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"THE BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINT"

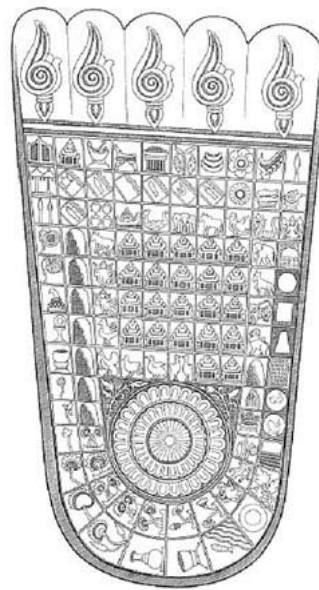
Ven. B. Seelawimala Nayaka Thera
Head of the London Buddhist Vihara

The footprint of the Buddha became an object of importance right from the time of the Buddha himself. After he had passed away, preparations were made to cremate his body. In the Mahaparinibbana Sutta (*Digha Nikaya, no.16*) it states that the four Malla chiefs tried to light the funeral fire, but were unable to do so. It was Venerable Anuruddha who told them that the fire would not burn until the arrival of one of his greatest disciples, Maha Kassapa. "Venerable Anuruddha said, 'The Lord's funeral pyre will not be lit until the Venerable Maha Kassapa has paid homage with his head to the Lord's feet.' Venerable Kassapa the Great then went to the Lord's funeral pyre and, covering one shoulder with his robe, joined his hands in salutation, circumambulated the pyre three times and, uncovering the Lord's feet, paid homage with his head to them, and the five hundred monks did likewise." It was this act which started the tradition of paying respect to the Buddha's feet or to images of his feet. From that time onwards, in imitation of Venerable Kassapa's action, the footprint has been an object of veneration throughout the Buddhist world. This is especially true of the celebrated Buddha's Footprints at the summit of Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka. According to the "Mahavamsa", the

Buddha left these prints as a commemoration of his third visit to Sri Lanka. These Footprints have become an object of great devotion throughout the Buddhist world. 2500 years later, thousands of pilgrims still come to

only, it can be taken as a man-made representation, often decorated with symbols of great complexity, as the sign of an enlightened being or, thirdly, it was used by the Buddha as a metaphor for his teaching. Looking at the first way, genuine footprints of the Buddha showed that He had indeed attained Enlightenment. As an example of this, we have a text in the Anguttara Nikaya (*Catukka Nipata*), where there is a story concerning a Brahmin called Dona. Dona was walking along the road, when he came across some footprints which clearly showed wheel marks. He realised that they must have been made by an extraordinary being, so he followed them until he reached the Buddha, who was sitting at the root of a tree.

Continued on page 2



**Pakhan-gyi Buddha Footprint,
Union of Myanmar**

pay respect to these footprints.

The footprint of the Buddha can be examined in three ways. It can be taken as a genuine footprint. Sec-

VESAK GREETINGS

"Sukho Buddhnanan Uppadho"
The Appearance of the Buddha
is the source of Peace and Happiness.

Ven. Seelawimala Nayaka Thera and all
the resident monks wish our readers,
friends, supporters and well-wishers
a very happy Vesak.

May this day bring you peace,
happiness, health, and success!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Lifestyles and Spiritual Progress
- Philosophy of Life Taught by the Buddha
- Why religion does not appeal to some people
- Contribution of Buddhism to Healthy Life
- Back to Basics
- A-Z of Buddhism
- Courses for the Year 2010
- Activities & Obituaries

Chief Executive: Ven. B. Seelawimala Nayaka Thera

Editors: Ven. Tawalama Bandula, Mr. Richard Jones

Continued from page 1

Dona asked the Buddha if he was a deva, a gandharva (a heavenly musician), a yakkha (a demon) or a human being. The Buddha replied “No” to all of these. Perplexed and confused by this answer, Dona finally asked him who he was and the Buddha replied “Take it that I am a Buddha”. At the end of this encounter, Dona became an anagami (non-returner).

The second way to look at the footprint is as a man-made representation. Before the 1st century C.E., there were no images of the Buddha. Instead, symbols such as an empty chair, a wheel, a bodhi tree or a footprint were used to represent the Buddha. The reason for this may have been the difficulty of representing in a material form, visible to human beings, a being who had attained the extinction of *parinibbana*. Instead the Buddha was represented by symbols.

At first, the footprints were fairly simple, but later they became very complex. In the Lakkhana Sutta (*Digha Nikaya, no.30*) the Buddha’s feet are stated as having a level tread, wheels with 1,000 spokes on the sole, projecting heels, toes of equal length, soft feet, toes evenly spaced, and ankles over the exact middle of the tread. The Buddha did not usually appear in any way outwardly different from a normal human figure. “From the Pali texts it is quite evident that these distinctive physical features in a human being could be visible only to those who had either a particular form of expertise or to those whose faith was so great that they could see such marks peculiar to a Great Man.” (*Wimalaratana, Concept of Great Man, p.184*)

The wheels on the sole of the foot are the most developed major mark in the list of 32 characteristics of a Great Man. Later works, such as the commentary to the Mahapadana Sutta (*Digha Nikaya, no.14*), developed the mark into designs of great complexity

shown in a checkerboard pattern, so that 108 or even 132 different signs and symbols are engraved on the sole. These are regarded as signs of good omen (*mangala lakkhana*) and include, for example, a spear, a pair of fish, an auspicious seat, a cluster of gems, water lilies, the sun, the moon and stars.

The third way of regarding the footprint is as a metaphor for his teaching. The footprint was used to symbolise the spreading of the Dhamma. The seat was used as a symbol of his enlightenment, the wheel a symbol of his first sermon, and the stupa a symbol of his parinibbana. The footprint came to symbolise the presence of the Buddha in a particular place and his preaching the Dhamma there.

Although these marks of a Great Man, such as the footprint, have developed great significance for Buddhists, the Buddha himself stated very clearly who is truly a Great Man. In the Dhammapada there is a stanza:

“He who is without craving and grasping, who is skilled in etymology and terms, who knows the words of the texts, their sequence, their spirit and letter, it is he who is called the bearer of the final body, one of profound wisdom, a great man.” (v.352)

The Great Man whose teachings we follow has given us the Four Noble Truths. An analogy of the elephant’s footprint was used by Venerable Sariputta to explain the importance of these truths. He said, “Just as the footprint of every creature that walks the earth can be placed within an elephant’s footprint, and so the elephant’s footprint is declared the chief of them because of its great size, so too, all wholesome states can be included in the Four Noble Truths.” (*Majjhima Nikaya, no.28, Mahahatthipadopama Sutta*)

Another, similar statement is found in

the Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant’s Footprint (*Culahatthipadopama Sutta*). This was the sutta chosen by the Arahant Mahinda when he was sent by Emperor Asoka to Sri Lanka to spread the dhamma there. It uses the analogy of a man following an elephant’s footprints as a way of showing how increasing understanding of the teachings brings greater and greater benefits. The Buddha says that if you judge the size of an elephant simply by the size of his footprint, you may be misled. First, it is necessary to follow the footprints and observe other signs left by the animal, including where it has passed, grazing as it goes. When you eventually see the animal in the open, then you are in the right position to judge his measurements correctly. So, too, a follower of the Buddha who progressively attains the four jhanas develops increasing confidence (*saddha*) in the Buddha and his teachings. When he finally knows he has destroyed the three taints (*asavas*) of sensual desire, becoming and ignorance, and attained Arahantship, then he reaches the conclusion that, ‘The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practising the good way’. The Buddha said that when we experience his teachings, then we shall see his footprints as the path which he has trodden to Enlightenment. Practising the Dhamma is the way to see the Buddha, i.e. wisdom is more important than faith to identify the Buddha. The more you examine the Dhamma, the more you see the Buddha.

As followers of the Buddha, we are trying to follow in his footprints. The Buddha is our teacher, who is showing us the way to Enlightenment and release from suffering in all its forms. He cannot make us enlightened, but by following where he has led, we can reach the ultimate goal of nibbana.

LIFESYLES AND SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

by *Bhikkhu Bodhi*

Newcomers to Buddhism often ask whether a person's lifestyle has any special bearing on their ability to progress along the Buddha's path, and in particular whether the Buddha had a compelling reason for establishing a monastic order governed by guidelines quite different from those that hold sway over the lay Buddhist community. Doesn't it seem, they ask, that a lay person who follows the Buddhist precepts in daily life should be able to advance just as rapidly as a monk or nun and attain the same level of enlightenment? And, if this is so, doesn't this mean that the entire monastic lifestyle becomes something superfluous, or at best a mere matter of personal choice no more relevant to one's spiritual development than whether one trains to become a doctor or an engineer?

If we suspend concern for questions of status and superiority and simply consider the two needs of life in their ideal expression, the conclusion would have to follow that the monastic life, lived in the way envisioned by the Buddha, is the one that conduces more effectively to the final goal. According to the Pali Canon, the ultimate goal of the Dhamma is the attainment of Nibbana: the destruction of all defilements here and now and ultimate release from samsara, the round of rebirths. This attainment comes about by eliminating craving and ignorance through the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path is open equally to both monastics and lay followers; monastic ordination does not confer any privileged access to the path or an empowerment that enable a monk or nun to make more rapid progress than a lay follower. But while this is so, the fact remains that the monastic life was expressly designed by the Buddha to facilitate complete dedication to the practice of the path in its three stages of virtue, concentration and wisdom, and thus provides the optimal conditions for spiritual progress.

The monastic lifestyle does so precisely because the final goal is a state of renunciation, "the relinquishment of all acquisition" (*sabb'upadhi-patinissagga*), and from the outset the monk's life is rooted in renunciation. In "going forth" the monk leaves behind family, possessions, and worldly position, and even the outer marks of personal identity, symbolised by hair, beard, and wardrobe. By shaving the head and donning the yellow robe, the monk has given up - in principle at least - any claim to a unique identity of his own. Outwardly indistinguishable from a hundred thousand other monks, he has become simply a "Sakyaputtiya samana," an ascetic who follows the Sakyan son (i.e., the Buddha).

The life of the monk involves radical simplicity, contentment with the barest requisites, the need to be patient in difficulty. The monastic lifestyle places the monk in dependence on the generosity and kindness of others, and imposes on him an intricate code of discipline, the Vinaya, designed to foster the essential renunciant virtues of simplicity, restraint, purity, and harmlessness. These virtues provide a sound basis for the higher attainments in concentration and insight, which are essentially stages in the progressive purification of the mind and the deepening of insight.

Of prime importance, too, is the external freedom ideally provided by the monastic life. The monastic schedule leaves the monk free from extraneous demands on his time and energy, allowing him to devote himself fully to the practice and study of the Dhamma. Of course, as the monastic life is lived today, monks take on many responsibilities not originally mentioned in the canonical texts, and in a traditional Buddhist country the village temple has become the hub of religious activity, with the monks functioning as virtual priests for the wider Buddhist community.

But here we are concerned with the canonical picture of the monastic life. If the monk's life so conceived did not promote smoother progress towards the goal, it seems there would have been no sound reason for the Buddha to have established a monastic order or to have encouraged men and women so inclined to "go forth from the home life in homelessness."

While the attainment of Nibbana is the ultimate goal of early Buddhism, it is not the only goal, and one of the shortcomings in the way Theravada Buddhism has been presented to the West is the one-sided emphasis placed on the final goal over the provisional aspect of the Teaching. In traditional Buddhist lands few Buddhists see Nibbana as an immediately realistic prospect. The great majority, both lay and monastic, regard the path as a course of "gradual practice, gradual progress, and gradual achievement" extending over many lives. Their practice as Buddhist followers centres around the performance of meritorious deeds and methodical mental purification, rooted in the confidence that the kammic law of causality and the spiritual power of the Dhamma will sustain them in their quest for deliverance.

To make clear the choices facing the lay follower we might posit two alternative models of the Buddhist lay life. In the first model lay life is seen as a field for gradual progress towards the goal through the development of wholesome qualities such as generosity, moral virtue, kindness, and understanding. The immediate aim is not direct realisation of the highest truth, but the accumulation of merits leading to a happy rebirth and gradual progress towards Nibbana.

The second model recognises the capacity of lay followers for reaching the stages of awakening in this life itself, and advocates strict moral

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

discipline and strenuous effort in meditation to attain deep insight into the truth of the Dhamma. While there are in Buddhist countries lay people who follow the path of direct realisation, their number is much smaller than those who pursue the alternative model. The reason should be obvious enough: the stakes are higher, and include a capacity for inward renunciation rare among those who must raise a family, work at a full-time job, and struggle to survive in a ruggedly competitive world. We should note further a point of prime importance: this second model of the Buddhist lay life become effective as a means to higher attainment precisely because it emulates the monastic model. Thus to the extent that a lay follower embarks on the practice of the direct path to realisation, he or she does so by conforming to the lifestyle of a monk or nun.

These two conceptions of lay life need not be seen as mutually exclusive, for an earnest lay follower can adopt the first model for his or her normal routine and also stake out periods to pursue the second model, e.g. by curtailing social engagements, devoting time to deep study and meditation, and occasionally going on extended retreats. Though a monastic lifestyle might be more conducive to enlightenment than a busy life within the world, when it comes to individuals rather than models all fixed preconceptions collapse. Some lay people with heavy family and social commitments manage to make such rapid progress that they can give guidance in meditation to earnest monks, and it is not rare at all to find sincere monks deeply committed to the practice who advance slowly and with difficulty. While the monastic life, lived according to the original ideal, may provide the optimal outer conditions

for spiritual progress, the actual rate of progress depends on personal effort and on the store of qualities one brings over from previous lives, and often it seems individuals deeply enmeshed in the world are better endowed in both respects than those who enter the Sangha.

In any case, whether for monk, nun, or lay person, the path to Nibbana is the same: the Noble Eightfold Path. Whatever one's personal circumstances may be, if one is truly earnest about realising the final goal of the Dhamma one will make every effort to tread this path in the way that best fits the particular circumstances of one's life. As the Buddha himself says: "Whether it be a householder or one gone forth, it is the one of right practice that I praise, not the one of wrong practice." (SN45:24)

(BPS Newsletter)

A SUPERIOR PERSON'S GIFTS

There are, O monks, these five gifts of a superior person. What five? He gives a gift out of faith; he gives a gift respectfully; he gives a gift at the right time; he gives a gift with a generous heart; he gives without denigration.

Because he gives a gift out of faith, wherever the result of that gift ripens he becomes rich and affluent, with great wealth, and he is handsome, comely, graceful, endowed with supreme beauty of complexion.

Because he gives a gift respectfully, wherever the result of that gift ripens he

becomes rich and affluent, with great wealth, and his children and wives, his slaves, messengers and workers, are obedient, lend their ears to him, and apply their minds to understand him.

Because he gives a gift at the right time, whenever the result of that gift ripens he becomes rich and affluent, with great wealth, and benefits come to him at the right time, in abundant measure.

Because he gives a gift with a generous heart, whenever the result of that gift ripens he becomes rich and affluent, with great wealth, and his mind

inclines to the enjoyment of excellent things among the five cords of sensual pleasure.

Because he gives a gift without denigrating himself and others, whenever the result of that gift ripens he becomes rich and affluent, with great wealth, and no loss of his wealth takes place from any quarter, whether from fire or floods or king or bandits or unloved heirs.

These, monks, are the five gifts of a superior person. (An. v, 148)

The sensual-minded people fond of sense pleasures yearn to be born in the regions of the gods, but the follower of Wisdom looks with loathsome disgust on the pleasures of the senses, whether human or divine.

Effort is what the Buddha wished that people should make. Effort is all in all. Effort is the basis of karma. Even the effort to think is karma.

No truth can come out of the man who is not absolutely free to express his highest convictions. Absolute freedom is a needed factor when we are in search of Truth.

Neither the existence of an eternal hell nor of an eternal heaven is acknowledged in Buddhism. Each individual being has to suffer according to the evil karma he has done, it may be for a kalpa, but at the end, cessation of suffering is the law.

Buddhism is a kind of spiritual athleticism. It teaches you the way to develop your spiritual muscles and to strengthen your spiritual tendons. If another does your work where is the glory of your effort?

(Anagarika Dharmapala)

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE TAUGHT BY THE BUDDHA

by Venerable Dr. H. Saddhatissa Nayakathera

“Suppose, brethren, a man in need of sound timber, in quest of sound timber, going about searching for sound timber, should come upon a mighty tree, upstanding, all sound timber, and pass it by; but should cut away the outer wood and bark and take that along with him, thinking it to be sound timber. Then a discerning man might say thus: ‘This fellow surely cannot tell the difference between sound timber and outer wood and bark, branch-wood and twigs He passes it by and goes off with the outer wood and bark, thinking it to be sound timber. Now such a way of dealing with sound timber will never serve his need’. Thus, brethren, the essentials of the pure life do not consist in the profits of gain, honour and good name, nor yet in the profits of knowledge and insight; but the sure heart’s release, brethren, is the meaning, that is the essence, that is the goal of living the pure life.” (*Majjhima Nikaya* I.194)

The goal of the Buddhist way of life, the Noble Eightfold Path, is *Nibbana*. The Buddha said: “*Nibbana* is the highest happiness.” (*Dhammapada* v.204) Hence the highest aim of the Buddhist is the attainment of it. Attempts have been made by writing many books to define this exalted state. It has to be appreciated that *Nibbana* is something that has to be realised within oneself, rather than described, explained or talked about as it is “not within the scope of logic”, being a supermundane state.

What happens to a person who realised *Nibbana* on his death? It cannot be stressed strongly enough that he is not annihilated, which opponents put forward as the only logical answer. The argument devolves round the Buddhist view of the self; no part of the individual can possibly be identified with a self or soul; hence, one cannot speak of the annihilation of the latter. In the West, however, many follow the theories of Plato and

maintain that the soul is synonymous with consciousness, and that it is this that is immutable and immortal. This view, which is denied by Buddhism, is very much akin to Hindu ‘*Atman*’ theory.

Nibbana, the goal in Buddhism, corresponds to salvation, except that the former is not attained through the agency of another or outside being but solely through one’s own efforts. If it is attained during one’s lifetime, it is termed ‘*Nibbana* with aggregate’ (*Sopadhisesanibbana*); if at death, then ‘*Nibbana* without aggregate’ (*Anupadhisesanibbana*). One must realise it of one’s own accord.

In a very practical sermon – in fact, it was his first sermon given by the Buddha at Sarnath near Benares – he declared that those who wish to lead a pure life should avoid the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-torture. Self-indulgence is low, coarse, vulgar, ignoble, and self-mortification is painful, ignoble – both are profitless. There is the Middle Way which leads to Insight and Wisdom. Its fruit is Serenity, Knowledge, Enlightenment, *Nibbana*. It is summed up in four great truths; the fact of suffering, the further fact that this suffering has its cause in the craving for personal satisfaction, the third fact that this suffering will cease when such craving is stilled, and fourthly that result can be achieved by treading the Middle Way, otherwise defined as the Noble Eightfold Path, consisting of Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Endeavour, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

This is the Middle Way, the Buddhists’ philosophy of life by which one lives and progresses in accord with the principles of moderation and detachment. Once deliverance is thus obtained from suffering, and the freedom appreciated, it cannot be lost by those who have once won it.

The first principle of all Reality is that whatever has a beginning must have an end. The Buddha said: “Whatever is subject to arise must also be subject to cease.” (*Digha Nikaya* I, 110) Therefore Suffering is no exception.

The first sermon contains all the essentials of the Buddhist ideal. The Buddha does not proclaim himself a Saviour willing and able to take upon himself the sins of mankind. On the contrary, he declares that each man and woman must bear the burden of their own actions. The Buddha says, “By oneself, indeed, is evil one; by oneself is one defiled; by oneself is evil left undone; by oneself, indeed, is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one purifies another.” (*Dhammapada* v.165)

It may seem that many features that have become associated with what is called ‘religion’ are not present in the Buddhist concept. Buddhism has none of the activities of a religion, but as an ethical philosophy it may be described as a progressive scheme of self-discipline and self-purification. This philosophy, based on the teaching of the Buddha, is to be understood and practised, not accepted and believed. The Buddha claims to be a guide, a teacher of the way, and any spiritual freedom is the conquest of one’s own intellect and will, rightly ruled and directed by oneself. “Buddhas point the way, you must make the effort.” (*Dhammapada* v.276) In the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* the Buddha categorically states, “Therefore, Ananda, dwell making yourselves your island (light), making yourselves, not anyone else, your refuge, making the *Dhamma* your island (light), the *Dhamma* your refuge, nothing else your refuge.” (*Digha Nikaya* II.100) Therefore the first requisite of his teaching is a frank recognition of the facts of life – a just estimate of their values. The

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

first essential is a realisation that all conscious existence is enveloped in suffering which is called *Dukkha*. It means not merely suffering, pain or misery, but includes all other factors of an unsatisfactory nature, namely: decay, death, hunger, thirst, impermanence, insubstantiality, and alike. This truth is easily realised by any person who can think soberly and dispassionately. It can be easily understood, too, due to its grossness and to the fact that it can be seen everywhere around us. It cannot be denied that where there is sensibility, there also is *Dukkha*. Infatuation with transient pleasures prevents us from seeing things as they truly are, but pain is an experience which results in a feeling of dissatisfaction. All activities, whether good or bad, stem from this feeling.

Buddhism is the adaptation of one's life to harmonise with natural laws. The importance of happiness cannot be overstressed. It can only come about when we live in harmony with the natural laws, which bring us health, success and contentment, tranquillity and peace of mind. One can understand the same fact in the sayings of the Buddha, "Here he rejoices, hereafter he rejoices; in both states the well-doer rejoices; he rejoices, exceedingly rejoices, seeing the purity of his own deeds." (*Dhammapada*

v.16) "Here he is happy, hereafter he is happy; in both states the well-doer is happy. Thinking that 'I have done good', thus he is happy. Furthermore he is happy, having gone to a state of bliss." (*Dhammapada* v.18)

When we live in discord with these laws we experience sickness, failure, discontent, worry and unbalance. In its practical application to our daily life, harmony is the fruit of understanding the law, while discord is the fruit of ignorance of it. Discord arises through greed, ill-will, and delusion. Greed is the parent of selfishness and avarice; selfishness is the parent of envy and jealousy; avarice is the parent of covetousness and the competitive spirit; ill-will is the parent of resentment and anger; resentment is the parent of pride and revenge; anger is the parent of malice and strife; delusion is the parent of attachment and fear; attachment is the parent of craving and lust; fear the parent of superstition and intolerance. All crimes result from greed for wealth, power, position, etc., in short, in the desire to be a step ahead of everyone else.

The positive aspect of harmony arises through charity (*dana*), loving-kindness (*metta*) and wisdom (*panna*). Charity is the parent of unselfishness and generosity; unselfishness is the parent of sympathy and altruism;

generosity is the parent of magnanimity and co-operation; loving-kindness is the parent of equanimity and goodwill; goodwill is the parent of compassion and self-control; wisdom is the parent of renunciation and serenity; renunciation is the parent of contentment and mental tranquillity; serenity is the parent of sound judgment and tolerance.

The right to be happy is accepted by nearly every nation, but the interpretation of how this happiness is acquired is conflicting. There is the popular belief that when an individual piles up all the possession he can, he will have arrived at a state of perfect happiness. In practice, he finds that the more he has the more he wants; like the sorcerer's apprentice, they conjure up a demand which cannot be controlled.

Different Motivations of People

*One who works for his own good,
but not for the good of others;*

*One who works for the good of others,
but not for his own good;*

*One who works neither for his own good,
nor for the good of others;*

*One who works for his own good
as well as for the good of others.*

(The Buddha)

OUR NEW RESIDENT MONK

We are most happy to welcome a new resident monk to assist at the Vihara. Ven. Konwewe Ariyaratana. He has been chosen by the Anagarika Dharmapala Trust in Sri Lanka, on the recommendation of the Ven. Bogoda Seelawimala Nayaka Thera, as the most suitably qualified person for this appointment. He took up his position on 2nd February 2010.

Ven. Ariyaratana entered the order as a novice at the age of 13 and studied at Siri Wijayasundara Pirivena in Kuliyaipitiya and Sri Vidyadhara Maha Pirivena in Ipalogama, Anuradhapura. He received his higher ordination in 1991.

He took up an appointment as a teacher of English and completed his teacher training at Penideniya Teacher Training College, in Kandy. He graduated from the University of Kelaniya in 1995 and completed his Post Graduate Diploma in Education in 2002. He has worked as a teacher for 15 years and became the principal of Hiripitiyagama Vidyalaya, Anuradhapura district. He gave his service to the same school until his arrival in London. He is the Head of the Vihara, Sri Jinendramaya in Hiripitiyagama, Ipalogama, in the district of Anuradhapura. He is well known in Sri Lanka as a writer of lyrics.

Ven. Ariyaratana's appointment as resident monk will greatly help our Head Monk, Venerable Seelawimala Nayaka Thera, and he, with other resident monks, will form an excellent team.

We wish him every success in his Dhammaduta work.

RAHULA DHAMMA DAY CELEBRATIONS - 2010



From the singing of Jayamangala Gatha to the National Anthem, the students of London Buddhist Vihara Dhamma School exuded great confidence and affinity with each other and their audience at the Rahula Dhamma Day, the annual Children's Variety Show and Prize Giving. Organised by the teachers and parents of Dhamma School, it was a colourful event consisting of plays that depicted the life of Buddha and his teachings, with readings from the scriptures and poetry, devotional songs, and dances that reflected the essence of Sinhala culture. Students of Pubudu Dham Pasala from North London who take part regularly at this event also contributed to the programme. The event, held at the Dharmapala Building, was well attended by parents and well wishers. The Chief Guest of the event was the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to the Court of St. James Justice Mr. Nihal Jayasinghe, who was accompanied by his wife Mrs Indira Jayasinghe.

Speeches were given by the Head of the Vihara Ven. Seelawimala Nayakathera, the Principal of the Dhamma School Ven. Tawalama Bandula, the High Commissioner Justice Mr. Nihal Jayasinghe, and Dr. Lucky Panagoda from the Vihara Management Committee. They all spoke of the importance of passing on the Dhamma to the younger generation and the sense of discipline that comes with it. They also spoke of unity among the Sri Lankans living in the UK and the need for expatriate Sri Lankans living here to savour their national identity.

The previous Head monk, the late Dr. Medagama Vajiragnana, was remembered with respect as he was the moving spirit behind the initial setting up of the Dhamma School; from its small beginnings it has grown to accommodate just over 150 students today.

It was certainly an enjoyable and memorable day for the children of LBV Dhamma school. As they glided onto the stage like a cloud of milky white butterflies in their white mini half saris and national dresses they sang the school song, Rahula Podi Hamuduruwo, to their hearts' content. Later, in their colourful costumes, they sang, acted and danced in front of their distinguished audience and took their bows just the way they were told, but their imaginations were allowed to roam free. In their minds, some turned into monkeys, some to birds, some became farmers, some into ogres and devils, to rural people, to kings, to paupers and some into Kandyan dancers, but they all looked at ease in their new-found characters and showed great affinity with the stage. In the end everybody was happy; teachers were relieved, parents beamed and the priests were contented.

Overall it was a proud day not only for the parents of the children but also for those teachers who worked hard instilling the Dhamma and the cultural aspects of the Sri Lankan people in the students. The final item of the day which was distribution of Dhamma Certificates and the prize giving to the children was done by the High Commissioner Justice Mr. Nihal Jayasinghe and his wife Mrs Indira Jayasinghe. The event was compered by Dr. Nanis Subesinghe and assisting him were Samadhi Galpayage, Jayanaka Attanayake and Heshani Gadakanda Arachchige. (Report by Pandula Ranatunga)

WHY RELIGION DOES NOT APPEAL TO SOME PEOPLE

By Most Ven. K. Sri Dhammananada Nayaka Thera

Some people have often said: “Religion is the soul of soulless conditions; the heart of heartless world; the opium of the people.”

Such statements are often made by persons who are really fed up with religions. This is because for many centuries religious authorities had misused religion by keeping their followers in the dark for their personal gain and power. Mankind today is divided in the name of religion. Certain religionists condemned the followers of other religions as “heathens”, “pagans” and “infidels”. The founders of certain religions who have done a great service for the happiness and welfare of mankind were even referred to as “devils”.

To propagate the peaceful message of their religion, certain religionists had themselves violated the peace and polluted the good name of religion through wars and bloodshed. No one can hide these facts because all these unfortunate incidents remain recorded in world history. Thus some people feel that religion has contributed more miseries than happiness. Religion has thus become a great burden to them. They used to believe that religion blindfolded man. They did not realise that man was not made for religion; religion was in fact made for man. The overzealous religionists fought for power under the garb of religion. They tried to show that they were working very hard to send others to heaven, but personally they had neglected to observe their own basic religious principles.

When people were not educated and science was then not known to them, they had their own imaginations with regard to the universe and life. Those beliefs and ideas were based on misunderstanding and ignorance, nevertheless they were introduced in the name of religion and preached as the real truth. Those who had faith accepted such theories without questions and clung to them blindly.

The dawn and advancement of science revealed the real nature of the universe and life and as a result their former religious beliefs were shattered and exposed and many people wanted to withdraw from religion completely. Because of this revolution, the religious authorities had to find out new versions and interpretations to conform with the factual conditions so as to protect their religion. It appears they have been too late. Still there are many vulnerable dark spots in their doctrine which they cannot easily erase by specious reasoning.

Under the circumstances we cannot blame those who hate religion because many people are educated today. They cannot agree with all those theories, dogmas, blind faith and practices introduced by the people who were ignorant of nature's laws. Today, they want something which is rational, reasonable, logical and practicable. Unless and until we give them some rational religion which they can understand and agree, the number of non-believers will increase.

THE FOOL AND THE WISE PERSON

*His action marks the fool, his action marks the wise person,
O monks, wisdom shines forth in behaviour.*

*By three things the fool can be known:
by bad conduct of body, speech and mind.*

*By three things the wise person can be known:
by good conduct of body, speech and mind. (An. III.2)*

AN A - Z OF BUDDHISM

JHANA - Absorption.

The Mental development one gains through Tranquillity meditation (Samatha) for gaining Jhanic power is called ‘absorption’ or ‘ecstasy’. Jhana attainment has eight stages. 4 Rupa (fine material) Jhana and 4 Arupa (formless) Jhana. They are achieved through the attainment of full concentration of the mind on an object, during which there is complete, though temporary suspension of fivefold sense-activity and of the 5 hindrances.

The 1st absorption is free from 5 hindrances and has 5 factors of absorption. When one enters the 1st absorption, there have vanished: Sensuous Desire, Ill-will, Sloth and Torpor, Restlessness and Worry, and Doubt; and there are present : Initial Application (*Vitakka*), Sustained Application (*Vicara*), Rapture (*Piti*), Joy (*Sukha*), and Concentration (*Samadhi*). In the 2nd absorption there are present only Rapture, Joy and Concentration; in the 3rd: Joy and Concentration; in the 4th: Equanimity and Concentration.

After the fourth Jhana, the practitioner may attempt to strengthen his concentration further by selecting a more subtle (non-material) object, ‘infinity of space’, to reflect on. If he can attain the state of jhana by means of this object, he enters into the Realm of No Form. The second stage is acquired by reflecting on ‘infinity of consciousness’ and the third stage by contemplating on ‘nothingness’. Finally he reflects on nothingness, but becomes aware of serenity alone and tries to make the intentional activity of the mind subside. Then he reaches the highest level of concentration, the state of ‘neither-perception-nor-non-perception’. The attainment of jhana was recommended by the Buddha as a means of training and purifying the mind. However, to attain enlightenment, it is necessary to practise a different form of meditation - vipassana.

CONTRIBUTION OF BUDDHISM TO A HEALTHY LIFE

*by Dr. Mrs. Princy Merlin Peiris
(Lecturer, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka)*

The essence of Buddhism is incorporated in the Four Noble Truths. In the First Noble Truth the Buddha points out that disease is suffering. Disease is painful whether it is physical or mental. For the ordinary worldly sickness is inevitable. It is the highest gift for a human being to lead a healthy life.

Once Venerable Ananda approached the Buddha and informed him that Venerable Girimananda was very ill. The Buddha requested Venerable Ananda to go and recite to him Ten Contemplations, so that the disease would be allayed then and there by listening to it. They are the contemplations of impermanence, anatta (absence of a permanent self or soul), impurities of the body, disadvantages (danger), abandoning, detachment, cessation, distaste for the world, impermanence in all compounded things, concentration on breathing in and out.

Commenting on the idea of disadvantages, the Buddha enumerated various types of diseases to which man is subjected. Human beings are afflicted with various types of physical illness. In this body arise diverse diseases such as the disease of eye, nose, tongue, head, ear, mouth, teeth and skin. Apart from external diseases one is subject to internal diseases as belly ache, dysentery, cholera, piles, diabetes, ulcers, and jaundice. Common diseases such as cough, catarrh, asthma and fever are also mentioned. Sometimes sickness occurs due to changes of the seasons, or the stress of circumstances, such as sitting or standing too long. There are also chronic diseases due to the ripening of Kamma. The sutta also mentions diseases due to external causes (opakkamika abhada). For example, one may be attacked as a result of the bad intentions of others,

who plan to hurt us with unwholesome thought, word and deed.

Mental diseases are cited in Buddhism as more acute than physical diseases. A person can admit that he did not experience any form of physical pain for a certain specific period. But beings are hard to find in the world who can admit freedom from mental pain even for one moment except those in whom the asavas are destroyed. The Buddha also stated that all ordinary worldlings have some form of mental disorder. The inherent nature of the mind is to be pure and lustrous, but it is often defiled by adventitious thoughts (coming from outside). The mind of the ordinary man is shrouded by five kinds of impediments, which are sense pleasures (Kamacchanda), anger (Vyapada), sloth and torpor (Thinamiddha), excitement and worry (Uddhacca Kukkucca), and doubt (Vicikiccha). When the mind is obsessed with these defiling tendencies there is an inability to understand the reality of life. As a result this untrained mind is always bewildered. For example, when the mind is perplexed with angry thoughts, there arise corresponding physical manifestations such as restlessness. According to modern medical science when the emotion of anger increases, a secretion of adrenalin enters the blood stream. This will affect the blood circulation causing various diseases.

When the mind is not peaceful there will be mental stress and fatigue. Mental depressions often occur when an individual is unable to curb emotions and maintain mental equilibrium. Every unskilled state of mind leads downwards. Hence one whose mind is preoccupied with evil thoughts like jealousy, pride, conceit, hatred and doubt before long will have to be remorseful. The de-

terioration of his mental health will be responsible to a certain extent for his physical indisposition.

Many are the causes of ailments according to Buddhism. Some individuals may have to face malignant conditions such as suffering from cancer due to the result of past kamma. According to Buddhism those who have killed beings in a previous birth will live a short life. Those who have physically harassed beings will have to lead an unhealthy life. In the modern world various diseases are due to man's unhealthy demeanour. Today it is accepted that alcoholism is a serious disease which causes many problems both for the individual and his family. To get rid of the drudgery of work and boredom, the use of sedatives and tranquilizers has become more common. Unfortunately they can create a vicious circle, leading to temporary relief or merely a few moments of escapism. The drug culture in the modern world is a serious problem since it is a threat to human life. These drugs bring about mental complications. Consuming cocaine and amphetamines brings about mental confusion, while consuming heroin and valium weakens the nervous system. The drug menace is a threat to physical and mental health. The deadly disease AIDS which is usually a result of unchastity is rampant today all over the world. As Buddhists we can overcome these health hazards if we practise the five precepts regularly.

According to Buddhism one must be moderate in food in order to lead a healthy life. The Buddha advised his disciples to drink water and end the meal when he could consume 5 to 6 additional mouthfuls of food. King Kosala was also advised by the Buddha to reduce gradually the amount

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 9

of food he ate. He followed this procedure and it was conducive to his good health. Even today most people suffer from problems like obesity and diseases like diabetes due to wrong health habits such as consuming excessive food. The Buddha mentioned that some forms of food pollute the body. People suffer from three diseases. They are desire (Iccha) which is a psychological disease, hunger (anasana) a physical disease, and old age (Jara) a natural disease. Later as a result of meat-eating human beings became subject to ninety-eight forms of disease. To keep the body healthy according to the Buddhism one should avoid excessive eating and consuming unsuitable food. Excessive fasting also hinders good health. Before his enlightenment the Buddha practised asceticism leading to excessive fasting. As a result during old age he suffered constantly from back pain and indigestion. This indicates that moderation in food leads to good health.

The Buddha as well as his disciples led a wandering life. The Buddha

requested his disciples to go forth to preach the Dhamma. They were very active and physically healthy since they walked long distances. The Buddha allowed the recluses to engage in walking up and down (cankamana), and to use a Jantaghara for health purposes, on the admonition of Jivaka, the physician. At the Jantaghara the sick person takes a bath of tepid water after a steam bath. It is a place which is useful to control diseases that arise as a result of intense cold. The Buddhist monastery was equipped with these centres which were conducive to the good health of the monks.

Buddhism also stresses the importance of a good environment. When considering the human body it can be considered as one's immediate environment. The Buddhist disciple was expected to keep his body clean, and the dress neat and methodical. Hence he was pleasant in his appearance compared to the other ascetics at that time who were lean and emaciated.

The dwellings of the monks were also

kept clean. The Vinaya Mahavagga gives an explanation of the manner in which the monastery was cleaned. Having removed the furniture the dwellings have to be swept and the rubbish removed. If there are cobwebs they also should be removed. If the walls and the floor are stained the stains should be removed. The windows should be closed to avoid dusty winds. Every unit in the monastery including the latrines should be kept clean. Buddhism is against environmental pollution. Even today environmental pollution has adverse effects on the health of the community. Modern medical science too has pointed out that most people suffer from lung diseases such as asthma due to inhaling dust, poisonous gases and fumes.

The Buddhist canon is rich in material dealing with good health habits. Leading a life according to the exhortation of the Buddha will contribute to good health which is man's highest gain. In the Dhammapada it says, "Health is the greatest gain." (*Arogya parama labha. v. 204*)

(Vesak Handa - Buddhist Annual, 2003)

BACK TO BASICS

WISDOM (PANNA)

"The noble disciple has wisdom; he is endowed with wisdom which leads to the knowledge of the rise and fall of phenomena, and with excellent penetration which leads the complete destruction of ill."

The summit of the Buddha's teaching is reached when understanding of the nature of life becomes complete, and everything that helps to that right understanding is included in this treasure which is the most valuable of the treasures of the noble. Without right understanding it is not possible to reach a state which is beyond the reach of becoming, and of continued existence. To be able to appreciate the happiness of the cessation of becoming, and to work for reaching that happiness, a man has to grow in understanding the impermanence, subjection to ill, and the absence of

any self whatsoever in the components of sentient life. He who knows that only ill arises and ceases, when there is arising and ceasing of any kind is firmly established in knowledge founded on direct perception and not on knowledge founded on belief in another's word. One who has such direct perception of the fact of ill and impermanence is a man of right understanding. When a man trains himself according to the instructions of the Buddha, he arrives at Right Understanding.

In the Dhamma men are purified finally and completely, not by virtue and concentration, but by right understanding. Virtue and concentration are requisites for preparing the mind for right understanding. Therefore the Buddha praised the life lived with right understanding

as the most excellent. How is that life developed? Through association with those who understand rightly, through receiving right instruction, and by seeing through the fetter of personality belief (sakkaya ditthi). Referring to the five khandhas, the Buddha taught us to compare matter to a foam-ball, feeling to a bubble, perception to a mirage, formation to a plantain trunk, and consciousness to an illusion. If a man sees according to the instructions of the Buddha, he will realise the insubstantiality of all phenomena and develop disenchantment in regard to the things that bind beings to life. With the growth of that disenchantment, he will reach the freedom from all craving, the freedom for the sake of which men of good family go forth.

VIHARA ACTIVITIES - 2010

Unless otherwise mentioned, the following events/activities were conducted by Ven. Seelawimala Nayakathera.

January

1. New Year Blessing Ceremony held at the Vihara.

13 Attended a service at St. Paul's Cathedral to the new chaplain's service for the Metropolitan police.

14 Advanced Buddhism class, "Sermons of the Buddha", taught by Julian Wall.

18 Attended the funeral service for Mr. W.D. Gunasinghe at Kensal Green Crematorium, West London,

18 "Buddhism for Beginners" class started.

19 & 20 Gave talks to pupils from Strand on the Green Junior School.

February

2 Gave a talk to pupils from Southfields Primary School, Chiswick.

4 Attended the Independence Day ceremony at the Sri Lanka High Commission.

4 Gave a talk to pupils from William Hogarth School, Chiswick.

6 Gave a talk at the inauguration ceremony held at the Vihara of the "Kalyana Mitra", a support group for the Buddhist Chaplaincy service.

6 Monthly Dhamma talk by Hemananda Madawala on "Quantum Theory and Buddhism".

8 School visit by pupils from Strand on the Green.

11 Attended the Archbishops and Bishops meeting at Mansion House, London.

22-26 Participated in a retreat at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery.

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

March

6 Navam Full Moon Day Celebrations.

8 Ven. Seelawimala attended the Commonwealth Day Observance at Westminster Abbey.

10 Attended the Theravada Buddhist Sangha Council meeting at the British Buddhist Trust in Wembley.

23 Attended Inter-Faith Network meeting in Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London.

25 Ven. Seelawimala and Ven. Bandula attended Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of UK meeting at Birmingham Maha Vihara.

26 Ven. Monks attended the funeral service for Mr. John Jackson at Mortlake Crematorium.

28 Vishaka Vidyalaya Founder's Day ceremony at the London Buddhist Vihara.

April

1 Attended the funeral service for Ms. Catherine Neil at Mortlake Crematorium.

3 Ven. Seelawimala attended the New Year Celebrations organised by Janahanda Foundation, Hounslow.

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

10 Monthly Dhamma talk by Ven. Dedunupitiye Upananda, head of Ehipassiko Monastery, Calgary, Canada on "The Blissful Wisdom of Change".

18 Ven. Seelawimala and Ven. Bandula attended the New Year Celebrations organised by Ananda Colles Old Boys Association in UK held at Kingsbury High School.

28 Ven. Bandula attended the funeral of Professor David Harvey at West London Crematorium.

OBITUARY

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

Mr. W. D. Gunasinghe. Passed away on 3 January and funeral was held on 18th January at Kensal Green Crematorium, West London. He is a long standing friend of the Vihara. He is survived by his loving wife Chandra and two daughters Lakshmi and Tanya.

Mr. Parakrama De Silva. Passed away on 7th March and funeral was held on 22nd March at Reading Crematorium. He is survived by his loving wife Christobel, and three children Nirmalee, Anuree and Gehan.

Mr. John Jackson. Passed away and funeral was held on 26th March at Mortlake Crematorium amidst a large gathering. He is a very good supporter of the Vihara. He is survived by his loving wife Barbara.

May they all attain the bliss of Nibbana!

Monthly Dhamma Talks & Other Important Speeches held at the Vihara in 2010

January

"Karma-Yoga-Meditation"
Ven. Susara

February

"Quantum Theory and Buddhism".
Mr. Hemananda Madawala

"Sila and a Veggie Life"
Ven. Susara

March (Navam)

"Only We Can Help Ourselves"
Ven. T. Bandula
"Keeping Sila"
Venerable Susara
"Art of Noble Living"
Venerable B. Seelawimala

"Religions and how to calm the mind"
Ven. Susara

April

"The Blissful Wisdom of Change"
Ven. Dedunupitiye Upananda

May

"Hidden Wonders of Korea"
Korean Spirit & Culture Promotion Project

"How to practise Buddhism"
Ven. Susara

COURSES FOR THE YEAR 2010

BUDDHISM FOR BEGINNERS

8 meetings starting:
Monday 07 June 2010, 7.00pm

The Life of the Buddha
The Noble Eightfold Path
Dependent Origination

The Four Noble Truths
Kamma
Meditation

Venue: London Buddhist Vihara

Tutor: Ven. Seelawimala Nayaka Thera

Fees : Free (donations are welcome)

How to join: Enrol at the class on first day of attendance.

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SARNATH

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NEW DELHI

Maha Bodhi Society
Buddha Vihara,
Mandir Marg,
New Delhi - 110 001

MADRAS

Maha Bodhi Society
17 Kennet Lane
Egmore, Madras - 8

SANCHI

Chetiayagiri Vihara
Maha Bodhi Society
Sanchi, Bhopal - MP

BHUBANESHWAR

Buddha Vihara,
Plot 4 Unit 9
Bhubaneswar, Orissa

NOWGARH (Lumbini)

Maha Bodhi Society
Srinivasa Ashram,
Lumbini Road
Nowgarh

LUCKNOW

Maha Bodhi Society,
Buddha Vihara
Risaldar Park,
Lucknow-1, U. P.

WEEKLY EVENTS

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

○ 2010 (FULL MOON) POYA DAYS

May	○	27
June	○	26
July	○	26
August	○	24
September	○	23
October	○	23
November	○	21
December	○	21

2010 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May	30	VESAK - Buddha Day
June	06	Blood donation Session
June	27	POSON
July	25	ESALA - Dhamma Day
Sept.	19	FOUNDER'S DAY
Nov.	07	KATHINA
Dec.	19	SANGHAMITTA DAY

PUNYANUMODANA

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

May you be well, happy and attain Nibbana.

SAMADHI SPONSORS

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Thank you.

Our email address is:

london.vihara@virgin.net

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