

INNER COMPASS



SPECIAL EDITION

PERSPECTIVES ON
BUDDHISM
IN THE MODERN AGE

COMMEMORATING
35 YEARS OF IBF



A GLOBAL JOURNEY OF SERVICE

Ven. Kalyanatissa Maha Thero



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Welcome Message

*By Venerable Halyale Wimalarathana Thero,
Senior Resident Monk of the International Buddhist Foundation, Geneva.*

It is a dream of many to live in beautiful Geneva, one of the most significant cities in the world for its role in facilitating international dialogue, peace and multilateralism. Therefore, first and foremost, I am grateful to the Government and people of Switzerland for giving us the opportunity to establish the International Buddhist Foundation, Geneva as an association and continue its activities for the past 35 years.

This is a historic publication marking the 35th anniversary of the International Buddhist Foundation, Geneva (IBF), which was founded in 1991 through the efforts of devoted Buddhists living in Geneva at that time.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to the Council of Devotees of the IBF for carrying out its responsibilities in connection with this important occasion. I express deep gratitude to the founding members and to all those, both monastic and lay, who have dedicated their time and effort to maintaining and developing this institution over the years.

Furthermore, this anniversary allows us to commemorate the second death anniversary of the Most Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Thero, who passed away on 12 July 2024 after serving the IBF as the Spiritual Director for many years. This is an occasion to remember his noble service, guidance and contribution to the IBF and the wider community.

From concept to execution, the Editorial Committee and the wider IBF community gave their time and talent freely to make this magazine a reality. I thank them and all the writers both monastics and lay persons who contributed their meaningful and thoughtful articles. I am also grateful to the distinguished guests and well-wishers who contributed messages for this commemorative occasion, including the His Excellency, Mr. Sumith Dissanayake, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Office in Geneva, and His Excellency Mr Samantha Wijesekara, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the World Trade Organisation in Geneva.

My gratitude goes to Mr. Sunil Perera, a founder member, for his generous support towards the printing of this magazine in memory of his late beloved wife, Mrs. Jeanette Perera Eisenring. The publication of the Geneva Buddhist Magazine in 2011, in conjunction with the commemoration of the 2,600th anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment at the United Nations in Geneva, provided valuable inspiration for this anniversary publication.

I consider it a great honour to celebrate this 35th anniversary together with Dr. Chandra Pinnagoda, a pioneer of the Geneva International Buddhist Foundation and its first Honorary President, and with the other living pioneer contributors who have supported the IBF throughout its journey.

May the Dhamma continue to guide us towards wisdom, compassion and peace.

May the world, immersed in the darkness of ignorance, be illuminated by the light of wisdom!

FROM THE EDITORS-IN-CHIEF



ANCIENT WISDOM FOR THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

There are some assignments we accept without knowing how much they will teach us. Serving as Editors-in-Chief of this 35th anniversary publication of the International Buddhist Foundation has been one of those for both of us.

It has been an honour, certainly. But it has also been an education and, unexpectedly, another step in our own practice and path.

This magazine celebrates 35 years of the International Buddhist Foundation in Geneva. But we wanted it to do more than commemorate an anniversary. We wanted to explore a larger question: What can the Buddha's teaching offer the world we live in today?

More than 2,500 years ago, the Buddha set out to understand dukkha, commonly translated as suffering. We have come to think of it more broadly as our repeated encounters with the inevitable, the unwanted and the unwelcome: illness and ageing, separation and loss, disappointment and uncertainty, not getting what we want, and having to live with what we do not want.

These experiences have not disappeared with human progress. Our world has been transformed by science and technology, yet the fundamental challenges of being human remain remarkably familiar.

This is one reason the work of editing this magazine has dovetailed so beautifully with our own questions and quest: to explore what becomes possible when the insights of modern science encounter the wisdom of ancient traditions. They are not the same, and we should resist simplistic attempts to make one "prove" the other. But each can illuminate different dimensions of the human experience.

A teaching, a lineage, a living practice

The magazine follows a simple journey.

We begin with the Teaching, exploring some of the Buddha's ideas and practices and asking why they remain relevant today.

We then turn to those who carried the Teaching: generations of monastics and lay practitioners who studied, practised, preserved and transmitted the Dhamma. In particular, we remember Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Maha Thera on the second anniversary of his passing and honour his contribution to the International Buddhist Foundation.

Finally, we turn to service: the 35-year journey of the IBF and the people, relationships, generosity and commitment that have sustained its contribution.

For us, bringing these different voices together became much more than an editorial exercise. We found ourselves returning repeatedly to the teachings, checking what we thought we knew, encountering different interpretations and asking questions of our own.

The process reminded us that the Dhamma is not something simply to be accepted, but something to be explored, practised and experienced.

We have come to regard the Buddha as one of the world's greatest teachers. His teaching, the Dhamma, has survived an extraordinary test: time. Twenty-five centuries later, people across cultures, languages and societies are still studying his teachings, testing his methods and practising the path he taught.

Perhaps that is the mark of a truly great teacher: not simply that the teachings endure, but that they remain relevant and retain the power to transform us.

Why Geneva?

There is another reason this publication matters here.

The International Buddhist Foundation has its home in International Geneva, long regarded as a heart of multilateralism, humanitarian action and human rights. It is a city built around the idea that, despite our differences, humanity must find ways to live together, reduce suffering, resolve conflict and protect human dignity.

There is something deeply fitting, therefore, about asking what an ancient tradition concerned with suffering, compassion, ethical conduct, wisdom and the interdependence of life might contribute to our shared future.

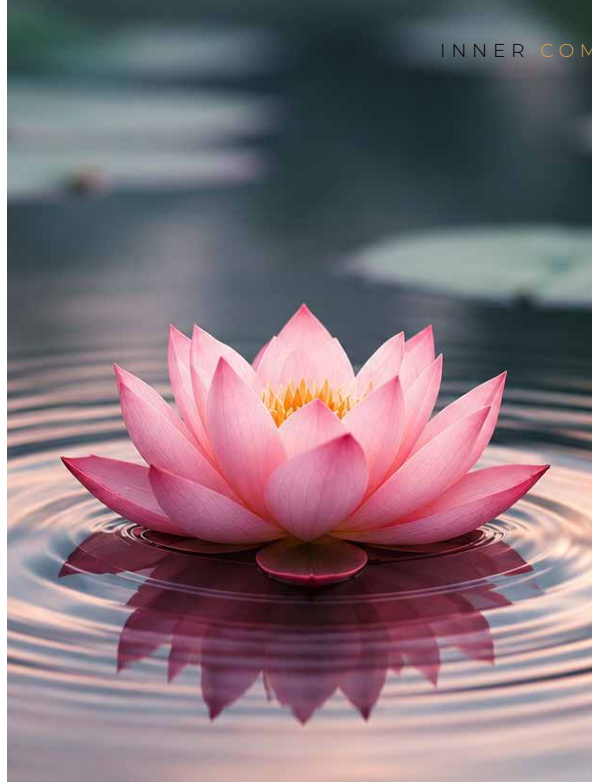
The world in which the IBF was founded 35 years ago is already very different from the world we inhabit today. Artificial intelligence, social media, scientific discovery and unprecedented global connectivity are changing how we work, learn, communicate and understand ourselves. Yet loneliness, conflict, polarization, fear and the search for meaning remain. The inevitable, unwanted and unwelcome remain part of being human, and so does our search for freedom from the suffering they can bring.

If the Dhamma is to remain a living tradition, preservation is essential, but preservation alone is not enough. Each generation must make its wisdom intelligible to the next without diminishing its depth.

The Buddha offered an invitation to “come and see” not to believe blindly, but to examine and experience. Ultimately, wisdom cannot simply be handed to us by another. We must discover it for ourselves, through our own effort, examination and experience.

That is ultimately why we created this magazine.

We hope Buddhists will find within it an opportunity to look afresh at teachings they may have known all their lives. We hope people from other spiritual traditions, and those with none, will encounter ideas worth considering rather than beliefs they are expected to accept. And we especially hope younger readers will feel free to question, investigate and discover for themselves.



The greatest tribute we can pay to those who carried the Dhamma before us is not simply to preserve what they handed down. It is to examine it, practise what we find valuable, and carry its wisdom and compassion into the world we are creating for those who come after us.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Venerable Halyale Wimalarathana, Senior Resident Monk of the IBF in Geneva, and Venerable Welagedera Sumanajothi Thero, whose vision, inspiration and tireless commitment have driven this magazine from idea to reality with a shared purpose: to bring the timeless teachings of the Buddha to life in the modern world. Our thanks also go to our monastic and lay contributors, writers, Editorial Committee, IBF Committee and generous sponsors, without whom these pages would not have been possible.

We hope that, as you turn these pages, you will find not only reflections on an ancient tradition, but also questions that speak to the world we share today.

Dr Gaya Gamhewage & Dr Nadeesha Wickramage

Editors-in-Chief

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Editorial Disclaimer



The articles in this publication represent the views, perspectives and interpretations of their individual authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF), its Committee, or the Editorial Committee, which do not endorse or assume responsibility for individual interpretations or opinions expressed.

The contributions have been freely offered and are shared in a spirit of open-minded inquiry, curiosity and investigation—qualities deeply consistent with the Buddha’s invitation to examine teachings rather than accept them unquestioningly.

This publication is intended to encourage reflection, learning and dialogue. Its contents should not be regarded as authoritative religious, medical, psychological, legal or other professional advice, nor as recommendations to be accepted or followed without personal examination and appropriate guidance.

We invite readers to read with curiosity, reflect with discernment, question with respect, and discover for themselves what is meaningful and valuable.





A Note on Language



This publication brings together contributors from different Buddhist traditions, cultures and backgrounds. Pāli and other Buddhist terms are therefore sometimes translated or transliterated in different ways. Where possible, we have provided simple English explanations for readers unfamiliar with Buddhist terminology, while respecting the terminology and interpretations preferred by individual authors. Pāli terms, as well as words from other languages, are depicted in italics.



SECTION 1

Timeless Teachings of the Buddha

In this section, both monastics and lay writers share their interpretation of the Buddha's teaching from 2,600 years for modern day living. They cover a wide range of topics: from how Buddhist teachings relate to modern day psychology, neuroscience, quantum physics, human relationships, interdependence, peace and living in a world of modern technology.

Understanding The Words of The Buddha

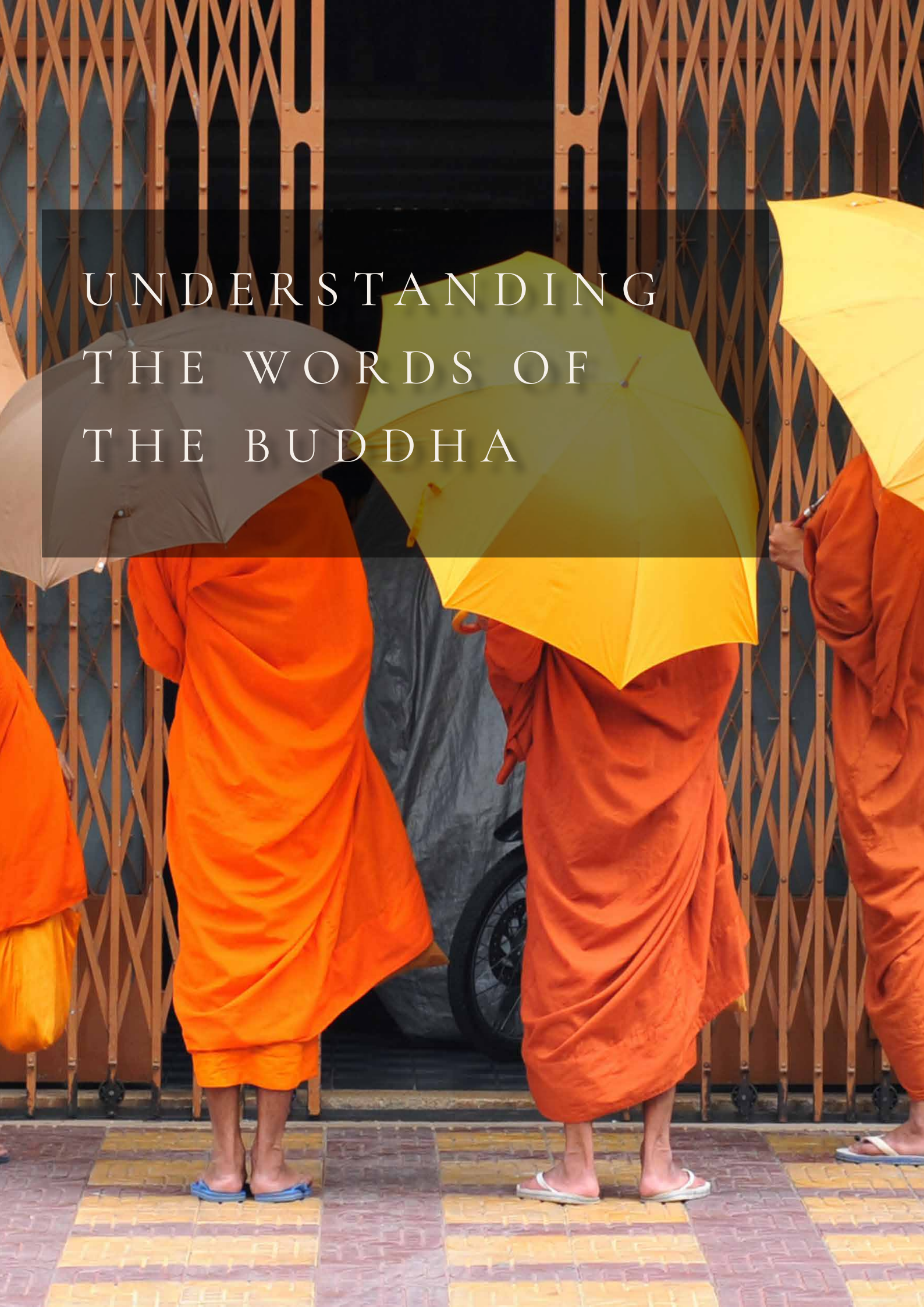
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A photograph of Buddhist monks in orange robes standing in front of a wooden lattice gate. They are holding umbrellas, suggesting it might be raining or they are protecting themselves from the sun. The ground is paved with yellow and brown tiles. A semi-transparent dark rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing the title text.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORDS OF THE BUDDHA

FROM KNOWLEDGE TO WISDOM

Buddhism in the Modern Western World

Venerable Dr. Wijayarajapura Seelawansa Thero,
Vienna-Austria

The modern Western world is characterized by an unprecedented expansion of knowledge. Scientific research, technological innovation, digital communication, and artificial intelligence have transformed the way human beings live, work, communicate, and understand the world. Information is available almost instantly, and scientific knowledge continues to expand at an extraordinary speed. Yet, despite these achievements, modern societies continue to face profound challenges. Psychological stress, anxiety, loneliness, violence, social polarization, environmental destruction, and dissatisfaction remain widespread. This raises an important question:

Does the accumulation of knowledge necessarily lead to wisdom and human well-being?

From a Buddhist perspective, the answer is no. Knowledge and wisdom are related, but they are not identical. Knowledge enables human beings to understand and influence the external world. Wisdom concerns the understanding of the human mind, the causes of suffering, and the ethical consequences of human action.

This distinction is particularly relevant to the modern Western world.

From Knowledge to Wisdom

The Buddhist tradition has always placed great emphasis on the transformation of knowledge into direct understanding. The purpose of the Buddha's teaching is not simply to accumulate theories or beliefs. It is to understand reality in such a way that the roots of all suffering - greed, hatred, and delusion - can be overcome.

The *Dhammapada* states:

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano seṭṭhā
manomayā.*

“Mind precedes all phenomena; mind is their chief; they are mind-made.”

This statement points to the central importance of consciousness in human life. Human beings do not merely respond mechanically to external events. Perception, interpretation, emotion, intention, and habitual patterns of thought influence how reality is experienced and how actions are undertaken.

In this respect, Buddhist thought has significant relevance for contemporary discussions in psychology and the study of human behaviour. The way in which a person interprets an event can influence emotional reactions and subsequent actions. Two people may encounter the same situation and respond in completely different ways because their mental conditions, experiences, and patterns of interpretation differ.

The transformation of the mind is therefore not a marginal religious concern. It is directly related to human behaviour, interpersonal relationships, ethical responsibility, and social well-being.

The Story of Venerable Vaṅḡsa Thera

An important illustration of the difference between specialized knowledge and liberating wisdom can be found in the story of the Venerable Vaṅḡsa Thera.

According to the Buddhist tradition, Vaṅḡsa was originally a highly respected Brahmin who possessed a remarkable ability. By examining the skulls of deceased persons, he claimed to be able to determine the realms in which they had been reborn. This ability brought him recognition and social status.

When Vaṅḡsa encountered the Buddha, the Buddha presented him with different skulls.

Vaṅgīsa was able to identify the realms of rebirth associated with ordinary beings. Finally, however, the Buddha presented him with the skull of an arahant. Vaṅgīsa was unable to determine where the arahant had been reborn.

The Buddha explained that an arahant had completely overcome the causes of renewed existence. Since the causes of rebirth had been destroyed, there was no future realm of existence to be identified. This encounter revealed a fundamental distinction. Vaṅgīsa possessed a remarkable form of specialized knowledge, but this knowledge did not liberate him from suffering. The Buddha's wisdom, however, was concerned with the causes of suffering and with their complete cessation.

Vaṅgīsa subsequently entered the monastic life and devoted himself to the practice of the Dhamma. According to the Theravāda tradition, he eventually attained arahantship and realized the three higher knowledges, known in Pāli as *tisso vijjā*. In the *Theragāthā*, his spiritual fulfilment is expressed in the following verse:

*Svāgataṃ vata me āsi,
mama Buddhassa santike;
tisso vijjā anuppattā,
kataṃ Buddhassa sāsaṇaṃ.*

“Truly, it was fortunate for me to be in the presence of the Buddha. The three higher knowledges have been attained; the Buddha's teaching has been fulfilled.”

The significance of this verse extends beyond its historical and religious context. It expresses a transformation from information to insight, from intellectual ability to existential understanding.

Mindfulness in Contemporary Society

One of the most important contributions of Buddhism to the modern Western world is the systematic cultivation of mindfulness, or *sati*.

In contemporary society, human attention is constantly exposed to stimulation. Digital media, social networks, advertising, news, and electronic communication compete continuously for the individual's attention. As a result, many people experience difficulty remaining mentally present.

The Buddhist practice of mindfulness offers a method of examining experience directly.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta describes mindfulness as:

*Ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo sattānaṃ
visuddhiyā,
soka-paridevānaṃ samatikkamāya,
dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya,
ñāyassa adhiḡgamāya, nibbānassa sacchikiriyaṃ.*

“This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of suffering and grief, for attaining the right path, and for the realization of Nibbāna.”

In the Buddhist context, mindfulness is more than a technique for relaxation. It is a disciplined form of observation. The practitioner learns to observe the body, feelings, mental states, and mental processes with greater clarity.

Anger, for example, can be observed as a mental state that arises, develops, and eventually passes away. Desire can be observed in the same way. Fear and anxiety can also be examined as changing processes rather than as permanent and unchangeable realities.

This perspective has considerable relevance to modern Western societies. Mindfulness can create a space between an experience and an immediate reaction. In that space, a person may develop greater freedom of choice.

Instead of immediately reacting to anger, one can observe anger. Instead of being completely controlled by fear, one can become aware of fear. This does not mean denying emotions. It means understanding them more clearly.

Ethics and the Human Future

Buddhism also emphasizes that mental development cannot be separated from ethical responsibility.

The Buddha states:

*Na hi verena verāni
sammantīdha kudācanaṃ;
averena ca sammanti,
esa dhammo sanantano.*

“Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is an eternal law.”

This teaching remains highly relevant in a world affected by political conflict, violence, discrimination, and social division. Violence frequently generates further violence. Hatred reinforces the psychological conditions that sustain conflict. From a Buddhist perspective, lasting peace requires not only external agreements but also a transformation of the mental conditions that produce hostility.

This does not mean that social injustice should be ignored or that harmful behaviour should not be opposed. Rather, Buddhism asks how opposition can be guided by wisdom rather than by hatred.

The Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*) provide a fundamental ethical framework: avoiding the destruction of life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxicants that cloud the mind.

These principles remain relevant in the modern world because technological progress does not automatically produce ethical maturity. The more power human beings possess, the greater the need for responsibility and wisdom.

Knowledge Requires Wisdom

The modern Western world does not need less science, less education, or less technological development. On the contrary, scientific knowledge is essential for addressing many of humanity's problems. However, knowledge alone is insufficient.

Humanity now possesses extraordinary power to influence nature, society, and the future. The fundamental question is therefore not only:

What are we capable of doing?

It is also:

What should we do, and what consequences will our actions produce?

This is where wisdom becomes essential.

The Buddhist perspective encourages a balance between external development and inner development. Science can explain many aspects of the external world. Buddhist practice investigates the processes of the mind and the ethical consequences of human intention.

The story of Vaṅgīsa Thera illustrates this transition. His specialized knowledge allowed him to identify the rebirth of others, but his highest achievement was not the acquisition of further information. It was the transformation of his own mind.

The Buddhist message for the modern Western world can therefore be summarized in one principle:

Knowledge provides power; wisdom provides direction. The future of humanity will depend not only on what human beings know, but also on how they use that knowledge. The modern world needs scientific intelligence, but it also needs ethical intelligence. It needs technological innovation, but also restraint. It needs freedom, but also responsibility. It needs information, but also the wisdom to distinguish what is beneficial from what is harmful.

Buddhism offers a tradition of systematic reflection on these questions. Its enduring relevance lies in the understanding that the transformation of society ultimately depends, at least in part, on the transformation of the human mind.

The words of Vaṅgīsa Thera express the culmination of this transformation:

*Tisso vijjā anuppattā,
kataṃ Buddhassa sāsaṇaṃ.*

“The three higher knowledges have been attained; the Buddha's teaching has been fulfilled.”

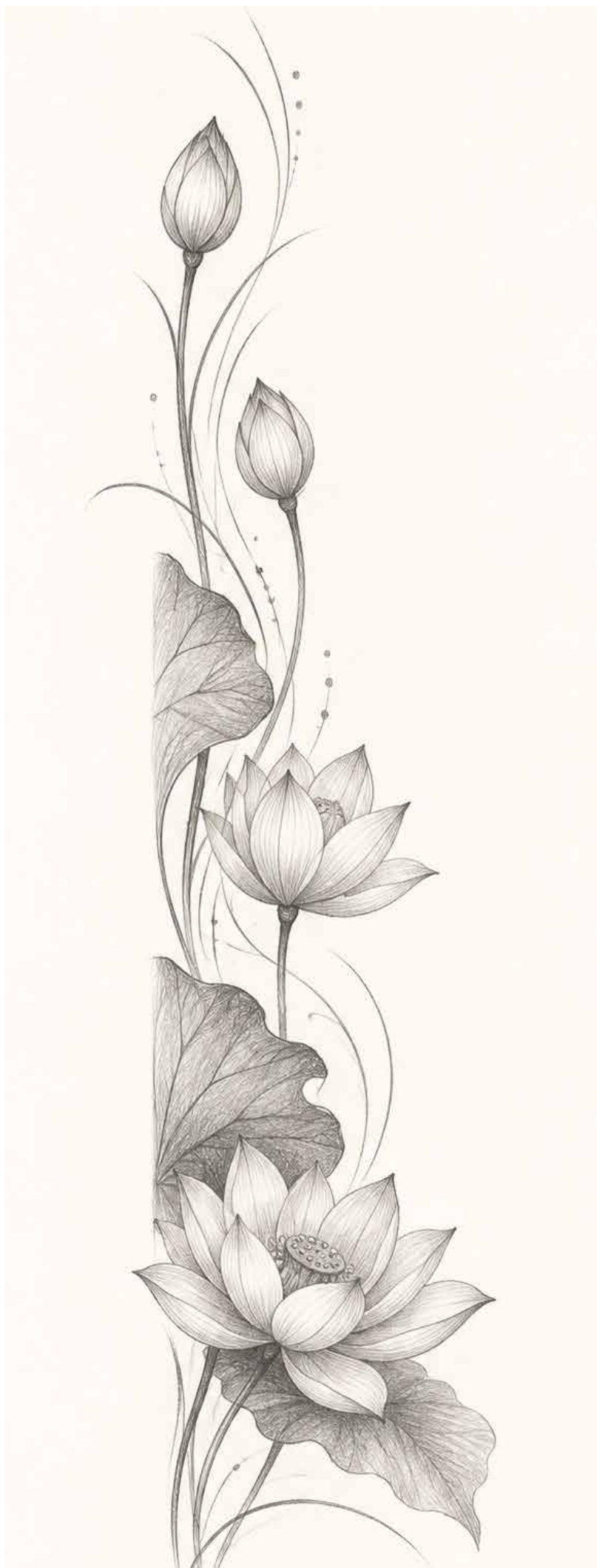
For the modern Western world, the Buddhist challenge is therefore not to reject knowledge, science, or modernity. It is to complement them with wisdom.

The essential question is not merely: “How much more can humanity know?”

But: “How can humanity transform knowledge into wisdom and power into responsible action?”

Buddhism for the modern Western world means precisely this: the cultivation of awareness, ethical responsibility, compassion, and wisdom in the midst of modern life.

External progress may change the conditions in which human beings live. But the quality of human life ultimately depends on how the human mind understands, interprets, and responds to the world. The most important development of humanity, therefore, is not only technological or scientific. It is also the development of wisdom within the human mind.



THE BEST WAY TO HONOR THE BUDDHA

Follow the Noble Eightfold Path

Venerable Ajahn Amaro,
London Buddhist Vihara

Adapted, with permission, by a speech delivered at the Vishakha Puja, 30th May 2026 at the 100th Century anniversary of the London Buddhist Vihara - the first Buddhist monastery in the Western world.

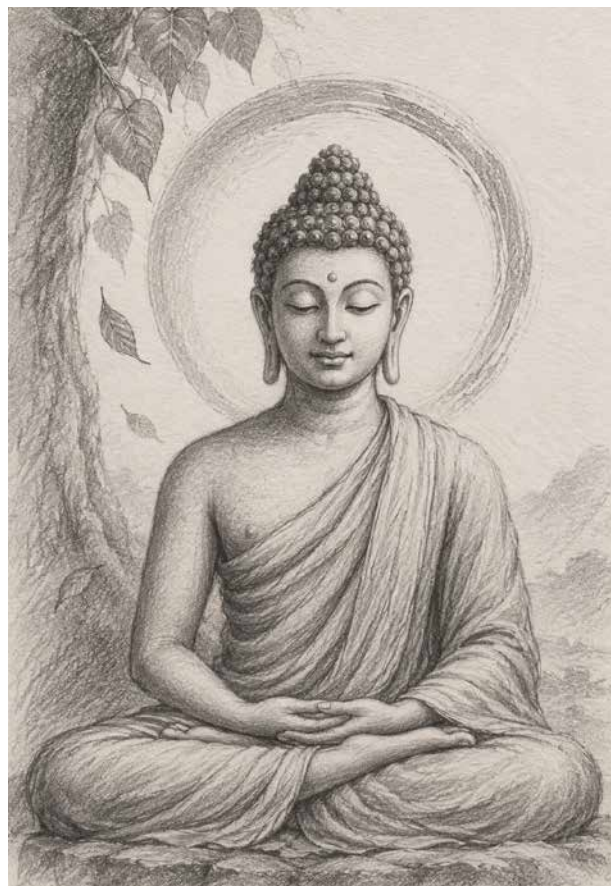
I was reflecting on some words between the Lord Buddha and the Venerable Ānanda that came to mind, from the time of the Parinibbāna, the Buddha's final passing away, at Kusinārā in northern India.

On that occasion, according to the stories that have come down to us, the Lord Buddha was very close to the end of his years, and he was lying down on his folded robes, underneath some sāla trees, in the forest outside the little village of Kusinārā. The sāla trees had burst into flower even though it wasn't their season, and heavenly blossoms – mandārava flowers – were raining down from the skies. The air was filled with the music of the celestial musicians, the gandharvas. And there was a huge gathering, not just of the local villagers, but also many devas and brahmā deities.

It was an astounding, unique occasion and venerable Ānanda, who was often very expressive in his devotion, his love and admiration for his Lord, the great teacher, I was reflecting on some words between the Lord Buddha and the Venerable Ānanda that came to mind, from the time of the Parinibbāna, the Buddha's final passing away, at Kusinārā in northern India.

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Luang Por Amaro — Abbot of Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, UK. He is a senior Theravāda Buddhist monk in the Thai Forest Tradition and a disciple of Ajahn Chah. He became Abbot of Amaravati in 2010.



Pencil artwork by Lalantha Sirisenage

just of the local villagers, but also many devas and brahmā deities.

It was an astounding, unique occasion and venerable Ānanda, who was often very expressive in his devotion, his love and admiration for his Lord, the great teacher, the Buddha, said, 'It is amazing, it is incredible, Venerable Sir, O Blessed One. Never before has the Blessed One been so honoured, so revered, so worshipped in such a way. The celestial musicians are filling the air with their music, mandārava flowers are raining down from the sky, the sāla trees have burst into flower, even though it's not their season. This

is amazing! This is incredible! Never before has the Blessed One been so honoured, so revered in such a way.'

Then the Lord Buddha replied, 'Yes indeed, Ānanda, never before has the Tathāgata been revered and praised and worshipped in such a way. But, if one wanted to revere and honour and worship the Tathāgata in the very best way, then what they would do would be to follow the Noble Eightfold Path.'

So this was the Buddha – as he regularly did – gently correcting Ānanda, helping him to adjust his views a little. I feel that, in accord with the Buddha's words here, the best way to celebrate the hundred years of the presence of the London Buddhist Vihara in the UK, and in the world, this first establishment of the Buddhist teaching in a monastic setting outside of Asia, the best way we can rejoice in that, celebrate and honour that, is by practicing the Noble Eightfold Path ourselves.

Those of us who frame it in a Buddhist way can use our Buddhist languaging of things. Those who have different faiths, who use different spiritual expressions, can embody their appreciation of this worthy institution by following the same principles of the Noble Eightfold Path – virtue, mind-training, and wisdom – in their own way and using their own terminology.

(There were) difficulties, the struggles over the years, involved in establishing a foundation like this in a foreign country – the difficulties of liaising with the British Government and the cultural forces of British society, and also within the Buddhist community itself. I have been a monk for forty-seven years, and my experience has been that it is very, very rare that you find a monastery where everyone agrees with everything all of the time. We often have a variety of opinions and points of view.

In this light, and reflecting on this occasion today, what was brought to mind was one of the teachings of the Buddha – the Araṇavibhaṅga Sutta, which translates as 'The Exposition on Non-Conflict'. To me this is a very beautiful and significant teaching. In this sutta the Buddha describes how, if you take a simple thing like a dish – and perhaps he had one to hand

and held it up for the Saṅgha to see – he pointed out how in one place it's called a 'dish' (pāti), in another place it's called a 'pot' (poṇa), another place it's called a 'saucer' (serāva), in another place it's called a 'bowl' (patta), or a 'vessel' (vittha), a 'beaker' (hana), a 'basin' (pisīla), or a 'pan' (dhāropa)... He lists these eight different words that, in different regions, are used to name the same object. He goes on to describe how, 'If one adheres to the one way of defining it according to one's locality, and say all the others are wrong: "It's not a 'dish', it's a 'bowl'!" "It's not a 'bowl' it's a 'pot'!". It is in this way that people conflict with each other.'

We are arguing simply over ways of expressing ourselves. It's the same object but with different names. Furthermore, the Buddha said how, if we don't adhere rigidly to our local usage, if we respect that other people call the same object different things in other places, then we can more easily get along with each other. There's a quality of respect and harmony. We can be living together comfortably even though I call it a 'pot', you call it a 'dish', or I call it a 'bowl' and you call it a 'saucer'.

We can appreciate the skilful way in which the Buddha used a simple household object – something free of any emotional charge – as his example. The great usefulness of this teaching, however, is that we can translate that same principle into our own lives, into our family dynamics, the workplace, and our monasteries, where emotions and habits of identification tend to be much denser and more heated.

If we take this core principle of being ready not to adhere to our own version of reality, our own specific point of view, but rather to take into account that of others: 'Well, I do call it a 'pot', but why shouldn't they call it a 'bowl' or a 'dish' or a 'saucer', or any of the other eight names? Why not?' In this way we can respect each other's point of view, and each other's modes of expression. We can listen to each other deeply, and we can avoid giving our own personal conditioning priority. Instead we say, 'Their version is a good enough name; why shouldn't it be a good enough way to refer to that?' In this way of respecting each other deeply and listening to each other, we find that we can establish a quality of harmony much more

easily and completely.

These (above thoughts) were simply the themes that came to mind and which seemed appropriate to this occasion: if we really want harmony in our lives and in the world, the more that we, as a human family, can listen to each other and respect each other's perspectives, then the more that wished for harmony can genuinely be embodied.

BRIEF HISTORY OF BUDDHIST TEACHINGS

Werner Ulmer
Author of the text "Buddhism and the Laws of Nature"

The Buddha characterized the three fundamental evils of humanity as follows: greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha). They are the three underlying causes from which actions arise.

We all know what is meant by the term greed: an excessive and scarcely satisfiable desire for something. But are we also aware of the consequences that may result from thoughtless actions? An untrained person who has never seriously studied one of the Buddha's discourses will repeatedly make the mistake of employing every available means in order to achieve a particular goal. Since the term „greed“ has a negative connotation, such a person will inevitably create unwholesome kamma through his or her unwholesome actions. Kamma (Pāḷi), better known as karma (Sanskrit), is the law of moral causation, whereby every unwholesome action must, in some form or another, bear its corresponding consequences. This inexorable law is something we should remind ourselves of from time to time.

In Buddhist teaching, the term hatred (dosa) fundamentally denotes the opposite of greed, namely rejection and aversion. An attitude of rejection is usually based either on a lack of understanding of the circumstances or simply on prejudice. All mental impulses and thought processes associated with hatred give rise to unwholesome speech and ultimately lead to unwholesome actions. Such

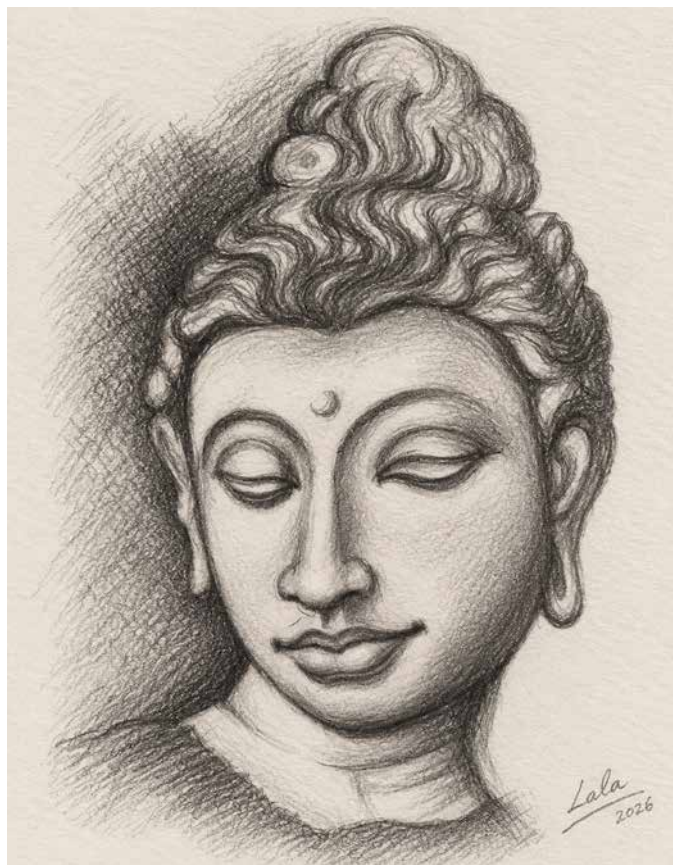
developments must be avoided at all costs - and in our own best interests.

Finally, the term delusion (avijjā) generally refers to human ignorance. People who have never come into contact with the Buddha's teaching do not understand the true nature of reality concerning our life and existence. They live their lives, suffer needlessly, die, and, as a consequence of their kamma, are compelled to enter another round of existence within the cycle of rebirth. This fate befalls them because, in the life they have just lived, they have failed to relinquish their greed for sensual objects - or, in other words, they have not possessed the wisdom or the strength to let go of their attachment to them.

The Buddha was once asked by a Brahmin whether he could summarize his teaching in a single sentence. The answer of the Fully Awakened One was spontaneous:

„*Sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya!*“

„Nothing whatsoever should be clung to!“



Pencil artwork by Lalantha Sirisenage

A TEACHING FOR EVERY AGE

Timeless, ancient wisdom for modern life

*Venerable Udumaththe Ariyaseela Thero,
Basel Buddhist Vihara*

Today, we live in a unique era that has achieved the highest level of technological and material development in human history. Living in highly developed, beautiful cities like Geneva and Basel in Switzerland, we lack nothing in terms of external resources. However, even amidst all these material comforts, has the fear, loneliness, mental stress, and sense of meaninglessness that challenge the heart of modern man diminished even by a fraction?

To bring mental solace to such a complex world, we do not need a new philosophy. What we need is to touch, through our own lives, the supreme Dhamma—the teachings of the Buddha. This teaching transcends time and space and was preached with wisdom by the Buddha 2,500 years ago.

The Dhamma - A philosophy Suited for the Modern Scientific Mind

People in the Western world tend to accept things based on logic and a scientific foundation. Buddhism is not a religion to be followed with blind faith or fear. It is a practical science that can be tested in life and verified through experience.

The Dhamma has six fundamental characteristics.

Svākkhāto — Well explained. The teaching is communicated clearly and in multiple ways and formats so that different people can understand and apply. Sanditthiko – Visible here and now. The results of this Dhamma can be experienced at this very moment. Akaliko – it is timeless. The Dhamma is not confined to a particular historical period, and its fruits are not dependent on some distant future.

Ehipassiko – “come and see”. This principle aligns with the scientific method. The teaching invites investigation rather than demanding unquestioning belief.

Opanayiko – leading inwards. It is to be brought into

our lives: knowledge that becomes practice and leads us onward.

Paccattam Veditabbo – to be known individually by the wise. Ultimately, the Dhamma has to be understood through one’s own realization; another person cannot experience it for us.

Ancient wisdom, modern practice

Amongst the vast and profound teachings of the Buddha, here are just a handful of practices that will help clear the mind, strengthen our hearts and care for the body.

Train the mind

Understand the “Illusion of the Mind” and cultivate being in the present moment using mindfulness techniques. Satipatthana (Mindfulness) trains us to return to the present moment. One who lives in the present neither regrets the past nor fears the future. Mental stress and anxiety arise largely from the restless nature of the mind.

Cultivate the heart

Compassion and Loving-Kindness both strengthen our humanity. The Buddha’s teaching “Sabbe satta bhavantu sukhitatta” reminds us to cultivate

universal loving-kindness. “Nahi verena verani” teaches that hatred is never overcome by hatred.

Care for the body and a Healthy Life

The Buddha’s teaching on abstaining from eating at improper times- Vikala Bhojana (fasting) harmonizes with modern research on intermittent fasting and supports both physical health and mental concentration.

ENRICHING ONE'S LIFE BASED ON THE TEACHING OF THE BUDDHA

*Venerable Pannala Sumedha Thero,
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Imagine life at the time of the Buddha.

India, the sixth century BCE, where the Brahmin caste led and managed society using their religious teaching in Vedic Literature. Each social group had its place in the Vedic hierarchy. At that time, people's knowledge was limited to accepting four castes that they believed had been created by Maha Brahma. There was no opportunity for them to think differently - for example, to consider evolution, historical consequences, or scientific thinking in forming their society. The Buddha's teaching challenged this way of life to protect human rights and independence.

This new way of seeing the world began with the first sermon of the Buddha that took place at Isipatana Migadaya on Esala full moon Poya day. The five ascetics were the first listeners and the first followers of the Buddha. The first Sermon was the Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta, in which the Buddha described the four noble truths.

The Advent of the Buddha's dhamma has been described as two extremes that must be avoided by ordained persons. These two extremes were: self-mortification and self-indulgence.

The Buddha presented the middle path as a way to be followed towards the cessation of dukkha – the unsatisfactoriness and suffering that is present in our lives.

As the foundation of his Teaching, the Buddha outlined four Noble Truths:

Dukkha Sacca – Suffering, dissatisfaction, and distress

Dukkha Samudaya Arya Sacca – The origin of suffering

Dukkha Nirodha Sacca – Cessation of suffering

Dukkha Nirodha Gamini Patipada Arya Sacca – is the way towards the cessation of dukkha; it is the middle pathway, the Noble Eightfold Path.

If anyone understands or comprehends these four laws of the Buddhist doctrine, he will reach the Ultimate Goal (Nibbana).

The Four Noble Truths that contain the Noble Eightfold Path are the essence of the Buddhist doctrine (Buddha Dhamma).

The first factor of the Noble Eightfold Path is Samma Ditthi, which means perceiving the real nature of worldly things as they are. Right Understanding serves as a sound base for all actions. The first two - Right Understanding and Right Thought or intention make up wisdom (Panna); The next three - Right Speech, Action, and Livelihood - make up virtue or morality (Sila), and the last three - Right Effort, Mindfulness, and concentration) make up the concentration (Samadhi). The Thrisiksha includes Sila, Samadhi, and Panna (Virtue or Morality group, Concentration group, and Wisdom group).

The Eight Factors of the Noble Eightfold Path

1. Right Understanding – (Samma Ditthi)
2. Right Thought – (Samma Sankappa)
3. Right Speech – (Samma Vaca)
4. Right Action – (Samma Kammanta)
5. Right Livelihood – (Samma Ajiva)
6. Right Effort – (Samma Vayama)
7. Right Mindfulness – (Samma Sati)
8. Right Concentration – (Samma Samadhi)

Concentration (Samadhi) Group

Right Effort (Samma Vayama) – This means the determination to prevent evil and unwholesome states of the mind. The mind which is uncontrolled leads to all forms of defilements, which originate due to the action of the six senses. Guarding the sense doors with Right Effort enables a person to develop the mind and concentrate on good things.

Right Concentration (Samma Samadhi) – Through Right Concentration, one can develop one-

pointedness of the mind, which is essential for meditation. Meditation purifies the mind. All these three factors promote mental discipline. Right Understanding (Samma Ditthi), the first factor in the Noble Eightfold Path, comes first and foremost even in promoting mental discipline.

Right Understanding (Samma Ditthi): This promotes seeing and understanding things as they are, understanding the reality of nature and all that exists. According to Buddhist doctrine, right understanding results from fully comprehending the Four Noble Truths.

Right Thought: This denotes thinking properly (yoniso manasikara). Thoughts on love and thoughts on non-violence lead a person to freedom from unskillful actions.

Right Understanding and Right Thought are grouped under wisdom because wisdom is endowed with all good qualities—like love, non-violence, and selfless detachment—that lead a person to ultimate liberation (nibbana). Following the Noble Eightfold Path is not only useful for those who have given up worldly life in search of enlightenment, but also for laymen.

Enriching one's life based on the teachings of the Buddha.

Buddhism teaches us that the mind is supreme and that everything is mind-made (mano pubbangama dhamma) except in the case of reflex or involuntary actions like blinking of the eyes, or yawning when one is thirsty, hungry, or sleepy. Every other action is the result of volition (cetana). The mind works first, and the action follows. Man works to fulfill a need or a desire. In day-to-day life, such aims come to a person's mind, and if fulfilled, they are of short duration.

When that need or desire is fulfilled, the aim is no more. However, there are sets of long-term aims and objectives a person wishes to fulfill during his lifetime. For such aims to originate and propel a person to action, he should exercise his mind. For such a course of action, wisdom (panna) is essential.

The Value of Buddhism to Present Day Society

In a deep voice of "come and see" (Ehipassiko), Lord Buddha, the Exalted One, cordially invited everyone to emancipation from all suffering. Man can purify and free himself from all unskillful propensities without going to a psychiatrist.

This is the message of Buddhism to the present-day society. Self-analysis in Buddha's teachings is based upon the observation, actually borne out in modern psychotherapy, that the painful symptoms of anxiety and suffering disappear when a person relates these symptoms to certain psychological conditions.

It is universally accepted that Lord Buddha, the World Honored One, is one of the greatest figures in human history. Among the unique virtues that gave Him this place are His penetrating wisdom, iron-will power, all-pervading compassion, selfless service to all mankind, marvelous power of renunciation, and spotless exemplary life. He was but an embodiment of all the virtues He taught. His contribution to world peace and universal happiness is by far His greatest contribution.

Description of Present Day Society

Present day society is riddled with harmful misunderstandings - commercial, international, economic, ideological and more.

There is great progress in science. Humans possess luxurious things which bring about great enjoyment as well as weapons of great destructive power. New instruments of death, which are capable of unimaginable destruction, have been produced. Human beings live in fear and suspicion; they are in tension because of the situation that they have themselves created. They challenge one another like the beasts in the jungle.

Man's strength lies in mercy and compassion. The brute in man that has not yet been destroyed does not allow the man to realize this truth to which Buddha himself pays homage. The Buddha says that anger must be conquered by non-violence. So long as man does not follow this injunction in his political and social life, the wicked will never be extinguished.

The monstrous cruelty of prisons and the threatening frowns of army barracks will make life increasingly intolerant; there will be no end to such affliction.

So now is the most proper time to take refuge in Buddha, who seeks to dissuade people from the folly of hoping to achieve success by violence and asks them to conquer anger by loving-kindness.

Buddha said, "There is a path to peace: hatred never ceases by hatred; overcome hatred by love and compassion; this is my way of universal peace. Conquer greed, thereby one becomes the unconquerable victor. Every man loves liberty and freedom. Don't interfere with another's freedom."

In Buddhism, religion, philosophy, ethics, psychology, and sociology are all interwoven into a comprehensive system of thought in direct relation to present-day society's needs and aspirations.

*"Sabbe Sankara aniccati
Yada Pannaya passati
Atha nibbindati Dukkhe
Esa maggo visuddhiya"*

When one sees with wisdom that all component things are transient, one overcomes misery. This is the Path to purity. When one sees... all component things are sorrowful, he overcomes misery, and all Dhamma are soulless; he overcomes misery; this is the path to purity.

Without a spiritual background, man has no moral responsibility. Man without moral responsibility poses a danger to society.

Buddhism is not mumbo-jumbo, nor a myth told to entertain the human mind or to satisfy the human emotion. It is a liberal and noble method for those who sincerely want to understand and experience the reality of life.



APPLYING THE BUDDHA'S DHAMMA TO MODERN SOCIETY

Cultivating the Mind on the Path to Liberation

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Vidyarthodaya Maha Pirivene, Polgahawela (Sri Lanka)

The Buddha taught:

*“Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano seṭṭhā
manomayā.”*

– (Dhammapada, Verse 1)

Meaning: The mind precedes all phenomena. The mind is their chief, and they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows like a shadow that never departs.

This profound teaching reveals one of the greatest truths of human existence: the true source of both suffering and happiness lies within the human mind. Although modern civilization has achieved extraordinary progress in science, technology, medicine, and economics, humanity continues to struggle with anxiety, anger, greed, hatred, jealousy, loneliness, and mental stress. Material advancement has not brought lasting inner peace.

The rapid pace of modern life, social media, excessive competition, and endless desires have made people increasingly restless. Family conflicts, violence, corruption, depression, and social divisions continue to affect society despite technological progress. These realities remind us that humanity's greatest challenge is not limited to external development but also inner transformation.

More than 2,500 years ago, the Buddha presented a timeless solution to this problem through the Dhamma. His teaching is not merely an ancient philosophy but a practical guide for daily life. The Buddha emphasized that before attempting to change the world, one must first transform one's own mind. When the mind becomes pure, speech becomes gentle, actions become wholesome, families become peaceful, and society becomes harmonious.

The Buddha identified three “unwholesome roots”

that contribute to human suffering: greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha). Many of the social problems we witness today, from violence and corruption to exploitation and hatred, can be connected from a Buddhist perspective to these mental defilements.

The Dhammapada states:

*“Natthi rāgasamo aggi, natthi dosasamo kali;
Natthi khandhasamā dukkhā, natthi santiparaṃ
sukhaṃ.”*

Meaning: There is no fire like greed, no evil like hatred, no suffering like attachment to the five aggregates, and no happiness greater than the peace of *Nibbāna*.

This verse reminds us that our greatest challenges are not found in the outside world, but within ourselves. Greed is an endless fire that can never be fully satisfied. Hatred destroys relationships and communities, while delusion blinds us to reality. Therefore, the journey toward liberation begins by recognizing these defilements and gradually overcoming them.

Today, many people seek happiness through wealth, fame, social status, luxury, and recognition on social media. However, Buddhism teaches that all conditioned things are impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). Since worldly pleasures constantly change, they can never provide lasting happiness.

True happiness arises from cultivating morality, mental discipline, wisdom, loving-kindness, compassion, and mindfulness. A person who has mastered the mind remains calm even during life's greatest difficulties. Such an individual becomes a source of peace not only for themselves but also

for everyone around them.

The Buddha's Dhamma therefore remains as relevant today as it was twenty-five centuries ago. It offers humanity a path beyond conflict, hatred, and suffering toward inner peace and ultimate liberation.

The Path of Mental Discipline

The Buddha taught that genuine transformation is achieved through the Threefold Training (*Tisikkhā*): Morality (*Sīla*), Concentration (*Samādhi*), and Wisdom (*Paññā*). Morality purifies one's actions and speech. Concentration develops a calm and focused mind. Wisdom enables one to understand reality as it truly is and eradicate mental defilements. Together, these three trainings form the foundation of the Noble Path leading to liberation.

The Buddha summarized a central principle of His teaching in one famous verse:

“Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ, kusalassa upasampadā;

Sacittapariyodapanaṃ — etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ.”

– (*Dhammapada*, Verse 183)

Meaning: To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to purify one's own mind, this is the teaching of all Buddhas.

This verse represents the very essence of Buddhism. It teaches that merely avoiding wrongdoing is not enough; one must actively cultivate wholesome qualities and, above all, purify the mind. A purified mind responds to anger with compassion, hatred with loving-kindness, and selfishness with generosity.

The Buddha also declared:

“Attā hi attano nātho, ko hi nātho paro siyā.”

(*Dhammapada*, Verse 160)

Meaning: One is one's own refuge. Who else could be one's refuge?

This timeless teaching reminds us that true change begins within ourselves. Teachers may guide us, and the Dhamma may illuminate the path, but each individual must walk that path through personal effort and understanding.

The practical way to liberation is the Noble Eightfold Path: Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. By developing these eight factors, a practitioner gradually weakens greed, hatred, and delusion while cultivating wisdom and compassion.

The ultimate goal of Buddhism is *Nibbāna* (Liberation), the complete cessation of greed, hatred, and delusion. Liberation is not simply a destination to be reached after death but the realization of profound inner freedom through the complete purification of the mind. As defilements disappear, genuine peace naturally arises.

In today's digital age, where our attention is constantly pulled away by technology and social media, mindfulness and meditation are more important than ever. Even a few minutes of daily meditation may help calm the mind, reduce stress, and strengthen emotional balance. Meditation is not an escape from reality; rather, it is a way of understanding reality more clearly.

Modern society's greatest need is not merely economic growth or technological advancement but also the cultivation of virtuous character, wisdom, compassion, and inner discipline. When individuals transform themselves through the Buddha's teachings, families can become more harmonious, societies more peaceful, and the world can become a better place.

The Buddha's *Dhamma* is not only a religion but also a universal path of wisdom that leads humanity from suffering to peace, from ignorance to understanding, and ultimately from bondage to liberation. By applying His teachings to everyday life, we cultivate a disciplined mind and move

steadily toward the highest freedom, *Nibbāna*.





THE SEARCH OUTSIDE

Understanding Dukkha Through the Teachings of the Buddha

Thilini Nimanthi Liyanage

Human beings spend much of their lives searching for happiness, comfort, security, recognition, and satisfaction. We often believe that happiness is something to be found outside ourselves: in possessions, relationships, achievements, wealth or pleasant experiences. Yet, after obtaining one thing, the mind soon searches for another. Why does this happen?

The Buddha's teachings invite us to look not only at the world outside, but also at the mind that experiences it.

What we call a “person” can be understood through the *pañcakkhandha*, the Five Aggregates: *rūpa* (material form), *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhāra* (mental formations) and *viññāṇa* (consciousness).

Through our senses, we encounter colours, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily sensations and mental objects.

When observing a person, there is a visual form, followed by perception and recognition of colours, shapes and features. Then the mind may immediately respond: “I like this,” “I dislike this,” or “This is beautiful”. What began simply as seeing can become attraction or aversion.

From there, clinging can arise. We want what is pleasant to remain and what is unpleasant to disappear. The mind begins saying, “I want this,” “I must have this”, or “I cannot lose this.” This craving, *taṇhā*, becomes a cause of *Dukkha* (suffering).

Modern science and technology have brought extraordinary comfort and possibilities. Yet greater external development does not necessarily bring greater inner peace. When mindfulness is lost, greed, hatred and delusion can influence our thoughts and actions, creating conflict within ourselves and in society.

“Cittena nīyati loko” — The world is led by the mind

The Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths: *Dukkha*, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation. *Dukkha* does not arise without causes and conditions. Craving, together with *rāga* (attachment), *dosa* (aversion), and *moha* (delusion), sustains our suffering.

Therefore, if we wish to overcome *Dukkha*, we must understand and gradually abandon its causes. This is the purpose of the Noble Eightfold Path: right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration cultivated through *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*.

Through *yoniso manasikāra*, wise attention, we learn to observe the mind carefully. Instead of immediately following attraction or aversion, we learn to recognise them as they arise. Listening to the *Dhamma*, meditation and the guidance of *kalyāṇa mitta* (spiritual friends) can support this practice.

Gradually, we begin to see that the world does not always need to change for the mind to become peaceful. The transformation begins within.

Perhaps the question is therefore not only, “What do I need to obtain from the world to be happy?” but also, “What is happening in my mind right now?”

When craving and clinging weaken, the mind becomes freer. When attachment, aversion and delusion diminish, wisdom and peace can grow.

The Buddha's path is ultimately a path from *Dukkha* to its cessation, from clinging to letting go, and from confusion to wisdom.

The endless search for happiness outside may never end. But when we turn inward and truly understand the mind, we begin to discover the path to freedom.

GIFTING DHAMMA IN A REAL WAY

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Generally, we hear various sounds every day. Countless words fall upon our ears. But they do not bring about ultimate mental peace. The cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*) keeps spinning, and we rarely hear what is truly beneficial. Even when the truth is present, some people lack the wisdom or desire to listen to it. Even if they hear it, they do not understand it. There is no wise reflection. Human beings spend countless lifetimes in *saṃsāra* without having the opportunity to hear this Sublime Truth. Obtaining the opportunity to hear this teaching is a rare occurrence that comes with deep wisdom and virtue. Every time one hears this *Dhamma*, their life gains profound meaning.

Let us examine the *Mahasāla Sutta* from the *Pañcaka Nipāta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* to understand how to expand the boundaries of your mind and view life's changes with proper reflection.

In this *sutta*, the Buddha gives us a beautiful explanation comparing righteous individuals to great trees supported by the majestic Himalaya Mountains. Supported by the mountain, these trees grow well. Their branches, leaves, bark, and flowers flourish. They bear abundant fruit. He describes this as the first growth. Next, the sapwood and heartwood grow strong. Similarly, devout followers who take refuge in the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha* grow in devotion (*saddhā*). They also possess morality (*sīla*). They are elevated in their spiritual practice.

Learning (*suta*) grows. This means they constantly listen to the *Dhamma* and gather spiritual knowledge. They never say, "I have listened enough; there is no point in listening further." They continuously develop their minds by listening to the *Dhamma*. They practice generosity (*cāga*). Likewise, they are established in wisdom (*paññā*). Wisdom means understanding the nature of impermanence, dissatisfaction, and non-self. Through wisdom, they contemplate the arising



and disappearance of phenomena, leading toward ultimate liberation (*Nibbāna*).

What happens to the external people who observe and associate with such virtuous individuals? The Buddha teaches that by watching disciples who are practising virtue, their surrounding followers not only grow in virtue but are also inspired to hear the *Dhamma*. Because of a single virtuous individual, their surrounding companions – whether children, a spouse, employees, relatives, or neighbours, may be guided to listen to the *Dhamma* for one reason or another. Likewise, followers learn to practice generosity because of faithful devotees. They get accustomed to giving, even if by chance. For example, when an almsgiving (*dāna*) is organised at home, you might invite your friends. Whatever their initial motivation, out of friendship, they participate. After coming to help with the *dāna*, they see how beautiful and wholesome it is; their minds become serene, and they may continue to engage in charity in the future. Such transformations happen.

The Buddha points out that they do not stop at generosity; they also undertake wisdom. They begin to hear about the Three Marks of Existence (*tilakkhaṇa*), and gradually learn to investigate life with wise consideration.

For example, if the husband in a family is a faithful person who has taken refuge in the *Dhamma*, his

wife and children who associate with him, filled with devotion, virtue, learning, generosity, and wisdom, will naturally come into contact with that Dhamma environment. If a classroom teacher in a school is virtuous, the students guided by that teacher will become virtuous individuals. If the principal of a school lives according to the *Dhamma*, that school transforms into a beautiful place filled with virtuous children.

Therefore, by observing and modelling the character of a person who lives by the *Dhamma*, others will gradually, not all at once, come toward the *Dhamma* as well.

There are some children whose parents lived according to the *Dhamma*, yet the children did not follow it while the parents were alive. However, long after the parents have passed away, the children reflect: "This is how our mother and father lived. We remember their way of life and their practice of virtue. Now, we too shall practice those virtues." Thus, there are instances where they turn to the *Dhamma* later in life.

Similarly, some teachers are no longer alive, yet former students remember: "This is how our teachers taught us. Back then, we got angry when they corrected us, but today we still remember and honour our teacher". By reflecting on the conduct of those teachers, people reform their own lives even today. Look at how practical the words of the Buddha are! Wherever virtuous individuals, like the virtue-filled Himalayan mountains, reside, the people around them gradually incline toward the *Dhamma*. When you sincerely practice the *Dhamma*, that practice itself becomes a gift of *Dhamma* (*Dhamma-dāna*) to the world. Why? Because by looking at your character, even one or two people might reform their lives, live according to the *Dhamma*, and become seekers of ultimate liberation.

Even if we teach *Dhamma* principles to the world, if those teachings are not practically present within us, it is futile. What we say might bring some good to the world, but for the world to have true confidence in the teachings, we must embody that behavioural value ourselves. Without *Dhamma* value within us,

even if we try to teach it, it will rarely touch people's hearts. For the world to trust the path, they need to see noble individuals actively walking it.

If you wish to give the gift of *Dhamma* to the world, the first step is for you to live according to the *Dhamma*. By your righteous living, your family will be blessed. The people at your workplace will be blessed. People will think, "If only I could become like that," and be uplifted. People who do not know you and have never met you will look at you, learn a lesson from your life, and engage in the *Dhamma*.

Through establishing your life in the *Dhamma*, turn the great strength and spiritual personality you develop into a gift of Dhamma for the world. Understand the *Mahāsāla Sutta* as a wonderful example of this.

May everyone gain the physical and mental strength to establish their lives in the *Dhamma* and make their entire life a gift of *Dhamma*!



BUDDHIST TEACHINGS ON WEALTH CREATION AND WEALTH CONSUMPTION

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Wealth is an inescapable aspect of the life of a socialized human being. For this reason, the Buddha also addressed wealth within the Dhamma, while maintaining Nibbāna (Enlightenment) as the primary goal.

Sutta discourses, verse teachings, and *Jātaka* (tales) related to this subject are found abundantly within the Tipiṭaka. Although the word “wealth” is commonly used, the suttas also discuss the subject using related terms such as *bhoga* and *vatthu*.

The Oxford Dictionary defines wealth as:

1. An abundance of valuable possessions or money.
2. The state of being rich; material prosperity.

The Great Sinhala Dictionary defines wealth as resources such as gold, silver, pearls, gems, land, money, and property, while the Pāli-Sinhala Dictionary describes it in terms of wealth, assets, gold, silver, and possessions. Although these definitions emphasize valuable material objects, it is important to remember that in Buddhist teachings, the concept of wealth may also encompass spiritual qualities.

For example, the Seven Noble Treasures (*Saptārya Dhana*) are described in the teachings as faith (*Saddhā*), morality (*Sīla*), moral shame (*Hiri*), moral dread (*Ottappa*), learning (*Suta*), generosity (*Cāga*), and wisdom (*Paññā*). The teachings also describe the mind (*Citta*) in relation to wealth. Thus, in Buddhism, wealth can refer both to worldly comforts and to spiritual virtues. The present discussion, however, focuses specifically on worldly wealth.

Earning Wealth

The Buddha’s teachings on earning wealth are distinctive. This subject is discussed in numerous sources, with the *Vyagghapajja Sutta* holding a prominent position. In this discourse, *Uṭṭhāna sampadā* is highlighted as an essential factor in the accumulation of wealth.

The teaching emphasizes that whatever occupation a person follows—whether trade, farming, commerce, cattle breeding, archery, royal service, or another craft—the person should be skilled, diligent, resourceful, and capable of carrying out the work properly. This is described as the achievement of energetic effort (*Uṭṭhāna-sampadā*).

The discussion of *Ārakkha-sampadā* further emphasizes that wealth should be acquired through industrious effort, personal strength, honest labour, and righteous means. The principle expressed through the phrase “*dhammikenā dhamma-laddhena*” is particularly important: regardless of how hard one works, wealth should be earned righteously. The distinctive feature of the Buddhist approach to wealth accumulation is therefore its emphasis on moral integrity. Earning wealth without morality is not praised in Buddhism.

A similar teaching appears in the *Singālovāda Sutta*. One particularly meaningful metaphor is the simile of the bee. Just as a bee gathers nectar without damaging the colour or structure of a flower, a person should accumulate wealth in a manner that causes harm to no one.

The metaphors of the bee and the termite illustrate the importance of diligent and consistent effort. The Buddha repeatedly discouraged laziness and encouraged energetic engagement. In the *Singālovāda Sutta*, six excuses that lead to inaction

and failure in work are highlighted:

1. Refusing to work because it is too cold.
2. Refusing to work because it is too hot.
3. Refusing to work because it is too late in the evening.
4. Refusing to work because it is too early in the morning.
5. Refusing to work because one is too hungry.
6. Refusing to work because one is too full.

The teaching emphasizes abandoning excuses, avoiding procrastination, and acting with steadfast effort. For a person who works in this manner, wealth can steadily accumulate over time, just as grains of sand gather day by day to build a termite hill.

At the same time, Buddhism does not support earning wealth by any means whatsoever. A clear distinction is drawn between righteous (*dhammic*) and unrighteous (*adhammic*) gain. The *Vaṇijjā Sutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* identifies five types of trade in which a lay follower should not engage: *Shattha Vaṇijjā*, *Satta Vaṇijjā*, *Masa Vaṇijjā*, *Majja Vaṇijjā*, and *Pāṇa Vaṇijjā*. These are presented as forms of livelihood that directly threaten the lives, health, and well-being of living beings. The teaching therefore establishes an ethical boundary around wealth creation and connects responsible livelihood with the principle of right livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). Alongside these ethical boundaries, the Buddha also emphasized the importance of making effective use of one's productive years.

Use and Management of Wealth

It is widely accepted that people need to know how to earn wealth. However, an equally important consideration is that one must know how to spend, preserve, and manage the wealth that has been earned. Failure to develop this discipline can lead to serious financial decline. The Buddha therefore addressed not only the acquisition of wealth but also its proper management and preservation.

In this context, close attention should be given to *Ārakkha-sampadā*. This concept emphasizes

anticipating potential risks and taking timely measures to safeguard one's resources. Wealth may be lost through various causes, including:

- Confiscation by authorities.
- Theft and robbery.
- Destruction by fire.
- Losses caused by floods or other natural disasters.
- Inheritance by unwanted or irresponsible heirs.

To ensure the long-term stability of wealth, a person should actively consider and mitigate such risks.

Closely connected with this is *Kalyāṇamittatā*—the importance of surrounding oneself with upright and beneficial companions. The story of Mahādhana Setthiputta is presented as an example of this principle. He inherited a vast fortune but ultimately became a beggar, primarily because of the influence of corrupt and wasteful companions.

In the *Sīṅgālaka Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the Buddha identifies six drains or doorways to ruin that contribute to the dissipation and loss of wealth:

1. Devotion to intoxicating drinks and drugs that cause mindlessness and loss of self-control.
2. Frequent wandering in the streets at inappropriate hours.
3. Frequent attendance at theatrical shows, dances, and entertainment venues.
4. Addiction to gambling, which encourages greed and financial loss.
5. Association with evil, irresponsible, or dishonest companions.
6. Habitual laziness and indolence in fulfilling one's duties and work.

These behaviours can become serious obstacles to earning new wealth and expanding existing assets.

The *Parābhava Sutta* echoes this warning. Two additional causes of decline highlighted in the discussion are *Itthidhuttha* (excessive sensual indulgence) and uncontrolled, extravagant expenditure of earned wealth in pursuit of various desires.

This latter point is illustrated through a simile in the *Vyagghapajja Sutta*: a pond receives water through four gates while water simultaneously flows out through four other gates. As a result, none of the incoming water accumulates and the pond remains empty. The simile illustrates a situation in which expenditure equals or exceeds income.

Through the concept of *Samajīvikatā* (balanced living), the Buddha taught that income and expenditure should be managed carefully, just as a merchant uses a scale to maintain balance. Expenses should not exceed income. At the same time, a person who earns substantial income should not live in extreme austerity without appropriately enjoying or using the wealth. Conversely, a person with a small income should not spend extravagantly beyond their means. The underlying principle is balance and wise financial conduct.

To earn wealth while avoiding the causes of decline, the Buddha also taught a practical discipline concerning the use of monetary resources. The teaching presented in the *Singālovāda Sutta* divides wealth into three portions: One portion should be allocated for daily basic needs such as food and drink. Two portions should be invested in the development of one's trades and businesses. The fourth portion should be deposited or saved for future protection in times of misfortune.

Benefits and Proper Consumption of Wealth

For a person who earns, safeguards, and develops wealth responsibly, the Bhoga Sutta of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* identifies five valuable benefits:

1. Wealth brings happiness and comfort to oneself.
2. Wealth brings happiness and comfort to one's parents.
3. Wealth brings happiness and comfort to one's spouse, children, servants, and workers.
4. Wealth brings happiness and comfort to one's friends and neighbours.
5. Wealth enables meritorious deeds, such as offerings to religious ascetics, which

are understood to yield beneficial future results.

These five points make it clear that the purpose of earning wealth is neither merely to hoard it nor to enjoy it alone. The value of wealth lies in using it appropriately to bring happiness and comfort to oneself, one's family, and one's well-wishing friends, while also supporting meritorious deeds. Wealth that is not used in such a manner is described through the image of a pond guarded by a demon.

The Rāsiya Sutta of the *Gāmiṇi Syutta* in the *Sāyutta Nikāya* provides a broad analysis of the acquisition and consumption of wealth. It presents the following principle:

“When a householder seeking sensory pleasures earns wealth righteously and without violence, enjoys that wealth happily, shares it, performs meritorious deeds, and uses that property without being attached, intoxicated, or mesmerized by it, seeing its drawbacks and possessing the wisdom of liberation, that person deserves praise on four counts:”

1. The person deserves praise because wealth is earned righteously and without violence.
2. The person deserves praise because the wealth is enjoyed in a way that brings happiness and comfort to others.
3. The person deserves praise because the wealth is used for meritorious deeds.
4. The person deserves praise because the wealth is used without attachment or intoxication, with awareness of its drawbacks and with wisdom directed toward liberation.

This teaching guides a person toward a balanced and meaningful approach to both earning and consuming wealth. A *Jātaka* story referred to in the *Soṇaka* narrative further illustrates this principle. An elephant that had died after being caught in a great flood was floating in the water. A crow landed on the carcass, fed on it, and remained with it for many days. Gradually, the carcass was carried into the middle of the ocean. When the carcass finally dissolved, the crow searched for dry land but could not find any. Exhausted, it fell into the sea and was

destroyed by marine creatures.

The lesson is not that the crow was wrong to make use of the elephant carcass. Rather, the story illustrates the danger of failing to leave when the appropriate time has come. Through craving and attachment, one may become absorbed in a source of pleasure or benefit and ultimately perish through that attachment.

The Ultimate Perspective on Wealth

Finally, there is an important truth to be understood:

“Even by a shower of gold coins, satisfaction in sensual pleasures cannot be found.”

Understanding this through wisdom, one should deal with wealth and money carefully and mindfully. Wealth should be used as a means for responsible living, the welfare of oneself and others, meritorious action, and progress toward a wholesome future and ultimately *Nibbāna*.

BUDDHISM IN NUMBERS

Eleven timeless teachings from the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*

Dr Gaya Gamhewage,
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The Buddha’s teaching was meant for anyone and everyone – infused with kindness and consideration for any learner. His teachings from 2,600 years ago are still relevant in modern life.

The Buddha used the spoken word to share his wisdom and guide those who were interested. Over the centuries, his teachings have been codified into written texts and translated by scholars and monastics into languages used today including English. The teachings preserved in the Theravāda

Buddhist tradition are contained in the Pāli Canon, known as the *Tipiṭaka* literally, the “Three Baskets”.

- The *Vinaya Piṭaka* deals principally with monastic discipline and the life of the Saṅgha.
- The *Sutta Piṭaka* contains the discourses attributed principally to the Buddha as well as some of his leading disciples.
- The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* offers a systematic analysis of mind, experience and phenomena.

The *Āṅguttara Nikāya* (AN) belongs to the Sutta Piṭaka. It is one of the major collections of the Buddha’s discourses and is usually translated as the Numerical Discourses of the Buddha – or what I call Buddhism in Numbers. This numerical structure was well suited to an oral tradition. It gave teachings shape, making them easier to learn, remember, recite and transmit.

But remembering is only the beginning of a process that can help develop our minds and our lives: Remember. Reflect. Understand. Practise. A teaching that can be remembered can be carried into life. And there, through reflection and experience, information can gradually become understanding—and understanding can grow into wisdom.

Indeed, in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* itself, the Buddha describes a learned person not simply as someone who has heard much, but as someone who remembers and retains what has been learned, reflects upon it and comes to understand its meaning deeply.

So perhaps these numbers are more than an ancient memory device. They are little containers for wisdom teachings simple enough to carry with us into life.

The modern translation of the Numerical Discourses by Bhikkhu Bodhi is contained in a book of nearly 2,000 pages with more than 8,112 discrete but interlinked teachings. They are organized into the Book of ones, the book of twos, and so on, all the way to the book of elevens. Here is a single teaching drawn from each of the eleven books.

1 TRAINING

From the Book of the Ones — AN 1.31–40

If there is one thing worth learning to manage, the Buddha suggests, it is the mind.

He makes the point repeatedly: an untamed mind leads to harm; a tamed mind to benefit. An unguarded mind leads to harm; a guarded mind to benefit. An unprotected and unrestrained mind can work against us; a protected and restrained mind can work for us.

The repetition itself seems to carry the lesson: The mind can be trained.

We do not have to follow every thought simply because it arises, believe every fear because we feel it, or act upon every impulse because it is strong.

For us today: We spend years educating ourselves and learning to manage our work, money, and technology. Perhaps the most consequential thing we will ever learn to manage is our own mind.

Source: *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1.31–40, Book of the Ones.

2 RECOGNITIONS

From the Book of the Twos — AN 2.21

The Buddha gives us two forms of foolishness—and their wiser alternatives.

The first is failing to recognise a transgression as a transgression. The second is failing to properly accept the acknowledgement of someone who recognises that they have done wrong.

Turn these around, and we have two remarkably simple practices:

Recognise when we have done wrong.

Know how to receive another person's acknowledgement when they have done wrong.

The pairing matters.

Accountability without the possibility of reconciliation can become punishment. Forgiveness without acknowledgement can become avoidance.

For us today: Imagine what these two simple practices could change in a family, a workplace, an institution, or even between nations.

Source: *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 2.21, Book of the Twos.

3 ROOTS OF UNHAPPINESS

From the Book of the Threes — AN 3.69

Why do human beings cause harm? The Buddha asks us to look beneath behaviour to its roots.

He identifies three fundamental roots of unwholesome action: Greed. Hatred. Delusion.

And their opposites: Non-greed (non-grasping or generosity). Non-hatred (kindness, platonic love and compassion). Non-delusion (the ability to see reality for what it is – ever-changing and impermanent)

This is an extraordinarily useful shift in perspective. Behaviour does not simply appear from nowhere. What we say and do grows from conditions within the mind.

For us today: When faced with conflict, corruption, cruelty or simply our own bad behaviour, perhaps we should ask not only What happened?, but What was feeding it? How can I cultivate generosity, goodwill and kindness, and understand all experience as not permanent?

Source: *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 3.69, *Akusalamūla Sutta*, "Roots".

4 KINDS OF HAPPINESS

From the Book of the Fours — AN 4.62

The Buddha spoke to people living ordinary lives with families, livelihoods, possessions, responsibilities and debts.

To the householder *Anāthapiṇḍika*, he described four kinds of happiness available to someone living such a life:

- The happiness of having honestly earned wealth.
- The happiness of enjoying and sharing that wealth.

- The happiness of being free from debt.
- The happiness of living blamelessly.

The Buddha places the happiness of living blamelessly above the other three.

Material security matters. Enjoyment matters. Financial freedom matters. But being able to live comfortably with one's own conscience matters even more.

For us today: Perhaps a good life requires us to keep two balance sheets: what we possess, and how we have lived.

Source: *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 4.62, *Ānāṇya Sutta*, "Freedom from Debt".

5 KINDS OF WEALTH

From the Book of the Fives — AN 5.47

What makes a human being wealthy? The Buddha offers five forms of wealth:

- Confidence or faith.
- Ethical conduct.
- Learning.
- Generosity.
- Wisdom.

There is something particularly beautiful in what he says about learning. The learned person does not merely accumulate information. What has been learned is remembered, retained, mentally examined and understood. Knowledge has to be worked upon before it becomes wisdom.

The Buddha is not dismissing material wellbeing. As the previous teaching shows, he recognised its importance. He is enlarging our definition of prosperity.

For us today: We spend much of our lives accumulating. The more interesting question may be: what are we becoming wealthy in?

Source: *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 5.47, *Dhana Sutta*, "Wealth".

6 WAYS TO LISTEN

From the Book of the Sixes — AN 6.88

The Buddha describes qualities that prevent a person from learning when listening to a teaching—and their opposites, which enable learning.

Among them are the willingness to listen, actually paying attention, making an effort to understand, and discerning meaning correctly rather than grasping the wrong meaning.

The underlying insight is simple: Hearing is not the same as listening.

We can hear someone while preparing our reply. We can listen only for evidence that confirms what we already believe. We can misunderstand because we enter the conversation determined not to understand. Good listening requires curiosity and a willingness to allow what we hear to challenge what we think we know.

For us today: In a world of polarisation, misinformation and competing versions of reality, listening may no longer be merely a social courtesy. It is a discipline of mind.

Source: *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 6.88, Book of the Sixes, teaching on wanting and being able to listen.

7 QUALITIES OF A TRUE FRIEND

From the Book of the Sevens — AN 7.36

What makes someone a true friend? The Buddha gives a wonderfully human answer. A friend worth keeping is someone who:

- Gives what is difficult to give.
- Does what is difficult to do.
- Endures what is difficult to endure.
- Shares confidences.
- Keeps our confidences.
- Does not abandon us when misfortune strikes.
- Does not look down on us when we are struggling.

There is little here that requires knowledge of Buddhism. More than two thousand years later, we recognise these qualities immediately. A true friend is generous, dependable and trustworthy. They are willing to be vulnerable with us and protect our vulnerability in return. And their friendship is tested not only when life is going well, but when it is not.

There is another way to use the Buddha's list. Instead of asking, Do I have friends like this?, we can turn the question around: Am I this kind of friend to others?

For us today: In an age in which we can accumulate hundreds or thousands of online "friends", the Buddha offers seven remarkably demanding measures of true friendship.

Source: *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 7.36, *Paṭhamamitta Sutta*, "A Friend".

8 WINDS THAT BLOW THROUGH EVERY LIFE

From the Book of the Eights — AN 8.6

The Buddha identifies eight conditions that move through human life:

- Gain and loss.
- Fame or status and disrepute.
- Praise and blame.
- Pleasure and pain.

Both the pleasant and the unpleasant on the above – all eight – happen to us across our day, our week, our life. No one is immune to these winds that blow universally and constantly. We gain things and lose them. People praise us and blame us. Our reputation rises and falls. We experience pleasure and pain.

The difference lies in what happens inside us when circumstances change. The aim is not indifference to life. It is learning not to be completely governed by every change in fortune.

For us today: A successful life cannot be one in which we are always winning, praised, and comfortable. No such life exists. Perhaps success lies partly in learning not to be blown over when

the wind changes, but to hold steady.

Source: *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 8.6, *Lokadhamma Sutta*, teaching on the worldly conditions.

9 WAYS WE KEEP RESENTMENT ALIVE

From the Book of the Nines — AN 9.29

The Buddha understood how skilful the human mind can be at keeping an injury alive. He identifies nine grounds for resentment.

We think: This person harmed me in the past. This person is harming me now.

This person may harm me in the future. Then we repeat the pattern around other people. Someone harmed, harms, or may harm a person we care about. Or someone helped, helps or may help a person we dislike.

Past. Present. Future. Self. Friend. Enemy. Nine ways of feeding resentment.

And then comes the more important part: the possibility of relinquishing it. This does not require pretending that harm did not occur. Nor does letting go mean that harmful behaviour should not have consequences.

The question is different: how long will we allow the injury to continue occupying the mind?

For us today: We live in an age in which grievance can be replayed, shared and amplified indefinitely. The injury may be real. But do we want to keep giving it somewhere to live?

Source: *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 9.29, *Āghātavatthu Sutta*, "Grounds for Resentment".

10 WAYS OUR ACTIONS MATTER

From the Book of the Tens — AN 10.211–214

The Buddha describes ten pathways through which human conduct becomes harmful or wholesome. Three concern what we do with the body. Four concern speech. Three concern the mind.

The harmful pathways include killing, taking what

is not given, and sexual misconduct; false, divisive, harsh, and meaningless speech; and states of covetousness, ill will, and wrong understanding.

Their opposites constitute wholesome conduct.

There is something strikingly practical here. Ethics is not simply what we believe or the values we claim to hold. Ethics is what we repeatedly do with our bodies, our words and our minds.

The four pathways concerning speech seem particularly contemporary. Words can deceive. They can divide people. They can wound. They can also tell the truth, reconcile and create understanding.

For us today: In an era when almost anyone can publish instantly to hundreds, thousands or millions of people, ethical speech is no longer only a private virtue. It has become a public responsibility.

Source: *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 10.211–214, Book of the Tens, teachings on the ten courses of action.

11 BENEFITS OF LOVING-KINDNESS

From the Book of the Elevens — AN 11.15

And finally, eleven.

The Book of the Elevens gives us one of the most loved practices in Buddhism: mettā usually translated as loving-kindness, goodwill or benevolence.

The Buddha describes eleven benefits associated with developing and practising mettā:

- One sleeps easily.
- One wakes happily.
- One does not have bad dreams.
- One is dear to human beings.
- One is dear to non-human beings.
- One is protected by deities.
- Fire, poison and weapons do not harm one.
- The mind becomes concentrated quickly.
- The face becomes bright and serene.
- One dies without confusion.

- And, if no higher liberation has been reached, one reaches a fortunate heavenly destination.

Some of these claims belong unmistakably to the cosmology and worldview in which the Buddha lived. A modern non-Buddhist reader may understand them differently.

But we should not lose the central insight: Loving-kindness is not simply something we give to another person. Its cultivation changes the person who practises it.

A mind that continually rehearses hostility inhabits a very different world from one that repeatedly practises goodwill.

For us today: In a world in which anger commands attention and outrage can circle the planet in seconds, perhaps loving-kindness is not softness at all but a superpower.

Source: *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 11.15, *Mettā Sutta*, "Loving-Kindness".

AND BACK TO ONE

We have travelled from one to eleven.

And yet the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* seems to bring us back to where we began: the mind and how we choose to live.





LE BOUDDHISME ET L'ART DE REGARDER LA RÉALITÉ

Rodolfo Muller

Sans Dieu créateur au centre, sans salut dépendant d'une autorité extérieure et sans vérités qu'il faudrait accepter aveuglément, le bouddhisme part d'une question profondément humaine : pourquoi souffrons-nous et que pouvons-nous faire pour nous libérer de cette souffrance ?

Pour un esprit formé dans la tradition occidentale, il y a quelque chose de déroutant dans le bouddhisme : la possibilité d'une religion sans Dieu créateur.

Nous avons l'habitude d'associer le religieux à une divinité, à une révélation, à un ensemble de commandements et à une forme d'autorité spirituelle faisant office d'intermédiaire entre l'être humain et le sacré. Le bouddhisme part d'un autre point. Il n'a besoin ni d'un créateur pour expliquer l'existence ni d'un sauveur extérieur dont dépendrait notre libération.

Il existe des temples, des maîtres, des cérémonies, des préceptes et des prières, et, au fil de vingt-cinq siècles, le bouddhisme a développé une extraordinaire diversité d'écoles et de traditions. Mais derrière toutes ces traditions demeure une préoccupation d'une étonnante simplicité : comprendre l'expérience humaine.

C'est peut-être pourquoi, pour aborder le bouddhisme, la première question ne devrait pas être de savoir ce que croient les bouddhistes, mais ce que le Bouddha a cherché à comprendre.

Un homme découvre la Souffrance

Il y a environ vingt-cinq siècles, dans la région située entre l'actuel Népal et le nord de l'Inde, Siddhartha Gautama, l'homme qui serait plus tard connu sous le nom de Bouddha, grandit dans des conditions extraordinairement privilégiées. Sa famille voulant le protéger des aspects les plus douloureux de l'existence, il vécut entouré de jardins, de confort, de beauté et de jeunesse, tenu à l'écart de la maladie, de la pauvreté, de la vieillesse

et de la mort.

C'est pourquoi, lorsqu'il quitta enfin cette bulle, ce qu'il découvrit eut pour lui la force d'une révélation. Mais ce ne fut pas une révélation surnaturelle. Aucun dieu ne descendit pour lui parler. Aucune lumière céleste n'apparut et il n'entendit aucune voix venue d'un autre monde.

Il vit un malade. Il vit un vieillard. Il vit un mort.

Ce qui, pour nous, fait partie du paysage inévitable de l'existence se présente à ses yeux comme une découverte radicale. Il comprend que le corps tombe malade, que la jeunesse disparaît et que toute vie prend fin.

Alors surgit la question qui allait déterminer le reste de son existence : si la maladie, le vieillissement, la perte et la mort sont inévitables, est-il également inévitable de vivre intérieurement soumis à la souffrance ?

Une quête intérieure

Siddhartha abandonna alors son existence privilégiée et entreprit une quête qui le conduisit auprès de maîtres, d'écoles spirituelles et vers différentes pratiques religieuses. Il expérimenta également des formes extrêmes d'ascétisme, soumettant son corps à de sévères privations.

Il passe d'un extrême, celui de l'abondance et des plaisirs, à l'autre : le renoncement et la privation.

Il découvrit que ni l'un ni l'autre ne contenait la réponse.

De cette expérience allait naître l'une des idées essentielles du bouddhisme : la Voie du Milieu. Il ne s'agissait ni de s'abandonner aveuglément au plaisir ni de déclarer la guerre au corps et au monde. Il ne fallait devenir ni esclave du désir ni faire de l'élimination du désir une nouvelle obsession.

La quête commença alors à se tourner vers un autre lieu : son propre esprit.

L'image bien connue du Bouddha assis sous l'arbre de l'Éveil est souvent représentée comme le moment d'une révélation presque surnaturelle. Mais on peut peut-être la comprendre d'une

manière plus proche de nous : un être humain qui décide d'observer avec une attention extraordinaire ce qui se passe en lui.

Il n'attend pas d'être sauvé. Il observe. Et dans cette observation, il découvre qu'une part considérable de la souffrance humaine ne vient pas seulement de ce qui arrive, mais de notre relation à ce qui arrive.

L'anatomie de la souffrance

Cette intuition se trouve au cœur des Quatre Nobles Vérités, l'un des fondements de l'enseignement bouddhique.

Leur structure ressemble à celle de la médecine : on reconnaît d'abord une maladie en analysant ses symptômes et ses signes ; on en recherche ensuite les causes ; on détermine s'il est possible de la guérir et, enfin, on établit un traitement.

La maladie, c'est la souffrance.

Et quelle en est la cause ? L'une des réponses fondamentales du bouddhisme est l'attachement.

Nous nous attachons aux personnes et aux objets, mais aussi aux souvenirs, aux attentes, aux opinions, aux croyances et aux identités. Nous nous accrochons à ce qui s'est passé, à ce qui aurait dû se passer et à ce que nous espérons voir arriver.

Nous nous accrochons même à une certaine image de nous-mêmes.

« Je suis comme ça. » « Ma vie devrait être ainsi. » « J'ai besoin de cela pour aller bien. » « Je serai heureux quand... »

Peut-être cette dernière phrase contient-elle l'un des mécanismes les plus universels de la souffrance : nous basons notre bonheur sur la possibilité d'acquiescer des possessions matérielles, ou sur la disparition d'un problème, un changement chez autrui, etc.

Le bouddhisme ne soutient pas que désirer soit mauvais. Le désir fait partie de la condition humaine. Chercher à éliminer violemment tout désir serait, paradoxalement, une autre forme de désir : le désir de ne pas désirer.

Le problème commence lorsque nous faisons de nos désirs des conditions indispensables à notre paix intérieure. Alors, nous cessons d'entrer en relation avec la réalité telle qu'elle est et nous commençons à lutter contre elle au nom de la réalité telle que nous pensons qu'elle devrait être.

L'art difficile d'être ici

Une grande partie de notre vie se déroule précisément dans cette distance. Le corps est ici, mais l'esprit revient sans cesse à ce qui s'est passé hier ou se projette vers ce qui pourrait arriver demain. Nous reconstruisons des conversations, anticipons des problèmes, imaginons des avenir, regrettons des décisions, revivons des pertes.

La pratique bouddhique cherche à réduire cette distance.

D'où l'importance de l'attention : observer notre expérience avant que nos peurs, nos préjugés et nos désirs ne la transforment immédiatement en autre chose.

Voir avant de juger. Écouter avant de répondre. Sentir avant de fuir. Être là avant de vouloir être ailleurs.

Cela ne signifie pas se résigner. Accepter la réalité ne revient pas à penser que tout va bien ni à renoncer à changer ce qui peut et doit être changé. Cela signifie quelque chose qui vient avant : voir clairement ce qui est en train de se passer. Car nous pouvons difficilement transformer ce que nous refusons de regarder.

Ne pas croire aveuglément

Il existe un autre aspect du bouddhisme particulièrement frappant : sa méfiance à l'égard de l'acceptation aveugle d'un enseignement.

Dans le célèbre Kalama Sutta, le Bouddha conseille à ses interlocuteurs de ne pas accepter une affirmation uniquement parce qu'elle appartient à une tradition, parce qu'elle figure dans un texte vénéré ou parce qu'elle est prononcée par une autorité respectée. Même les paroles du maître doivent être examinées.

Un enseignement prend son sens lorsqu'il peut être confronté à l'expérience et lorsqu'il conduit à une diminution de la souffrance, à davantage de lucidité et à une relation plus compatissante avec les autres.

Le maître peut montrer un chemin, mais il ne peut pas le parcourir à notre place. L'expérience reste la nôtre.

La question fondamentale cesse alors d'être « Que dois-je croire ? » et devient « Que puis-je observer et comprendre par moi-même ? »

Dans cette perspective, il devient plus facile de comprendre pourquoi la figure d'un Dieu créateur n'occupe pas une place centrale dans le bouddhisme.

Il ne s'agit pas nécessairement d'une négation combative de Dieu. La question cesse simplement d'être indispensable pour résoudre le problème que le Bouddha s'était proposé d'examiner.

Qu'un Dieu créateur existe ou non, notre colère, notre peur, notre jalousie, la maladie et la mort sont toujours là. Notre esprit, avec son extraordinaire capacité à aimer et à haïr, à comprendre et à se perdre, à construire et à détruire, est toujours là.

C'est là que le bouddhisme porte son attention.

Au lieu de commencer par demander qui a créé l'univers, il demande qui est ce « moi » qui a besoin d'une réponse. Au lieu d'examiner d'abord l'origine du monde, il examine l'origine de la souffrance. Au lieu de situer nécessairement la libération en dehors de l'être humain, il observe ce qui se produit lorsque nous apprenons à comprendre notre propre expérience.

Un monde en perpétuel changement

« Bouddha », selon certaines interprétations, signifie « l'Éveillé ».

La métaphore est puissante: s'éveiller signifie cesser de confondre nos constructions mentales avec la réalité. L'une des premières choses que nous remarquons lorsque nous observons attentivement

l'existence, c'est que tout change: notre corps, nos relations, nos idées, nos désirs, les personnes que nous aimons, nos craintes et nous-mêmes

Pourtant, une partie de notre esprit exige la permanence. Nous voulons conserver ce qui nous procure du plaisir et chasser définitivement ce qui nous dérange. Nous voulons que les personnes demeurent telles que nous nous les rappelons, que nos corps ne vieillissent pas, que nos certitudes ne disparaissent pas. Mais la réalité n'a jamais signé ce contrat.

Peut-être l'une des intuitions les plus profondes du bouddhisme peut-elle s'exprimer ainsi : nous souffrons lorsque nous exigeons la permanence d'un monde dont la nature même est le changement.

Le comprendre ne signifie pas cesser d'aimer, mais apprendre à aimer sans faire de l'autre une possession.

Cela ne signifie pas cesser de construire, mais déconstruire en sachant que toute construction est temporaire.

Cela ne signifie pas se détourner de la vie, mais y entrer pleinement.

Regarder de nos propres yeux

Siddhartha commença sa quête après avoir connu ce qu'une grande partie de l'humanité poursuit : le confort, la sécurité, le plaisir et l'abondance.

Puis il connut la privation et comprit que la réponse ne se trouvait dans aucun des deux extrêmes.

Elle ne consistait ni à posséder le monde ni à le rejeter. Il fallait apprendre à le voir.

C'est peut-être pourquoi, vingt-cinq siècles plus tard, le bouddhisme continue d'interpeller des millions de personnes, y compris beaucoup qui ne se considèrent ni bouddhistes ni religieuses. Derrière la diversité de ses temples, de ses images, de ses écoles et de ses rituels demeure une question d'une étonnante actualité :

Sommes-nous capables de regarder la réalité sans exiger immédiatement qu'elle soit différente ?

Peut-être est-ce là que commence le véritable sens de l'Éveil. Dans la compréhension que la liberté ne consiste pas nécessairement à faire obéir le monde à nos désirs, mais à transformer notre relation à ce que la vie place inévitablement devant nous. Car tout change. Ce qui est agréable disparaît. Ce qui est douloureux aussi. Ce que nous croyons indispensable aujourd'hui peut cesser de compter demain. L'identité que nous défendons avec tant de sérieux ne demeure pas non plus intacte.

Et au milieu de ce mouvement continu, il existe quelque chose que nous pouvons apprendre à faire : observer.

Observer nos désirs sans devenir immédiatement ces désirs. Observer nos peurs sans leur permettre de définir entièrement la réalité. Observer la douleur sans y ajouter nécessairement la résistance qui consiste à penser qu'elle n'aurait jamais dû survenir.

Peut-être le bouddhisme commence-t-il précisément là : non par une croyance, mais par un regard tourné vers l'expérience immédiate, vers le mouvement de notre propre esprit et vers une réalité qui change constamment, indépendamment de nos attentes.

Pas dans un autre monde. Pas comme une récompense future. Pas nécessairement par une révélation. Mais ici. En cet instant. De nos propres yeux.

PERSPECTIVES & PRACTICES



10 QUESTIONS ABOUT BUDDHISM

You May Have Wanted to Ask

*Dr Gaya Gamhewage,
Founder, The Wisdom House*

1. Do I have to be a Buddhist to practise Buddhist teachings?

No. Many Buddhist practices like mindfulness, compassion, loving-kindness and equanimity can be explored without adopting a Buddhist identity. The Buddha repeatedly emphasized personal investigation and experience. The invitation ehipassiko is often translated as “come and see.” You can examine a teaching, practise it, and observe what happens.



2. Is Buddhism a religion, a philosophy, or a way of life?

It can be understood as all three, depending on who you ask. Buddhist traditions include temples, rituals, devotional practices and monastic communities that are characteristic of religion. But Buddhism also offers a philosophy of mind, ethics and existence, together with practical methods for cultivating attention, compassion and wisdom. For many people, it is principally a way of living and practising.

3. Do Buddhists believe in God?

Buddhism does not require belief in a creator God. Its central concern is different: understanding suffering, its causes, and how human beings can work towards liberation from it. This is one reason Buddhist thought can enter into dialogue with both religious believers and people who are agnostic or atheist.



4. Isn't Buddhism rather pessimistic because it talks so much about suffering?

It can sound that way until we consider the whole teaching. The First Noble Truth acknowledges dukkha –suffering, dissatisfaction, and unease. But the next three ask what causes it, whether it can cease, and what we can do about it. In that sense, Buddhism is not simply a diagnosis of suffering. It is a proposition that something can be done.

5. Does Buddhism ask us to give up ambition, success and enjoyment?

Not necessarily. The deeper concern is attachment – our tendency to make happiness dependent upon getting, keeping, or controlling things that inevitably change. The Eight Worldly Conditions remind us that gain and loss, fame and disrepute, praise and blame, and pleasure and pain come and go. The challenge is not to stop living fully, but to become less captive to life's changing fortunes.

6. Isn't mindfulness just meditation or a way of reducing stress?

Modern mindfulness programmes have made aspects of Buddhist practice widely accessible, including in medicine and psychology. But Buddhist sati is broader than relaxation or stress reduction. Within the Eightfold Path, mindfulness works alongside ethical conduct, effort, concentration and wisdom. The ultimate purpose is not simply to feel better, but to see more clearly and live more skilfully.

7. What can Buddhism offer in an age of anxiety, loneliness, social media and AI?

While it cannot make modern problems disappear, it asks surprisingly contemporary questions: What are we actually paying attention to? What are we craving? What happens when we constantly compare ourselves with others? What drives our anger and fear? Can we respond rather than simply react? And can we cultivate qualities such as compassion, loving-kindness, appreciative joy and equanimity? Ancient questions can remain useful even when the circumstances around them have radically changed.

8. Does Buddhism mean accepting injustice and remaining calm whatever happens?

No. Equanimity is easily confused with passivity. Buddhist practice does not require indifference to suffering. Compassion (*karuṇā*) involves recognizing suffering and responding to it. Equanimity (*upekkhā*) can help us act without being overwhelmed by anger, fear or attachment to a particular outcome. A steady mind need not be a silent one.

9. What does Buddhism say about how we should communicate with one another?

A great deal. *Sammā vācā*, or Right Speech, asks us to refrain from false, divisive, harsh and frivolous speech. Elsewhere, the Buddha describes well-spoken words as timely, truthful, gentle, beneficial and spoken with goodwill (AN 5.198). This does not mean avoiding difficult truths. A truth may be unwelcome and still need to be spoken—wisely and at the right time (MN 58). In an age of misinformation, online hostility and instantaneous communication, that is remarkably relevant.

10. What is wisdom in Buddhism and can an ordinary person cultivate it?

The Pāli word *paññā* is usually translated as wisdom or discernment. It is more than possessing information or being intelligent. It involves learning to see reality more clearly, including impermanence, the causes of suffering, and our own habits of craving and attachment, and allowing that understanding to change how we live. Buddhist practice rests on a hopeful proposition: the mind can be cultivated. Wisdom is therefore not simply something we possess. It is something we practise.



REGAINING ATTENTION AND WELL-BEING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The power of meditation

Yann Chappuis

In the era of smartphones, incessant notifications, and endless scrolling, our ability to sustain attention is diminishing, giving way to constant distraction.

Before the digital age, the capacity to focus for extended periods on a single task ("sustained attention") was the norm in many professional and educational settings.

However, since the advent of smartphones and social media, fragmented attention has taken hold. We constantly task our brains to switch from one activity to another, checking notifications, messages, and information feeds. Studies indicate that we handle our smartphones between 200 and 600 times a day, creating a cycle of immediate rewards via the neurochemical dopamine, which further reinforces this compulsive behavior.

Meditation and the Brain

Fortunately, neuroscience has significantly enriched our understanding of meditation's effects on the brain over recent decades. Several studies show that regular meditation practice, particularly mindfulness, is associated with an increase in gray matter density in key brain regions.

- The prefrontal cortex, involved in emotional regulation and decision-making
- The hippocampus, the seat of memory and learning
- The insula, linked to bodily awareness.

Through meditation practice, stress and anxiety responses become less frequent and are activated only when truly necessary. With less stress, a reduction in the volume of the amygdala (the area associated with stress and emotional reactivity)

is often observed. Finally, on a functional level, meditation helps reduce mental rumination. All these physiological changes correlate with better stress management, reduced anxiety, and improved attentional capacities.

Meditation on positive mind states

In Buddhism cultivating loving-kindness and compassion meditation aims to actively cultivate positive feelings toward oneself and others. They highlight distinct brain mechanisms: activation of circuits linked to empathy, positive emotions, and pleasure. Empathy is the ability to perceive and feel that another is suffering. Compassion consists of actively wishing to alleviate that suffering.

By meditating on compassion, we train our brains to no longer react with distress to the suffering of others, but to experience benevolent motivation. This drastically reduces the risk of emotional exhaustion - common in professions heavily exposed to suffering, such as caregivers, psychologists, or humanitarian workers.

These practices stimulate lasting changes: kindness and compassion strengthen like muscles, durably improving pro-social behaviors and psychological well-being, even outside meditation sessions.

The more regular and long-standing the practice, the more significant the changes will be. Even just 5-10 minutes a day will bring benefits after a few weeks.

Meditation thus appears as a precious resource to restore our balance and improve our daily well-being. But stopping at psychological benefits would be reductive. Unfortunately this is the case with the current trend of mindfulness (and other approaches like yoga). Giving meaning to

our existence, recentring ourselves on the essential, preparing for death, ensuring favorable conditions for future lives, and, ultimately, attaining definitive liberation from suffering are often forgotten in our consumerist society, even though they are at the heart of meditation practice. Indeed, meditation's true aim is deeply spiritual in nature, as a path to awakening. This should not be forgotten or set aside.

A great meditation master said in a teaching: "If you practice the Dharma correctly, you will notice a progressive decrease in your negative emotions. If you meditate and your negative emotions remain the same, it is then a sign that your practice is not correct, and you need to change your approach."

Practice should therefore allow us to be happier, but also to progressively transform our way of being: more patience, compassion, humility, generosity, among other positive qualities.

Finally, if we persevere sufficiently, we may ultimately realize the nature of clarity, emptiness, and infinite love of our mind (our Buddha nature) and establish ourselves there in a sustained way. As this prayer summarizes very well: "May we quickly attain Enlightenment and benefit all beings." You can repeat this sentence as often as you want as it brings peace, happiness and spiritual qualities to your life.

REDISCOVERING SPIRITUALITY IN AN AGE ON MATERIAL INSECURITY

*Insaf Nizam,
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If everything started and ended within this material world, there would perhaps be little need for a higher objective to human life. Life could become simply a pursuit of what can be acquired, experienced and enjoyed during the relatively short period between birth and death.

Yet throughout history, human beings have looked beyond the immediately visible and tangible. Religion and spiritual philosophy have provided a moral horizon beyond immediate self-interest, reminding us that individual freedom and wellbeing must be accompanied by responsibility and that our actions have consequences beyond immediate gratification.

Different religious traditions understand this higher reality differently. Yet they share an important insight: human beings cannot find lasting fulfilment through unlimited material accumulation alone.

The insecurity of accumulation

The desire to accumulate immense wealth has contributed to a profoundly uneven world. Extraordinary concentrations of wealth coexist with abject poverty and suffering. But more importantly, craving for wealth can distort our larger development objectives.

The Buddha's teaching speaks strikingly to this condition. The Dhammapada warns:

"Riches ruin only the foolish, not those in quest of the Beyond. By craving for riches the witless man ruins himself as well as others."

— Dhammapada, 355

This is not a condemnation of economic activity or legitimate prosperity. It is a warning about craving—the point at which possession ceases to serve human wellbeing and human life begins to serve possession.

Islamic teaching offers a remarkably complement ary warning. The Qur'an states simply:

“Competition in [worldly] increase diverts you, Until you visit the graves.”

— Qur'an 102:1–2

The Prophet Muhammad similarly taught that true richness does not consist in the multiplication of possessions, but in “sufficiency in the soul”.

Both teachings identify something deeply relevant to our modern condition: Unlimited accumulation does not necessarily produce security. Often, it produces further insecurity. – The more one possesses, the more one fears losing. The more one accumulates, the greater the temptation to accumulate still more.

The Dhammapada offers the alternative with a beautiful economy: “Contentment [is] the greatest wealth.” — Dhammapada 204

When individual craving becomes a global problem

When natural resources are restrained only by what is legally permissible, rather than also by spiritually grounded ethics and responsibility towards others, development can lose its purpose. Industrialisation and technological progress then risk becoming ends in themselves rather than means towards broader human wellbeing.

The consequences are visible in environmental degradation and climate change. The benefits of intensive industrialisation may be concentrated in one place while the consequences are suffered elsewhere. This demonstrates a fundamental reality familiar to Buddhist thought - our existence is deeply interdependent and thus, our actions cannot be isolated from their effects upon others.

The same uncontrolled pursuit of wealth and power can contribute to another destructive cycle: conflict. Competition over territory, strategic advantage and valuable resources such as oil and minerals intersects with the enormous economic interests associated with weapons.

Conflict generates demand for weapons and creates instability. Instability can facilitate exploitation. Societies already suffering must divert their resources towards sustaining themselves within that conflict.

Those subjected to exploitation can themselves become trapped in the same mentality. Anger at injustice is understandable. Yet when anger becomes detached from a higher ethical purpose, both exploiter and exploited risk becoming prisoners of fear, retaliation and violence.

As the Dhammapada reminds us, “Victory begets enmity; the defeated dwell in pain. Happily the peaceful live, discarding both victory and defeat.” — Dhammapada 201

From material insecurity to digital insecurity

A newer form of insecurity is particularly visible among younger generations. Digital technology and social media have created extraordinary opportunities for communication and knowledge. Yet they have also created an arena in which human worth can become confused with public visibility.

Increasingly, it is not sufficient to achieve something; one must display it. Beauty, wealth, travel, possessions and talent acquire value because they can be exhibited. Even trivial, irrational or dangerous acts may acquire perceived worth if they generate sufficient attention.

The reward here is recognition: a like, a share, a follower.

We are approaching an inversion of human existence: I am seen, therefore I am.

A quiet act that genuinely alleviates suffering may receive no public recognition. Caring for an elderly parent, helping someone in distress, teaching a child or comforting a grieving friend may never become visible online, even though these actions possess genuine human value. Meanwhile, something with almost no enduring value can acquire enormous significance because thousands of strangers approve of it.

Technology itself is not the problem. The problem arises when technology begins determining our values rather than serving values grounded in a deeper understanding of human existence.

Rediscovering a higher purpose

What, then, is the way forward?

I believe humanity needs to rediscover spirituality—not by rejecting science, technology or material development, but by restoring a higher purpose to them.

The great religious traditions do not necessarily demand rejection of worldly life. Indeed, the Qur'an expresses the balance explicitly: "Seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world." — Qur'an 28:77

Buddhist teaching similarly distinguishes between craving and purposeful action. The problem is not effort, creativity or improvement. It is attachment and craving without limit.

This gives us an important distinction between two paradigms: development driven by craving and development guided by purpose.

One asks: How much more can I possess? The other asks: What can human creativity contribute to human wellbeing?

One paradigm treats knowledge, resources and technology primarily as instruments of accumulation and power. The other sees them as means through which suffering can be reduced and life improved.

The Dhammapada captures this principle powerfully: "If by renouncing a lesser happiness one may realize a greater happiness, let the wise man renounce the lesser, having regard for the greater." — Dhammapada 290

Spiritual renewal does not require perfect circumstances

The great religious traditions themselves emerged amid societies experiencing struggles for wealth,

status and political power. The Buddha taught in an India of competing kingdoms, social divisions and worldly ambition. Christianity emerged under the immense political power of Rome. Islam arose in seventh-century Arabia amid tribal rivalries and in a region dominated by the great Byzantine and Sasanian powers and their constant wars and struggles for wealth and influence.

Their histories demonstrate that spiritual renewal does not require perfect circumstances. Periods dominated by material ambition and insecurity may be precisely when humanity most needs—and becomes most receptive to—a higher ethical horizon.

Ancient wisdom in a technological age

This leads to an intriguing paradox. The same technologies that have intensified consumption, comparison and competition can help humanity rediscover spirituality.

Never before has so much religious and philosophical knowledge been so widely accessible. Teachings once available principally through monasteries, scholars, libraries and teachers can now cross continents almost instantaneously.

We therefore do not need to return to the technological conditions of the ancient world in order to recover its wisdom. We can bring ancient wisdom into conversation with modern knowledge.

Today our material capabilities are greater than those of any previous generation. But capability without purpose is not progress. Technology can help us accumulate more, or understand more. It can intensify craving, or help disseminate wisdom. It can divide human beings, or reveal their interdependence. The choice remains ours.

At a time of extraordinary material capability and equally extraordinary insecurity, spirituality is therefore not a retreat from modern life. It is a means of giving modern life direction.

The Buddha's timeless inquiry into suffering, craving, ethical conduct, compassion and

liberation—and the wider spiritual insistence that human life must answer to something greater than immediate possession—offers humanity a guiding light.

Our task is not to abandon progress, but to give progress a purpose.



THE HAPPINESS WE KEEP SEARCHING FOR

Reflections on Happiness Through the Dhamma

Thilini Nimanthi Liyanage

What is happiness?

Dictionaries define happiness as a state of being happy, experiencing pleasure, or feeling satisfied that something is good or right. Yet each person may understand happiness differently. For a child, it may be a favourite toy. For a young person, it may be a good education or career. Later in life, it may be a well-paid job, marriage, children, a house, a vehicle, or financial security.

There is nothing wrong with wanting these

things. They can certainly bring us to experience happiness. But there is something curious about the human mind: once we achieve one thing, we often begin looking for the next.

“I will be happy when I finish my studies.”

“I will be happy when I get a good job.”

“I will be happy when I get married.”

“I will be happy when I buy a house.”

And the list continues...

We can spend our entire lives pursuing tomorrow's happiness while forgetting to experience the happiness available today.

Buddhism offers us a different way of looking at this. It does not say that happiness does not exist. Rather, it teaches us that happiness depends entirely on changing external circumstances and cannot provide lasting satisfaction. This is connected to the Buddhist understanding of Dukkha, not simply sadness or suffering, but the unsatisfactory nature of conditioned existence.

Why do we keep searching for more?

Because everything we experience is subject to Anicca, impermanence; what gives us pleasure today may change tomorrow. When we cling to things that inevitably change, dissatisfaction and suffering arise.

The Buddha therefore invites us to look closely at Taṇhā, craving — the persistent desire for something more, something different or something that we believe will finally make us complete.

Becoming an observer

Mindfulness offers a way to begin observing this restless mind.

When eating, be aware that you are eating. When speaking, listen mindfully. When anger arises, recognise it. When desire arises, observe it. Instead of immediately following every thought and desire, we can learn to see them clearly.

This does not mean abandoning our goals, relationships or responsibilities. It means learning not to make our happiness entirely dependent on achieving them.

From Happiness to Nibbāna

Nibbāna is far deeper than simply feeling calm or peaceful; it is liberation from the causes of Dukkha, including Rāga (attachment or craving), Dosa (hatred or aversion), and Moha (delusion). Yet the path towards liberation begins with understanding our own minds.

Perhaps, therefore, the question is not only:

“What do I need to make myself happy?”

but also:

“What can I learn to let go of?”

The future will always contain something we do not yet have. But this moment, the only moment in which we can actually live and practise, is already here.

Cittena Nīyati Loko

The world is led by the mind. Much of how we experience happiness and unhappiness begins with the way our minds perceive, interpret and respond to what happens around us. We may not always be able to change the circumstances of our lives, but through Sati, mindfulness and wisdom, we can learn to understand and transform our responses to them.

Perhaps this is where the journey towards genuine happiness begins, not by changing everything

outside us, but by understanding the mind within us.

Sabbe Sattā Bhavantu Sukhitattā!

May all beings be happy and peaceful!

WORDS HEAL. WORDS HARM.

Can we learn to communicate more wisely?

*Dr Gaya Gamhewage
Founder, The Wisdom House*

We use words to comfort a frightened child, reassure a sick patient, clarify dangerous misinformation. We use them to share good news, start and nurture relationships, and to create enjoyment, inspiration and hope. When used positively, they help us to express what is in our minds and hearts, connect, cooperate, teach, learn, inspire, organize and create. But we also use words to end relationships, create divisions, start a war, mobilize a nation, or to confuse, create anxiety, and deepen fear and sadness. We know that Words bring both peace and punishment, pleasure and pain. There is always a price to using words.

Words – spoken or written are the main ingredient of one of humanity’s most powerful and extraordinary capacities to communicate. Communication has helped us build communities, institutions, movements and nations and mobilize people around ideas that have changed the world. Printing multiplied it. Radio and television carried it across continents. The internet made communication instantaneous and global. Social media gave almost everyone a platform. And now artificial intelligence can generate words, images and voices at a scale and speed we are only beginning to comprehend.

It's obvious that we are communicating more. But have we become better at communicating wisely? Nearly six billion people are now online, yet we inhabit an information environment in which truth competes with virality, speed with accuracy, and thoughtful discourse with outrage. In the 2025 Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 58% of people surveyed across 48 markets said they were concerned about distinguishing what is true from what is false in online news. At the same time, WHO reports that around one in six people globally experiences loneliness. We have never possessed

more ways to reach one another, and yet human connection itself can feel increasingly fragile and fraught.

I have been aware throughout my life of the importance of communication. First as a journalist, then as an advocate, then as a doctor and public-health professional, and eventually as Director of Communications at the World Health Organization. I have seen first-hand the power of communication to reassure frightened populations, mobilize communities, create policies that protect the vulnerable, change behaviour and help save lives.

I have also seen words stigmatize, divide and mislead. Misinformation and disinformation undermine trust, and institutional silence sometimes communicates as powerfully as words. Across thirty years of public health work, especially in health emergencies and institutional crises, I learnt that the hardest communications decisions were rarely simply about what to say. They were about what was true, what people needed to know, what remained uncertain, when to speak, how to speak, and sometimes whether to speak at all.

I have often tried to overlay my Buddhist practice in my professional work. Leading communications for a global multilateral organization, my first question was not what we should communicate, but why we should communicate. What is the intention?

Aligning with Buddhist teachings, I approach communications as beginning with a simple frame. Speech is not born in the mouth. Before we speak, post, publish or broadcast, something has already happened within us. We have perceived and interpreted. We have formed beliefs and judgments. Modern science provides evidence that our hidden fears, desires, intentions, and biases all colour our speech. Our communication is an outward expression of that inner world. The same fact can be spoken to illuminate or to humiliate; to protect or manipulate; to connect or divide, to serve or be self-serving. We rarely have the wisdom to pause before we speak and ask ourselves, “What is happening inside me that makes me want to say it?”

More than 2,500 years ago, the Buddha placed

sammā vācā - Right Speech within the Noble Eightfold Path. Sammā carries the sense of right, appropriate, proper or skilful; vācā means speech or utterance. The Buddha was teaching in an oral world. What is meant by sammā vācā is ethical discipline around human expression and is remarkably contemporary. Since it is a practice that can be developed and leads to good results here and now, I prefer to use the word skilful. The Buddha felt Skilful speech was so fundamental that he assigned it as one of three forms of ethical conduct – the others being skilful actions and skilful livelihood.

How can we better understand what is meant by Sammā – right, skilful, ethical? Ethical conduct, through speech or actions, has an inherent value on its own. It reduces harm to others, creating a sense of community, cooperation, trust and calm that is required for human civilization to exist. And looking inwards, it helps reduce our own anxiety, suffering and pain – the purpose of Buddhist practice and a basic human motivation - and leads to inner development. Skilful is beneficial to oneself and to others.

In Majjhima Nikāya 117, Mahācattārīsaka Sutta, the Buddha outlines 4 types of wrong speech - “Lying, divisive tale-bearing, abusive speech, & idle chatter. This is wrong speech.”

These correspond to the Pāli categories of four unskilful actions (out of 10) that everyone should try and avoid, and cultivate their opposite.

- *Musāvāda* — false speech, lying
- *Pisuṇā vācā* — divisive or malicious speech; speech that sets people against one another
- *Pharusā vācā* — harsh, abusive or hurtful speech
- *Samphappalāpa* — idle, frivolous or pointless chatter

Abstaining from these types of unskilful speech is not enough. There is more guidance from the Buddha that is still relevant today.

In the Aṅguttara Nikāya 5.198, Vācā Sutta, the

Buddha outlines the five qualities of skillful speech. Thanissaro Bhikkhu translates the Buddha's words: “It is spoken at the right time. It is spoken in truth. It is spoken affectionately. It is spoken beneficially. It is spoken with a mind of good-will.” The Buddha says speech possessing these five qualities is: “well-spoken, not ill-spoken.”

Truth is necessary, but truth alone is not enough. “In the case of words that the Tathāgata (the Buddha referring to himself) knows to be factual, true, beneficial, but unendearing & displeasing to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them.”

Inevitably, skilful speech also involves what is considered noble silence. Sometimes, when there is no benefit, or when something is not critical to an issue, the best thing may be to be silent.

Here are practical questions that I use in my daily training.

The first set: Is it true? Is it pleasant to hear? Is it divisive or creating conflict between people? Is it unnecessarily consuming my and the others' mental energy and just creating noise?

The second set: Is it true? Is it beneficial? Is this the best time to say it? And from what intention am I speaking?

But knowing the principles of Right Speech is not enough. We also need to catch ourselves before the words leave us. This is where sati, mindful awareness, which is Mindfulness – the 6th part of the Eightfold Path, becomes important. What am I feeling right now? Anger? Fear? Envy? Hurt? The need to be right? The desire to impress, retaliate, or belong? What is my intention in speaking?

Mindfulness creates a small but potentially consequential space between the emotion arising within us and the words through which we express it. It helps us notice and restrain the impulses that would otherwise become unskillful speech.

At its root, skillful speech is based on Right Intention (sammā saṅkappa) - the second factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, immediately before Right Speech. The Buddha defines Right Intention as three orientations: renunciation/non-attachment, non-

ill-will or goodwill, and non-harming/non-cruelty. With these intentions constantly brought to mind, Right or skilful speech becomes more effortless with practice.

Right Speech is not only about the words we send out into the world. We need to consider what we allow repeatedly into our minds. Social media has created an unprecedented environment of continuous communication, and its consequences are complex. Social media can connect, educate and support us, but the evidence increasingly associates problematic use with anxiety and depressive symptoms, particularly when it involves social comparison, feedback-seeking, sleep disruption and harmful interactions such as cyberbullying. Algorithms are based on stimulating attachment, anger, fear, envy, shame and other primal responses that keep audiences hooked and scrolling.

A 2024 systematic review of 67 studies (Sleem N et al, 2024, PubMed) confirmed these associations while cautioning that cause and effect are not always straightforward. Among American adolescents, those spending more than three hours a day on social media have been found to face about twice the risk of poor mental-health outcomes, including symptoms of anxiety and depression. Words can harm us even when they are not our own. What we repeatedly read, watch, respond to, share and amplify becomes part of the mental environment in which we live.

Perhaps sammā vācā in the digital age therefore asks us not only to take responsibility for what we communicate, but also before we listen, watch, engage, click, share and amplify.

The mind finds a voice. Voice, words, speech all have consequences for ourselves, for others and the world. Think before you speak. Try out the timeless and practical framework for communication provided by the Buddha. Be curious. See how they impact your life.



THE SPECTRUM OF LOVE

A neurobiological and spiritual breakdown of romantic partnerships in the modern age.

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*“Pematō jāyatī sōkō, pematō jāyatī bhayaṃ;
Pematō vippamuttassa, natthi sōkō kutō bhayaṃ.”*
– *Dhammapada, Verse 213, Piya Vagga (Affection)*

“From affection springs grief, from affection springs fear.

For one who is wholly free from affection, there is no grief, whence then fear?”

Personal relationships in modern society are experiencing a crisis characterised by a rising number of unions becoming troubled and increasing rates of divorce across the globe. This instability in relationships can be attributed , among other factors, to hyper-individualism, unrealistic expectations regarding emotional self-satisfaction, and possessive attachment. The dissolution of partnerships presents as a serious psychosocial stressor that directly accounts for a significant portion of suicides, while driving a sharp increase in clinical anxiety and depression.

Looking at the situation from a sociological point of view, the rising rate of divorce can be attributed to fundamental changes in modern culture, the economy, and technology rather than to personal shortcomings on the part of individuals. The shift in society towards hyper-individualism has transformed the idea of marriage. In accordance with sociologist Anthony Giddens' notion of the "pure relationship", contemporary marriages are no longer based on traditional obligations or the need for economic survival, but are kept simply for personal self-fulfillment and emotional satisfaction. Once a partner fails to meet these higher, often consumer-oriented expectations, divorce then becomes the likely result.

At the same time, the digital age presents ongoing difficulties in everyday life. Our constant

dependence on screens and the culture of social media creates emotional distance among individuals. Additionally, people are led to make unrealistic comparisons with the idealised lifestyles shown online, and are given easy access to other partners. Taken together, these social, economic and cultural changes produce a situation in which long-term commitments have become increasingly fragile and much harder to maintain.

The Biological basis of love

The question of what love truly is thus becoming more and more relevant. Biological anthropologist Dr. Helen Fisher famously revealed that love is an evolutionary survival mechanism, developed thousands of years ago to keep parents together in order to protect vulnerable offspring who needed years of constant care.

Her research highlights how hypothesises that human beings exhibit at least three interrelated, yet distinct brain systems for mating, reproduction and parenting:

Lust is fueled mainly by sex hormones like testosterone and estrogen, which motivates individuals to find a partner.

Romantic attraction, on the other hand, is powered by a strong surge of dopamine and norepinephrine that activates reward circuits much as addictive substances, producing euphoria and intense focus.

Finally, deep attachment sustained by neurochemicals like oxytocin and vasopressin, encourage long-term bonding, emotional security, calm, and mutual trust essential for raising children together.

She also found that, notable drops in serotonin contributed to obsessive feelings, heightened

jealousy, anxiety, possessiveness and attachment,

This biological truth is further clarified by psychologist Robert Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, which proposes that complete, or Consummate, Love depends on the presence of three key elements: passion (the physical drive), intimacy (emotional closeness and trust), and commitment (the deliberate choice to stay together). In the early phase of a relationship, passion takes the lead, driven by heightened neurochemical activity. Yet, as long-term bonding takes over, helped by neurochemicals such as oxytocin and vasopressin, the brain naturally reduces dopamine production. Clinical psychologists point out that couples often misinterpret this natural biological transition as "falling out of love," when in reality they are undergoing a normal chemical adjustment while beginning to notice each other's imperfections for the first time.

The main problem in modern relationships may therefore lie in the chemical trap and dopamine crash. The brain simply cannot sustain peak dopamine levels indefinitely. Over time, tolerance builds, and also the initial excitement fades. Partners often misinterpret this natural neurochemical change as a sign that love has disappeared. They begin to notice only each other's flaws and may leave in search of a new dopamine rush with someone else caught in an endless cycle of temporary attachment and breakup, much like a form of samsara. The intense grief and depressive feelings and thoughts that follow are not just about losing a person, they stem from the brain undergoing literal dopamine withdrawal, similar to what a drug addict experiences.

While this chemical shift explains the typical evolution of relationships, Buddhist teachings shed light on a distinctive occurrence: the sudden, intense bond felt upon meeting someone connected to a past life. This immediate intensity can be seen as a convergence of neurobiology and spiritual memory functioning much like "Cached Data." Since unresolved karmic records exist between the two individuals, their systems quickly align upon reuniting, prompting the brain to unleash a substantial flood of dopamine.

The urge to declare, "I will stay with this person until the end of time," arises from the fusion of this chemical surge with the synchronisation of past data, leading to profound attachment and clinging. However, it is important to highlight that not everyone from the past arrives to bring romantic fulfillment. Harmful individuals may enter one's life to resolve karmic obligations.

Becoming trapped or rationalising abuse under the pretense of "paying off karma" is a perilous misunderstanding. Whether finding someone from the past or a new person, decisions must be grounded in conscious awareness rather than dopamine dependency or blind hope, as we are not bound by fate.

A Buddhist framework for relationships

The word "love", however, remains inadequate to convey the full spectrum of human emotion occurring in a relationship, from selfish clinging to boundless compassion. To address this, Buddhist psychology organizes love around four essential mental states known as the Four Immeasurables, or Brahmaviharas.

The first is *Metta* (Loving-Kindness), that embodies the altruistic, unconditional wish for all beings to experience happiness and peace without any expectation of reciprocity, extended equally to friends, strangers, and even adversaries.

The second one is *Karuna* (Compassion), which is empathy put into practice, manifesting as a heartfelt desire to relieve others from suffering and its underlying causes.

The third, *Mudita* (Sympathetic Joy), serves as a potent remedy against envy and jealousy, enabling us to take genuine happiness in the good fortune and achievements of others.

Lastly, *Upekkha* (Equanimity) offers a steadfast, balanced mental clarity that regards all beings as equal, shielding loving-kindness from turning into emotional dependency or despair.

Through this framework, Buddhism reveals a clear distinction between selfless love and emotional

attachment (*Tanha*, or *Raga*). When individuals continually pursue fleeting dopamine rushes by moving from one partner to another, it results in recurring heartbreak, reflecting this very pattern of *Raga*, a condition of sensory craving, passion, and ego-driven attachment rooted in self-interest ("I love you because of how you make me feel") which approaches relationships as transactional arrangements.

In sharp contrast, Buddhist psychology introduces *Metta* as an unconditional, non-attached form of goodwill that seeks a partner's true well-being without expecting anything in return, offering complete freedom, demanding no control, and carrying no fear of loss.

A powerful illustration of this pure, non-attached love appears in the story of Prince Siddhartha and Princess Yashodhara. They were not brought together over countless lifetimes because the universe pushed them into a romantic "soulmate" ideal, but because they shared a profound mission to support the monumental pursuit of attaining Buddhahood, with Princess Yashodhara willingly walking her own spiritual journey alongside his to create a bond of spiritual perfection (*Paramita*) rather than a transactional romance.

Loving someone brings emotional suffering when pure love is mistaken for attachment. True love is selfless and focused on wishing for the other's happiness, whereas attachment is a

self-centered craving for personal fulfillment that breeds fear, control, and eventual heartbreak.

The psychological principles of Buddhism can thus provide an effective and non-dogmatic way of fostering true affection while going beyond toxic attachment (*Upadana*). To love without conditions, one must embrace the Three Marks of Existence, Impermanence:

- Anicca, that encourages us to value our limited time together,
- Suffering (*Dukkha*), which reminds us not to rely on another person to satisfy all our emotional needs,
- Non-Self (*Anatta*), which redirects our energy from trying to control others to mastering our own reactions.

By putting into practice the Four Immeasurables such as, Loving-Kindness (*Metta*), Compassion (*Karuna*), Altruistic Joy (*Mudita*), and Equanimity (*Upekkha*), romantic relationships can be transformed from ego-driven, transactional arrangements into altruistic and resilient partnerships. In the end, combining ancient Buddhist philosophy with modern sociology and psychology reduces severe mental distress and provides an integrative and practical approach to sustainable human intimacy.



MEDITATION FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Simple Practices to Train the Mind and Cultivate Calm and Compassion

Yann Chappuis

Mindfulness consists of directing all one's attention to the present moment, without following the thread of thoughts, in order to calm the mind and become more present and serene in the face of emotions and thoughts.

The observer focuses their attention on a perception (generally the breath, but it can be a physical sensation, sounds, an image, etc.). Their aim is to remain fully present and mentally silent, simply observing the perception as it is, in the present moment, and its eventual evolution. The intention is to remain silent, not to evaluate, not to make mental commentary on what appears in consciousness. The meditator does not seek to retain or conversely reject sensations or thoughts, whether pleasant, neutral, or unpleasant. They remain in equanimity, without preferences.

In Tibetan, the word "meditate" does not exist. It was translated from the term "gom" which actually means "to habituate one's mind". And if you have already tried, you know from experience that the practice of meditation becomes easier with training and regularity, and that results appear progressively.

According to Buddhism, the goal of human life is to attain wisdom and unconditional, unlimited love. The assiduous practice of meditation allows us to progressively liberate our mind from gross emotions, then to purify increasingly subtle veils, until realizing "pure consciousness". Once this is revealed, we spontaneously manifest wisdom and love in our actions, our words, and our thoughts.

Preparing for meditation

The agitation of modern life is not very conducive to the practice of meditation. Our mind is often filled with all sorts of incessant worries. This is why

it is important to organize oneself to find a quiet time and place, without noise and agitation, where we will not be disturbed or interrupted. If possible, meditate at the same time of day on a regular basis. It will make it easier to anchor this new habit.

Adopting the right attitude

It is good to remember, before starting, that we practice this exercise in order to find calm and inner tranquility to put ourselves in harmony with ourselves and our environment.

One can think with determination: "I will do this meditation with presence, vigilance, and without letting myself be distracted!"

To open our hearts to love and compassion, we can also develop the following intention before sitting: "May the meditation I am about to do now contribute to the peace and happiness of all living beings."

Finding the right posture

Certain physical postures facilitate concentration. Yoga practitioners say that the "Lotus posture", sitting cross-legged on the floor, back straight, head upright and gaze slightly lowered, is the best posture, because subtle energies thus circulate freely in the body.

However, for those who are not used to this posture, it is often better to meditate on a chair, feet flat on the floor. The important thing is above all to keep the back and head relatively straight.

One can also meditate while walking, standing (immobile), or lying down. Here again, the essential thing is to keep the body aligned and our consciousness clear and present.

In general, if our posture is too relaxed, there is a risk of falling into drowsiness. Conversely, a posture that is too rigid and tense risks creating mental agitation and fatigue. It is therefore important to find a posture that is comfortable and balanced, while maintaining the back straight.

Stabilizing the mind

Mastering our mind does not mean imposing additional constraints on it, but liberating it from the grip of mental habits and inner turbulence. Initially, the practice of meditation therefore aims to calm the whirlwind of thoughts. To make our mind clearer and more stable, we can take a simple and always available support: our breath.

Observing our breath

Breathe calmly and naturally. Concentrate all your attention on the movements of the breath. Observe the sensation created by the passage of air in the nostrils. Be attentive to the moment when the breath is suspended between the exhalation and the next inhalation.

While inhaling, focus again on the place where we feel the air passing. Keep this attention again and again, without creating tensions and without relaxing too much, in order to avoid the extremes of agitation and drowsiness. Awareness of the breath must be limpid and serene. If you notice that you are distracted, simply resume the observation of the breath.

It is important to not try to stop the influx of thoughts that occur. Simply avoid feeding them. Let them cross our consciousness like a bird passes through the sky without leaving a trace.

All training requires effort and all change meets resistance. You will therefore have to learn to overcome the two major obstacles of meditation : mental agitation and lethargy (drowsiness).

It is better to meditate regularly for short sessions than to force a long and difficult meditation upon oneself in order to avoid becoming discouraged.

If you feel you have more thoughts than before

starting meditation, this is normal! It is simply that you are seeing exactly how your mind is incessantly caught up in thoughts. By persevering a little, you will be able to notice an improvement.

Exercises to train and develop your meditation practice

Counting the breath

Inhale... Exhale.... (count 1)

Inhale... Exhale.... (count 2)

Inhale... Exhale.... (count 3)

Continue like this up to 10, then start again at 0. Notice when you are distracted by thoughts and if you have lost track of your breath count, start again at 0. Do this exercise with as much presence as possible. Start with a minute, then progressively increase the time you are able to do this effectively.

Feeling the breath

- Observe the sensation of the air passing through your nose with each breath.
- Listen to the noise the air makes passing through your nose with each breath.
- Feel your chest filling and emptying with each breath.
- Feel your belly swelling and deflating with each breath.
- Feel for a few moments the other sensations in your body: your feet, your buttocks, your head. Progressively, you can thus do a scan of each part of the body. The more specific you are, the better it works (the tip of the right foot... The right heel... (then the same on the left).

Meditating on the breath to manage emotions

Observe a tree in a storm. Its top is agitated and vulnerable. A gust of wind can break its most fragile

branches at any moment, but the base of the trunk is the best anchored part of the tree, the most solid.

Abdominal breathing, which consists of breathing while consciously inflating and deflating the belly, is a very simple method to channel one's emotions when we are prey to violent emotions, such as anger or fear. In such circumstances, we should bring our attention back to the center, in our belly, rather than remaining at the intellectual level.

We are like trees: under the blow of a strong emotion, our head is similar to the top of the tree that the storm shakes and damages. It is therefore in our "trunk", in our belly, that we should focus our attention to find stability.

Connecting the mind and speech

Another method that is sometimes very effective in calming our thoughts consists of breathing consciously while repeating grounding phrases to ourselves. This can be done either by whispering out a sentence or mantra after each cycle of inhale-exhale or even by uttering each word individually after each inhale and exhale.

Here are a few sentences or mantras that you can use. Take a few breaths with each sentence or simply say one word on the inhale, and one word on the exhale, written in parentheses.

- I inhale into my belly. I exhale into my belly. (inhale... Exhale...)
- I inhale, I am calm. I exhale, I am at peace. (Calm... Peace...)
- I inhale, I am calm. I exhale, I observe my sensations. (Calm... Sensations...)
- I inhale, I am stable. I exhale, I am present. (Stable... Present...)
- I inhale, I am present. I exhale and I smile. (Present... Smile)

Meditating during meals

Meal times are an ideal moment to slow down thoughts and return to sensations. The pleasant taste of food, the act of chewing, taking the fork and putting it down, drinking, all these moments can be done in mindfulness, in attention to each bodily movement, to each sensation.

The teaching of Vietnamese Buddhist Master Thich Nhat Hanh inspired the following meditation exercise that can be done while consuming meals:

Before eating, we breathe mindfully for a few moments. This will calm and soothe us, so that we can fully appreciate the food. Then we can recite these five contemplations and remember them during the meal:

1. This food is the gift of the entire universe: from the earth, the sky, much work and much love. We realize that many elements such as rain, sunlight, earth, air, the work and love of other people have participated in bringing this meal to us. Nature and so many people have contributed to this meal... Let us take it as a gift!
2. I will eat this meal in mindfulness, grateful for having food to eat. We will eat consciously, calmly, savoring the different tastes and textures, grateful for the work of others that allowed us to have food.
3. I will eat in moderation. Let us be attentive to our impulses, which incite us to eat too much, or too fast...
4. We will only take foods that nourish us and keep us in good health. Our consumption can create much suffering, whether to ourselves or to others. Let us be attentive to the products we consume, so that they are respectful of our health, our balance, other living beings, as well as the environment.
5. We take this food in order to develop wisdom and compassion in our lives. This food will nourish us and allow me to bring peace and harmony around us, as much as possible.

Meditating on love and compassion

Breathe deeply a few times. Put your attention inward.

Think of a person you love, and who does you good. Or if it is easier for you, think of a child or an animal that you love deeply. Fill yourself with this feeling of affection and love.

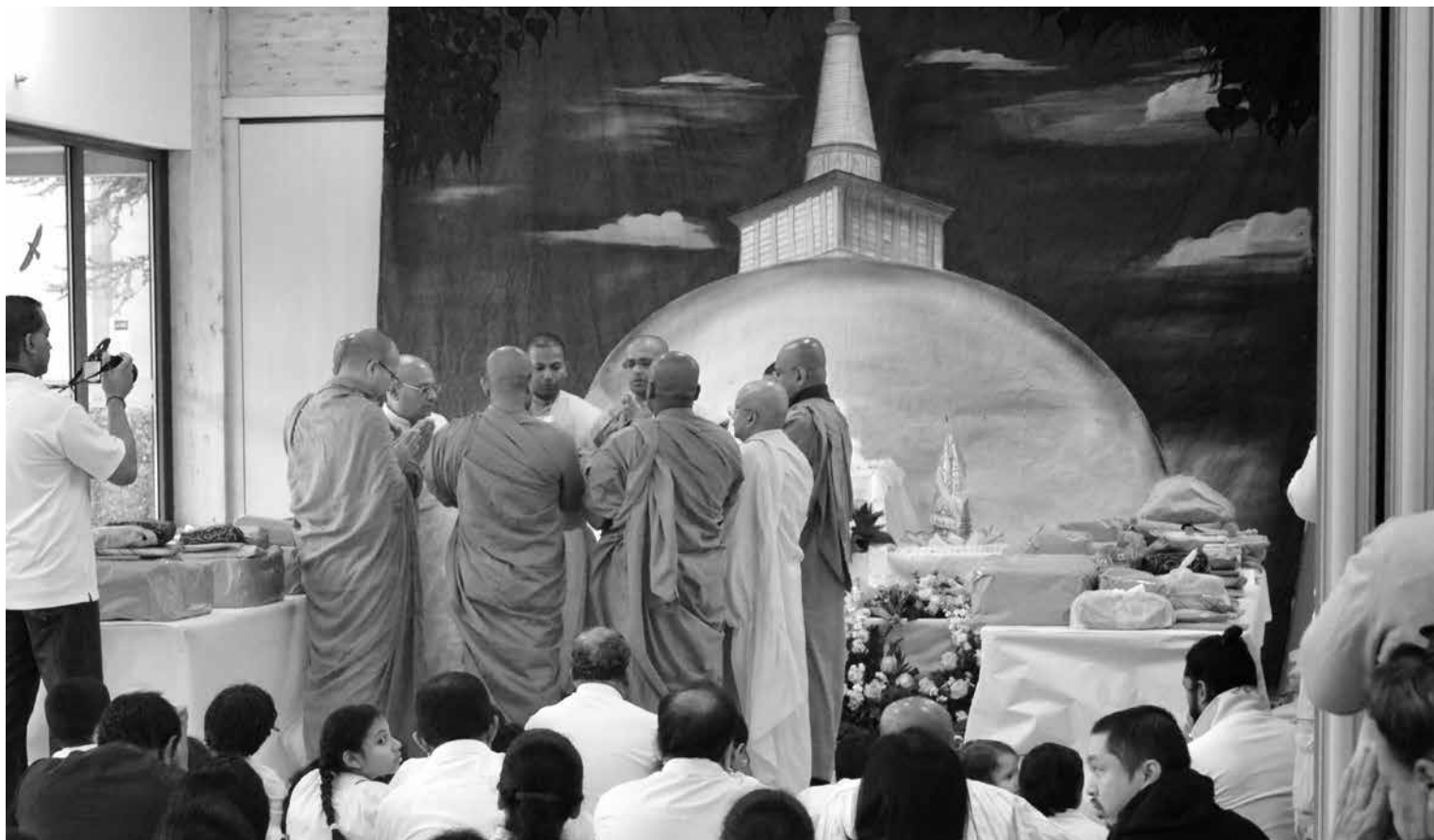
Feel this love in your heart, in your body. Impregnate yourself with this sensation of tenderness and affection. If this sensation leaves, revive it by imagining taking the person (or animal) in your arms. You can also think of moments when you lived beautiful moments together. If you start thinking about neutral memories, or worse, unpleasant or painful memories, stop and start over. Meditation will only work if one impregnates oneself with kindness and compassion and maintains this feeling.

Then, extend this feeling of affection towards other people you love: your family, your friends. The most important thing is to preserve this feeling of affection. If you cannot extend it further, repeat points 1 to 3.

Then, still feeling it, extend your affection/compassion towards those you do not know personally (people affected by war, illness).

If you are comfortable, you can finally extend it to people you do not like (your "enemies").

Even if it seems a bit intellectual and you do not feel this emotion of altruism very clearly, persevere! Perseverance and repetition will allow you to feel love and compassion more and more clearly, and will produce remarkable transformations in you.



MAE CHEE KAEW

An epitome of Dhamma in practice

Sarasi Wettimuny

The life and journey of Mae Chee Kaew towards spiritual awakening offer many encouraging lessons to anyone who seeks the path of liberation through Buddhist practice, irrespective of gender differences.

Mae Chee Kaew, a Buddhist practitioner from rural Thailand, is regarded as one of the most renowned female arahants of modern times. Her courageous path towards enlightenment amidst life's various obstacles and conventional boundaries as a female proves yet again that the Buddha's noble path is equally accessible to women beyond gender based social and cultural limitations.

She was born as the youngest child into a farming family in a remote region of northeastern Thailand in 1901. From an early age, the loss of her mother when she was only five years old led her to the understanding of the inevitable realities of suffering and impermanence, an understanding that deepened further as life unfolded. Her unhappy marriage, desire to renounce lay life, difficulties encountered during her early years of meditation, and even her own illnesses further strengthened her understanding of the Tilakkhana - Anicca (impermanence), Dukkha (suffering), Anattā (non-self). Her every experience of suffering brought her closer to the Dhamma and determination to end the cycle of rebirth.

While reading about her life and journey towards enlightenment, what I found most inspiring and unique was her ability to maintain the same level of perseverance, sincerity, genuine compassion for all living beings, and steadfast endurance throughout all stages of her life. The biggest fortune which finally guided her to the path to Nibbana was her encounter with the two legendary meditation teachers of the Thai forest tradition named Ajahn Mun Bhuridatta and Ajahn Maha Boowa. Her gratitude, appreciation, and unwavering devotion to the guidance of her teachers led her to the

pinnacle of dhamma practice.

The lessons she learned from these two great meditation masters paved the way to end her samsara. And now, through her own words, those same lessons, enriched further by her own experience, have become life lessons for lay people who wish to walk that same path.

For any lay person, regardless of gender, aspiring to walk the Buddha's path, she stands as a practical proof that it can be done, and as I see it, here are some of the top lessons from her life worth carrying with us:

Turn ordinary daily life, chores, waiting, even an unhappy marriage, into your practice, instead of waiting for ideal conditions. In simpler terms, she made it clear that every unpleasant or difficult experience in one's life can be turned into a source of motivation to progress in the Dhamma. Meet resentment and envy by consciously turning them into compassion and motivation. Ask for what you need patiently and persistently, without bitterness, even when refused again and again.

Mae Chee Kaew's life reflected the proverb 'every dark cloud has a silver lining'. It is important to cultivate courage and perseverance to challenge your day-to-day hardships to reach your goal, no matter to which level the external circumstances hinder you.

She stands as a clear testimony to the Buddhist virtue of loving-kindness (metta). The cultivation of metta can bring about powerful transformation in our lives. Her loving-kindness was for all living beings, true metta in its fullest sense. Let Mae Chee Kaew's tenderness towards farm animals, whom she fed and spoke to with the same care she gave to people, remind you that compassion is meant to extend to every living being, not just those closest to us. Her compassion towards farm animals was exceptional. 'She fed her cows and water buffalo

lumps of sticky rice every day, whispering sweetly in their ears that because they worked the rice fields, they too deserved to eat rice’.

Her life is remarkable in showing us the value of endurance and the ability to recover when faced with painful or bitter experiences of lay life and even in the spiritual path. Since her childhood, she endured the burden of household chores after the loss of her mother; she endured her husband’s resistance to her spiritual aspirations for many years while turning every incident into a reflection of the Dhamma.

The progress of the spiritual path relies on one’s ability to endure. As she herself once put it, "I've endured many hardships to test my determination. I went without food for many days. I refused to lie down to sleep for many nights. Endurance became the food to nourish my heart and diligence the pillow to rest my head."

Don't let low status or how others see you diminish your inner effort; that's just convention, not your worth. Above all, let her life remind you that a woman's capacity for wisdom and freedom is equal to any man's, whatever constraints she's born into. Long before she was known as a fully awakened arahant, Mae Chee Kaew was simply a grieving daughter, an unhappy wife, and a woman refusing to give up on her search for freedom.

In 1991, Mae Chee Kaew passed away, her cycle of samsara finally at an end, leaving behind a path of lessons for all who seek to walk it. Her story is not one of miracles, but of an ordinary woman who simply refused to stop, and in that refusal, found the extraordinary.

FROM RITUAL TO REALIZATION

A Personal Journey into the Practice of the Dhamma

Hema Dassanayake

We easily identify ourselves as Buddhists. In fact, the vast majority of us (perhaps 98–99%) remain Buddhists until the very end of our lives. Yet, what happens next is a complete mystery.

Have we made a sincere effort to understand what Lord Buddha truly taught? Many of us visit temples, worship Buddha statues, care for the Bodhi tree, give alms, observe sila (ethical conduct), recite gatha (recite the teaching), and light oil lamps. These are meaningful good deeds, but we should still ask ourselves: Are such rituals truly the essence of Lord Buddha’s teaching?

The Historical Origin of the Dhamma

Lord Buddha’s primary quest was to discover why human beings suffer and to find a practical way to prevent it. After 29 years of worldly life, he left everything behind in a noble search (Arya Paryeshanaya) to free humanity from suffering. He succeeded and realized Nibbana.

The Evolution of the Teachings

- The First Discourse: He first explained his path to the Pancha Vaggriya (his five former ascetic colleagues) and later to many others.
- The Oral Tradition: Following his Parinibbana, his great disciples preserved the teachings - the Dhamma - through oral traditions, safeguarding them as Sutta (the Buddha’s direct teachings and sayings), Abhidhamma (the detailed analysis of the mind and experience), and Vinaya (the monastic code of conduct).

Transition to the Written Word

This oral tradition was preserved for centuries before the Dhamma was eventually recorded in writing from Sri Lanka. At Alu Lena cave near Kegalle, Sri Lanka, the teachings were committed to ola (palm) leaves using the Sinhala script, giving rise to the written Tripitakaya - the Three baskets (Sutta, Abhidhamma and Vinaya pitakayas).

Modern Controversies and Translations

There are continuing discussions about the authenticity and transmission of different versions of the Tripitakaya. The history of how the teachings were preserved and transmitted is important; however, for me, the more important question is whether we can understand and practically apply the Dhamma to free ourselves from suffering.

Shifting Focus: From Rituals to Inner Exploration

Like many others, I spent my school, university, and working years devoutly practicing traditional Buddhist rituals. It was only after retirement that my genuine search for the core Dhamma began.

Initially, I observed seela and practiced Pranayama (breath-awareness) meditation, which is the most common form taught in Sri Lanka. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, these physical sessions stopped, prompting me to seek Dhamma sermons online.

My spiritual journey evolved through several distinct stages:

1. **The Foundations:** Listening to hundreds of deep sermons by Ven. Ududumbara Kassapa and the late Ven. Meemure Dhammawansa, filling multiple notebooks with insights.
2. **The Turning Point:** Discovering discussions on the Siwhela YouTube channel between host Sampath Bandara and a remarkably insightful 13-year-old boy whose explanations of Buddha Dhamma made

profound logical sense.

3. **The Core Realization:** Gaining access to the teachings of Ven. Meewanpalane Siri Dhammalankara Maha Arahathan Wahanse. Listening to profound discourses like the San Desanawa and Tipariwattaya completely shifted my perspective.

Eventually, I attended two seven-day residential Bhavana (meditation) programs in Mirigama. Using a concise 160-page book containing 20 to 30 core suttas from the Tripitakaya, I finally understood the direct path to Nibbana: practicing Anussati Wadima to achieve Magga-Phala (stages of enlightenment).

The Power of the Four Anussati Meditations

Unlike traditional, rigid meditation practices, Anussati programs focus on the ten recollection techniques introduced by Lord Buddha. Among these ten, Lord Buddha emphasized four core meditations as sufficient for both monastics and laypeople to eradicate latent defilements (*Anusaya*) before they manifest as deep mental attachments (*Asawa*) within the inner mind (*Manomaya Kaya*).

These four foundational instruments must be used correctly (*niwaridawa*), practically (*prayogikawa*), and in tandem (*yuganaddawa*) to counteract the root poisons of Raga (greed/attachment), Dwesha (hatred/anger), and Moha (delusion).

1. Countering Greed (Raga) with Asubhanussati

When we encounter a pleasant stimulus—be it a sight, sound, smell, taste, physical touch, or a pleasant memory—our minds naturally tend to attach, desire ownership, and become addicted. This triggers a mental formation (*Sankhara*) leading to craving (*Tanha*) and clinging (*Upadana*).

- The Fix: Before reaching the stage of Upadana, you must use *Asubhanussati* (meditation on foulness/impermanence of beauty) to cushion and soften the attachment.

- The Follow-up: Immediately transition into *Marananussati* to completely destroy the latent defilement (*Anusaya*) before it takes root.

2. Countering Anger (Dwesa) with Mettanussati

When anger arises due to an unpleasant interaction or an adverse situation, the mind quickly becomes toxic.

- The Fix: Instantly apply *Mettanussati* (loving-kindness meditation) to soften and neutralize the negative emotional spike.
- The Follow-up: Immediately follow it with *Marananussati* to prevent the anger from embedding itself into your inner mental system (*Manomaya Kaya*).

Note: Both *Asubhanussati* and *Mettanussati* function as forms of Samatha Bhavana (tranquility meditation) to temporarily calm the mind.

3. Rooting Out Defilements with Marananussati

As soon as the mind is calmed via Samatha, you must immediately employ *Marananussati* to destroy the karmic seeds (*beeja*) of greed or anger. *Marananussati* invokes the *Tilakkhana* (to destroy the Three Marks of Existence):

- *Anicca*: Realizing there is absolute impermanence; nothing can be maintained to our satisfaction.
- *Dukkha*: Recognizing that chasing worldly pleasure (*sukha*) always culminates in suffering; therefore, chasing it is futile.
- *Anatta*: Embracing the nature of change (*Viparinama Dhamma*). Matter changes every split second; we cannot truly own or control anything.

4. Cultivating Wisdom via Buddhanussati

If *Marananussati* is practiced correctly, *Buddhanussati* follows automatically as a natural review (*Pratya Vekshawa*). This process unlocks four progressive states of liberation:

- *Nibbida*: Disenchantment; no longer being bound by worldly stimuli.
- *Viraga*: Fading away of desire; becoming free of raga.
- *Nirodha*: Cessation; stopping the cycle of reactive thinking.
- *Patinissagga*: Total relinquishment; getting completely free from all clinging (*Upadana*).

Dhamma as a Way of Life

As explicitly stated in the *Maha Satipatthana Sutta*, performing these four *Anussati* meditations does not require you to sit cross-legged in an isolated room. They can be seamlessly practiced in any posture—whether you are sitting, walking, standing, or resting. You can practice them while working in an office, cooking at home, or walking in a field.

The ultimate goal is to remain acutely conscious throughout the day. By staying vigilant, you can instantly identify any unwholesome thought (*Sankhara*) the moment it creeps into your mind, select the correct *Anussati* combination, and dissolve it on the spot:

- If anger arises, apply *Mettanussati* followed by *Marananussati*.
- If greed or lust arises, apply *Asubhanussati* followed by *Marananussati*.
- If delusion arises, apply *Marananussati* directly and *Buddhanussati* to see reality clearly.

Through continuous mindfulness, the *Dhamma* transforms from a passive ritual into an active, protective shield that directly clears the path toward Nibbana.

NOTHING EXISTS ALONE

Buddhist Wisdom, Modern Physics and an Interconnected World

Nadeesha Wickramage, PhD

We live as though we are separate. We draw boundaries around ourselves, our communities and our nations. We speak of my interests and your interests, our problems and their problems. Yet many of the defining challenges of our lives and of our times keep reminding us of something we easily forget: that we live in an interconnected world.

One of the important teachings in Buddhism is that nothing exists completely by itself. Everything depends on other things and conditions. Think of a tree. A tree needs soil, water, sunlight, air, insects, and many other things to grow. A human being is also connected to many conditions. We depend on food, family, society, nature, and our experiences.

In Buddhism, this profound understanding of the interconnectedness is called dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). It means that things come into existence because certain causes and conditions come together. Existence is not a collection of isolated things, but a phenomena arising through causes and conditions. Things come to be because the conditions for them are present; when those conditions change, what arises from them changes too.

Modern physics studies the universe in a very different way, but it also shows us that the world is more connected and complicated than it may appear. It is revealing new insights into matter, and the systems and forces that shape reality. This new knowledge is defying our ordinary institutions and perceptions about separateness.

A Universe of Relationships

Our daily experience is characterized by the perception of a collection of separate objects. We observe trees, people, rocks, stars, and think that they are all independent from each other. The approach of physics differs from this. Physics

research shows that material bodies consist of interacting components. Their nature is described by modern physics using concepts such as fields, energy, forces, and interactions. An atom is not an independent body. It has component parts and interacts with its environment. In the deepest layer of nature described by modern physics, particles are seen as excitations of quantum fields.

This does not mean that Buddhism is proven by physics. They serve different purposes and use different techniques. Nevertheless, physics allows questioning the concept of complete independence of all objects observed in our daily experience.

Dependent Origination

The Buddha's teaching of dependent origination begins with a simple idea. Things exist because conditions allow them to exist. Take a cup of tea as an example.

We might say, "This is my tea," as if the tea were simply an object sitting in front of us. But if we look more carefully, we can see that many things were needed to make that cup of tea possible. There was water, tea, soil, sunlight, rain, farmers, transportation, human work, a cup, and heat. Many different conditions came together to create that simple cup of tea. The same is true for us. We often think, "This is who I am," as if there were a permanent and independent self inside us. Buddhism encourages us to look more closely.

Our bodies are constantly changing. Our thoughts come and go. Our feelings change depending on what happens around us. Our personalities are influenced by our family, culture, education, relationships, memories, and environment.

So where is the completely independent and permanent "self"?

Buddhism does not say that we do not

exist. Instead, it teaches that our existence depends on many conditions. We exist through relationships and processes.

What Can Quantum Physics Teach Us?

Quantum physics gives us another reason to be careful about thinking of things as completely separate. One example is quantum entanglement. In some quantum systems, two particles can have a strong relationship between their states, even when they are separated. However, we should not say that quantum entanglement and Buddhist interdependence are the same thing. They are not.

Quantum entanglement is a specific scientific phenomenon that can be described mathematically and tested through experiments. Buddhist interdependence is about how things arise through causes and conditions. Still, both ideas can encourage us to question a simple picture of reality in which everything is completely separate. Physics shows us that relationships and interactions are important to the physical world. Buddhism teaches us that understanding relationships can change the way we understand ourselves and live our lives.

From Interdependence to Compassion

The most important connection between these ideas may not be scientific. It may be ethical. If nothing exists alone, then our actions do not exist alone either. A harsh word can hurt someone. That person may then become angry and take that anger into another relationship. In the same way, a kind action can affect someone positively and encourage them to be kind to another person. Our everyday choices are also connected to the wider world. The food we eat, the things we buy, and the resources we use all connect us to other people, animals, and the environment.

When we think of ourselves as completely separate from others, another person's suffering can seem like someone else's problem. But when we understand that our lives are connected,

compassion becomes more natural. We begin to see that our well-being is connected to the well-being of others. The Buddha's teaching asks us not only to understand interdependence as an idea, but also to experience it in our own lives.

Nothing Exists Alone

Modern physics does not prove every Buddhist teaching, and Buddhism should not be reduced to a simple explanation of quantum physics. The two are different. Physics uses experiments and mathematics to study the physical world. Buddhism uses observation, reflection, meditation, and practice to investigate experience and suffering.

But both can help us question the idea that reality is as simple as it first appears. Physics shows us a universe filled with fields, forces, energy, change, and interaction. Buddhism shows us a world in which things arise because of conditions and constantly change. We are not isolated beings standing outside the universe. We are part of it.

The air we breathe, the food we eat, the people we meet, the love we receive, and the natural world around us all help make our lives possible. Understanding this can lead to greater humility, gratitude, responsibility, and compassion. The Buddha's teaching begins with learning to see things clearly. Perhaps one part of seeing clearly is this simple realization.

Nothing exists alone.

Everything arises through relationships.

And understanding those relationships may be the beginning of wisdom.

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BUDDHISM, INTERDEPENDENCE AND THE SPIRIT OF MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

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Geneva, a city built around dialogue

Every day, representatives of countries large and small meet here to discuss peace, health, humanitarian concerns, development, labour, the environment, human rights, trade and many other issues that cross national borders. They arrive with different histories, interests and political views, yet they continue to meet because many of the challenges facing humanity cannot be solved by one country acting alone.

Buddhism teaches us to understand life through relationships, causes, effects, and conditions. Events do not arise in complete isolation. Our actions affect others, and the actions of others affect us. Our wellbeing is connected, in many ways, with the wellbeing of the people and the world around us.

This understanding of interdependence has a deep spiritual meaning. Yet it also speaks clearly to the world in which we live today.

A health crisis beginning in one place can quickly become a concern for the whole world. A conflict in one region can affect food supplies, migration and security far beyond its borders. Climate change does not recognize national boundaries. Technology connects people and societies almost instantly. Economic and political decisions taken in one country may have consequences for people thousands of kilometres away.

Whether we like it or not, humanity is increasingly interconnected. The challenge, therefore, is not whether we should be interdependent. We already are. The real question is how we choose to live with that interdependence. Do we respond through rivalry, fear and isolation? Or do we search for cooperation, understanding and common ground?



This is where the spirit of multilateralism becomes important. At its heart, multilateral cooperation is a recognition that shared problems require shared effort. It does not mean that countries must agree on everything. They do not. Each nation has its own interests, responsibilities and circumstances. But multilateralism provides a space where differences can be discussed, disagreements can be managed, and common ground can be searched for peacefully. In this sense, there is a natural harmony between Buddhist thought and cooperation among nations.

One of the best-known Buddhist teachings is the Middle Path.

The Middle Path encourages us to avoid harmful extremes and to approach life with balance, wisdom and moderation. A similar lesson can be useful in international affairs. Countries sometimes face the temptation to view problems in absolute terms: victory or defeat, friend or enemy, our interest or their interest. Yet many international challenges are too complex for such simple divisions.

Successful cooperation often requires something more difficult: the ability to protect one's own interests while also understanding the concerns of others. This is not weakness. It is wisdom.

A country does not need to abandon its principles to listen. It does not need to surrender its interests to compromise. Durable solutions are often those in which different sides feel that their essential concerns have been understood and respected.

The Middle Path can therefore remind us that national interest and international responsibility do not always stand in opposition. In many situations, wise cooperation can serve both.

Buddhist teachings also place great importance on compassion, which begins with recognizing that other human beings experience fear, pain, hope and uncertainty just as we do. This idea is particularly important in international affairs, where complex issues are often discussed through technical language, reports and statistics. Behind every policy debate, however, are real human lives.

A discussion about conflict is ultimately about people whose lives are affected by violence. A

discussion about health is about people who need treatment and care. A discussion about food security is about families who need access to food. A discussion about migration is about people who may have left their homes because circumstances gave them little choice. A discussion about development is ultimately about people's hopes for dignity, opportunity and a better future.

Compassion does not remove the need for laws, negotiations or difficult decisions. But it reminds us of the human purpose behind them.

Buddhism also gives particular importance to Right Speech. Words matter.

In diplomacy, as in everyday life, careless words can create mistrust, deepen divisions and make agreement more difficult. Respectful words can create space for understanding. Right Speech encourages truthfulness, restraint and the avoidance of unnecessarily harsh or divisive language. These qualities have great relevance to negotiation. Countries will disagree. Sometimes they will disagree strongly. But disagreement does not have to become hostility.

Another Buddhist idea with relevance to negotiation is non-attachment.

This does not mean that people or nations should have no goals or interests. Rather, it reminds us not to become so attached to a particular position that we lose sight of the larger purpose. In negotiations, parties sometimes become attached to a specific proposal, phrase or method and forget the underlying objective they are trying to achieve. The purpose of negotiation should not simply be to prove that one side is right. It should be to find a way forward. This requires flexibility.

One can remain firm about an important objective while remaining open about the way in which that objective may be achieved. Such flexibility is often the difference between deadlock and agreement.

Buddhist thought also reminds us of the value of restraint. Modern international cooperation depends greatly on restraint. Countries possess power, but they also accept rules. They may have

the ability to act alone, yet they agree to consult others. They accept procedures, responsibilities and limits because they recognize that everyone benefits when others behave with similar restraint.

These lessons have particular importance at the present time. The world is passing through a period of uncertainty. Geopolitical tensions are increasing. Trust between countries is under pressure. Societies are becoming more divided, while new technologies are changing the way people communicate, work and understand the world.

At such a time, there is a temptation to retreat into narrow interests. Yet the world's major challenges are becoming more connected, not less. Climate change, public health, humanitarian crises, technological change and economic instability all demonstrate the same reality: no country, however powerful, can completely separate its future from the future of others.

This brings us again to the Buddhist understanding of interdependence. If our wellbeing is connected, cooperation is not merely an act of generosity toward others. It is also an act of wisdom.

A Role for the International Buddhist Foundation in Geneva

This reflection also raises an important question: what role can a Buddhist institution play in a city such as Geneva?

The International Buddhist Foundation in Geneva has a unique opportunity. Geneva is one of the world's principal centres of international dialogue. Governments, international organizations, humanitarian institutions, civil society, academics and communities from almost every part of the world gather here in search of solutions to common challenges.

The presence of the International Buddhist Foundation in such an environment therefore carries a significance that can reach beyond the Buddhist community itself.

The Foundation can become a place where the timeless wisdom of the Buddha enters into

conversation with the challenges of the modern world—not as a political doctrine and not as an attempt to prescribe solutions, but as a source of reflection on how human beings can cooperate more wisely.

Buddhist teachings on interdependence can enrich discussion about shared responsibility. The Middle Path can encourage moderation when debates become polarized. Compassion can remind decision-makers of the human consequences behind policies. Right Speech can strengthen respectful dialogue. Non-attachment can encourage negotiators to look beyond fixed positions. The principle of non-harm can invite reflection on the wider consequences of our individual and collective actions.

These are not concerns only for Buddhists. They are universal human concerns. This is why Geneva offers such fertile ground for sharing them.

The International Buddhist Foundation could become a centre of reflection and dialogue for multilateral Geneva, bringing together diplomats, international officials, scholars, religious representatives, young people and civil society to consider how Buddhist wisdom may contribute to peace, understanding and human wellbeing.

Geneva already has institutions where rules and agreements are negotiated. What it also needs are spaces that nurture the spirit in which dialogue takes place. At a time when mistrust and division are increasing around the world, Geneva needs not only negotiations, but also deeper understanding and values capable of sustaining cooperation.

This may be where the International Buddhist Foundation can make a distinctive contribution. Its role need not be to tell multilateral Geneva what decisions to make. Its contribution can be to encourage reflection on how we listen, how we disagree, how we understand the concerns of others, and how we remember the human purpose behind our institutions.

Buddhism does not provide a detailed design for modern international institutions, nor should ancient teachings be forced into modern political frameworks.

But Buddhist wisdom continues to remind us of certain simple truths: that no one exists entirely alone; that our actions have consequences for others; that extremes rarely provide lasting solutions; that strength can coexist with compassion; that words should be used carefully; and that cooperation requires wisdom as well as rules.

Perhaps this is one of the most meaningful contributions Buddhism can make to multilateral Geneva: not to provide another set of negotiating positions, but to help cultivate the wisdom with which positions are negotiated.

And perhaps Geneva can, in turn, become an important place from which this simple message of the Buddha reaches a wider world: We are interdependent, our actions affect one another, and lasting peace and prosperity are ultimately built through understanding, restraint and cooperation.

RESTORING MORAL CONSCIENCE THROUGH CAUSE AND EFFECT

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Life is a wondrous phenomenon where each undergoes unique experiences within a limited timeframe. A person encounters all these experiences as a result of the karma accumulated from distant past lives in Samsara together with the causes and conditions present in the current life.. Furthermore, all these experiences are governed by the principle of "Patichcha Samuppādaya" (Dependent Origination).

"Yē dhammā hēthuppabhawā

Thēsan hēthun thathāgathō

Āha thēsagnacha yō nirōdhō

Ēvan vādhī mahā samanō"

One day, the young ascetic Upatissa, who would later become the Venerable Arahant Sariputta,

was highly impressed by the serene demeanor of Arahant Assaji, who was on his alms round. Upatissa inquired about the Dhamma that Arahant Assaji followed. On that occasion, the above stanza was preached, perfectly elucidating the core of Buddhist philosophy.

The meaning here is that nothing arises without a cause, and the Supreme Buddha explained these causes. When there is a cause for something, once that cause is eradicated, its result naturally ceases. This is the essence of Buddhism.

This truth has also been acknowledged by Western philosophers. A principal teaching of the Greek philosopher Democritus (460-370 BCE) is that nothing happens by chance; everything occurs due to a specific cause and natural necessity, leading him to reject creationism. Similarly,



according to the "Theory of Four Causes" by the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BCE), truly understanding something means comprehending the root cause that led to its occurrence. No effect arises without a cause, and by altering the cause, the outcome can also be changed. Furthermore, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535-475 BCE) stated that everything in the world is in a state of constant flux, governed by a universal law he called "Logos," meaning it operates strictly according to a system of cause and effect.

The philosophies of these thinkers provide an interesting point of comparison with Buddhist teachings on causality and conditionality.

A person's experiences - both favourable or unfavourable, are the results of past actions. Therefore, we must refrain from sinful or unskillful deeds. However, in today's world, humanity has largely lost the sense of shame and fear of committing sins. In other words, the understanding of the Dhamma concept of "Hiri Oththappa" (moral shame and fear) has deteriorated. Following righteous attitudes and preserving moral values have also declined. Many commit wrongdoings for momentary pleasure. Sometimes parents neglect their children, and sometimes children abandon the parents who raised them with love. Helpless animals are subjected to cruelty. In my view, even caging an animal is a sin. Would you like to be kept in a cage? Many such sinful acts occur today. No living being wishes to be subjected to punishment, pain, or violence. Therefore, according to the teaching "Aththānan upaman kathwā" (making oneself the example), one should neither harm others nor incite others to do so. This concept is beautifully explained in a stanza from the Danda Vagga of the Dhammapada:

"Sabbē thasanthi dhandassa

Sabbē bhāyanthi machchunō

Aththānan upaman kathwā

Na haneyya na ghāthayē "

A major psychological factor contributing to these issues is the diminishing empathy among people today. Psychology categorizes empathy into several

types. Let us examine three types of empathy in relation to the above points:

- Cognitive Empathy: The intellectual ability to understand what others are thinking and the perspective from which they see the world. Here, understanding the other person's mental state is done logically rather than emotionally.
- Affective Empathy: When the feelings of others directly become your own emotions.
- Compassionate Empathy: Not only understanding someone's situation (Cognitive) and feeling it emotionally (Affective), but also taking practical action to help them.

To illustrate these points, we can look at the example of how the Buddha subdued Angulimala. The Buddha was compassionate even toward Angulimala, who came to harm him.

Angulimala had murdered 999 people and planned to kill his own mother as his final target. The Buddha perceived this with his supreme wisdom and saw that if Angulimala killed his mother, he would commit an Anantariya Papa Karma (an immediate, unpardonable sin). This is a remarkable instance demonstrating the Buddha's Cognitive Empathy.

Subsequently, although Angulimala was a violent murderer, the Buddha saw the fate awaiting him and felt profound compassion. Consequently, the Buddha went to the Jalini forest to save Angulimala from this grievous wrong. This is a remarkable instance demonstrating the Buddha's Affective Empathy.

Even though Angulimala chased after the Buddha to kill him, the Buddha felt no fear or anger. Using his psychic abilities, the Buddha made it appear as though he was walking normally, yet orchestrated it so that Angulimala could not catch up. Afterward, the Buddha transformed Angulimala's mindset, paving the way for him to be liberated from sin. Regarding this event, when Angulimala yelled, "Ascetic, stop!", the Buddha's response, as recorded in the Angulimala Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya, was:

*"Tthithō ahan angulimāla sabbadhā
Sabbēsu bhūthesu Nidhāya dhandan
Thuvancha pānēsu asagnnathō
Thasmā ahan tthithō thuvan atthithō"*

The meaning of this is: "Angulimala, I have stopped forever, laying aside all weapons toward all living beings. But you are unrestrained in your violence toward living beings. Therefore, I have stopped, and you have not." This is a remarkable instance demonstrating the Buddha's Compassionate Empathy.

If we intelligently analyze the above event, it can help us resolve many modern-day problems. By eradicating hateful intentions from our minds and cultivating loving-kindness and compassion, a vast number of current issues can be eliminated. The following Dhammapada stanza from the Yamaka Vagga perfectly clarifies this point:

*"Nahī vērēna vērānī
Sammanthidha kudhāchanan
Avērēna cha sammanthi
Ēsa dhammō sananthanō"*

The meaning is: Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world; by non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is an eternal law preached by former Buddhas.

As human beings endowed with intellect and the capacity for higher thinking, if we always perceive the world through "Patichcha Samuppādaya" (Dependent Origination), understand the root causes of unwholesome actions, and live with profound empathy mindfully practicing the four Brahma Viharas: "Meththā" (Loving-kindness), "Karunā" (Compassion), "Mudhithā" (Empathetic Joy), and "Upekkhā" (Equanimity) we can minimize societal issues and lead peaceful lives.

RULE OF LAW AND GOOD CONSCIENCE

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The Rule of Law is one of the foundational principles upon which a civilised society is built. It is not merely a legal expression or a constitutional ideal. At its deepest level, the Rule of Law represents the conviction that no person, institution or authority is above the law, and that the exercise of power must be governed by established legal principles rather than by personal will, arbitrary discretion or the dictates of those who happen to possess authority. It requires equality before the law, fairness in the administration of justice, respect for fundamental rights and accountability for the exercise of public power.

Yet, law, however carefully formulated, cannot regulate every aspect of human conduct. There are spaces in human life that cannot effectively be reached by courts, statutes, regulations or enforcement agencies. There are thoughts which are never spoken, intentions which are never disclosed and actions which may never be witnessed by another human being. It is in that private realm of human existence that the idea of good conscience assumes profound importance.

The Rule of Law governs our conduct as members of society. Good conscience governs us from within. A person may sometimes believe that he or she can escape the consequences of an unlawful or improper act if it is not discovered. One may conceal an act from another person, avoid the scrutiny of an institution, or even escape the reach of a court. But one cannot escape one's own conscience. We may deceive another person, but we cannot ultimately deceive ourselves.

This is where the relationship between Law and *Dhamma* becomes particularly meaningful. The Rule of Law asks us: Was the act lawful? Good

conscience asks us a deeper question: Was the act right?

These questions are not always identical. Something may not immediately attract legal consequences and yet may be morally wrong. Conversely, the law may permit a particular course of action while conscience may compel a person to consider whether that course is just, compassionate and ethically defensible. The true strength of a society therefore cannot depend solely upon the number of laws it possesses. It also depends upon the quality of conscience of those who make, interpret, administer and obey those laws.

For a judge, this principle has an especially profound significance. Judicial office is exercised publicly, but many of the most important decisions of a judge are preceded by a private process of reflection. A judge reads, listens, examines, questions, weighs competing arguments and ultimately makes a determination according to law. At the end of that process, however, there remains something which cannot be delegated to another person or to a machine—the responsibility of one's own conscience.

The law provides the framework within which judicial power must be exercised. Precedent, legislation, constitutional principles, evidence and legal reasoning guide the judicial process. But a judge must also possess the moral discipline to approach that process without prejudice, personal interest or improper influence. The judicial oath is therefore not merely a formal undertaking. It carries with it an enduring responsibility to the law, to justice and, ultimately, to one's own conscience.

The same principle applies to every person exercising public power. An official may have the authority to sign a document, make an order or take a decision. But legal authority should never be confused with moral justification. The possession of power increases rather than diminishes the responsibility to act with integrity.

The Buddha's teachings provide an extraordinary insight into this dimension of human responsibility. Buddhism places great emphasis upon “*kamma*”, the intention and the consequences of one's

thoughts, words and actions. The Buddha repeatedly directed attention not merely to outward conduct but to the mental condition from which conduct arises. In this sense, *Dhamma* teaches us that ethical responsibility begins before an act becomes visible to the outside world.

We often say that there are cameras everywhere today. Modern technology has made it possible to record an extraordinary amount of human activity. A CCTV camera may record what happens in a street, a building or a workplace. Computers can preserve transactions. Digital systems can store communications and documents. Artificial intelligence can analyse enormous quantities of information with a speed beyond the capacity of the human mind.

But there is a record more important than any technological record. The human conscience is itself a witness.

One may switch off a CCTV camera. One may delete a file. One may erase a message. One may attempt to conceal an action from another human being. But there is no button by which conscience can simply be switched off. The deepest record of our conduct is carried within ourselves.

No machine, however sophisticated, possesses the moral authority of a good conscience. No computer, however powerful, can replace the inner capacity of a human being to distinguish between right and wrong. Technology may tell us what happened; it cannot necessarily tell us whether what happened was morally right. It may identify facts, patterns and probabilities, but the responsibility for ethical judgment remains with the human being.

This is why the development of technology should be accompanied by the development of conscience. The greater our technological power becomes, the greater must be our moral responsibility.

If a person refrains from wrongdoing only because the law may punish him, his morality remains dependent upon external supervision. But if he refrains from wrongdoing because he understands that the act itself is wrong, even when there is no possibility of detection, he has reached a higher level of moral discipline.

A healthy legal system requires both kinds of discipline. External law is necessary because society cannot depend entirely upon the personal morality of every individual. Institutions, courts, procedures and sanctions are essential to protect rights and maintain order. But no legal system can survive through enforcement alone. If citizens, officials and institutions lose their sense of conscience, the law itself can gradually become an instrument devoid of justice.

This is why the Rule of Law and *Dhamma* are not strangers to one another. Both seek to restrain arbitrary conduct. Both recognise that human freedom carries responsibility. Both value truth, fairness and respect for others. The law establishes standards of conduct within society, while *Dhamma* seeks to transform the person who lives within that society.

The law may settle a dispute. *Dhamma* teaches us to understand the causes of conflict and the value of compassion, patience and restraint. There is therefore a profound complementarity between legal justice and moral wisdom. The importance of a good conscience becomes particularly evident in positions of trust. Judges, lawyers, public servants, political leaders, teachers, religious leaders, business persons and all those entrusted with responsibility exercise influence over the lives of others. Their conduct is often observed by society, but the true test of character is how they conduct themselves when observation disappears.

Integrity is not doing the right thing because someone is watching. Integrity means doing the right thing when nobody is watching. A person with a good conscience does not need a permanent external surveillance system. His or her own awareness becomes the most effective form of accountability. Such a person understands that every thought, word and action contributes to the character that he or she ultimately becomes.

In that sense, we are all carrying our own record. We may construct explanations for others. We may rationalise our conduct. We may persuade ourselves temporarily that an improper act was justified. Yet, we cannot lie to ourselves indefinitely.

Beneath those explanations, conscience remains capable of asking the most difficult question: "Was I truthful to myself?"

The answer to that question may never appear in a court record. It may never be written in a judgment. It may never be stored in a computer. But it is nevertheless of immense importance.

This understanding gives special meaning to the Buddha's teaching on mindfulness. To be mindful is, among other things, to remain aware of one's own conduct and mental states. A person who develops such awareness becomes less dependent upon external control. The discipline comes from within.

A society in which the Rule of Law is respected, and individuals possess good conscience, is therefore a society in which justice has the possibility of becoming a living reality rather than merely a legal aspiration. Laws provide the architecture; conscience gives that architecture life.

It is in this context that I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the International Buddhist Foundation in Geneva as it commemorates thirty-five years of dedicated service. From its modest beginnings, the Foundation has grown into an institution that has promoted the *Dhamma* not only among the Sri Lankan Buddhist community but also within the wider international and multicultural environment of Geneva. Its association with activities connected with the United Nations and its efforts to bring the values of compassion, non-violence, tolerance and respect for human dignity into international dialogue are particularly commendable. I also wish to place on record my personal appreciation of my longstanding *Dhamma* friend, Ven. Halyale Wimalarathana Thera, whose dedicated service, wisdom and commitment have contributed greatly to the spiritual development of devotees and to the growth and international outreach of the Foundation.

The 35th anniversary of the International Buddhist Foundation is therefore not merely an occasion to look back at institutional achievements. It is an opportunity to reflect upon the continuing relevance of the *Dhamma* to the modern world.

The world today possesses unprecedented legal, technological and institutional capacity. Yet humanity continues to face conflict, dishonesty, inequality, intolerance and misuse of power. These challenges cannot be overcome by technology alone. Nor can they be overcome by laws alone. The Buddha's message reminds us that the transformation of society begins with the transformation of the individual. When the individual develops wisdom, compassion, mindfulness and a good conscience, the benefits extend beyond the individual to their family, institutions and society as a whole.

And perhaps the deepest lesson of all is this: we may escape the eyes of the world, but we can never escape the truth known to our own conscience. That truth, ultimately, is one of the timeless messages of the *Dhamma*.

LE JET D'EAU OU L'IMPERMANENCE

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L'eau, pompée dans le lac et injectée sous haute pression, monte en un seul trait, généralement bien droit, malgré un vent capricieux. Ce n'est que lors de sa descente, plus ou moins rapide, plus ou moins disciplinée, qu'apparaît un panache, parfois telle une voile de bateau gonflée par les airs. À d'autres moments les fines gouttelettes le composant semblent ne pas vouloir se séparer. Ce spectacle se répète avec régularité et il est possible de penser: "mais ce n'est qu'une illusion", que le Jet d'eau est une œuvre d'art moderne dressée là, au bout de la jetée, par un artiste à la fois facétieux et génial.

Cependant, l'eau qui anime le jet n'est jamais la même, bien qu'elle provienne du lac. Par ailleurs, l'eau remplissant le bassin du lac est régulièrement remplacée par les eaux provenant des diverses rivières se jetant dans le Léman, notamment le Rhône, fleuve majestueux et tranquille descendant du glacier du Rhône, dans le massif des Alpes valaisannes, traversant le canton du Valais de part en part avant de plonger dans le lac, qu'il parcourt

dans toute sa longueur avant d'en ressortir à Genève afin de continuer son périple en direction de la mer Méditerranée dans laquelle il finit par s'abandonner avec délice.

Ainsi, l'eau qui compose le jet, n'est jamais la même bien qu'elle provienne des mêmes sources et du même plan d'eau. Quelle belle matière à réflexion quant à l'impermanence de toutes choses, le lac Léman, le Rhône et le Jet d'eau offrent-ils à l'observateur attentif! La disparition de l'eau retombant dans le lac, après sa montée triomphale dans les airs, d'où elle est venue, ne lui enlève rien de sa beauté, fugace certes ; le panache, tel un voile de mariée, se modifie avec régularité sous les assauts du vent, sous la caresse d'une brise légère. Les gouttes d'eau se bousculent en rangs serrés avant de disparaître pour de bon dans les eaux du bleu Léman.

La beauté est impermanente.

LES LIENS ENTRE BOUDDHISME THERAVĀDA, COMMUNICATION NON VIOLENTE ET PAIX SYSTÉMIQUE

Une posture et conscience intérieure au service de la paix relationnelle

*Yohan Fernando,
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Le bouddhisme Theravāda, la Communication Non-Violente (CNV) et les mouvements de paix systémique appartiennent à des traditions différentes, mais ils partagent une même idée fondamentale : la transformation de la violence passe par une transformation de notre manière d'être en relation avec nous-mêmes, avec les autres et avec les structures de la société. Les trois pratiques encouragent l'être humain à œuvrer aussi bien à l'intérieur de soi que dans la relation aux autres ou avec les systèmes et organisations plus larges, dans une intention similaire, celle de développer la paix.

Le dialogue ou la dialectique interne des trois mouvements (Bouddhisme, CNV et Paix systémique) permet ainsi de penser la paix non seulement comme l'absence de conflit, mais comme une véritable culture relationnelle.

Dans le bouddhisme Theravāda, la violence trouve notamment ses racines dans trois attitudes fondamentales: l'avidité, l'aversion et l'ignorance. Ces mécanismes, décrits comme des sources de souffrance, peuvent également être observés dans les relations humaines : nous cherchons à obtenir ce que nous désirons, nous rejetons ce qui nous déplaît et nous interprétons souvent la réalité à travers nos propres croyances et peurs.

La pratique bouddhiste invite alors à développer l'attention, la compréhension et la compassion afin de ne plus réagir automatiquement à ces mouvements intérieurs, suscités par des événements extérieurs.

La Communication NonViolente, développée par Marshall Rosenberg, propose une démarche très concrète pour transformer les conflits. Elle invite à distinguer l'observation des jugements, à

reconnaître les sentiments, à identifier les besoins fondamentaux et à formuler des demandes claires. Derrière un reproche, une colère ou une opposition, la CNV cherche ainsi à retrouver les besoins humains qui peuvent être communs aux personnes vivant des tensions interpersonnelles. Cette approche rejoint profondément l'esprit de la pratique bouddhiste: observer avant de réagir, développer la compréhension et rechercher une relation qui ne soit pas fondée sur la domination.

La CNV, par sa pratique, nous invite à vivre différemment au quotidien et développer un art de vivre et d'être en relation, alliant l'écoute de nos besoins, l'écoute de l'autre et le développement d'espaces de dialogues conscients.

La notion de paix systémique élargit encore cette perspective. Elle considère que la violence n'est pas seulement produite par les comportements individuels mais peut également être inscrite dans les institutions, les systèmes économiques, les rapports sociaux, les cultures et les modes d'organisation collective. Une société peut ainsi produire de la violence même lorsque ses membres ne souhaitent pas personnellement être violents. La construction de la paix suppose donc de transformer à la fois les individus, les relations et les structures.

Le concept bouddhiste d'interdépendance est particulièrement fécond dans cette approche systémique. Nos actions ne sont pas totalement isolées : elles influencent les autres et sont elles-mêmes influencées par notre environnement social, économique et culturel. De ce point de vue, agir sur soi est indissociable du travail de transformation du monde. Cultiver la paix intérieure peut contribuer à des relations plus pacifiques, tandis que la

transformation des structures injustes peut créer les conditions permettant aux individus de vivre avec davantage de sécurité et de dignité.

Ces trois perspectives peuvent donc être envisagées comme trois approches complémentaires, ayant une intention commune ou une vision commune pour la paix. Le Theravāda apporte une compréhension des mécanismes intérieurs de la souffrance et de la violence. La CNV fournit des outils pour transformer concrètement la communication et les relations. La paix systémique permet enfin d'examiner les structures collectives qui entretiennent ou reproduisent la violence.

Nous considérerons ici le bouddhisme Theravāda comme une pratique philosophique, en référence aux textes ancestraux qui la décrivent comme une école empirique de la vie et de la vie intérieure. La Communication NonViolente, quant à elle, est abordée ici comme une pratique et une posture de communication issues de recherches empiriques et scientifiques dans le champ de la psychologie humaniste et sociale. Les mouvements vers la paix systémique sont abordés comme des mouvements variés et pluriels. Notre approche se fonde sur quatre principales actions : le mouvement de la non-violence et l'action de Mahatma Gandhi, le mouvement américain des droits civiques, le mouvement du Congrès national africain (ANC) et la lutte anti-apartheid. Cette pluralité d'actions vers des changements sociétaux a comme vecteurs communs des pratiques et des postures non violentes visant un éveil individuel et systémique de conscience dans l'objectif de générer des sociétés équivalentes et unies au-delà des différences observables.

La rencontre entre le bouddhisme, la CNV et les mouvements de paix conduit ainsi à une conception et vision élargie de la paix : transformer la manière dont nous pensons, parlons et agissons, mais aussi transformer les systèmes dans lesquels nous vivons.

La non-violence devient alors bien plus qu'une technique de communication ou une attitude morale individuelle. Elle devient une

démarche globale visant à créer des relations et des institutions fondées sur l'écoute, la compassion, la justice, la coopération et la reconnaissance de notre interdépendance.

Ainsi, le bouddhisme Theravāda, la Communication NonViolente et les mouvements de paix systémique peuvent se rejoindre autour d'une même ambition : passer d'une culture de la réaction, de la domination et de la séparation à une culture de la conscience, du dialogue et de la coopération.

Quelle que soit la pratique personnelle qui nous est plus familière, l'invitation est la même: développer davantage la conscience et la confiance en soi, pour faciliter nos relations avec les autres et agir conjointement pour co-crée un monde et des structures où l'interdépendance est vécue concrètement.

Malgré cette volonté partagée par l'immense majorité des humains, nous vivons dans une réalité sociétale bien différente de celle que nous décrivons. Cette dissonance cognitive et émotionnelle vécue quotidiennement en observant les interactions humaines, en étant confrontés à nos difficultés personnelles ou encore en constatant le fonctionnement actuel de notre société, pourrait facilement nous conduire à abandonner nos croyances d'interdépendance, d'unité et de paix.

Ainsi, il nous paraît très important et urgent de nous relier et d'œuvrer conjointement vers notre éveil de conscience intérieure et collective.

« Seul on va plus vite, ensemble on va plus loin »

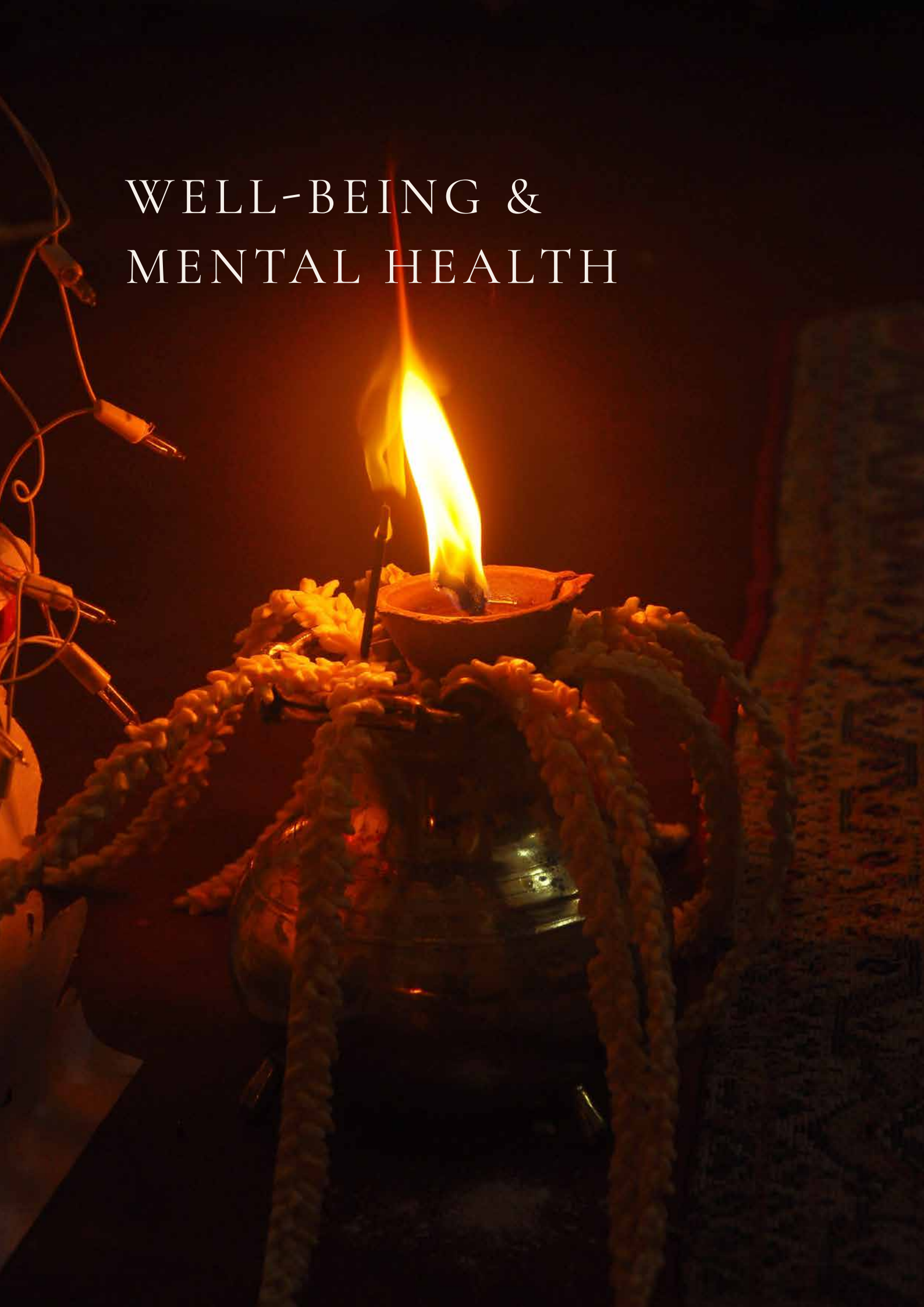
– Proverbe Africain, source inconnue

L'auteur est issu d'une famille pluriculturelle et multiethnique. Il est engagé vers le développement de relations humaines harmonieuses orientées vers l'émergence d'une société de paix.

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Pour les lecteurs: l'auteur vous invite à participer gratuitement à un atelier de Communication NonViolente qu'il anime en le contactant: yohan@beenow.ch ou +41 76 413 70 73.

WELL-BEING & MENTAL HEALTH



THE DECLINE OF RELIGION AND THE RISE OF MENTAL MALAISE

What Buddhism Can Offer a Changing World

*Venerable Rambukwelle Devananda Nayaka Thero, PhD
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The religions and philosophies of the world exist for the sake of human beings, not for other animals or for a material world. Therefore, no religion or philosophy should be underestimated or disregarded.

We should use religion and the Dhamma - the Buddha's teaching - both to make our own lives successful and for the welfare of the world. Unfortunately, the opposite exists in both Buddhist countries and in countries where other religions prevail. The fundamental reason for this is the failure to understand that all crises first begin within oneself.

In modern Europe, religious affiliation and participation in religious activities have declined significantly over the past several years. This is a trend consistently demonstrated by population surveys and social research. Of the 300,000 Buddhists in Germany about 140,000 have an Asian background.

In many countries of Western Europe, the number of people identifying themselves as having "No Religion" has increased reaching more than 37% of the population who identified as belonging to no religion. In 2021 the Christian population in the United Kingdom fell below 50% for the first time, according to their population census. In the Netherlands, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Estonia, the non-religious population has also reached high levels. Participation in churches and religious places also declined in many countries. In many Western European countries, only a small percentage of the population attends religious services weekly.

The interest in Buddhism among the people of Europe that I observed from the beginning of the 90's greatly contributed to the popularity of

Buddhism. The main reason for this was that the Tibetan Dalai Lama, as both a political leader and a religious leader, placed Buddhist thought at the forefront of his efforts to liberate his country. In fact, the leadership of the Dalai Lama greatly helped us to bring Theravada Buddhism among the people of Europe as well.

At that time, together with the now deceased Venerable Walpola Kalyanathissa Nayaka Thera, the Sambodhi Vihara in Berlin, Germany held an International Buddhist Congress in Berlin. The chief guest at this conference was the Dalai Lama. We organized this conference through the cooperation of several Buddhist associations in Berlin. A very large number of Germans and Europeans participated. This contributed not only to the spread of Buddhism in Germany but also to the wider propagation of Buddhism throughout Europe. Because learned Buddhist leaders such as the Tibetan Dalai Lama and the Vietnamese "Thich Nhat Hanh" took the lead, Buddhism also became a powerful theme in the mass media, and this itself greatly helped the spread of Buddhism in Europe.

Society has evolved, but are we happier?

Today, people of all ages throughout the world, young and old alike, are increasingly isolated and experience mental stress, sadness, depression, anxiety, dissatisfaction, or feeling unable to be content with anything. They face economic difficulties. They are distanced from the social structures, their religion and the Dhamma. Many seek relief through entertainment, consumption and the endless distractions now available to us. But few realize that these provide only temporary pleasure and escape, but they do not always

address the deeper sources of our unease.

Several social trends contribute to the individual becoming distanced from religion today. Technological and economic development in the Western world, individualism and independent lifestyles, adoption of social media and digital culture, declining trust in religious institutions, having to live in a multicultural and multi-religious society, infamous harmful religious incidents that occurred in certain countries, the focus of higher education and dependence only on scientific knowledge all contribute. Urbanization and modernization, changes in family structures and lifestyles, the greater and misinterpretation of values such as individual freedom and human rights are amongst other factors.

The growth of secularization is a prominent factor too. The separation of the state, education and legal systems from religion has become stronger. A greater number of young people say that they are not affiliated with a religion, and participation in religious observances is also lower than among older people.

There is growth of individualism. Greater attention to personal preferences, values, spirituality, or various belief systems, at the expense of the social good and a distancing from collective practices offered by traditional and religious institutions, is also a factor.

Apart from this, religious diversity has increased due to migration. As possible adverse consequences of an individual becoming distanced from religion, the person has to face not only an increase in questions about the purpose of life, loneliness, isolation, being confined within four walls, and separation from social relationships, and the weakening of community bonds, but also challenges in seeking moral, ethical, and spiritual guidance.

At the same time, it must also be acknowledged that many non-religious people can and do maintain strong moral, principled and ethical values and contribute actively to their communities and the world.

Is Buddhism a religion?

Buddhism is seen more as a philosophy than a religion. The distinctive feature of a religion is that it is based on belief in a creator. It is something to be believed in. A philosophy, however, is not so. But when analyzed more deeply, Buddhism is not merely a philosophical doctrine or a way of thinking, but a discipline through which human beings rationally investigate themselves, the world, life, truth and ultimate reality.

The method of science is to conclude through experimentation and observation. Buddhist philosophy does not oppose this principle either, encouraging independent reflection, observation, analysis and experience. We know that the Buddha taught in the Kalama Sutta that his Dhamma (teaching) should not be accepted merely because someone has said it, because it has existed as an earlier teaching, because one's teachers or parents have followed it, or because it has been passed down through tradition.

The consequences that may arise from an individual becoming distanced from religion can also bear risks. It can increase questions about the purpose of life, increase loneliness, separation from society and weakening of community bonds, mental stress, and challenges in seeking moral guidance.

Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy are not necessarily opposed to modern science or progress. Many learned people, including the American thinker Henry Steel Olcott, Robert Thurman, the British Stephen Batchelor, the French Alexandra David, Burnouf, the German Paul Dahlke, Georg Grimm, Nyanatiloka Mahathera, Nyanaponika Mahathera, Ayya Khema nun, the Swiss Max Ladner, Kurt Baier, the Austrian Karl Neumann are among the many philosophers, thinkers, lawyers, judges and other intellectuals who embraced Buddhism. They are examples of how Buddhism is relevant not only for the present but also for future Buddhist European thinkers.

The social service expected through religion, as well as the offering of compassion, kindness, loving-kindness and affection to society, is extremely valuable. Through this, values such as

social responsibility can be developed.

Today, with technological advances, Buddhism can theoretically be learned by anyone who needs it, through social media and in various languages around the world. However, the proficiency in foreign languages required for Europeans to practically study Buddhism, and the shortage of Buddhist monks rich in knowledge of the *Dhamma*, are the greatest challenges we face.

Nevertheless, it is also very important to attract the current younger generation towards Buddhism. It is important to create opportunities to introduce Buddhist festivals, customs and cultural aspects to them, to invite young people to build mutual friendship, and to invite them to rediscover their own religious or philosophical heritage with an open mind. It is very important to further emphasize to them that asking questions, engaging in dialogue and exploring matters concerning faith are important, and to show the importance of building mutual understanding while respecting those who have different opinions.

Buddhism is a philosophy of life that guides us regarding the deeper meaning and purpose of human life. It also provides guidance on the moral values and responsibilities necessary for living a good life and on the relationships that should be built with others. Religion encourages the development of qualities such as truth, compassion, honesty, patience, and mutual respect. These are important not only for building an individual's character, but also for creating a peaceful and just society. Likewise, religion emphasizes the importance of maintaining good relationships with family, friends and other people in society.

As the world develops through industrialization and technology, it is not surprising that human beings become distanced from their spiritual state. Nevertheless, since time is equally available to all of us, we should understand the reality of life and make an effort to reflect on and improve our spiritual states.

Practically, we should allocate at least 10 to 20 minutes from the twenty-four hours of the day to mindfully observe the breath as it moves up and

down. Once accustomed to the practice, it is an excellent meditation, and by sincerely practicing loving-kindness meditation first toward oneself and then toward all beings living on earth, one can open the doors to obtaining unchanging and eternal satisfaction without any cost to oneself.

Today, many people, young and old, throughout the world suffer from mental stress. The fundamental reason for this, as we can see, is that human beings have become distanced from the wisdom of Buddhist thought.

THE HAPPINESS HACK

*By Dr Gaya Gamhewage
Founder, The Wisdom House*

In many ways, these are the best of times to be alive.

We are living longer, more people have basic needs met, we have better access to health care, education, information and technologies that were unimaginable for our grandparents. Before the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted decades of progress, global life expectancy had risen by more than six years since 2000. Knowledge that once took a lifetime to acquire is now at our fingertips.

And yet, there are signs that all is not well.

Three stark statistics from the World Health Organization point to dangerous currents below a seemingly calm surface. One in seven adolescents globally lives with a mental health condition, with anxiety and depression among the leading causes of illness and disability in this age group. Nearly one in six people worldwide reports feeling lonely—and the proportion rises to about one in five among young people. At the other end of life, social isolation and loneliness remain major threats to wellbeing, while retirement, bereavement and loss of purpose can bring their own forms of distress.

“I’m stressed.” How often do we hear—or say—those two words?

Stress has become part of the vocabulary of ordinary life: work stress, financial stress, relationship stress, exam stress, parenting stress—even the stress of taking a holiday. Research following people through their daily lives confirms what our language already suggests: for many of us, stress is woven into everyday life.

More than 2,500 years ago, the Buddha was examining an ancient version of this very same deeply human problem: dissatisfaction, pain and suffering. As a royal prince, he had everything he desired. Yet the question that troubled him then still troubles us today.

Why, even when we have what we want, are we so easily dissatisfied? Why does the mind cling, compare, fear and react? And can it be trained to respond differently?

The essence of Buddhist teaching is not to discover some abstract “meaning of life.” It begins by examining *dukkha*: the dissatisfaction, unease, pain and suffering that permeate human existence—from the trivial discomfort of a mosquito bite to the profound grief of losing someone we love.

The Buddha’s foundational teaching, the Four Noble Truths, has always struck the doctor in me as remarkably clinical in its architecture:

The first Noble Truth, *Dukkha*, is the presenting condition or diagnosis: What is the problem? There is suffering and dissatisfaction in human experience.

The second, *Samudaya*, is the aetiology: What causes it? Craving and clinging, rooted ultimately in our failure to see reality clearly—including the fact that the world, everything in it, and we ourselves are constantly changing.

The third, *Nirodha*, offers the possibility of recovery: Can something be done? Yes. If the causes of suffering can be relinquished, suffering can cease.

And the fourth, *Magga*, is the treatment plan: What can we do? Follow a practical path of ethical conduct, mental cultivation and wisdom—the Noble Eightfold Path.

In summary: There is dissatisfaction. It has causes.

It can be reduced and ultimately overcome. There is a path of practice for doing so.

For some 45 years, the Buddha walked the towns, villages and kingdoms of the Gangetic plains of northern India, teaching monastics, householders, rulers and ordinary people. He adapted his teaching to his audience, using stories, questions, metaphors and the language of everyday life.

His argument was radical: by seeing reality more clearly, cultivating ethical conduct, and developing and training the mind, we can lessen suffering. The result does not depend upon an external power. It requires understanding, effort and practice.

It is perhaps the ultimate brain—and happiness—hack.

Twenty-six centuries later, modern neuroscience and psychology are investigating some aspects of these ancient practices. Neuroimaging studies have reported functional and structural differences associated with sustained meditation practice, although the evidence remains an evolving field. Researchers are studying attention, emotional regulation, compassion, loving-kindness and equanimity.

Science has not “proved Buddhism”—nor should we ask it to. But it is increasingly able to investigate what happens when human beings systematically train attention and cultivate particular mental states.

And some Buddhist-derived practices have already travelled remarkably far.

As globalization accelerated, Buddhist teachings moved beyond Asia. Monastics and migrant communities established new roots; scholars translated ancient texts; philosophers and spiritual seekers engaged with Buddhist ideas; and psychologists, physicians and neuroscientists began investigating contemplative practices.

Over the past half-century, practices rooted partly in Buddhist contemplative traditions have travelled from monasteries and meditation centres into hospitals, universities, psychotherapy, businesses—and our homes.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction helped make contemplative practice accessible to secular medicine. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy subsequently brought mindfulness into conversation with cognitive psychology and is now an evidence-based approach, particularly for preventing relapse in recurrent depression. Compassion-based interventions draw on the trainability of compassion; loving-kindness meditation is being studied for positive emotion, relationships and prosocial behaviour.

But something interesting happened in translation. Mindfulness was extracted from a much larger system of mind training in which it originally belonged.

In Buddhism, mindfulness was never simply a technique for becoming less stressed while continuing to live exactly as before. It belonged within an ethical and philosophical architecture concerned with how we see, speak, act, relate—and ultimately how wisely we live.

One of the most difficult Buddhist ideas to grasp is the extent to which our minds construct our experience. We easily believe that if we have more, do more, achieve more, happiness will follow.

Buddhism offers a different perspective. Dissatisfaction, pain and stress need first to be acknowledged and understood. No amount of wishing, manifestation or good luck breaks the cycle by itself. This is not morbid. It is reality.

Like all great teachers, the Buddha used metaphors, parables, analogies, similes and stories. His was an oral tradition, and he used ordinary language to explain complex ideas and the relationships between them.

One teaching is particularly useful for modern life: the Eight Worldly Conditions, or what we might call the Eight Winds of Life. In the Lokavipatti Sutta (AN 8.6), the Buddha describes eight conditions that pursue human beings:

Gain and loss.

Fame or status and disrepute.

Praise and blame.

Pleasure and pain.

At any given moment, one or more of these winds may be blowing on us.

We naturally assume that the “positive” winds—gain, recognition, praise and pleasure—will make us happy, while their opposites make us suffer. But the problem, the Buddha suggests, is not simply gain or loss. It is our failure to understand their nature. They change. Without exception.

When gain comes, we celebrate it and cling to it. When gain inevitably becomes loss, we suffer. We do the same with recognition, praise and pleasure.

And when the negative winds arrive—loss, obscurity, blame and pain—the mind can tell us that this is unbearable, that it defines us, perhaps even that it will last forever. But these conditions too are impermanent.

The Lokavipatti Sutta contrasts the ordinary response with that of a well-instructed person. When gain arises, the trained person recognizes: “Gain has arisen for me.” They reflect that it is impermanent and subject to change. They see it as it actually is rather than allowing it to consume the mind.

Notice the subtle difference. Not: “I am successful.” But: “Gain has arisen.”

Not: “I am a failure.” But: “Loss has arisen.”

Elsewhere, the *Dhammapada* gives us the memorable image:

“Like a solid rock is not moved by the wind, the wise are not shaken by blame or praise.”

— *Dhammapada*, verse 81

This relates to one of the qualities Buddhists cultivate: *upekkhā*—equanimity.

Equanimity does not mean not caring. Nor does it mean suppressing joy or grief. It means developing steadiness through understanding that experiences arise, change and cease—the principle of *anicca*, impermanence.

So how might an ordinary person practise this?

Pick one wind that is blowing on you today. Suppose it is loss. Instead of immediately thinking, “I have lost something dear to me,” try first saying: “Loss has arisen.” Then pause. Observe what is happening in your body and mind. Notice the story your mind is constructing around it. Remember that this experience, too, is subject to change.

You have not denied the loss. You have not pretended that it doesn't hurt. You have simply created a little space between what has happened and who you believe you are because it happened. That is a micro-practice anyone can try.

And contemporary neuroscience and psychology give us good reason to take such practices seriously. The brain remains plastic throughout life. How we repeatedly direct attention, interpret experience and respond to emotion can influence patterns of thought and behaviour. Perhaps that is where an ancient teaching becomes unexpectedly modern.

We are moving into a future shaped by artificial intelligence, climate change, demographic transformation and disruption to familiar social, political and economic systems. The winds will keep blowing. Buddhist teaching does not promise to stop them. Instead, it asks something both simpler and harder: Can we learn to see more clearly? Can we become less captive to craving and fear? Can we train a wiser mind?

That is why I believe Buddhist teaching is as relevant today as it was 26 centuries ago. The Dhamma itself is described as well expounded, timeless, reaping benefits here and now, inviting us to come and see for ourselves, leading inward, and to be known and experienced by each person for themselves. It does not ask us to believe. It asks us to investigate, practise and see what we discover.

No more. No less.



UNDERSTANDING THE MIND, OBSERVING THE MIND

Menusha Rodrigo,

Psychologist

One of the things I value most about my work as a psychologist is being allowed into moments when people are trying to make sense of themselves. Sometimes it is about a decision, a change at work, a difficulty with someone close to them, or simply the feeling of falling into the same reactions again and again. Behind these different situations, I often hear a similar question: Why do I react this way, even when I know better?

Earlier in my career, I think I placed too much faith in understanding. If we could identify where a pattern came from, put words around it and make sense of it, I assumed that change would naturally follow.

I still believe understanding matters enormously. Psychology helps us see how our experiences, relationships and histories shape what we expect from ourselves and from others. There can be real relief in recognising a pattern for the first time. Something that once seemed confusing suddenly makes sense.

Understanding means becoming able to make sense of why we think, feel or behave in certain ways. In psychology, this often involves recognising how previous experiences, relationships and beliefs influence the way we interpret and respond to what happens to us in the present. Understanding gives our reactions a context: instead of simply asking, “Why am I like this?”, we begin to see how a particular way of responding may have developed.

By Pattern, I refer to a way of thinking, feeling or behaving that tends to repeat itself across similar situations. A pattern may involve the same kind of interpretation, emotion and response. Because it is familiar and often automatic, we may not recognise the pattern while we are inside it. We simply find ourselves responding in the same way again.

But understanding has its limits. Every so often, someone in therapy will say: “I know exactly why I react like this, but I still react the same way.” I have always found that sentence interesting. Knowing where a reaction comes from does not necessarily stop it from appearing.

A Reaction, is what arises in us in response to something we experience. This may include thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations and impulses to act. Many reactions happen very quickly, sometimes before we have consciously decided how we want to respond.

This is where mindfulness adds something that understanding alone may not provide. Understanding can help us recognise why a reaction exists; mindfulness can help us observe the reaction as it is happening. Instead of immediately following a thought, emotion or impulse, we begin by noticing that it is there.

Over the years, I have become less interested in the moment when someone says, “Now I understand”, and more interested in what sometimes happens later: “I noticed myself doing it again, but this time I didn’t immediately follow it.” The difference can sound small. Often, it isn’t.

Getting to that point usually happens gradually. At first, someone may recognise the pattern only afterwards: I did it again. With time, they may begin to notice it while it is happening: I am doing it again. And sometimes they start noticing the first signs of the reaction - a familiar thought, a change in the body, an emotion beginning to rise, or an impulse to act. The pattern has not necessarily disappeared. What has changed is the ability to observe it before automatically giving in to it.

I grew up with Buddhism, so many of its practices and methods of observing the mind were familiar to me long before I became a psychologist. I did not originally think of them as theories or ideas to believe in, but as ways of paying attention to experience and observing how the mind works. They were simply part of the way I had learned to look at the mind and at the changing nature of experience.

Becoming a psychologist gave me another language for some of these questions. Over time, I began to notice connections that I had not necessarily seen before. While psychology helped me understand how our histories and relationships shape our patterns, Buddhist practice kept bringing me back to something equally important: what happens when those patterns appear in the mind, here and now.

Perhaps this is why I do not experience psychology and Buddhism as two separate worlds that need to be forced together. In my own life, they have simply become two ways of looking at some of the same human experiences.

Psychology often takes us back: How did I come to respond this way? Buddhist practice brings me to another question: What is my mind doing right now?

Take something very ordinary, such as receiving a short message from someone. The message may contain only a few words, but within seconds the mind can produce an entire story around it. Why did they write it like that? Did I say something wrong?

Psychology can help us understand why one person might be more sensitive to this uncertainty than another. Previous experiences influence what we notice, what we expect and how quickly we arrive at certain interpretations. But understanding this does not necessarily prevent the story from starting.

What Buddhist practice has made me attentive to is the possibility of noticing the story while it is being created. I do not have to decide immediately whether the thought is right or wrong. I can first recognise that it is a thought.

This sounds simple, but in practice it is not. Thoughts can be remarkably convincing. We often experience them as descriptions of reality rather than as something the mind is producing. Yet when we pay attention, they appear, disappear, return and change.

This has influenced how I think about therapy. Change does not always begin when an

uncomfortable emotion disappears. Sometimes it begins when someone notices what is happening a little earlier than before. There may be irritation and, for a moment, an awareness of it before acting. The emotion is still there, but there is now a little room between the experience and what happens next.

The Buddhist understanding of impermanence has stayed with me for similar reasons. We know that experiences change, yet an emotion can feel surprisingly permanent while we are experiencing it. However, when we observe more closely, our inner world is constantly moving. Thoughts come and go. Feelings change in intensity. Something that seemed very important in the morning may look quite different by the evening.

This does not make an emotion less real. It simply changes our relationship to it. I find that making the distinction between “I am anxious” and “There is anxiety here” is useful for this reason. The latter does not deny the anxiety. It simply leaves a little more space around it. Anxiety becomes something I am experiencing rather than a definition of who I am.

Psychology teaches us to take our personal stories seriously. What has happened to us matters: our relationships and experiences leave traces, and understanding them can be an important part of therapy. At the same time, the Buddhist perspective reminds me to be careful about clinging to those narratives too tightly. Indeed, a pattern can slowly become an identity: “I worry a lot” can become “I am an anxious person”. An experience can become evidence of who we think we are.

Compassion matters here too. Awareness can easily become another opportunity to criticise ourselves: I know I do this, so why am I doing it again? One thing I continue to value in Buddhist practice is the possibility of noticing without immediately judging. This does not mean becoming passive or avoiding responsibility. It simply means that change does not always have to begin with dissatisfaction with ourselves.

I still place enormous value on understanding. I

want to understand why certain experiences affect us, why particular patterns develop, and why some are difficult to change. I am simply less convinced than I once was that understanding is the end goal.

Sometimes the next step is not another explanation. It is noticing what the mind is doing before we automatically follow it. For me, this is where psychology and Buddhist practice meet most naturally: understanding the patterns we carry, while learning to notice when they begin to carry us.

BASIC TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA

in the eyes of a therapist

Don Felix Sarath Warnakula Social educator, music therapist and mentor for socially and psychologically challenged youth, Denmark

In Europe, the influence of the teachings of Buddha started as early as 1909 through the establishment of the monastery "*Datsan Gunzecoinei*" in Saint Petersburg. Contacts between the Hellenistic world and India increased following Alexander the Great's campaigns, and these contacts later contributed to exchanges between Greek and Indian philosophical and religious traditions. However, the claim that Buddhism itself was "brought to Europe" in the 4th century BC should be stated cautiously and supported by a historical source.

The first European Theravada Buddhist center, "*Das Buddhistische Haus*," was established in Berlin by the physician Dr. Paul Dahlke in 1924. For a little over 100 years now, the interest in Buddhism has grown remarkably in Europe. Today, with freedom of choice as well as the knowledge of self-awareness and self-determination, people in Europe have started crossing these psycho-social borders of traditional and cultural norms with the purpose of experimenting and experiencing new paradigms to learn how to live a life more enriched with self-contentment. During this process, Buddhism has been embraced in its traditional form but has also

transformed to suit the individual needs of people who seek refuge in the tranquillity and peace associated with Buddhist practice.

In my thirty years of experience as a social educator, music therapist and mentor for socially and psychologically challenged youth, I have noticed how effective and influential the teachings of Buddha have been for them. Coincidentally, I have been in my line of work for the exact number of years as "The International Buddhist Foundation of Geneva" has existed.

Until the late sixties, Denmark's social upbringing and basic educational principles were based on strict rules of authoritarian governance and strict disciplinary guidelines of the Christian church.

Discipline on school premises was based on three guidelines

1. "*Kæft*": No freedom to speak without the permission of a teacher or another adult.
2. "*Trit*": Walking two by two in a line formation.
3. "*Retning*": Be strictly in the line and obey the teacher or other adult.

A similar code of conduct applied to the home, as the principles of bringing up a child were based on the three "R`s":

1. "*Renhed*": cleanliness
2. "*Ro*": Calmness
3. "*Regelmæssighed*": Routine

Although these structural elements helped to create a very disciplined society, the impact of these same principles may also, in some circumstances, have contributed to less spontaneous and less emotionally expressive forms of human interaction. In other words, people were becoming more mechanical than human, creating a vacuum in human relations. At the same time, a substantial number of people these days suffer from loneliness and anxiety-induced stress and even depression. To handle the rapidly increasing stress in society, many have found mindfulness and meditation to be their method of choice.

The two science-based secular meditation techniques that are most commonly used in Denmark are: MBSR, mindfulness-based stress reduction; and MBCT, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy.

Low arousal is the term used to describe an effective preliminary method used in social/psychological institutions in Denmark by therapists, mentors, and educators to tackle the chaos and confusion that may affect people experiencing significant psychological and social difficulties. It consists of maintaining an inner calm and serene state when in contact with a client, student, or patient who is overly sensitive or hyperactive, allowing them to project that calmness effectively to the client.

I have experienced in my work that this gives a decent chance for a good beginning and fruitful results at the end, regardless of the objectives and intentions of both parties involved.

As a newcomer to Buddhism, my knowledge about it may be restricted. However, through my education and experience, I have observed interesting parallels between the four foundations of mindfulness described in the "*Sathara Satipattana Sutta*" and therapeutic approaches using the "low arousal" method in Denmark and elsewhere in Europe.

For example, I see a certain connection between:

1. *Kayanupassana* – and the awareness of the body language of the therapist when communicating with a client.
2. *Vedananupassana* – and being able to understand and feel the discomfort and distress of the client
3. *Chiththanupassana* – and the intuition of the therapist to understand the contradictory, complex thoughts of the client and the ability to sort through these thoughts for the benefit of the client.
4. *Dhammanupassana* - and the capacity of the therapist to grasp the understanding of the sense of justice, good and bad, of the client.

There are many necessary conditions when dealing with a client. But the quality of communication tops them all. “*Samma Vacha*” (right speech) is one of the eight factors of the "Noble Eightfold Path," which Buddha had preached to help people to end suffering and reach enlightenment. This noble path can also be used effectively in therapy and mentoring, especially when communicating with clients. Indeed, I find the connection between this one important element of therapy and the four distinct segments of "*Samma Vacha*" very insightful:

1. Being truthful and being honest with the client as much as one can. Not to deceive the client with false hope or fabricated truth to evade an uncomfortable situation for the therapist.
2. Keeping the communication professional and bearing in mind the oath of secrecy, bound by law. Though this obligation by law was implemented less than 30-40 years ago in Denmark, Buddha had already advised people to practice this several thousand years ago.
3. Speaking softly to the client. Keeping calm and reacting mildly (rather proactively) even in situations where the client's tone can become harsh and chaotic.
4. Being specific and consciously addressing what is important to the client's well-being.

These are just some instances in which the noble teachings of Buddha are reflected in the present-day basic psychological and pedagogical practices in Denmark that I have observed and applied in my profession.

At times, both at work as well as in private life, in certain situations where I run out of answers and understanding, my little knowledge of Dhamma leads me to search for the meaning and purpose of life. I believe that crossing geographical borders 35 years ago and settling down here also paved the way for me to cross my mental borders – both those of my original culture and those of the traditional norms in which I was raised, to open up a new way of life.

HEALTH IS WEALTH

Analysing Health According to Buddhism.

*Venerable Halyale Wimalarathana Thero,
Senior Resident Monk of the International Buddhist
Foundation, Geneva.*

All beings desire to live in peace with health. No matter how much one has, if one is not healthy, none of it is of any use. Therefore, among the things that a being needs, living in health is considered the greatest gain. (1.Dp.Sw 2) Accordingly, you and I also desire to live in good health. Therefore, we have a moral right to protect our own health as well as the health of all in society.

The Buddha taught that living by nurturing the qualities necessary for the well-being of all beings is the most valuable skill and that you can get a benefit that cannot be obtained from anything else. (2.SN.M.Sutta) Everyone's wish is to live a healthy life free from diseases. In modern life, people adopt various methods to lead a healthy life. Among them, there is an increased motivation for diet control and physical exercise based on the latest medical advice.

But it is very rare to find a person without any disease or suffering. To some extent, we and all of society have become victims of physical disease or mental health challenges. It would seem that all of society is affected by these pathological conditions.

Among the factors that have had a strong impact on the deterioration of human health in today's society are the widespread consumption of sugar, artificial foods and beverages, fast food, pesticides used in food production, and chemical medicines. These have led to widespread consumption of foods unfit for human consumption.

Moreover, due to the use of various drugs, unlimited addiction to technical devices, and the confusion of the human mind by the market system aimed at hyper-consumption, pollution and effects of war, it is challenging to formulate and implement projects

to help a society lead people back to health.

Humans are today suffering from mental ill health. Underlying this is the fundamental fact that the causes of suffering and unease - craving, anger, fear, and ignorance are strong and present in our lives.

We easily forget that by weakening the powerful factors of nature like earth, water, air and sunlight, not only the health of man but also the existence of life is threatened; it means getting lost in the thick darkness of ignorance.

The Buddha and Health

The purpose of this article is to investigate this health issue according to the teachings of the Lord Buddha.

According to Buddhist analysis, all phenomena are explained according to the theory of cause and effect. Accordingly, the first step is to identify the causative conditions. The second step is to study the causes of those causative conditions. The third step is to identify the solution or treatment, and the fourth step is to cure the disease or cure the patient through treatment.

This is the first step in identifying the diseases and patients in society in terms of causal theory. Let us identify the various diseases prevalent in modern society - physical and mental diseases. They are analysed extensively on various medical scientific bases. There are also extensive studies on their causes. Moreover, for the prevention of diseases, a system of methods for curing diseases using various types of medicines is followed.

According to the teachings of Buddhism, a being is the sum of the five aggregates of form, sensations, perceptions, formations, and consciousness.

In *Girimananda Sutta* (3.AN), a profound analysis of the being identified with the consciousness of I, my, or mine and the state of being in truth is presented using the ten perceptions. The teaching of these ten perceptions is very important in understanding the illusory nature of the physical and mental state in which the two

Dharmas of body and mind are bound. These include the perceptions of impermanence, not-self, ugliness, drawbacks, giving up, fading away, cessation, dissatisfaction with the whole world, impermanence of all conditions, and mindfulness of breathing. Understanding this perception also helps us to study the disease states that arise in the body and to understand the life we have received from nature, freed from our animalistic nature.

Let us now examine the part relevant to our topic, the perception of origin:

“And what is the perception of drawbacks? There is the case where a monk — having gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling — reflects thus: 'This body has many pains, many drawbacks. In this body many kinds of disease arise, such as: seeing-diseases, hearing-diseases, nose-diseases, tongue-diseases, body-diseases, head-diseases, ear-diseases, mouth-diseases, teeth-diseases, cough, asthma, catarrh, fever, aging, stomach-ache, fainting, dysentery, grippe, cholera, leprosy, boils, ringworm, tuberculosis, epilepsy, skin-disease, itch, scab, psoriasis, scabies, jaundice, diabetes, haemorrhoids, fistulas, ulcers; diseases arising from bile, from phlegm, from the wind-property, from combinations of bodily humours, from changes in the weather, from uneven care of the body, from attacks, from the result of Kamma; cold, heat, hunger, thirst, defecation, urination.' Thus, he remains focused on drawbacks regarding this body. This is called the perception of drawbacks.»

When examining the diseases taught in this *Girimananda Sutta*, there is not much difference between the diseases that exist in the society we live in because the principles that cause the production of this body are the same.

In the same text, there are eight different reasons for the diseases: Diseases arising from bile. Diseases arising slowly. Diseases arising from air. Diseases arising from the three evils. Diseases arising from the change of seasons. Diseases arising from wrong conduct. Diseases arising from subterfuge. Diseases arising from the results of *karma*. Cold. Heat. Hunger. Thirst. Excrement. Urine. Thus, one

dwells in this body, seeing with wisdom the effects of the effects of the body. This is called Ananda, the perception of the effects of the effects of the body.

According to this explanation, diseases arise due to internal and external factors. Diseases arise due to the existence of unethical conduct and external dangers. In addition to all this, diseases and dangers also occur due to the *karmic* consequences associated with the being. How practical this analysis is can be understood by studying the phenomena related to life. Despite how advanced medical methods are in modern times, there is much we still do not know, as we see by examining diseases whose causes are unknown and cannot be cured by treatment.

The Asivisopama Sutta teaches that death, or near-death suffering, occurs due to the anger of the four great demons. ‘Four venomous vipers of awesome might’ is a term for the four principal states: the elements of earth, water, fire, and air. (4.SN1.19) The nature of the four great demons, namely, earth, water, fire, and air, is a terrifying task, like guarding four poisonous snakes. In modern times, the daily life of man, the food, drink, and environment, etc., have all led to the awakening of the poison within man. By observing the suffering of humans and other animals who are afflicted with various diseases, the Dharma guides us to wisely examine the life we lead, which is inherently poisonous.

No matter where one is born, one is born as a victim of these four great demons. No one is able to escape the self that is acquired through karma. What is acquired as a gift of *karma* must be accepted. (5.AN. Dasa) There is no escape from these snakes except by freeing the mind from the defilement that creates fear of samsara and all the problems and by attaining emancipation.

The most terrible disease for a being is rebirth. It is like being hit by a flood. When the four great elements that contribute to the birth of a being act as internal relics, the terrible nature manifests itself externally through natural phenomena such as floods, storms, volcanoes, landslides, earthquakes, etc. Many beings, including humans, become victims of them. It is extremely complex to

analyse these situations. It shows that there is no method to control the activities of these four great demons and that the being is constantly a victim of that situation. Therefore, the Buddha preached that the mind should be developed to a state where this mind is not a victim of the four great demons. That is, the only solution is to free the mind from all defilements.

The Blessed One said: "There is the case, monks, where an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person — who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma — perceives earth as earth. Perceiving earth as earth, he conceives [things] about earth, he conceives [things] in earth, he conceives [things] coming out of earth, he conceives earth as 'mine,' he delights in earth. Why is that? Because he has not comprehended it, I tell you." (6. MN 1. Mp)

The Buddha's first sermon, the *Dhammachakka pawaththana Sutta* (7. SN 56.11), is a profound explanation based on the theory of cause and effect, teaching the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering. There, the cause of suffering is presented as craving. It is the root of all mental illnesses. It is also taught as craving for sensual pleasure, craving for existence, and craving for potential. Based on that craving, the mind moves towards the four defilements of hatred, fear, and delusion. Furthermore, it is motivated to act by freeing itself from the consciousness of being and becoming and developing the consciousness of being. The peak of mental illnesses arises in humans based on egoism. There, this life, which is of the nature of form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness, is eager to maintain itself as a form-attachment, a feeling-attachment, a perception-attachment, a mental formation, and a consciousness-attachment. Because of this, man becomes a slave to thoughts and acts unconsciously.

The advice given by the *Dhamma* here is to use the wisdom of insight to look at life analytically by cultivating mindfulness and effort. (8. DN.22 MS)

Due to this mental problem, the mental concentration of the person is lost. That is, the mind becomes weak. Due to this, bad thoughts arise. Or one becomes enslaved by emotions. Due to this, the words spoken and the actions done are harmful. The physical and mental discipline that should be present in the person is lost. Due to this, one is tempted to commit any sin or crime. The effects of the bad deeds done due to this mental state follow one throughout the entire *samsara*. It is the universal law that various repercussive energies are attached to the being. (9. Dp. YW 1)

By improving the mental state, many diseases and afflictions that affect the body can be eliminated. Since an undisciplined mind is prone to various sinful tendencies, as taught in the *Dhamma*, the principles of vigilance and vigour are at the forefront of mental training. Accordingly, controlling the mind, body and speech helps to achieve physical and mental balance. Furthermore, sensory control is a noble quality that must be trained for mental health. Through the discipline of the senses of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, mental control as well as mental concentration can be developed. By getting rid of the five sins and ten unwholesome qualities, a superior lifestyle of loving-kindness, compassion, and equanimity is developed through this. For this reason, as a result, this mind is freed from the four defilements of attachment, guilt, fear and delusion. There is no room for sinful thoughts to arise in that mind.

There is no greater way to give meaning to this life, which is the result of a high level of karmic energy, than this. Because the person who maintains this lifestyle lives comfortably, he himself also lives comfortably, and even the animals and all the other creatures in society find comfort. How powerful this mental health is. As a result of this, the mind develops in virtue and concentration. Such a person could experience the luminous nature of the purity that exists in his mind.

The Buddha said “*Bhikkhus*, there is a most wonderful way to help living beings realize purification, overcome directly grief and sorrow, end pain and anxiety, travel the right path, and realize nirvana. This way is the Four Establishments

of Mindfulness”. (10. DN 22 MS)

According to the guidance in the Satipatthana Sutta, the person who follows the path for the purification he or she realises this body, sensation, mind, and mental formations as they are. Having realized this sublime truth, he or she is living in good health physically as well as mentally among the people who are suffering from diseases.

As a result of this training, achieve the wisdom and enters the first step of liberation, becoming Sothapanna.

The path to be followed to resolve all problems is the Middle Way. The Buddha first taught it in the *Dhammachakkapawattana Sutta*. Right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This historical teaching is timeless. This is the only way for man to solve his problems and create a beautiful human being who is kind to nature, the environment, and all beings. This path of *Dhamma* is clear to the wise. It is the truth revealed to the world through noble research. By following this path of *Dhamma*, let us work hard for the great opportunity to heal physical and mental illnesses, develop virtue, concentration, and wisdom, and be free from the suffering in this life.

May all beings be in good health!



BUDDHIST WISDOM IN MODERN LIFE

Finding Balance in a Changing World

Mauli Wijesinghe,
Former Dhamma School student

Life has changed greatly over time, but many of the questions we face as human beings remain the same. How can we find peace when life is uncertain? How can we live with others while respecting ourselves? How can we face change, disappointment, ageing and loss without losing our sense of direction?

For more than two thousand years, Buddhist teachings have offered ways of reflecting on these questions. Their relevance today does not come from providing simple answers to every difficulty, but from encouraging a way of living based on awareness, compassion, wisdom and balance.

One of the central lessons of Buddhism is the importance of finding contentment. Human beings naturally have desires and ambitions. We want to improve our lives, achieve our goals and create a better future. Buddhism does not require us to abandon these aspirations. Instead, it reminds us that constantly wanting more can prevent us from recognising the value of what is already present in our lives.

Contentment does not mean giving up. It means being able to appreciate what we have while continuing to grow. We can have goals without allowing them to control our happiness. We can recognise our weaknesses without forgetting our qualities. In this way, Buddhism encourages a quieter and more stable form of confidence: one that comes from understanding ourselves rather than constantly seeking approval from others.

This search for balance is closely connected to the Buddhist teaching of the Middle Way. Life often presents us with extremes, but wisdom can be found in learning not to be controlled by them. We can care for others without completely forgetting ourselves. We can work towards success without making success the only measure of our worth.



We can enjoy what life gives us without becoming unable to accept its loss.

The Middle Way is therefore not simply an ancient philosophical idea. It can become a practical attitude towards everyday life: learning when to act, when to accept, when to persevere and when to let go.

Compassion and loving-kindness are also at the heart of Buddhist thought. They invite us to recognise that every person experiences difficulties, hopes, fears and imperfections. Compassion begins when we become capable of looking beyond ourselves and recognising the humanity of another person.

This does not mean agreeing with everything others do. Nor does it mean accepting harmful behaviour. It means learning to separate a person's actions from their entire worth as a human being. Someone can make a mistake and still deserve understanding. We can disagree while remaining respectful. We can protect ourselves while refusing to respond with unnecessary hatred.

Buddhist ethical teachings, including the Five Precepts, support this same principle. Respect for life, honesty, responsibility and awareness encourage us to consider the consequences of our choices. Rather than simply asking, "What do I want?", Buddhist practice encourages another question: "What effect will my actions have on myself and on others?"



This awareness can gradually change the way we relate to the world. Generosity, patience and kindness do not need to appear through extraordinary actions. They can become part of the way we speak, listen, make decisions and treat the people around us.

Another essential Buddhist teaching is impermanence: the understanding that everything is constantly changing. We often become attached to the idea that certain things should remain as they are. Yet our circumstances change, relationships change, our bodies change, and our own thoughts and feelings change. Buddhism does not teach impermanence in order to make life seem meaningless. On the contrary, understanding that things do not last can help us recognise their value while they are present.

Impermanence can also bring hope. Just as joyful moments do not remain forever, neither do difficult ones. A painful period can change. A mistake does not have to define an entire life. Accepting change can allow us to move forward instead of remaining attached to what can no longer be changed.

Even the awareness that human life has an end can deepen our appreciation of it. Recognising that our time is limited can encourage us to live with greater attention, to value the people around us and to avoid endlessly postponing what truly matters.

Perhaps this is one of the greatest contributions Buddhist wisdom can make to modern life: teaching us how to live fully without trying to

control everything.

Buddhism does not promise a life without difficulties. It offers ways of meeting those difficulties with greater understanding. It reminds us that peace does not always come from changing the world around us; sometimes it begins by changing the way we understand and respond to it.

These teachings can accompany a person throughout every stage of life. Their meaning may change with experience, but principles such as compassion, balance, awareness, contentment and acceptance remain relevant. They can guide the young person beginning to discover the world, the adult carrying responsibilities, and the older person looking back on a lifetime of experiences.

The wisdom of Buddhism is therefore not limited to monasteries, ceremonies or ancient texts. It exists in ordinary life: in the way we treat another person, the way we respond to difficulty, the way we accept change and the way we appreciate what is already before us.

In a world that will continue to change, these teachings remind us of something deeply human: we cannot control every event in our lives, but we can learn how to meet life with greater wisdom, compassion and balance.

And perhaps that is why Buddhist teachings, despite their ancient origins, continue to have something meaningful to offer the world today.

LA PLEINE CONSCIENCE DANS UN MONDE EN CRISE

Fabienne Bandaranayake,

Psychologue

Malgré les avancées technologiques et le développement des techniques de soins de plus en plus

sophistiquées, la société et la santé de ses individus se dégradent, tant physiquement que psychiquement. La prévalence des maladies cardiovasculaires et des cas de cancer augmente dans les pays dits “développés”, de même que les troubles psychiques des individus. Selon l’OMS, la santé se définit comme un état de bien-être physique, psychique et social, et non seulement par l’absence de maladie. Ceci montre l’importance d’un équilibre entre ces trois sphères. En effet, la psyché ne peut s’envisager que dans ses liens avec le corps et la biologie, d’une part, la société et la culture d’autre part.

Notre corps nous parle mais nous ne l’écoutons pas. Nous avons perdu l’habitude de lier notre corps à notre esprit, ou notre cœur à notre cerveau. Nous sommes pris dans les tourments de la vie, au sein d’une société de plus en plus compétitive et égocentrique qui oublie l’essentiel, l’amour entre les êtres humains, le respect et la gentillesse.

La pleine conscience se définit comme un état attentionnel, concentré sur le moment présent, sans que l’esprit soit pris dans d’autres pensées. La respiration est le lien qui se fait avec le corps, et on l’utilise afin de revenir dans l’instant. Pourquoi la pleine conscience est-elle si importante aujourd’hui? Dans les carences qui sont aujourd’hui les nôtres, il manque le calme, la lenteur, la continuité : nous sommes incités à répondre de plus en plus vite, et nous ne pouvons plus suivre quelque chose ou profiter de nos loisirs sans être dérangés, étant tout le temps connectés. Lorsque nous méditons, c’est que nous aspirons au calme, et nous sommes dans le calme, la continuité et la lenteur, dont nous prive le monde contemporain.

La méditation est pratiquée depuis plus de 2 500 ans, notamment en Orient. Il existe aussi des traditions méditatives en Occident et globalement

dans toutes les cultures. Mais l’enseignement de Siddhartha Gautama, le Bouddha, reste aujourd’hui toujours aussi profond et pertinent. Nous y trouvons l’essence des pratiques ancestrales pour venir en aide aux gens dans leur souffrance et le chemin qui mène à leur libération, non seulement au travers des pratiques méditatives mais aussi par l’application de valeurs telles que le respect, l’amour universel, des valeurs morales et tant d’autres encore.

Ces enseignements et ces valeurs deviennent de plus en plus importants dans le monde actuel. Les enfants d’aujourd’hui grandissent dans un environnement où les sollicitations sont nombreuses et où l’attention est constamment sollicitée. Leur apprendre à s’arrêter, à respirer, à ressentir leur corps et à observer leurs émotions peut devenir une véritable ressource. De nombreuses recherches suggèrent que les pratiques de la pleine conscience peuvent soutenir, chez les enfants et les adolescents, l’attention, la régulation émotionnelle et la capacité à faire face au stress. Elles peuvent également favoriser le calme intérieur, la bienveillance envers soi-même et envers les autres.

Le but n’est pas de leur apprendre à « méditer » à tout prix. C’est de leur transmettre, par notre propre manière d’être, la possibilité de ralentir, d’écouter, de prendre soin de soi et des autres. Les enfants apprennent beaucoup par l’observation. Un enfant qui voit un adulte prendre quelques instants pour respirer, écouter véritablement, accueillir une émotion ou faire preuve de compassion reçoit déjà un enseignement.

Ainsi, la santé, au sens large du terme, est un processus global impliquant le corps, l’esprit et les relations qui nous unissent aux autres. Il ne s’agit pas seulement de soulager des symptômes, mais de retrouver un équilibre fondamental, une qualité

de présence à soi-même, aux autres et au monde. C'est peut-être là que les enseignements du Bouddha prennent aujourd'hui toute leur actualité.

Dans un monde qui nous pousse sans cesse à aller plus vite, à consommer davantage et à nous disperser, la pleine conscience nous invite à revenir à l'essentiel: être pleinement présents, développer la compassion, reconnaître notre souffrance et apprendre à nous en libérer. La pleine conscience n'est donc peut-être pas une pratique de plus à ajouter à nos vies déjà bien remplies. Elle pourrait, au contraire, être une invitation à ralentir, à écouter, à respirer et simplement à être là – avec nous-mêmes, avec les autres, avec la vie.



SECTION 2

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THE LEGACY OF VENERABLE KALYANATHTHISSA MAHA THERO

HE WHO WALKED THE PATH OF THE BUDDHA

In the cherished memory of a humble teacher sharing his wisdom with grace across the modern world.

Ophélie Ratsaphong

A Sacred First Encounter

The story of my family's connection with the late Most Venerable Kalyanatissa began in 1986, when my parents joined the Lao-France group on their annual pilgrimage to honour the path of the Lord Buddha and visit the sacred Buddhist sites he had described to Bhante Ananda, his closest disciple, before his parinibbana.

During their stay in Sarnath, my parents and their group were accommodated in a one-storey house that they had helped to fund, with more than ten rooms prepared to welcome visiting pilgrims. It was there that they encountered a young monk whose radiant smile and compassionate eyes remained deeply in their memory. He was the late Most Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Maha Thero, hereinafter referred to as "the late Most Venerable". With kindness and generosity, he accompanied the group to the holy Buddhist sites in Sarnath, speaking elegant English and sharing his profound knowledge of the Buddha's historic places.

That first meeting soon grew into a lasting bond. After my parents returned to France, my mother received a letter from the late Most Venerable in which he expressed his wish to pursue further studies at a French university. At her request, a letter of private support and third-party guarantee was prepared and sent to him, helping make possible his student visa for France.

Studies in France and Early Dhamma Work in Europe

This support opened the way for a new chapter in Europe. Between 1987 and 1990, the late Most Venerable resided with my parents in Arras and attended a university in Lille. After completing his studies, he set off on a meaningful journey across France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. In each country, people welcomed him with kindness and invited him to share the Dhamma with generosity and a gentle heart. Whether speaking to many people or only a few, he remained enthusiastic, dedicated and sincere in his wish to help others.

As his work expanded, the late Most Venerable travelled frequently between Europe and Sri Lanka, yet he remained happy, calm, patient, kind and positive. Through his own example of patience and determination, he encouraged those around him to cultivate personal growth and mental tranquillity.

Service in Germany and Switzerland

From 1991 to 1994, the late Most Venerable was appointed Spiritual Counsellor at the Buddhist Haus in Berlin, an important centre in the growth of Buddhism in Germany. This period marked a new phase of his European service, as his teaching moved from university life in France into wider community guidance.

After this service in Germany, he continued his mission in Switzerland. From 1994, the late Most

Venerable served as Spiritual Director for the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF) in Geneva, assisting with its Dhamma programmes. The IBF organised Sinhala language classes and Dhamma lessons for children, alongside humanitarian and social initiatives. His appointment came at a pivotal moment for the organisation, soon after the departure of its Chief Incumbent, Venerable Tawalama Dhammika, a revered communicator of the Dhamma.

The laity, particularly the Sinhalese community, warmly supported and valued his contributions. Many visitors from Switzerland, Thailand, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and France sought his counsel on Dhamma philosophy and meditation techniques. This led to the organisation of several meditation retreats under his guidance, attended by participants from many professional backgrounds.

Foundations and Community Service

While serving Buddhist communities in Europe, the late Most Venerable also remained deeply connected to Sri Lanka. Alongside his responsibilities abroad, he established the Sudarshana Meditation Centre in his hometown of Yatiyana, Minuwangoda, to support the local Sri Lankan community. The Centre guides both lay and monastic devotees towards peace, clarity and a deeper understanding of the Buddha's teachings. It offers Dhamma talks, discussions, study sessions and guided meditation, nurturing mindfulness, enhancing concentration and promoting personal development.

As a devoted meditation practitioner and counsellor, the late Most Venerable also served as the spiritual custodian and a member of the Lemanique Buddhist Foundation in Morges, founded by Ms. Sylvia Guignard.

His contribution to Buddhist life in Switzerland continued to grow. Recognising the increasing interest in the Dhamma, the late Most Venerable contributed to the establishment of both the Zurich Buddhist Vihara, headed by Venerable



Karuwalagaswewa Anuruddha, and the Basel Buddhist Vihara, established on 1 July 2024 and headed by Venerable Udumaththe Ariyaseela Thero.

International Buddha Relics Exhibition and Global Custodianship

From these local and regional efforts, his service eventually extended to a remarkable international responsibility connected with the sacred Buddha relics.

In March 2002, the Swiss Buddhist Association in Geneva, under the guidance of the late Most Venerable and its organising members, hosted an International Exhibition of the Buddha Relics from Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Myanmar. The exhibition was held before the sacred relics were enshrined in a golden stupa at the United Nations in New York.

The event welcomed more than 4,000 visitors from the United States, Asia, and Europe. Following the successful exhibition, the late Most Venerable was appointed by the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand as

the monk custodian of the sacred Buddha relics, accompanying the golden stupa on a journey around the world. This role allowed him to meet and connect with people across the globe.

Teachings, Guidance and Inner Practice

Beyond his public service, the late Most Venerable also guided students personally and patiently. When I started learning from him, he suggested I begin with “Buddhism in a Nutshell” by Ven. Narada Thera and then move on to “What the Buddha Taught” by Ven. Walpola Rahula. This enlightening experience led me on a deeply enriching journey in search of the truth about life. With his guidance, he monitored my progress in meditation each week. As my awareness deepened, my mental state remained unshaken, and bodily sensations seemed to fade. In that state, there was no fixed “I” or “me” to hold on to, only mind and matter arising through the four elements of solidity, fluidity, heat and air. He suggested I delve deeper into this state where I perceive small cells of lightning emerging and dissipating, accompanied by an energy akin to electricity.

The late Most Venerable remarked that this is simply how nature operates. Consider having a mind as resilient as a tree. When a strong wind blows, be mindful and observe how the branches and leaves move with the wind, unperturbed by the constant changes. Be an observer rather than an actor.

After thirty-five years as his student, I came to realise that he demonstrated the true nature of things rather than merely what we wished them to be. He frequently emphasised that Buddhism is a practical and logical way of life, not a matter of blind faith or hearsay. Instead, we should examine teachings through our own experience and verify whether they are wholesome and blameless, whether they lead to true happiness, and whether they help bring suffering to an end.

Legacy of Wisdom and Compassion

Taken together, these memories reveal the legacy of a teacher who was both deeply wise and profoundly compassionate. Such a person is not

easily found; wherever he appeared and spoke, students were blessed with guidance, clarity and happiness. The legacy of the late Most Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Maha Thero endures through the wisdom he shared, the kindness he embodied and the countless lives he touched. He did not seek fame or praise, nor did he write a book for recognition. Instead, he chose to be among the people, helping them move towards liberation from saṃsāra, the cycle of death and rebirth.

Conclusion

The life of the late Most Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Maha Thero remains a source of deep gratitude and inspiration. From his first encounter with my family in Sarnath to his years of study, teaching, counselling and international service, he carried the Dhamma with humility, patience and compassion. His example reminds us that true wisdom is lived quietly through kindness, discipline and service to others. May his noble legacy continue to guide all who knew him, and may the merits of his dedicated life be a blessing to many generations to come.



*From Venerable Devananda Rambukwelle Nayaka
Thero, PhD*

*Chief Incumbent of Sambodhi Vihara, Berlin,
Germany, (B.A.Hons., M.A.)*

Dr. Walpola Kalyanathissa Nayaka Thero began his overseas missionary activities in Sarnath, India, and carried out a great mission to propagate Theravada Buddhism throughout Europe, centering on major cities such as Paris, Berlin, and Geneva. Being proficient in Eastern languages such as Sinhala, Pali, and Sanskrit, as well as Western languages such as English, French, and German, our Nayaka Thero became a pioneer in spreading our Buddhist philosophy throughout Europe when, following an invitation extended by the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF) in Geneva, where the United Nations is located, he was appointed as its chief spiritual advisor in order to share his knowledge of the Dhamma.

Engaged in a 35-year mission of Dhamma propagation through the IBF institution, our Nayaka Thero established several Theravada Buddhist temples not only in Geneva, Switzerland, but also in cities such as Zurich and Bern, and guided learned and capable monks such as Venerable Halyale Wimalarathana Thero, Venerable Welagedara Sumanajothi Thero, and Venerable Karuwalagaswewa Anuruddha Thera to continue fulfilling the fundamental objectives of those institutions. Our Nayaka Thero carried out this task in Germany as well.

One such memorable and significant event was that he worked with the Sambodhi Vihara in Berlin, Germany to hold an International Buddhist Congress in Berlin attended also by the Tibetan Dalai Lama at the conference, whose presence was instrumental in increasing public interest in Buddhism in Germany and in Europe more broadly.

As a result, I gratefully rejoice in the merit of having been given the opportunity to come to Germany and engage in missionary service for the Dhamma.

From Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe

My first encounter with Venerable Walpola Kalyanatissa Thero was in the late 1980s. The German Dharmaduta Society (GDS) in Colombo, of which my father was the Secretary at the time, had selected Ven Kalyanaththissa to travel to Berlin to head the Berlin Buddhist Vihara.

He had been selected by a distinguished committee chaired by M. J. Perera (the first Ceylonese Director General of Radio Ceylon) and other members such as D. S. de Silva (a former Auditor General of Sri Lanka), along with others, all of whom were on the Board of the GDS. The selection came at a time when the GDS had been going through a difficult time retaining a suitable head monk. The role was to lead the Buddhist mission in Europe as well as serve as a point of contact for the GDS Board in Colombo, while also requiring someone capable of being an efficient manager.

The role called for special skills: the ability to engage with the visitors who came to the Vihara in search of the Buddha's teachings, to keep a wide network of well-wishers committed and, most importantly, to be humane and compassionate towards those who turned up at the Vihara in need of refuge.

I was in my late teens then, just finishing my Advanced Level school examination, and could hear the numerous discussions over the phone that my father had with the other Board members as they discussed the suitability of their new selection. There was a genuine sense that they had found their ideal candidate. Because my father was the Secretary at the time, it was he who did all the groundwork to help the Venerable to secure his visa and make necessary travel arrangements.

In Sri Lanka, the Venerable Kalyanatissa visited our home regularly leading up to his departure to Germany. My mother prepared the almsgiving on the days he arrived in the morning. He would chat to us in that most friendly and affable way he had, after he had partaken of his alms. After his period in Germany in the role for which he had been selected, he returned to Sri Lanka and came

to visit my father. Venerable Kalyanatissa was very much in his element and had fitted into the role effortlessly. He reported to a GDS Board that was clearly pleased with his contribution to the Vihara.

To me, however, what mattered most was that he took the time to speak to me. I still remember him listening to my plans after my studies and taking the time to discuss the Dhamma with me. He patiently spoke to me about whether it was possible to live a lay life if a Buddhist was trying to practice renunciation. Buddhism, he assured me, should not be understood as a nihilistic or pessimistic teaching. Nor should it be taken to mean that material comforts should be rejected – that was a total misrepresentation of the teaching, he said. These ideas left a deep impression on my young mind. Soon after that, I began my higher studies and, after my father's death, lost touch with the happenings at the GDS.

Nearly 30 years later, a remarkable and serendipitous event occurred. A year ago, in 2025, I was desperately searching high and low for affordable housing in Geneva for a close family member. Having looked at all possible options, it occurred to me that there may be a Buddhist Temple in Geneva. As I assumed, when I searched on the internet, I found that there was, and what's more, that the Venerable Kalyanatissa had been the head priest of the temple, but had passed away a year before. I was taken aback by the coincidence, and also deeply saddened to hear that he was no more. I called the Temple. Ven Halyale Wimalarathana Thero answered. He listened to me, a cold caller, and said only a few words: "Give me a few minutes; I will call you back. Please don't worry. Be assured that your problem will be sorted". As promised, he called back and introduced me to a family living in the heart of Geneva, who warmly opened their home to a lodger.

In hindsight, I wonder how things could come together in this way. I would like to believe that Venerable Kalyanatissa and my father must have guided me to the right place or that the



goodness of that encounter thirty years ago created the conditions to make this encounter possible. It seemed like so much had come full circle: a remarkable Buddhist monk who began his journey from Sri Lanka to Europe with the support of the GDS and my father. A temple in Geneva he had taken to great heights and left behind with new leadership, in the able hands of Ven Halyale Wimalarathana Thero, who continues to keep his legacy truly alive. If there was one of the many things that Venerable Kalyanaththisa would always be remembered for, it would be for his glowing persona that was able to show real compassion to those in need with grace and lightness. The IBF in Geneva continues that ethos under the leadership of Venerable Halyale Wimalarathana and his committed dayakas.

What better monument could there be or indeed be needed for a true noble member of the Sangha?

BRIDGING SRI LANKA AND EUROPE THROUGH BUDDHA'S TEACHING

35 Years of Journey of the IBF in Geneva

Sumith Dassanayake,

Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva & Consul General of Sri Lanka in Switzerland.

It is a great privilege to extend this message on behalf of the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva and the Consulate General of Sri Lanka in Switzerland on the commemoration of 35th anniversary of the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF) and the second death anniversary of Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Maha Thero.

The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka also has the honour to recall its contribution for the inception of IBF and the Geneva Buddhist Vihara in 1991-1992. During the period of three and a half decades, the IBF and the Geneva Buddhist Vihara established in a city renowned as a hub for global governance, diplomacy, and human rights has continuously fostered meaningful dialogue among monastics, scholars, diplomats, and civil society. By offering a compassionate space for reflection, the IBF has demonstrated that Buddhist philosophy is not merely a historical tradition, but a living, dynamic framework for understanding contemporary global challenges.

Today, our global community faces unprecedented complexity, characterized by rapid technological disruption, rising geopolitical tension, societal fragmentation, and widespread anxiety. In addressing these challenges, the core elements of the Buddha's teachings, Metta (loving-kindness), Karuna (compassion) and Middle-Path provide a vital moral compass for global community to navigate towards peace and security and sustainable development.

As diplomats and policymakers work to rebuild trust and core values of Buddhism such as promoting sustainable peace, the timeless principles of non-violence, mutual understanding,

and interdependence offer practical guidance for modern governance and international cooperation. The IBF's ongoing work in facilitating this intersection between ancient insight, scientific enquiry, and policy development remains immensely relevant.

On this solemn occasion, we also pay profound homage to the memory and legacy of Senior Advisor, Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Maha Thero. Through his dedication, profound scholarship, and spiritual guidance, Venerable Kalyanatissa Maha Thero nurtured the spiritual well-being of the communities in Switzerland as well as in Europe while elevating the reach of Buddhist philosophy across Europe. His compassionate presence, intellectual rigor, and commitment to interfaith dialogue continue to inspire all who had the honour of engaging with him. His legacy lives on through the vibrant community and enduring mission of the IBF.

As we mark these double milestones, the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka re-affirms its commitment to supporting the sacred values of the Dhamma and the work of spiritual institutions abroad. I commend Chief Incumbent, Venerable Halyale Wimalarathana Thero, Venerable Welagedara Sumanajothi Thero, the President and the Council of Devotees of the IBF, and the editorial team for assembling this commemorative publication.

May the noble work of the International Buddhist Foundation in Geneva continue to flourish, bringing peace, and harmony to the world.

May all beings be happy and peaceful.

MESSAGES IN HONOUR OF THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE IBF

From R. G.S Wijesekara,

Ambassador / Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the World Trade Organization.

It is a privilege to offer this message on the occasion of the 35th Anniversary of the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF), Geneva, which also marks the second anniversary of the passing away of most Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Nayaka Maha Thero.

These two commemorations are deeply connected. The International Buddhist Foundation, established in Geneva in 1991, has for thirty-five years served as a centre for the practice and sharing of the Buddha's teachings. Its objectives extend beyond religious observance to the promotion of peace, understanding, meditation, humanitarian service, friendship among communities and dialogue with other religions. The Foundation was also granted consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1998, giving it a meaningful connection with the wider international community in Geneva.

In remembering this journey, we also remember with gratitude the remarkable service of most Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Nayaka Maha Thero.

The late Maha Thero was a learned Buddhist monk, an international Dhamma teacher and a dedicated servant of the Buddha Sasana. His life journey took him from Sri Lanka to India, Germany, France, Switzerland and many other parts of the world. His academic achievements were equally remarkable, including advanced studies in Pali and Abhidhamma and a doctorate devoted to the

Buddhist doctrine.

His contribution to Buddhism in Europe was particularly significant. In Switzerland, he served as spiritual director and adviser to the International Buddhist Foundation and inspired many initiatives for the advancement of Buddhism. He also contributed to the establishment and development of Buddhist centres in different parts of Switzerland and devoted much of his life to bringing the Dhamma closer to people of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

For nearly a decade, the Maha Thero was closely associated with the IBF in Geneva. He worked to ensure that capable monks would continue its religious, social and cultural mission and also supported the annual Vesak observances connected with the United Nations in Geneva. His passing on 12 July 2024 left a profound sense of loss among those whose lives he had touched.

As we commemorate these anniversaries, the most meaningful tribute we can offer is to carry forward the values to which he dedicated his life.

Geneva is a centre of international dialogue, bringing together nations, cultures and traditions in the search for peace and solutions to common challenges. In such a city, the IBF has an important opportunity to serve not only the Buddhist community but also the wider society. The Buddha's teachings on compassion, peaceful coexistence, moderation, understanding and respect for others remain deeply relevant to our

increasingly interconnected world.

May the 35th anniversary therefore mark not only a celebration of the IBF's achievements, but also the beginning of a renewed journey of service.

May the International Buddhist Foundation continue to be a centre of Dhamma, compassion and dialogue in international Geneva, carrying forward the noble legacy of Most Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Nayaka Maha Thero for generations to come.

May the most Venerable Maha Thero attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbāna.



From Venerable Udumaththe Ariyaseela Thero

Basel Buddhist Vihara, Switzerland.

The Maha Sangha and the Dayaka Sabha (lay devotees) of the Basel Buddhist Vihara highly appreciate with deep respect the noble religious service rendered by the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF), Geneva for over three and a half decades in propagating pure Buddhism in Switzerland and the European region, and for the spiritual well-being of both local and foreign communities.

For 35 years the Geneva Buddhist Vihara has preserved and shared the Buddha's teachings, inspiring future generations with compassion, morality, and wisdom. Basel Buddhist Vihara is honored to work with the same noble aspiration.

May the International Buddhist Foundation Geneva and the Geneva Buddhist Vihara continue to spread the light of the Dhamma throughout Europe. May the Triple Gem bless you all!

Yours in the service of the Sasana,

Basel Buddhist Vihara, Switzerland.

From Indunil Welikele

The establishment of the International Buddhist Foundation and Buddhist Vihara in Geneva, Switzerland, stands as a remarkable recognition of the noble service rendered by the Buddhist community. Having grown up in the deeply rooted Buddhist culture of Sri Lanka, leaving behind our relatives, friends, and familiar surroundings to settle permanently in a European country like Switzerland brought with it a profound sense of separation from the Buddhist environment that had shaped our lives. It reminds us of the Buddha's teaching that separation from those and things we cherish is a cause of suffering. Throughout our lives, the temple has always been our refuge in times of sorrow as well as in moments of joy.

The temple in Geneva, lovingly sustained through

the tireless dedication of the monastic community and devoted lay supporters, has been a profound source of comfort to us. It has deepened our connection to the Dhamma, inspired and supported our spiritual practice, and filled the sense of emptiness we experienced after leaving our homeland. The creation and continued flourishing of such a spiritual refuge is truly a remarkable and commendable achievement.

One of the Foundation's greatest contributions is the guidance it provides to our children and to those who have been born and raised in Switzerland. By nurturing spiritual values rooted in Buddhism, it helps them lead lives of wisdom, resilience, compassion, and happiness while living within a different cultural environment. Equally admirable is the way the Foundation has united Sri Lankan families living in Switzerland. Through Dhamma discussions, meditation programmes, religious observances, and other meritorious activities, it has fostered harmony, friendship, and mutual support within the community. The temple has become a source of comfort and reassurance, offering guidance and encouragement during both joyful and difficult times.

We wish to express our deepest respect and heartfelt gratitude to all the venerable monks who have served the Foundation with unwavering dedication from its inception to the present day, as well as to the resident monks who continue this noble mission with great commitment. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the many lay devotees and volunteers whose selfless service and generous support have contributed to the Foundation's growth and success over the years. Finally, we offer our sincere wishes that this temple and International Buddhist Foundation continue to flourish with strength, wisdom, and courage in serving the Buddhist community. May future generations actively participate in its religious and cultural activities, deepen their understanding of the Buddha's teachings, and enrich their lives through the practice of Dhamma.

May all living beings be well, happy, and peaceful!

NAMO BUDDHAYA!

From Pwint Phyu Thinn

It is with profound respect and heartfelt gratitude that we commemorate the 35th Anniversary of the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF) in Geneva, a truly remarkable milestone marking three and a half decades of steadfast dedication to the Buddha Sāsana and to the timeless ideals of peace, compassion, wisdom, and human dignity.

Since its establishment, the IBF has stood as a noble bridge between the profound wisdom of the Buddha and the aspirations of the modern world. Moreover, the IBF has brought together diverse cultures, religions, scholars, diplomats, and communities, nurturing a spirit of mutual respect, harmony, and shared humanity. Its dedication reminds us that the teachings of the Buddha are not merely a treasured spiritual inheritance from the past, but a living and compassionate wisdom that continues to illuminate the path towards a more peaceful, ethical, and harmonious world.

The true strength of IBF is the sincerity of its purpose, the steadfastness of its vision, and the dedication to community harmony. The journey of IBF is not merely the history of an institution – it is the story of a noble vision brought to life through unwavering faith, selfless service, and the collective dedication of monks, volunteers, devotees, and well-wishers. Guided by the inspiring leadership of its Founder and Spiritual Director, the Late Most Venerable Walpola Kalyanatissa Maha Thero, IBF has become far more than a Buddhist temple. It has grown into a spiritual refuge where people from every nation, culture, and religious background are welcomed with respect and compassion.

This 35th anniversary of IBF also highlights a unique opportunity to honour the sacred memory of the Late Most Venerable Walpola Kalyanatissa Thero on the second anniversary of his passing. His vision, wisdom, and unwavering dedication laid the foundation for an institution that continues to serve the Buddha Sāsana and humanity with purpose and compassion. Indeed, he envisioned a living community where the Dhamma would be practised

in daily life, where compassion would guide proper action, and where wisdom would foster harmony among people of diverse backgrounds. For more than three decades, he became a distinguished ambassador of Theravāda Buddhism in Europe. Through his tireless missionary work, he nurtured Buddhist communities, established centres of worship and meditation, and guided thousands of people from diverse cultures towards the timeless path of morality, concentration, and wisdom. The greatest tribute we can offer to his sacred memory is not merely remembrance but practice. By living according to the Noble Eightfold Path, cultivating virtue, developing meditation, and nurturing wisdom and compassion, we become the custodians of the noble mission to which he devoted his entire life.

As we commemorate this dual occasion, may we express our deepest appreciation to the venerable Sangha, devoted supporters, benefactors, volunteers, and all those whose tireless efforts have sustained the Foundation over the past thirty-five years. May the noble legacy of the Most Venerable Walpola Kalyanatissa Thero continue to illuminate the path ahead, and may the International Buddhist Foundation remain a beacon of wisdom, compassion, and harmony for generations to come.



From the Sri Lankan Bhikkhu Association in Europe

Blessings and best wishes !

Adhering to a philosophy of life rooted in Buddhist principles ensures both worldly success and spiritual security for an individual, bringing the cessation of suffering within reach.

The Buddha, who unveiled this philosophy to the world, remains a preeminent teacher for all humanity. Although the Great Teacher passed away 2,570 years ago, His teachings continue to endure and remain profoundly relevant.

The institutional mission historically undertaken and currently sustained by Sri Lankan Theravada monks to introduce this profound philosophy to the modern world is truly commendable.

Among these efforts, the role of the International Buddhist Foundation in Switzerland is exceptionally significant and deserving of the highest honor. This milestone celebration marks 35 years of such distinguished service a legacy in which the name of Venerable Walpola Sri Kalyanatissa Thero holds a preeminent and revered position.

The Sri Lankan Bhikkhu Association in Europe seizes this opportunity to express its deepest appreciation for this noble mission of disseminating the Dhamma the most precious treasure in the world to seekers of wisdom in both the East and the West. Furthermore, the Association honors all the venerable monks dedicated to this mission and extends its heartfelt blessings and recognition to the lay devotees.



SECTION 3

The International Buddhist Foundation, Geneva

In this section, we remember the history of the IBF, its achievements and how it has impacted the community it serves.



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Message from the President of the Council of Devotees of IBF

Udaya Gunawardena,

President, Council of Devotees, IBF

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF) presents this commemorative magazine on two significant occasions. The first is the 35th anniversary of the IBF. The second is the two-year death anniversary of the late Most Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Maha Thero, the Spiritual Director of the IBF.

The Most Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Maha Thero guided the IBF with his wisdom, compassion, humility, and unwavering dedication. Through his teachings, leadership, and personal example, he inspired monks, devotees, and friends of the IBF to practise the Dhamma in their daily lives and to serve society with kindness and generosity. His vision laid a strong spiritual foundation for the IBF, and his influence continues to guide and inspire our community today. It is therefore most fitting that this commemorative magazine also honours his life, his teachings, and his legacy.

Over the past thirty-five years, the IBF has grown from a small beginnings into a respected Buddhist organization serving people from many countries, cultures, and backgrounds. It has been a place where the Dhamma has been taught, meditation has been practised, friendships have been formed, and people have found peace, guidance, and support in their daily lives.

Throughout this journey, the IBF has operated from a modest apartment in Geneva. Although this humble space has served the community with great dedication, it can no longer meet the growing needs of the many people seeking spiritual guidance and participation in our activities. As a result, the dream of establishing a larger and more accessible home for the IBF has become a shared aspiration of our community. Sustained by generosity, dedication, and a deep commitment to preserving and sharing

the Buddha's teachings for future generations, this vision continues to inspire our efforts as we look to the future with confidence and hope.

The journey of the IBF has only been possible through the dedication and generosity of many people. We respectfully remember and thank the monks who have served the IBF over the years and those who continue to serve today. Their guidance, compassion, and commitment to the Dhamma have helped countless people in their spiritual journey.

We are especially grateful to our present resident monks, Venerable Halyale Wimalarathana Thero and Venerable Welagedara Sumanajothi Thero, for their dedicated service and support to the IBF community. We take this opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate the continued spiritual guidance provided by Venerable Halyale Wimalarathana Thero to the IBF for more than ten years, as well as his inspiration and encouragement towards the 35th anniversary celebration and this commemorative magazine.

At the same time, the IBF has also provided valuable opportunities for many monks to broaden their experience by serving an international community. Living and working in a multicultural environment has enabled them to deepen their understanding of the Dhamma in practice, strengthen their spiritual discipline, develop maturity, and gain valuable experience in sharing the Buddha's teachings with people of different cultures and traditions. We are deeply grateful for their dedicated service and the mutual learning that has enriched both the monks and the community.

We also express our sincere appreciation to all founder members, past and present office bearers, devotees, volunteers, well-wishers, donors, and

friends of the IBF. Every contribution, whether large or small, has helped strengthen this Foundation and support its mission.

On behalf of the Council of Devotees, I would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Editorial Committee for the time, dedication, and care they have devoted to producing this commemorative magazine. We are equally grateful to all the authors who have generously contributed their knowledge, experience, and reflections. Their valuable contributions have made this publication a meaningful tribute to these two important milestones.

The Buddha taught that all wholesome achievements arise through generosity, wisdom, compassion, and harmonious effort. The story of the IBF is a reflection of these values. It reminds us that when people work together with kindness and a shared purpose, they can create something of lasting benefit for many generations.

These are the very qualities that the late Most Venerable Dr. Walpola Kalyanatissa Maha Thero exemplified throughout his life and encouraged others to cultivate in their own lives.

May this magazine not only preserve the history of the IBF but also inspire present and future generations to continue learning, practising, and sharing the timeless teachings of the Buddha for the benefit of all.

On behalf of the Council of Devotees, I offer my sincere gratitude to everyone who has been part of this remarkable journey and wish the International Buddhist Foundation every success in the years ahead.

May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful.

THE HISTORY AND JOURNEY OF THE IBF

35 Years of the International Buddhist Foundation in Geneva

Samantha Karunajeewa, PhD
Former Secretary, Council of Devotees, IBF

Summary

For 35 years, the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF) in Geneva has served as a spiritual, cultural, educational and charitable institution, promoting the teachings of the Buddha - the Dhamma. It is an institution that was founded on compassion to promote peace and community solidarity within Geneva's Buddhist and international communities.

Through spiritual services, Dhamma education, cultural Buddhist celebrations, charitable initiatives, interfaith engagement and collaboration with international institutions, the IBF has contributed to supporting human dignity, social harmony and peacebuilding.

As it commemorates its 35th anniversary, the IBF honours all those who have sustained its mission and looks to a future of expanded outreach and impact for individuals and the border international community.

1985-2000 - Roots

The IBF has its roots in the Sri Lankan community in Geneva and the Sri Lankan Association of Geneva (SLAG), which was founded in December 1984. From the outset, the community recognized Geneva's distinctive role as an international centre of dialogue, peace and cooperation, and sought to create an institution through which the message of the Buddha could be shared for the benefit of humanity.

On 25th May 1985, the Buddhist community in Geneva commemorated the 2529th anniversary of the Buddha, by inviting a Buddhist monk from London. Dr Chandra Pinnagoda, the founding President of SLAG, was requested by the community to serve as convener and to guide the establishment of a foundation dedicated to the propagation of the Dhamma and the promotion of peace, compassion and mutual understanding.

First, the Buddhist community in Geneva and its environs were consulted through the Missions of the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of the South Asian countries and several others on 08 May 1991. Incorporating the feedback of these Missions, copies of a draft Constitution for the establishment of the International Buddhist Foundation were distributed among the devotees in Geneva. Finally, the Founder Members of the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF) convened at the Salle 259 UNI Dufour, 24, Rue General Dufour, Geneva on 23 June 1991 and reviewed and revised the draft and unanimously adopted the Constitution of the IBF.



Establishing the Geneva Buddhist Vihara

The Founding members and the community firmly believed that “the Dhamma shall prevail in the world for the good of the many” . They rented a studio on the ground floor of No. 3 Quai des Vernets, Les Acacias marking the beginning of the Geneva Buddhist Vihara. His Excellency the late Dr Warnasena Rasaputra, Sri Lanka’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva at the time of the IBF’s establishment in 1991, was an important early supporter of the Foundation. He generously donated the Buddha statue that he had venerated for many years for installation at the premises.

This statue of the Lord Buddha was moved to the new premises according to tradition on 08 March 1992 and devotees 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 as required by tradition 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 a week.



Humble beginnings

From these modest beginnings, the IBF gradually became an important spiritual and cultural institution for devotees and the wider community in Geneva. Its activities included meetings, seminars, meditation practices, the observance of higher precepts by both young and elderly devotees, Dhamma education for schoolchildren, and the dissemination of information to support the understanding and practice of the Buddha’s teachings. The IBF also contributed to social cohesion through inter-religious programmes and supported the broader pursuit of lasting peace through participation in United Nations programme activities.

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 with the United Nations

A memorandum for the admission of the IBF as a non-governmental organization associated with the United Nations. was subsequently presented by the Director-General to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) on 11 May 1998.

Through its engagement with the United Nations, the IBF has sought to bring Buddhist values of compassion, non-violence, tolerance and respect for human dignity into wider international dialogue. IBF regularly participated in the sessions of the Human Rights Commission and its Committees. Looking ahead, the IBF continues to aspire to expand its contribution in areas of social concern, including the welfare of children and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar, then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, led the diplomatic initiative that secured international recognition of the Day of Vesak by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999. This landmark initiative was spearheaded by international permanent missions, led by Sri Lanka, and presented by Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar. The resolution provided the opportunity for high-level commemorative events, cultural programmes and dialogues hosted by Member States such as Sri Lanka and Thailand at the United Nations.

2010–2020: Revival

The first resident monk arrived in early 2000 and continued to perform religious activities with great devotion. A number of monks, one after the other, resided at the temple during this period and each provided valuable service at the Vihara until early 2010. The devotees benefited from exposure to different aspects in the practice of the discipline of meditation including the development of concentration meditation (Samatha bhavana), familiar to those of the forest monk tradition.

By 2010, it had become evident that a renewed phase of institutional revitalization was necessary to strengthen the activities, administration and long-term sustainability of the IBF.

With the guidance of Venerable Dr Walpola Kalyanatissa 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. With his arrival, the devotees benefited from his profound knowledge in the practice of the Dhamma. More importantly,

the confidence among the devotees continued to be strengthened with devotion to the Dhamma.

Renewed efforts were undertaken to strengthen and expand the services provided by the IBF, to serve not only the Sri Lankan Buddhist community but also the wider international community in Geneva, and to place the Foundation on a more stable and sustainable footing.

Regular spiritual activities were introduced.

Daily veneration of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha in the evenings, with the possibility of participation by devotees who wished to join the resident monk.

Spiritual consultations by appointment in English and Sinhala languages during the weekdays.

Meditation sessions on Saturday evenings.

Regular dhamma discussions on Sunday evenings.

A full-day programme of observing Poya Sil (Eight Precepts) and meditation on the last Sunday of every month at the Geneva Buddhist Vihara premises.

The first community activity of this revival process, Katina Pinkama (religious event marking the end of the Rainy Retreat) was held in November 2010 after many years.

The 2600th Buddha Jayanthi and International Outreach

Following the arrival of Ven. Halyale Wimalarathana Thero in 2010, the IBF's participation in United Nations activities and public outreach increased significantly. To commemorate the 2600th anniversary of the Enlightenment of the Buddha in May 2011, Ven. Wimalarathana Thero proposed that the IBF organize a series of activities involving the international community in Geneva and its surroundings. These activities helped present the message of the Dhamma as a living source of wisdom, compassion and peace in contemporary society.



The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva, based on a proposal by the IBF, led the historic event to celebrate the 2600th anniversary of the Enlightenment of the Buddha at the United Nations Office at Geneva. A ceremony was held on 11 May 2011 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Mr. Tokayev, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, was the chief guest at this historic ceremony to celebrate Vesak at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The ceremony was conducted with Ven. Seelawimala Thero, Head of the London Buddhist Vihara, in attendance. Ven. Olande Ananda Thero delivered the keynote address. The event was attended by several members of the Maha Sangha, the diplomatic community in Geneva, and devotees from Switzerland and neighbouring countries in Europe.

To mark the occasion, IBF published a commemorative magazine for the first time in its history. The magazine included articles on Buddhism written by scholars, IBF members and children, and was distributed at the official UN celebration.

An event was also organized at the Place des Nations with traditional Vesak decorations, devotional song recitals and the offering of free refreshments, highlighting the Buddhist concept of sharing (Dhana). The event was once again the first of its kind to take place at the Place des Nations and was attended by the public in Geneva.

The 2600th Buddha Jayanthi celebrations were concluded by a day of observing Sil (eight precepts) for spiritual development and offering Dhana to the maha sangha as well as to the lay devotees observing Sil.

These activities created renewed unity, confidence and enthusiasm among IBF members. They also strengthened the Foundation's role as a centre of spiritual practice, cultural continuity and community solidarity.

Strengthening Spiritual Services and Community Engagement

Recognizing the multicultural and multilingual character of Geneva, the IBF took steps to ensure that its spiritual services could reach a wider public. The need for resident monks to provide Dhamma teachings and spiritual consultations in French, in addition to English and Sinhala, was addressed by enrolling Ven. Wimalarathana Thero in French language courses. This practice has continued, enabling resident monks to interact more effectively with the local community and to make Buddhist teachings accessible to people from diverse backgrounds.

Since 2010, the IBF has conducted annual Vesak celebrations and Katina celebrations as its two main public events, with a large number of devotees and friends in Dhamma from Geneva and surrounding countries. This tradition has continued without interruption, except during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The IBF also conducted regular Sunday Dhamma school for children with resident monks teaching dhamma and Mrs. Kanthi Gamhewage, a retired teacher residing in Geneva, teaching them Sinhala language.

This period saw the strengthening of its charitable role by promoting activities to assist those in need. While continuing to work towards long-term financial sustainability, the Foundation served as a bridge between compassionate donors and vulnerable individuals and communities. Through this approach, the IBF helped facilitate book donations for schoolchildren in Sri Lanka, free eye-testing camps and the provision of reading glasses, as well as long-term financial sponsorships for students pursuing higher education and vocational training. These initiatives demonstrate the IBF's practical commitment to compassion in action.

As part of its efforts to encourage scholarly monks and provide them with exposure to international Dhamma-duta service, the IBF invited and hosted several monks each year for short visits to Geneva under the guidance of Ven. Wimalarathana Thero.

Monks who were considered suitable during these short stays were subsequently invited for longer periods of residence, following a selection and interview process conducted by the Board of Trustees.

Interfaith Dialogue, Charity and Wider Service

The IBF developed close collaborations with other religious establishments and communities, thereby contributing to interfaith understanding and social harmony. Ven. Halyale Wimalarathana Thero and other monks coordinated by the IBF were invited on several occasions to make presentations at programmes conducted by the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, a centre for ecumenical education linked to the World Council of Churches and the University of Geneva. In 2020, Ven. Halyale Wimalarathana Thero delivered a presentation on Buddhism's contribution to the Global Compact on Education, highlighting universal brotherhood as a central aspect of the Buddha's teaching, at an event connected with the initiative of His Holiness Pope Francis to renew the Global Compact on Education. The IBF was also represented at the inaugural Global Sangha Conference held in Japan in December 2018.

In 2019, the IBF was able to sponsor and engage the services of Ven. Welagedara Sumanajothi Thero, a young and learned monk, as the second resident monk of the Geneva Buddhist Vihara. This created renewed enthusiasm, especially among the younger generation of devotees, resulting in increased participation in IBF activities and the commencement of new community projects.

In 2020, the IBF proposed the commemoration of International Vesak Day at the United Nations Office at Geneva. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was held online, with Ven. Ajahn Amaro of Amarawathi Monastery in the UK delivering the keynote address and Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, attending as chief guest. The event was co-hosted by the Ambassadors of Sri Lanka.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the IBF, with the support of The Wisdom House (Geneva), IBF conducted regular weekly online Dhamma discussions and programs on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. These online webinars and discussions enabled devotees to continue their spiritual development and helped ease the pressures of isolation during the COVID lockdowns. Conducted in Sinhala, English and French, the discussions attracted participants from Geneva, other parts of Switzerland and neighbouring countries in Europe, showing the IBF's capacity to adapt and continue serving the community even under challenging circumstances.

2021–2026: Resilience

Sacred Events and Remembrance

In 2024, the IBF organized an exhibition of Buddha's relics in Geneva as part of the Vesak celebrations. The exhibition was held over two days at the "Fo Guang Shan Centre de Conférence Bouddhiste" under the guidance of Ven. Dr Walpola Kalyanathissa Maha Thero, with the participation of many distinguished senior Buddhist monks, including the Most Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva Maha Thero, a revered Sri Lankan forest monk, meditation master, and the fourth Abbot and Chief Preceptor of Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya.

The sudden demise of Most Ven. Dr Walpola Kalyanathissa Nayaka Maha Thero in 2024 was a huge loss for the IBF. He served the IBF as Spiritual Director and as a member of the Board of Trustees from 2010 until his passing, providing invaluable service by selecting, interviewing and guiding resident monks, in addition to offering spiritual guidance to devotees. He also provided guidance in organizing IBF public events, such as annual Vesak celebrations, annual Katina celebrations and the exposition of Buddha's relics. A funeral service to pay tribute to the great service rendered by the late Maha Thero in facilitating the dissemination and teaching of the Dhamma to the masses in Europe and the rest of the world during his esteemed ordained

life was held at the “Église néo-apostolique de Genève” on 27 July 2024. The funeral service was attended by distinguished monks, dignitaries and devotees from various countries.

The legacy of the late Nayaka Thero continues to inspire the community and guide all devotees on the path towards enlightenment.

The IBF assisted the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva in organizing the International Day of Vesak at the Palais des Nations for four consecutive years from 2023. Among the Foundation’s contributions to this annual commemoration, it is particularly noteworthy that the keynote address at the 2026 event was delivered by Ven. Halyale Wimalarathana Thero.

Celebrating 35 Years of Service

The 35th anniversary of the IBF to be celebrated in September 2026 in Geneva represents not only a celebration of institutional continuity, but also a solemn tribute to the monks, devotees, donors and well-wishers who have sustained the Foundation’s spiritual, educational, charitable and interfaith mission.

The IBF further takes this opportunity to respectfully remember and express its profound gratitude to the late Most Venerable Dr Walpola Kalyanathissa Nayaka Maha Thero on the second anniversary of his passing. The anniversary celebrations will comprise a range of activities organized by the Council of Devotees and members of the IBF.

May the IBF continue for many more years as a centre of spiritual guidance, moral education, charitable service, interfaith friendship and peacebuilding, serving the international community in Geneva and beyond with compassion, wisdom and dedication.

Guided by this vision, the IBF looks to the future with the aspiration to remain a trusted centre of Buddhist learning, spiritual practice, compassionate service and interreligious understanding, contributing to a more peaceful, harmonious and humane society for present and future generations.

May all living beings be happy and peaceful!

May the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be upon you.



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

A Permanent Home for the IBF

*Venerable Welegedara Sumanajothi Thero,
Head of the Building Fund Taskforce – IBF Geneva*

The history of the International Buddhist Foundation (IBF) is a story of generosity, determination, and service. For more than thirty-five years, the IBF has been a place where people from many countries and backgrounds have come together to learn the Dhamma, practise meditation, celebrate Buddhist traditions, and find peace and friendship.

Remarkably, all these activities have been carried out from a modest apartment of approximately 60 square metres in Acacias, Geneva. Within this small space, a shrine room has welcomed countless visitors, while resident monks have devoted themselves to serving the spiritual needs of the community.

As the IBF continued to grow, so did the needs of the community. Space became increasingly limited. We were no longer able to accommodate all those wishing to participate in our programmes. Running our Saturday Dhamma School and meditation programme for children became increasingly challenging because of space limitations and practical constraints. At the same time, there has been an increasing need to provide suitable facilities for young adults, families, and senior members seeking a peaceful place for learning, meditation, and spiritual support.

Recognising these challenges, the IBF first established a Building Fund Task Force in the late 1990s. However, the conditions for acquiring a suitable property were considerably more challenging at the time. In September 2019, the IBF established a new Building Fund Task Force under Article 5b(v) of the Constitution. It was entrusted with raising funds and exploring opportunities to secure a permanent home for the Geneva Buddhist Vihara.

The journey began during one of the most difficult periods in recent history. Soon after its establishment, the world was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by rising living costs and economic uncertainty. These circumstances significantly affected fundraising activities and delayed many

planned initiatives. Nevertheless, with patience, determination, and the generous support of devotees and well-wishers, the Task Force continued its work without losing sight of its long-term vision.

Throughout this period, the Task Force adopted a broad and practical approach to fundraising. Initiatives included the “One Franc Per Day” campaign, direct donations, pledge programmes, temple collections, cultural food events, New Year sweets box projects, legacy giving through wills, and the exploration of partnerships with companies, foundations, and public institutions. At the same time, the Task Force actively explored potential properties, inspected various sites, and considered both property purchase and long-term leasing as possible solutions to meet the growing needs of the community.

Despite the many challenges, the results have been encouraging. By the middle of 2026, a total of approximately CHF 122,000 had been raised through the remarkable generosity of devotees and supporters. More importantly, a strong foundation has been established for the next stage of this important project.

Our vision extends far beyond acquiring a larger building. We aspire to establish an IBF Mental Well-being Centre—a peaceful and welcoming place where people of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds can develop mindfulness, meditation, compassion, and inner well-being through the timeless teachings of the Buddha.

The proposed centre will include a meditation hall, shrine room, Dhamma School and learning facilities, community meeting areas, accommodation for resident monks, accessible amenities, and welcoming spaces that encourage spiritual growth, education, and community engagement. Located within the Canton of Geneva and easily accessible by public transport, it will enable the IBF to serve present and future generations more effectively.

The Buddha taught that generosity (dana) is the foundation of many wholesome qualities. Every contribution, whether through financial support, voluntary service, professional expertise, or simple acts of encouragement, becomes part of a shared effort that benefits many people. The Building Fund Project is therefore not merely a construction project; it is an investment in the future of the Dhamma and in the well-being of the wider community.

On behalf of the Building Fund Task Force, I express my heartfelt gratitude to every donor, volunteer, office bearer, devotee, and well-wisher who has supported this project since its inception. I also wish to acknowledge the encouragement and guidance received from the Council of Devotees throughout this journey.

Although our destination has not yet been reached, we have taken meaningful steps towards it. With continued unity, generosity, and determination, I am confident that the vision of a permanent home for the IBF will one day become a reality.

May this project continue to inspire generosity, strengthen our community, and provide a lasting sanctuary where future generations may learn, practise, and benefit from the timeless teachings of the Buddha.

May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful.

How You Can Support the Building Fund Project

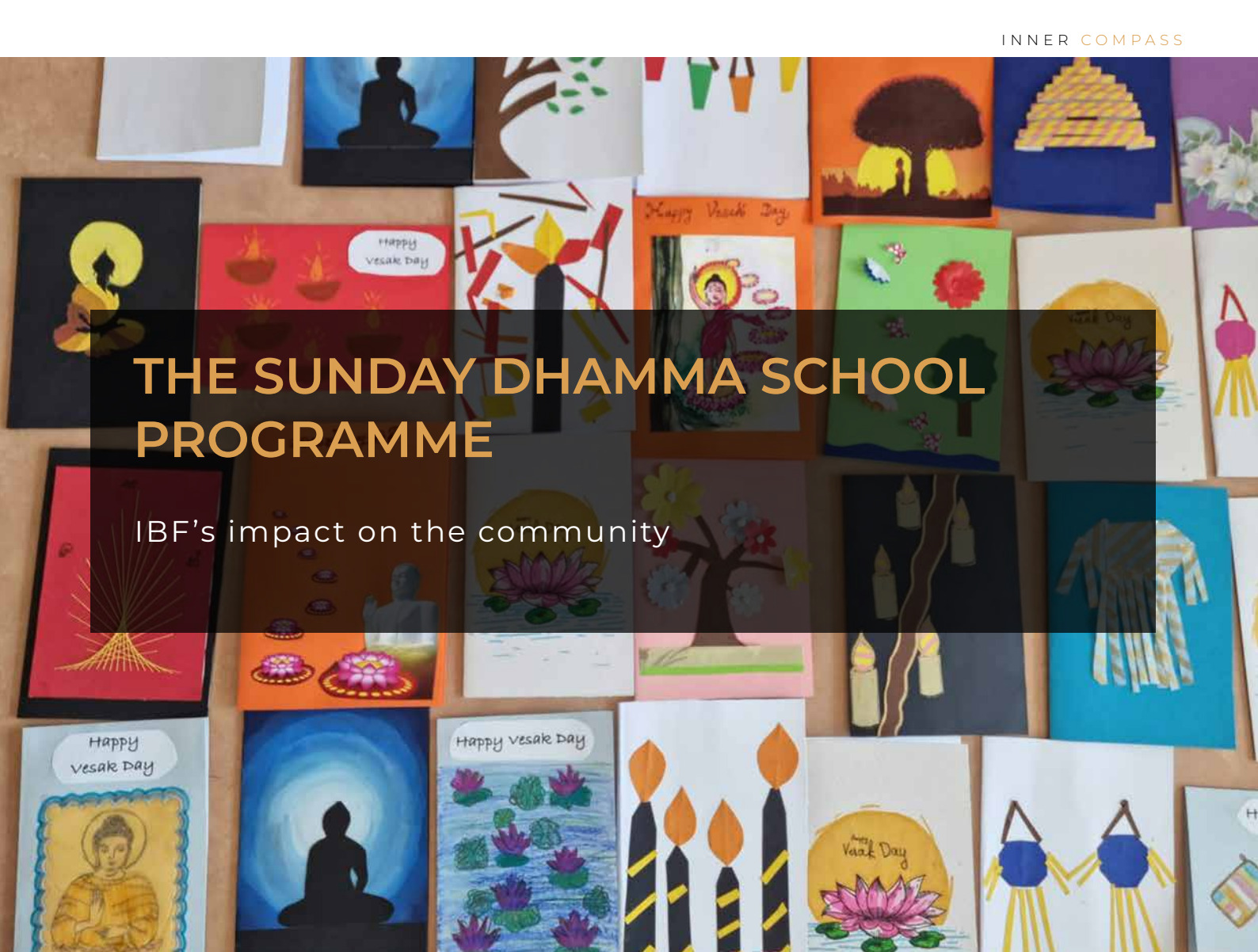
Account Name: International Buddhist Foundation

Bank: PostFinance

IBAN: CH37 0900 0000 1559 6917 5

SWIFT/BIC: POFICHBEXX





THE SUNDAY DHAMMA SCHOOL PROGRAMME

IBF's impact on the community

A Teacher's Perspective on the Online Dhamma School

Preenie Baluthgama
IBF Dhamma School Teacher

Teaching Sinhala online at IBF's Geneva Dhamma School is a rewarding opportunity to help children maintain their language, culture, and Buddhist heritage while living outside Sri Lanka. For many students, Dhamma school is one of the few places where they regularly hear, speak, read, and write Sinhala. As an online teacher, I have the privilege of connecting with students from different backgrounds and supporting them not only in developing their language skills but also in strengthening their appreciation of their cultural identity.

Teaching in a virtual classroom requires creativity and adaptability. Since students are learning through a screen, lessons need to be interactive and engaging to maintain their attention and encourage participation.

Using colourful presentations, pictures, short videos, quizzes, and online games can make learning enjoyable and meaningful. I also include storytelling, simple conversations, and Sinhala songs to make the lessons more memorable. These activities give students opportunities to practise speaking and listening while developing a positive attitude towards learning Sinhala.

One of the strengths of teaching at Geneva Dhamma School of IBF is the opportunity to connect Sinhala language learning with Buddhist values. Stories from the Jataka tales, discussions about kindness,

respect, gratitude, and compassion, and the use of simple Buddhist vocabulary help children understand that language is closely connected to their culture and religion. Learning Sinhala therefore becomes more than simply memorising words and grammar; it becomes a way of understanding and connecting with their heritage.

Every child learns differently, particularly in an online environment where language abilities and levels of support at home may vary. Some students speak Sinhala confidently, while others use it only occasionally at home. As a teacher, it is important to create a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere where every student feels comfortable asking questions and making mistakes. Positive feedback, patience, and recognition of individual progress help build confidence and motivate them to continue learning.

Parents play an important role in supporting online education. Encouraging children to speak Sinhala at home, read simple Sinhala books, or have short conversations with family members can reinforce what they learn during Dhamma school lessons. Even practising for a few minutes each day can make a significant difference in developing fluency and confidence.

Teaching online also provides opportunities that traditional classrooms may not always offer. Digital resources can be shared instantly, students can participate in interactive activities, and families from different parts of Switzerland can join the same class without the need to travel. These advantages help create a connected learning community while making Sinhala education more accessible to children and families.

For me, teaching Sinhala online at Geneva Dhamma School of IBF is about much more than teaching a language. It is about preserving a rich cultural heritage, strengthening children's connection to Buddhism, and helping them develop pride in their Sri Lankan identity. Through engaging online lessons, encouragement, and close cooperation with parents, we can inspire the next generation to value the Sinhala language and confidently carry it forward into the future.



HOW BUDDHISM AFFECTS MY LIFE

From current students at the Geneva
IBF Dhamma School

I think that Buddhism affects my life in many ways. It teaches me to always be kind, calm and respectful to others. It also teaches me to learn from my mistakes and that making mistakes is part of life. It helps me stay peaceful and grateful for the things I already have. It also reminds me to respect animals and nature as well as people. Whenever I visit sacred Buddhist places, like temples in my country, I feel a deep sense of peace within me.

All these teachings make me a better and happier person and help me grow as a person every day.

Jethya Sirisenage, 15 years old

How the 5 precepts help me to have good relationships:

- *I will not hurt others.*
- *I will not steal from others.*
- *I will avoid harmful and bad behavior.*
- *I will not lie.*
- *I will avoid taking drugs.*

When I don't hurt others, they don't hurt me. Both of us are happy. When I don't use drugs, it allows me to be peaceful and mindful. When I don't steal from others, they are happy. They don't steal from me. When I don't tell lies, the truth gets spoken.

When I don't engage in harmful or bad behaviour, it's good for others too. That's why I follow the five precepts. They help me in life. It doesn't depend on race or religion. The five precepts are the truth. Anybody can practise them.

Sanu Herath, 11 years old

J'ai commencé l'école du Dhamma à l'âge de cinq ans. J'apprends à lire et à écrire le cinghalais, ainsi qu'à réciter des chants bouddhistes.

Parfois, chez ma grand-mère, je récite avec elle les cinq préceptes bouddhistes pendant qu'elle fait une offrande au Bouddha. J'ai aussi participé à des célébrations, comme le Vesak et le Kathina.

Dans la vie de tous les jours, le bouddhisme m'aide à être plus bienveillante. Ce que j'aime le plus pendant les cours à l'école du Dhamma, c'est quand les moines nous apprennent la méditation. L'école du Dhamma permet aussi aux enfants de se retrouver régulièrement.

Nuvee Sedara Hettige, 11 ans

Buddhism helps me to calm down and focus when I get angry. I learned not to hurt anybody and not to kill even a bug.

Buddhism also taught me to respect my parents, teachers and adults. I go to Dhamma school where we meditate and learn how to purify the mind.

We also learn about Lord Buddha. Now I know how to make offerings of alms (Dana) and offer flowers and other items during Buddha pooja.

Pahan Perera, 10 years old

I am going to Dhamma school in Geneva. I talk a lot with Buddhist monks. They teach me many good things. I have many friends in Dhamma School. I like to offer flowers and light an oil lamp when I visit the temple. In Dhamma School, my favorite activity is to meditate. I like my Dhamma School a lot.

Minuk Lohas Bandara, 8 years old

Depuis le jour où je suis né, mes parents et le temple m'ont appris à être gentil avec les animaux et à ne pas les tuer. Par exemple, s'il y a un insecte dans l'eau, il faut le sauver avec un bout de papier.

Chaque jour, je donne à manger aux oiseaux. J'ai aussi noté que dans mon village, il y a plein de chats et de vaches. Et à chaque fois que je passe à côté d'eux, ils veulent que je les caresse. Donc, avec les chats, je me mets accroupi, je tends la main et après ça, normalement, ils doivent sentir ma main. Et seulement après, je les caresse.

J'arrive bien à être gentil avec les animaux et je crois qu'ils arrivent à le sentir.

Vidupabasara Bulathgama, 13 ans



When a situation goes wrong, I have learned to stay calm, not to panic, to step back and react accordingly. And it has helped me a lot.

At school, when I feel like there's too much homework and I feel like I'm going to explode, it helps me to think that it isn't the end of the world. So now I have learned to stay positive.

Buddhism has also helped me to stay strong. My father told me the story of the arrow. When a person is hit by an arrow, it hurts. Then a second arrow hits the same place. And that hurts even more.

Similarly, when something bad happens, it's like the first arrow. And then we think about the pain and how we don't like it, it's like the second arrow. And the more we think about it, the more pain we will have, which means more arrows.

So we shouldn't panic. If something bad happens, we should stay calm instead of thinking, "Why did it happen? Why me? Who did it?" I use this method every day and it has helped me a lot. I hope this will help you too.

May the Triple Gems bless you.

Jitendri, 15 years old

Buddhism affects my life in different ways. I try to practise a little bit every day, like staying calm and thinking before I do something. I also try to be kind and respectful towards other people. Buddhism teaches me to appreciate what I have and not to always want more things.

I don't follow every Buddhist teaching all the time, but I think it still affects the way I think and behave in my everyday life. Especially helping someone when they need it. Being content with what I have and what I get. Behaving in a way that does not cause trouble to anyone.

I always try to respect my parents, teachers, and elders and follow their advice.

Sethun Subasinghe Dewage, 15 years old

Le bouddhisme est devenu un modèle très important dans ma vie. Le Bouddha nous a enseigné de belles valeurs comme la gentillesse, la compassion, la patience, la vérité et le respect des autres. C'est pourquoi j'essaie d'appliquer ces bonnes valeurs dans ma vie quotidienne.

Lorsque je suis en colère, le bouddhisme m'aide à rester calme et à être patient. J'essaie aussi de ne pas faire de mal aux autres et de les aider chaque fois que je le peux. Respecter mes parents, mes enseignants et les personnes âgées, ainsi que traiter mes amis avec gentillesse et bienveillance, sont des leçons importantes que j'ai apprises grâce au bouddhisme.

Selon les enseignements du Bouddha, vivre avec de bonnes pensées et accomplir de bonnes actions nous aide à devenir de meilleures personnes. Ainsi, le bouddhisme est pour moi une lumière et un guide qui m'aide à suivre le bon chemin. À l'avenir, je souhaite continuer à mettre en pratique les bonnes valeurs du bouddhisme afin de devenir un enfant bon et un citoyen responsable.

Sasan Mallawarachchi, 11 ans



La pratique du bouddhisme dans la vie courante

*Anjalee Piyadigama,
Ancienne élève de l'école du Dhamma IBF*

Le bouddhisme est à la fois une philosophie, une tradition spirituelle et une religion que nous choisissons de suivre tout au long de notre vie. Il nous amène à réfléchir sur notre manière de vivre et d'agir envers nous-mêmes et envers les autres.

Depuis notre enfance, nos parents et les enseignements bouddhistes nous ont toujours enseigné qu'il fallait faire de bonnes choses dans la vie actuelle pour obtenir une meilleure vie plus tard. En effet, dans le bouddhisme, nous considérons que nous renaissons. Mais allons-nous renaître en tant qu'humains ? Cela dépendra de ce que nous aurons fait de bien ou de mal dans nos vies antérieures, mais également dans notre vie actuelle. Selon la conception bouddhiste du karma, nos actions et nos intentions ont des conséquences sur notre existence. Il faut donc être conscient que chacune de nos actions peut avoir un impact positif ou négatif sur notre vie future. Les actions que nous accomplissons dans le présent doivent être bénéfiques pour nous-mêmes, mais également pour autrui. Cependant, il est important d'agir avec conscience et de ne pas être paralysé par le doute ou la peur des conséquences.

Dans la tradition bouddhiste, la renaissance dans le monde humain est considérée comme particulièrement précieuse et liée aux actions et au karma accumulé dans nos vies précédentes. Nous avons dû accomplir de nombreuses bonnes actions pour en arriver là.

En allant au temple et en pratiquant la méditation, j'ai pu constater, au fil des années, à quel point cette pratique m'apaisait dans les situations de stress et d'anxiété. La méditation est une pratique bien connue qui permet d'essayer de développer une meilleure conscience de notre corps, de notre esprit, de nos

pensées et de nos sensations.

Pour bien méditer, il faut avoir l'esprit clair et être concentré sur son corps ainsi que sur ce qui se passe à l'intérieur de celui-ci. C'est un travail qui ne peut se faire en une seule séance, mais cette pratique nous apprend qu'il ne sert à rien de se précipiter pour résoudre un problème, car le résultat risque de ne pas être à la hauteur de nos attentes initiales. Il faut donc prendre le temps de comprendre le problème, en gardant une conscience pleine et apaisée, puis agir calmement et de manière réfléchie. C'est souvent à ce moment-là que l'on trouve les meilleures solutions pour résoudre le problème rencontré.

Je suis quelqu'un qui se base fortement sur ces croyances. Étant donné que j'étudie pour devenir enseignante à l'école primaire, et que j'effectue donc des remplacements dans des classes afin d'acquérir de l'expérience, j'ai remarqué à quel point la patience était importante dans ce métier, mais surtout à quel point il fallait rester pleinement conscient de nos gestes et de nos actions pour mener à bien une classe, sans créer de problèmes pour nous-mêmes et pour les élèves.

L'enseignement bouddhiste m'a permis de comprendre qu'il y aura toujours des périodes de difficulté et des problèmes à gérer, mais l'important est de trouver le bon chemin pour les résoudre sans effets néfastes sur les autres ou sur moi-même. Il faut également accepter le fait que nous sommes tous différents les uns des autres, mais qu'en fin de compte, nous sommes tous humains: un individu ayant moins de capacités ou de compétences mérite tout autant de respect.

Nos actions ont des conséquences, et cela me rappelle de traiter chaque vie humaine avec respect et bienveillance.

Grandir avec l'IBF

Toute une vie de Dhamma

*Dinuki Goonathilake,
Ancienne élève de l'école du Dhamma IBF*

J'ai eu la chance de grandir à Genève, au sein de la communauté de l'IBF, grâce à mes parents qui ont si généreusement consacré leur temps à la Fondation. Je me souviens avec plaisir de l'école du Dhamma que je fréquentais chaque dimanche, dès l'âge de sept ou huit ans. Ces cours ont donné aux enfants comme moi, dispersés aux quatre coins de la ville, l'occasion de se retrouver chaque semaine. Nous y apprenions le bouddhisme, l'histoire et la culture du Sri Lanka, et même à lire et à écrire le cinghalais. Mais surtout, nous y avons tissé des amitiés qui durent encore aujourd'hui.

Cet enseignement était bien différent de ce que nous vivions dans les écoles genevoises. Ayant grandi dans une ville où se côtoient des enfants de confessions et de croyances variées, dans un système scolaire où la religion n'a pas sa place, l'école du Dhamma m'a offert quelque chose de précieux: un ancrage, un sentiment profond de savoir qui j'étais.

Quelques années après le début de ces cours, une présentatrice de la RTS (encore la TSR à l'époque) est venue assister à l'une de nos séances. Elle était à la recherche d'enfants de différentes confessions pour l'émission "Dis-moi Noël". J'ai eu l'honneur d'être sélectionnée et de partager ce que représentait Noël pour moi, en tant qu'enfant bouddhiste, et la manière dont le bouddhisme a façonné qui j'étais.

Au fil des années, l'école du Dhamma m'a permis d'approfondir ma compréhension du bouddhisme, non pas seulement comme une religion, mais comme une philosophie de vie, dont les enseignements continuent encore à me guider dans mon quotidien.

Depuis que je suis devenue maman, je suis profondément reconnaissante de voir à quel point l'IBF reste ancrée au cœur de la communauté sri-lankaise de Suisse, et que les enfants continuent, aujourd'hui, à se retrouver à l'école du Dhamma. Cet été, de passage à Genève, j'ai eu la joie d'emmener

ma fille au temple, de lui parler de mes liens si étroits avec cette communauté, et de lui montrer, à mon tour, comment le bouddhisme fait, lui aussi, partie de son éducation et de sa culture.

The Role of Buddhism in My Life

*Anonymous,
Former Dhamma School student*

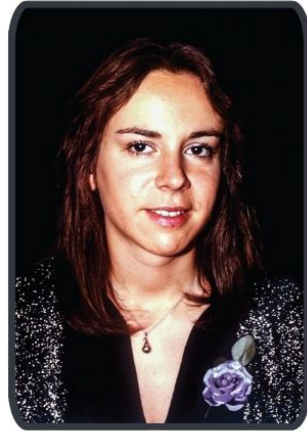
There isn't really one simple answer to this question. It affects me in many ways: the way I think, the way I react, the way I feel, the way I see things around me and more.

Buddhism not only affects what's inside of me, but also what's outside and around me: for example, my family life, my school life, my professional life, my love life, my dreams to chase.

Basically, it connects everything to me, but I feel the best way to describe how it affects my life would be the word « Example », something or someone to look up to and to keep balance in life.

I have learned a lot from Buddhism, not only because it's my religion, but also because it has changed my way of seeing life in a good way. And with all I have learned, I have come to a conclusion: Life is a lesson to be learned, we are the only ones who know how to put it into action.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
MY BELOVED WIFE
Jeannette Perera Eisenring



Together, we were pioneering members of the
GENEVA BUDDHIST VIHARA (IBF)

With heartfelt blessings on its
35TH ANNIVERSARY

Among the memories of my life stretching back to 1974, the establishment of the IBF stands out as a particularly significant milestone.

As the 1980s began, we started planning for the future. Although we participated in various Buddhist activities including Vesak festival, we did not have a temple of our own. So, we got together and discussed the idea of establishing a temple we could worship. With the arrival of the 1990s, we were finally able to turn that dream into reality.

"We" mean dear families living in Geneva. But still, difficulties and numerous challenges continued. But in a way, that's life!

During the critical period of continuity of the IBF Vihara, with the guidance and support of most respected Chief Buddhist monk late Rev. Walpola Kalyanatisa chief monk, we were fortunate to meet Venerable thero Halyale Wimalarathana.

We were also blessed to receive the support of leading monks from Sri Lanka, who accepted our invitation and made a commendable contribution to this great undertaking. By coming together, we have been able to understand and enrich our lives through the teachings of the Buddha.

Let us protect and preserve our Geneva IBF Buddhist community!

— Sunil Perera —
Printing Contributor of this Magazine

In the early years of the Buddha's teaching, these words were given as the Ovāda Pāṭimokkha—a concise summary of the guidance he gave to the Saṅgha. More than 2,500 years later, their simplicity and relevance endure.

*Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ,
kusalassa upasampadā;
sacittapariyodapanaṃ —
etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ.*

To refrain from what is unwholesome,
to cultivate what is wholesome,
to purify one's own mind —
this is the teaching of the Buddhas.

— Dhammapada 183

IBF marks
35 years of learning, practice and service.
The journey continues.

*From still water,
Wisdom blooms*

