Mahendra Pathirathna

Le Bouddhisme et l'Occident furent en contact étroit dès l'antiquité, et le bouddhisme porte en lui l'héritage génétique de la philosophie grecque. Il n'est donc pas surprenant que cette grande religion, ou philosophie (chacun la qualifiera comme il voudra) n'ait qu'à paraître pour s'implanter en occident : elle y est chez elle.

Dans ce contexte, nous ne nous étonnerons pas de trouver des convergences entre le bouddhisme et la philosophie grecque : même objectif de recherche d'un bien-vivre sans vulgarité (ou de suppression de la souffrance, ce qui est la même chose) ; même énergie dans la maîtrise des passions, désir ou colère ; même reconnaissance distanciée de l'existence du monde des dieux (sans majuscule) : on ne nie pas qu'ils existent, mais on n'en attend pas son salut ; même recherche de la tranquillité d'âme et de la sérénité, sous le nom d'ataraxie pour les différentes philosophies grecques (tant disciples d'Epicure que Stoïciens ou Sceptiques) ou sous le nom d'équanimité pour le bouddhisme.

On fera une mention particulière du *Kalama Sutta*, un sermon sur l'esprit de libre examen, que l'on croirait écrit à l'époque moderne :
"Nous ne devrions pas croire à une chose uniquement parce qu'elle a été dite, ni croire aux traditions parce qu'elles ont été transmises depuis l'Antiquité ; ni aux "on dit" en tant que tels, ni aux écrits des sages parce que ce sont des sages qui les ont écrits ; ni aux imaginations que nous supposons nous avoir été inspirées par un être spirituel ; ni aux déductions tirées de quelque hypothèse hasardeuse que nous aurions pu faire ; ni à ce qui paraît être une nécessité analogique ; ni croire sur la simple autorité de nos maîtres ou instructeurs.
Mais nous devons croire à un écrit, à une doctrine ou à une affirmation lorsque notre raison et notre expérience intime les confirment.
C'est pourquoi je vous ai enseigné à ne pas croire aveuglement àtout ce que l'on vous dit, mais d'agir confermément à notre expérience personnelle et de fçon généreuse. Ne vous fiez pas à l'enseignant, mais à l'enseignement qu'il donne. Ne vous fiez pas à de simples paroles, mais à leur sens au-delà. Ne vous fiez pas au sens littéral, mais au sens définitif. Ne vous fiez pas à la conscience grossière, mais à la sagesse ultime qui réalise la véritable signification.Fiez-vous au message du maître, non à sa personnalité. Fiez-vous au sens, non aux mots seuls. Fiez-vous au sens ultime, non au sens relatif. Fiez-vous à votre esprit de sagesse, non à votre esprit ordinaire qui juge".

En Asie comme en Occident, le Dharma inter-agit avec le contexte intellectuel de l'environnement où il se diffuse. En occident, il fut découvert d'abord à travers le prisme déformant de l'apologétique chrétienne, puis par celui des pionniers de l'orientalisme avant de susciter l'intérêt des philosophes. Arthur Schopenhauer est sans doute celui qui s'en approche le plus explicitement. Cette proximité ouvre sur une perspective plus vaste : celle des convergences entre la démarche du philosophe occidental et celle de la vision, de l'expérience et de l'activité du Bouddha.
Le bouddhisme exerce un grand attrait sur le monde contemporain parce qu'il relève d'une démarche rationnelle et scientifique. Le Bouddha a bien dit : " Ne croyez rien de ce que je dis par simple respect pour moi, mais éprouvez-le et analysez-le par vous-mêmes comme si vous alliez acheter de l'or". L'homme contemporain apprécie cette approche non dogmatique.

De nombreux dialogues se sont établis entre les scientifiques et les guides spirituels du bouddhisme comme Sa Sainteté le Dalaï-Lama. Ensemble, ils discutent et font des recherches sur ce qu'est la réalité. Selon le Bouddha, tous les problèmes proviennent d'une mécompréhension de la réalité, d'une confusion à son égard. Si nous étions conscients de ce que nous sommes et de la façon dont nous et le monde autour de nous, existons, alors nous ne pourrions pas créer des problèmes ayant pour cause cette confusion. Le bouddhisme a une attitude extrêmement ouverte lorsqu'il s'agit d'examiner ce qui est vrai. Puisque les maîtres érudits du passé ont adapté le bouddhisme à la culture de chaque société où il se propageait, il n'est rien de plus naturel qu'à notre époque les professeurs présentent le bouddhisme sous un jour légèrement différent en fonction de la diversité des sociétés contemporaines. En général, le bouddhisme met l'accent sur une explication rationnelle. Dans ce contexte, et selon les traits culturels prédominants, l'insistance est mise sur certains points et approches plutôt que sur d'autres.

Si le Bouddha a enseigné une telle diversité de méthodes, c'est tout simplement parce qu'il y a une grande diversité de gens. Tout le monde ne pense pas de la même façon. Prenez, par exemple, la gastronomie. S'il n'y avait qu'une seule spécialité culinaire en ville, tout le monde ne serait pas attiré par cette spécialité. Par contre, si l'on propose différents plats aux goûts variés, alors chacun y trouve de quoi se satisfaire. De la même façon, le Bouddha a enseigné une grande diversité de méthodes pour des gens aux goûts divers et variés afin de leur permettre d'évoluer et de s'épanouir. Après tout, le but du bouddhisme est de surmonter nos problèmes, de dépasser nos limites et de réaliser tous nos potentialités au point de devenir capables d'aider les autres autant que possible.

Ainsi, le bouddhisme s'adapte à la culture et à la mentalité des gens dans chaque société tout en conservant les enseignements majeurs du Bouddha. Les enseignements essentiels du Bouddha ne sont pas changés – le but est de surmonter nos problèmes, de dépasser nos limites et de réaliser nos potentielités. Et que les pratiquants insistent davantage sur une approche psychologique, intellectuelle, scientifique ou pieuse, tout dépend de leur culture.

Comment le bouddhisme s'adapte-t-il au vingtième siècle en general?

Le bouddhisme s'y adapte en mettant l'accent sur l'approche scientifique rationnelle de ses enseignements. Il donne une claire explication sur la façon dont surviennent les expériences de la vie et sur la meilleure façon possible de traiter ces situations. Le bouddhisme enseigne aussi qu'il ne faut rien accepter à l'aveuglette ; réfléchissez par vous-même à l'enseignement, éprouvez-le et voyez s'il en vaut la peine. Cette approche ressemble à l'approche scientifique qui exige de vérifier les résultats d'une expérience en y procédant par soi-même et de ne pas considérer les résultats comme des faits avant d'en avoir fait soi-même l'expérience. L'homme contemporain n'aime pas acheter quelque chose sans l'examiner au préalable ; il n'achèterait pas une voiture sans l'essayer. De même, l'homme contemporain ne se tourne pas vers une autre religion ou philosophie de vie sans vérifier d'abord qu'elle tient vraiment debout. C'est ça qui rend le bouddhisme tellement attrayant pour l'homme du vingtième siècle. Le bouddhisme est ouvert aux investigations scientifiques. D'ailleurs, il encourage vivement cela.



Buddhism spread far and wide. In Borobudur in Indonesia, Buddhism was initially influenced by Hinduism but began to decline in the 14th century. For hundreds of years after the decline of Buddhism in Indunesia, this amazing Buddhist complex lay hidden under volcanic ash and jungle. It was rediscovered in the early 19th century and in 1974 UNESCO funded a major renovation. The site contains the story of Buddhist cosmology carved in stone and has many statues of the Buddha in the seated positions. This statue shows the Buddha's hand is raised, palm out in the *Abhaya mudra* depicting courage and fearlessness. Today, the Buddhists of Indonesia and pilgrims from other places still celebrate Wesak at this ancient site.



Young Buddhists

In this section we share with you the contributions of some of the younger members of the Geneva Buddhist community. They all live in the West and yet have grown up in Buddhist families. The timeless influence of the Buddha's teachings have touched them both at home and in the Sunday School run by the International Buddhist Foundation of Geneva. The teachings of the Buddha has six qualities, three of which are singled out here. *Sandittiko* is Buddhism's ability to be examined and tested by each individual. *Ehipassiko* is the invitation to everyone to come and see for themselves. *Akaliko* represents Buddhism's timelessness and ability to produce immediate results. In the articles below, young Buddhists explain how they have examined and tested Buddhism for themselves through a process of self-investigation, and how the Buddha's teachings are as appropriate and relevant as ever.

What Buddhism Means to Me

by Thavisha Gunaratne, 15 years old

Nearly every South-Asian country has its own image of the Buddha. For example, in China, statues of quite a blubbery and laughing monk is common. In Sri Lanka, a much more serene and healthy looking monk is represented, most of the time, sitting and doing the thing he knows best: meditating.

Maybe I should start off with Buddhism taught in my grandmother's time, which is pretty much the version taught in Sri Lankan temples. It goes something like this: Prince Siddhartha was the son of a great king. The stories say that, when he was seven days old, he took seven steps (without helping hands) and that on each step appeared a beautiful flower. There are of course other supernatural and extraordinary chapters of Buddha's life told throughout time, but then again telling you each and every one of them would be less reason to go to the temple and listen to people recounting these magical events with passion.

For now let's return to the Lord Buddha's early life: he never really went outside the castle walls, but lived in luxury in its care. One day he decided that he wanted to visit his father's kingdom. To his shock, the world was full of misery, illness and death. This world of suffering in which most lived affected him deeply. He somehow wanted to find an end to this suffering. So he decided to give up his soon-to-be-all-mine kingdom, became a monk and retired to the forest to meditate. I don't really know what exactly was going on in his head during those years, but then again who does? He tried different things, had different teachers and meditated for several years. And then, after 6 years of searching, he became enlightened. It is said that he attained a state of mind which allowed him to obtain a position higher than the traditional gods. He spread his teachings with the help of his followers. Everything was transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth.

If I am honest, I don't believe that Prince Siddhartha was able to walk at seven days old, and I do not believe that a ring of light encircled his head after his enlightenment. I pretty much don't believe in all the magical wonders he was said to accomplish. Like I said, everything was transmitted orally: when the first books were written, people had already made him a god. But Buddhism does not force me to believe either. It leaves me to make up my own mind.

To me Lord Buddha was very simply a genius. Although the stories of his magical accomplishments might be a very interesting subject

for children, as you grow, you realize that 2,600 years ago, this prince gave up all his wealth and comfort just to find a state of mind where a human being could remain unaffected by this naturally cruel world. When you think about it, he was an incredible person to begin with. To take such a risk in your life you need a minimum of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. You need a minimum of respect and loyalty towards the human race and pretty much all living beings to take up a challenge like this amazing person did for humanity, for us.

Despite my disbelief in most of the Buddha's incredible life stories and my great lack of prayers, rituals and so forth… I still am a great admirer of the Buddha's teachings. One thing I do believe is that these qualities, these teachings can be practised by anyone: believer, follower, admirer or neither. To me, Buddhism is very far from being a religion, it's a way of life. Let me give you an example.

Two years ago, around this time of year, every 8th grade class was presented a project brought by a wonderful teacher at our school. We were told that the following year, one of the classes in 9th grade would raise money to build a medical centre in an African village. I was lucky enough to get into this special class when I entered 9th grade.

A class full of teenagers and five teachers got together and raised more than 100,000 Swiss Francs to help a village in Senegal. It was remote, on the edge of the Sahara desert, 50 degrees in the shade and had no running water, electricity or toilets. Without even being sure we would be allowed to go to the village for security reasons, we decided that we would put our hearts and backs into the project. In Geneva we cleaned river beds, collected garbage for the town authorities, baked and sold cookies and cakes, prepared meals for teachers and scouted for donations with all our hearts. In the end, the department of security did not let us go because the village was too close to the border and there were kidnappings reported in the area.

We kept on working so we could at least finance the project and send the money to the village for its development.. We were indeed disappointed, but we never gave up. I don't know if it was karma or not, but our teachers managed to find us a new project. We worked even harder. In the end we managed to finance a medical centre in one village and participate in the construction of a shelter for the children of an elementary school and the foundations for the first "modern" kitchen in another village. The children had never had a place to play during their break at school. The 50 degree heat was too harsh to be outside. We went to the village in Senegal for two weeks, lived in tents, learnt to live without tap water, electricity or telephone. We slept in tents but were overwhelmed by the warmth and hospitality of villagers who had so little yet gave so much.

It was probably the greatest experience of my life. It changed me completely. In my whole class, I was the only Buddhist and yet I have never so closely observed the greatest quality of the Buddha: loving kindness. And there weren't only my classmates' efforts. My English teacher, who started up this whole project, would sometimes come to class and could barely stand, because he was up all night making apple strudel to make some money in the teachers' lounge. My geography teacher, a well-travelled and experienced lady, would be running in and out of the embassy getting all the visas and passports together.

Every single person - my classmates, the teachers, our parents and friends - put in so much without really knowing why. They didn't need a reason to do good, they didn't want to preserve their place in paradise or get closer to attaining nirvana by doing so. They probably just wanted to see the smiles on those villagers' faces and get that rise of happiness that you just don't get enough of in a lifetime. They weren't pushed by religion or society, just by the quality of kindness and compassion for others. For me, this is a lesson from Buddhism that everyone, regardless of labels, should cultivate and practise. I have seen it happen.

I'm not a very strong and passionate Buddhist follower but I do believe that the Buddha's teachings are a great reference to lead a decent life. I don't know many details about Buddhism. I stopped going to dhaham pansal or Sunday School last year and I have quite a bad memory, so it may be that I make mistakes from time to time. I'm now in my first year of high school, and I play football.

Are You Happy?

by Sinidhu Welikela, 16 years old

Whether one believes in a religion or not, the purpose of our life is to seek happiness. We are all seeking something better in life. Being happy is good for oneself and others. The first goal is to let go of unhappy thoughts using the power of one's own mind. You must not feel helpless or unhappy, but keep the mind free and clear and feel positive. You can choose to be happy. It really is a choice.

How can we achieve inner peace and happiness?

Everyone wants to achieve happiness, and they make all sorts of efforts for this purpose without knowing where to find it. In most cases people are unhappy because of worldly aspirations, attachments and joys. They pay too much attention to these. Man thinks he can obtain happiness when he gets a job. After he gets a job, he is still not happy. He wants to get married. He marries and sets up a family. He has a child. Still he is not happy. He wants a promotion so that he can earn more to maintain his family. He gets it. Even then he is not happy. And he goes on like that in quest of a happiness that eludes him. Happiness is not there in all these attainments or possessions. It is only in the heart within. He himself is the embodiment of happiness. Yet, without realizing this, he goes on seeking happiness elsewhere. It does not exist in material objects. It is not found in physical pleasures.

Clinging to the self is the source of suffering according to Buddhism. If we practice selflessness, our endless list of needs and wants start to dwindle. It is then that we feel content with simply who we are, with what we can do given the present moment, and happiness will come as a side effect without us trying so hard.

The pursuit of happiness is not difficult if we have the right mental attitude. Love is the key to happiness. All human beings have the potential to give and receive love. In the Buddha's teachings, the spirit of love is more important than good work. No matter how unhappy you are now or have been in the past, you can still find happiness in the future. And remember, love begins with you.

We have six sensory organs, namely eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. It is useful to guard all the senses in order to lead a happy life. Society becomes very complex day by day. Due to globalization and the computer revolution, it is not easy to guard our senses properly. Yet, it is possible for us to guard our sensory organs, if we are really honest.

The world is like a mirror and if you look at the mirror with a smiling face, you can see your own beautiful smiling face. Learn to be peaceful with yourself and the world will also be peaceful with you. Being happy means having value in your life. This allows you to live the life you choose to live. You become comfortable with who you are.

You also have a very positive attitude. You are positive in your thinking, your speaking and your actions. You then radiate this positive energy into your life and great things happen around you.

When harmful thoughts arise we learn not to entertain them and when peaceful thoughts arise we let them grow and stay in the mind much longer. This way we learn from our own experience how to think more healthily.

"If someone speaks or acts with a wicked mind, because of that suffering follows him like the wheel of the cart that follows the foot of the ox. On the other hand, if someone speaks or acts with a pure mind, because of that, happiness follows him like the shadow that never leaves." (The Dhammapada)

May you all be well and happy!

I am a first year student of College Rousseau, Geneva. I like Buddhism. Buddhism for me is a way of life rather than a religion.

Different Types of Meditations and Their Impact

by Gunanga Dias, 18 years old.

Meditation, *bhâvanâ* in Sanskrit, means the development of the mind. The gift of learning to meditate is the greatest gift you can give yourself, for it is only through meditation that you can undertake the journey to discover your true nature and so find the stability and confidence you will need to live, and die, well. Meditation is the road to enlightenment: a state in which you are liberated from all suffering and delusion. There are many different ways of meditating: I present three of them here.

First of all, in Buddhism, we distinguish two main meditation practices:

- *Shamatha*, to develop the capacity to focus your attention on one point
- *Vipassana*, which refers to insight meditation.

Anapanasati meditation means "mindfulness of breathing". You usually start by *shamatha* and end with *vipassana*. *Anapanasati* focuses mainly on your breathing. Your focus can be on different levels:

- Inhalation through your nose and exhalation from your mouth. Concentrate on this through several rounds of inhalation/exhalation.
- Finally, focus on the movement of your belly on inhalation and exhalation.

There is also the *metta* meditation, or *maitri* (Sanskrit), which means loving-kindness, friendliness, benevolence, amity, friendship, goodwill, love, sympathy and active interest in others. So during the meditation you have to develop those positive thoughts. During *Anapanasati* and *metta* meditation, you are seated on the floor in the lotus position.

Walking meditation involves concentrating on each and every movement you do in one step. In other words, you have to focus on the five following movements:

1. lift your heel
2. lift your foot
3. bring your foot forward
4. keep your heel on the floor
5. Finally, keep the whole foot on the floor

Personally, I find the walking meditation is the easiest. This is because; you have to focus on 5 different movements. But in the *Anapanasati* meditation, you have to focus on 2 movements: your inhalation and exhalation.
Every type of meditation helps one stay calm. But we often forget to meditate, or don't set aside time to sit and meditate at least once per week. We neglect it, while we find time for other daily routines: washing, eating, brushing our teeth.
The main aim is to be aware of each and every movement you are doing, that will put you in a meditative position. To master focus and concentration, we need to practice meditation.
Meditation brings you peace and serenity. Therefore it can also help in a daily life, which is filled with stress. Especially for a student like me, meditation helps you to focus faster and better. I personally think that meditation is one of the keys to a balanced life.

I am 18 years old. I am in my last year of high school (college). I try to practice Buddhism in my daily life, even though it is not so easy.

Les Bonnes Choses Faites Grâce au Bouddhisme dans la Société Moderne

de Dushyantha Piyadigamage,13 ans

Je pense que le Bouddhisme peut beaucoup aider une personne dans la société moderne. Le Bouddhisme peut changer le cours de la vie d'une personne.C'est une espèce de cure à toutes les maladies concernant la psycologie. Certaines personnes ont beaucoup de problèmes de famille, d'amis, etc… alors qu'en méditant, ces problèmes peuvent disparaître. Le Bouddhisme est une philosophie qui marche tout le temps : si on fait du mal à quelque chose, cela nous retombera dessus d'une manière ou d'une autre. La viande que nous mangeons a été un animal vivant. auriez-vous aimé vous faire tuer pour servir de repas à d'autres espèces? Avant dagir, mieux vaut réfléchir aux choses qui précèdent et aux conséquences. Il y a pleins de problèmes qui peuvent être évités si on est plus consciencieux. Selon la religion, nous avons plusieurs vies. Chacune est pleine de souffrance et d'obstacles et, les Boudhhas sont les seuls qui sont capables d'échapper à cette souffrance. Si on fait des bonnes choses au cours de notre vie, on aura une meilleure vie la fois prochaine et une conscience tranquille. Si on médite, on oublie tous les problèmes de la vie quotidienne et on est dans une espèce de transe relaxante. Si vous voulez avoir une preuve que le Bouddha est un être surprenant, prenez cet exemple :
Chaque fois que l'on bouge la dent du Bouddha sans cérémonie, même en temps de sécheresse, il pleut. Comme maintenant au Sri Lanka: on a montré la dent à des personnes sans procéder à une cérémonie, il pleuvait tellement qu'il y avait des inondations. Sacrée coincidence ? Non, c'est un fait.
Il ne faut pas tuer, même les petites choses comme les moustiques. Aimeriez-vous être écrasé vivant ? Si on ne tue pas, on aura la conscience tranquille.
Pensez à tout ceci, et si vous ne voulez pas changer de religion, prenez cela comme une philosophie.



Buddhist Temple: *A drawing by Ruchini Perera, who is 5 years old and is the youngest student of the IBF Sunday school.*

La Vie du Bouddha

de Dushyantha Piyadigamage,13 ans

Selon moi, le Bouddhisme est la meilleure religion car elle nous explique vraiment la vie.

Le Bouddhisme a été fondé au nord de l'Inde, vers le Népal. Il y a eu, jusqu'à présent, 6 Bouddhas (Kakusanda, Koonagama, Kashappa, Assagi, Gautama), tous en Inde. Chacun doit passer par toute sorte de vie pour devenir un Bouddha (animaux, insectes, oiseaux, homme pauvre ou malade). Un Bouddha est né tous les 5000 ans. Le dernier Bouddha s'appelait Gautama mais quand il était un prince il s'appelait Siddharatha. Il était fils du roi Sudoddana, qui était marié à la reine Maha-Maya, celle-ci mourut une semaine après la naissance de son fils (une mère qui porte un futur Bouddha meurt une semaine après la naissance de son fils). Il était né le jour de la pleine lune de mai (Vesak) à Lumbini au Népal. La sœur de Maha-Maya s'occupa de Siddharatha jusqu'à ce qu'il devienne adulte. A la naissance du prince le roi demanda aux prêtres quel était l'avenir du prince. Plusieurs répondirent qu'il allait devenir un excellent roi, mais un seul prêtre dit que le prince allait abandonner les siens pour aller chercher la Vérité. Il disait que dsi le prince voyait un pauvre, un malade, un mort et un prêtre, il deviendrai sûrement Bouddha.Son père, qui était contre ce fait, ordonna de ne pas laisser le prince partir du palais et qu'il soit entouré de toutes les richesses et les conforts que l'on pouvait imaginer. C'est pourquoi durant son enfance, le jeune prince passait son temps à méditer et à apprendre. Il était très tendre envers tous les êtres vivants. Quand vient le temps de se marier, le jeune Prince dû montrer ses talents pour conquérir la princesse Yasodara-Devi. Il réussit et la fête fut grande. Après un certain temps, la princesse tomba enceinte. Siddharatha demanda à son père s'il pouvait aller visiter son futur royaume comme il allait bientôt avoir un héritier. Le roi accepta et le laissa aller avec Channa (un servant). Le roi demanda à ce que tous les pauvres, les malades et les morts soient cachés à l'arrivé du prince.

Quand le prince arriva, la foule criait de joie. Un pauvre se faufila entre la foule pour voir le prince et le vit et ce fut réciproque. Le prince fut surpris et demanda qu'est-ce que c'était. Il fit 3 autres excursions durant lesquelles il vit un malade, un mort et finalement un prêtre en robe orange. Entre temps, il a eu un fils qu'il appela Rahula. Il y aeu une grande célébration. A la fin de la fête le prince vit les femmes, à terre, épuisées d'avoir dansées toute la nuit. Le prince en avait marre, il ne voyait aucun sens à faire cela, à gaspiller son énergie. Il alla demander à Channa de préparer son cheval préféré (il était blanc et s'appelait Kantaka) et alla revoir une dernière fois sa femme et son fils. Il était triste mais partit avant qu'il ait des remords. Il alla avec Channa vers le rivage du *Nerangeana* et sauta d'une rive à l'autre.

Il dit à Channa qu'il allait devenir un moine et se coupa un peu les cheveux et fit un chignon avec le reste. Channa suppliait son prince de ne pas partir mais en vain. Le prince lui confie ses biens et Kantaka, puis partit. Sur le chemin du retour le cheval mourut de chagrin.

Le prince s'appelait maintenant Gautama et il était vêtu en orange. Il se déplaçait tout le temps à pieds. Il essaya plusieurs méthodes pour devenir Bouddha: à plusieurs ou seul, dont un consistait de souffrir. Pendant 6 ans, dans une petite grotte sur une montagne vers Bodgaya, il ne mangea que les fruits qui tombait vers lui. Ses collègues étaient étonnés de son attachement. Il comprit que ce n'était pas la bonne voie et redescendit, épuisé, vers la vallée. Ses collègues pensant qu'il les avait abandonnés le laissèrent et partirent

chacun de leur côté. Il s'assit au pied d'un arbre près d'une rivière. La fille d'un noble de la région qui venait souvent là pour prier avec des offrandes, appelée Sujata offrit du riz et apaisa la faim de Gautama. Après avoir mangé et remercié, il posa le récipient sur l'eau et fit un vœu : si un jour il deviendrait Bouddha le récipient ira à contre-courant sur l'eau et ce fut le cas. Il reprit la route vers Bodgaya et s'assit sous un arbre *Bodhi* et se dit : "Je ne me lèverais pas jusqu'à ce que je sache la Vérité" et il médita. Pendant qu'il méditait, le démon envoya ses 3 filles pour le déconcentrer mais elles n'y parviendront pas. Enfin après beaucoup de temps, il sut la Vérité. Il pouvait voir ce qu'il était dans ses précédentes vies. Il était devenu un Bouddha. Il avait 32 ans et c'était la pleine lune du mois de mai (Vesak). Il resta dans les alentours encore 7 semaines à méditer, à penser… La dernière semaine 2 marchands (Tapassu et Balluka) en route vers Tambapanni (Sri Lanka) le vit et lui donna du miel. En échange, Gautama Bouddha leur donna quelques cheveux que les deux marchands amèneront à Tambapanni et qui seront vénérés durant de longues année et même maintenant. Gautama Bouddha parcourra toute l'Asie en enseignant sa philosophie, "le Dhamma" et en accumulant ses disciples.
Il revint une fois vers sa famille pour la voir et il vit son fils de 7 ans, Rahula. Quand sa tante le vit, elle lui supplia de la laisser entrer dans la communauté Bouddhiste jusqu'à se qu'il accepte, faisant ainsi d'elle la première femme prêtre.
Il nous quitta quand il avait 80ans (Un Bouddha vit le ¾ de la vie d'un homme normale, ce qui fait que, à l'époque, on pouvait bien vivre 120 ans.). C'était également un jour de pleine lune de mai (Vesak) à Kushinara.
Moi qui suis allé à tous ces endroits, je peux vous garantir que c'était incroyable. Quand on est à ces endroits, on sent notre corps se débarrasser de tous nos problèmes. La vie nous a donné des choses car on les a méritées en faisant des bonnes choses dans nos vies précédentes. Il ne faut pas gaspiller cette chance.
Prenant comme exemple l'Afghanistan : Il y avait des statues de Bouddhas qui ont été détruites par les musulmans habitant le pays et qu'est-ce qui c'est passé...? Six mois après l'Amérique a commencé une guerre contre eux et plusieurs des leurs sont morts. Alors prenez exemple sur ça et faites le meilleur pour être bien.
Ne prenez pas le Bouddhisme comme une religion (le Bouddha ne vous force pas) mais comme une philosophie cela vous aidera, j'en suis persuadé.

Je suis un garçon et j'ai 13 ans. J'habite à Meyrin, Genève mais je suis d'origine Sri Lankais. J'ai une sœur qui s'appelle Anjalee. Je suis Bouddhiste et pratiquant. Mes passe-temps sont l'écoute de la musique et le dessin.

La Legende de Bouddha

de D.Binara De Silva, 10 ans

Le récit de la naissance de Bouddha est une légende célèbre. Sa mère Maya Devi (dont le nom signifie 'illusion') aurait conçu Siddhartha en songe, pénétrée au sein par un éléphant blanc à six défenses . Elle aurait enfanté dans un bois sacré, accrochée à une branche d´arbre ,tandis que les divinités brahmaniques faisaient pleuvoir. Sur elle des pétales de fleurs.

Sitôt né l´enfant se serait mis debout et pris possession de l´Univers en se tournant vers les quatre points cardinaux, puis aurait fait sept pas vers le nord. Son père , averti que son fils serait soit un grand guerrier ,soit un sage, l'éleva en guerrier dans l'enceinte du palais familial , à l'écart de toutes difficultés et de toutes souffrances.

La légende rapporte qu'il découvrit la souffrance en faisant quatre rencontre qui changèrent sa vie. Il croisa un vieillard , un homme malade , un cadavre que l'on menait bucher et un ermite qui lui montra une voie possible vers la sagesse.
Il aurait prononcé son premier sermon dans le parc des Gazelles, près de Benares , exposant **"les quatre nobles vérités" sur la** souffrance , son origine , son anéantissement et le chemin spirituel pour y parvenir. Et nous avons le plaisir de fêter ses 2600 ans.

Je suis une étudiante de l'école de Dharma de L'IBF.

Poetry in Buddhism

Traditionally, most of the Buddha's discourses or *sutta* have a prose component supplemented by verses (known as *gatha*) that reiterate and summarize in poetry the preceding passages. Gatha functions as mnemonic device helping the Buddhist practitioner commit to memory a certain principle. In fact, the earliest extant forms of Buddhist discourse appear in verse because for 450 years after the passing away of the Buddha, texts were memorized and transmitted orally from person to person. Linguistic analysis shows that the prose component of the sutras is likely to have been modified by later editing, while the poems often contain earlier forms of language. Therefore, poetry plays an important part in Buddhism. Here a Sri Lankan teenager has penned a poem describing an aspect of Buddhism that touches him personally: the limitless qualities.

The Brahma Vihara

by Randula Karunajeewa,13 years old

I'm what a mother has for her son,
A love that continues whatever he becomes,
I'm not what a bird feels in its cage,
Nor do I have anger, nor feel rage,
I leave no room for such foolish blindness,
I am the virtue of loving kindness.

When she broke her leg, he felt it too,
When she was down, he too was blue,
He thought of her, not for his own gain,
All he wanted was to relieve the pain,
I was the cause of this man's emotions,
I am the virtue known as compassion.

She felt not jealousy as she saw him in his new car,
Instead she felt happy, at how life had taken him far,
She practiced me well and for that was always sunny,
Despite the fact that she had almost no money,
She had won a better victory than the Siege of Troy,
She had attained me, altruistic joy.

When he lost his job, he felt not sorrow or cry,
When he won a million dollars he didn't jump for joy,
When his new iPod was dropped, broken and smashed,
He remained calm and was not sad,
When his new car was stolen, he broke not life's serenity,
He accomplished all this through me, equanimity.

I feel that Buddhism is easy to listen but hard to practice. Nonetheless, practicing it, has truely helped me get through hard times in life.





About IBF

International Buddhist Foundation, Geneva

by Dr. Chandra Pinnagoda

Conception

The Buddhist Community in Geneva celebrated the 2539th Anniversary of the Buddha on 25 May 1995, traditionally as hitherto practised during that epoch, by inviting a Buddhist Monk from London. The Sri Lankan community founded the Sri Lankan Association of Geneva on 14 December 1984. Since its inception, a firm conviction matured that it had the capacity and the right environment to give leadership to propagate the Message of the Buddha to the World for the establishment of lasting and universal peace. The author, as the founder President of Association was invited by the community to function as the convener devolved with the task of leading the community to realise the noble task of establishing a Foundation.

Thereupon, an Information Note was circulated to the Buddhist community in Geneva and its environs through the Missions of the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of the South Asian countries and several others on 08 May 1991.

The Information Note identified:
the **felt need**:

- to liberate every individual from the shackles of this world, which is full of conflicts, illusion and suffering by appealing to the latent Buddha nature in each civic person;
- to find ways to eradicate human suffering brought about by wars, conflicts, famine, hunger, disease, squalor and death, and recalled the words of Sri Jawahallal Nehru- "Never before has **the need been greater** for all of us to remember that immortal message which Lord Buddha, the Greatest and the Noblest of the sons of India, gave to us, and to you and to all the world. That message of two thousand five hundred years ago is a living message today, enshrined in our hearts, and we draw inspiration from it to face the troubles and difficulties that threaten to overwhelm us".

the need to go **International**:

- as the international community in Geneva has the best opportunity to perform its bounden duty to share the knowledge of the Message of the Buddha (the *Dhamma*), out of compassion, with everyone desirous of cultivating happiness of body and mind;
- as such benevolent efforts bring benefits of the ability to reap the benefits of true happiness;

the need of a **Foundation**:

- as the Swiss Law provides for the formation of corporate bodies such as societies and associations by subscribing members;
- whereas, a body to propagate the *Dhamma* should be accessible to all devotees of all nationalities; and
- whereas, a Foundation with a Board of Trustees to administer its Fund is subject to supervision by the Swiss authorities has to be the goal;

the **aims and objectives** of a future Foundation as:

- to contribute to the establishment of lasting and universal peace by perpetuating the *Dhamma*;
- to promote, among the world community, the practice of the Buddhist Way of Life (*Dhamma Vinaya*) that is compatible with the universal norms of moral and social ethics;
- to foster friendship and consolidate harmony with the Swiss and international communities through spiritual development and cultural association in conformity with the *Dhamma*;

the identified individual **benefits** of a Foundation included:

- the establishment of a place of Worship (a *Buddhist Vihara*) for devotees to:-

1. practise meditation and rituals; receive guidance from a resident Buddhist monk; and

2. practise relinquishment by offering the basic requisites to the monk and receive spiritual guidance and blessings, either individually at home or at the *Vihara*; and educate the children in the *Dhamma*;

the means to **sustain** the Foundation:

- by reflecting on the futility where ones wealth is drained to seek material joy with little or no regard to the development of inner peace, as against the mental satisfaction that one achieves through the promotion of social cohesion, solidarity and the general welfare of all through relinquishment, kindness and understanding; and
- by making generous pledges and voluntary contributions in the benevolent cause.

After obtaining the feedback from the concerned Missions, copies of a Draft Constitution for the establishment of the International Buddhist Foundation was distributed among the devotees who attended the celebration of the 2539th Anniversary of the Buddha on 25 May 1995 held at Salle 259 UNI Dufour, 24, Rue General Dufour, Geneva.

Thereafter, the Founder Members of the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF) convened at the same venue on 23 June 1991 and examined and revised the draft and unanimously adopted the Constitution.

Geneva Buddhist Vihara- the Beginnings

The dedication and the devotion demonstrated by those with the courage of conviction that "the *Dhamma* shall prevail in the World for the good of the many" enabled the Foundation to rent a Studio at the Ground Floor of No. 3 Quai des Vernets, Les Acacias- that was the beginning of the Vihara. His Excellency the Late Mr. Rasaputra donated the Buddha Statue that was venerated by him for many years, to be installed at the above premises.

The devotees conducted the Statue of the Lord Buddha in procession on **08 March 1992** and paid homage to the Noble Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the *Sangha* (the community of the Noble monks and devotees). The convener (the then President of the IBF) conducted the ceremonies in the absence of a member of the *Sangha*.

The Vihara was blessed for the first time by the Most Venerable U Revatha Dhamma Maha Thero (a Burmese monk resident in Birmingham) on 25 March 1992, who kindly consented to reside at the *Vihara* for around a week.

The IBF takes Root

Starting with such modest beginnings, the IBF was able to offer services to the devotees and the community; these included: meetings, seminars, meditation practices, practice the observance of higher precepts to the young and the old, *Dhamma* education for the school going children, information dissemination for the propagation the *Dhamma,* participation in social cohesion through inter-religious programmes, and contributing to the establishment of lasting peace through participation in the United Nations programme activities. By mid 1992 the IBF was able to acquire more spacious accommodation on rent and the Vihara premises were moved to its present site at fifth Floor of No. 1 Quai des Vernets, Les Acacias.

The Geneva Cantonal authorities provisionally accepted the IBF as a Charitable Institution on **14 December 1994** and granted permanent recognition on **07 August 1997**.

Consultative Status of the United Nations

Much ground work had to be done for the admission of the IBF as a Non Governmental Organisation of the United Nations. The processing of the Application Forms with financial statements and its timely presentation through the hierarchical channels may have caused delay. Finally, the Director General presented the memorandum of admission to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations on **11 May 1998**.

The contribution of the IBF to the United Nations is mainly through participation in the Sessions of the Human Rights Commission and its Committees. The IBF aspires to get more involved in other areas as welfare of children and the protection of the vulnerable groups of the population.

Sustenance and Revival

Towards the end of 1999 the devotees felt the necessity to obtain the services of two resident monks. The IBF rented the Studio adjoining the *Vihara* and decided to segregate the residential accommodation of the monks from the place of worship. A Resident permit was obtained for the senior second monk, who arrived and provided services to the devotees of the IBF. The arrangement could not be sustained; on the contrary, the misgivings matured to negativity. Nevertheless the challenge of filling the lacuna caused by the absence of a member of the *Sangha* community was met with great success by the young and courageous devotees, who had developed unremitting confidence in the Buddha, *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*.

The devotees invited Venerable Siddhamulle Wimala Maha Thero in early 2000 and continued to perform religious activities with great devotion. Inspired by the knowledge gained from the sermons delivered by the Venerable, the devotees acted with greater zeal. They conducted several fund raising activities and augmented the funds of the IBF. Thereafter, the periodicity and the diversity of the monks invited to provide services at the *Vihara* varied until early 2010. The devotees benefited from exposure to different aspects in the practice of the discipline of meditation including the development of concentration mediation (*samatha bhavana*), familiar to those of the *forest monk tradition*.

Wherefore the IBF

The world is awakening to the glory of the 2600th Anniversary of the Enlightenment of the Buddha and is heralding the occasion in May 2011. The devotees of the IBF having deliberated on the manner of marking the event decided to seek spiritual guidance.

Following spiritual guidance provided by Venerable Walpola Kalyantissa Maha Thero, the IBF invited Venerable Halyale Wimalarathana Thero to be the Resident monk at the Geneva Buddhist *Vihara* and he joined the IBF on 02 July 2010. Since his arrival, the devotees continue to benefit from his profound knowledge in the practice of the Dhamma and children have been inducted in formal and regular educational activities. More importantly, the confidence among the devotees continues to be strengthened with devotion to the *Dhamma*.

At the Annual General Meeting of the IBF held on 10 October 2010, the devotees unanimously elected Ven. Wimalarathana as the President of the IBF and the Head of the Geneva Buddhist *Vihara*. Ven. Kalyanatissa Maha Thero was appointed as the Spiritual Director.

The devotional inspiration among the female devotees has led to the establishment of a Ladies Wing within the IBF and they jointly sponsored the *Katina Pinkama* (religious event marking the end of the Rainy Retreat) in November 2010.

The participation of the IBF in the activities of the United Nations demonstrates a noticeable increase since 2010. The newly elected President of the IBF is organising several activities in preparation for celebrating the 2600th years of the Enlightenment of the Buddha. The details are shown elsewhere.

Mindful of its goal to contribute to the establishment of Lasting Peace on Earth, the IBF has unremitting confidence in the power of the Dhamma that it shall fulfil its role.

Sabbe Satta Bhavantu Sukhitatta (May All Beings be Happy)

Dr. Pinnagoda was the Founder President of the IBF

List of IBF Monthly Activities

IBF has regular activities to help Buddhists and non-Buddhists understand Buddhism better and to practice skills including meditation. Our programme is designed to have something for everyone: every age group and every level of understanding. Activities are conducted in English and Sinhalese languages and are usually conducted at the IBF premises at 1, Que des Vernets, 1227- Acacias, Geneva.

- Sunday mornings (9:00 – 10:30 a.m.) - Sunday Dhamma School for children.
- Saturday mornings (10:00-12:00 a.m.) - On-line Dhamma School: Skype address: dundal27
- Saturday evening (3:00-5:00 p.m.) - Group meditation & Dhamma consultations. Open for all those who are seeking guidance of Dhamma.
- 1st Sunday of the month (3:00-4.00 p.m.) - Dhamma discussion for teenagers (11-18 years).
- 3rd Sunday of the month (5:30-7:00 p.m.) - Budda Pooja and Dhamma discussion.
- Last Sunday of the month (8:00- 4:00) - Poya Sil (Observing of Eight Percepts) and Meditation program.
- Daily: Dhamma consultations are provided during weekdays between 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. by prior appointments. (Email: hwimalarathana@gmail.com; Telephone: 0041(0)22 30 10 859/ 0041(0)77 50 40 229)

IBF exists only because of the generosity of the Buddhist community in Geneva and beyond. It is the tradition of the Buddhist clergy to have only a few personal processions - the robe, the alms bowl and a few essential items. They rely on lay supporters for food, accommodation, medicines, utilities, travel and all other expenses. The services of the IBF and this magazine are all offered free of charge. IBF acknowledges with sincere thanks everyone who provides support in the form of money, goods and in kind to enable it to function. If readers wish to make a donation now or in the future, please note our bank details:

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