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## PILGRIMAGE - THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

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

Pilgrimage is one of the main practices of every religion. Sometimes it is compulsory for followers. We Buddhists, from time to time, engage in pilgrimages and experience spiritual joy, contentment and peace. In Sri Lanka there are well-known Buddhist sites called Atamastana at Anuradhapura, and lots of pilgrims visit Polonnaruwa every day. Nagadeepa is one of the major places in the north of the island. At Adam's peak, "Sripada", the footprint is highly venerated by pilgrims of all the religions. Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims all mix together harmoniously.

In the Mahaparinnibbana Sutta (DN 16.5.8) in his last days the Buddha recommended four places as worthy of veneration by the devoted person:

"Ananda, there are four places the sight of which should arouse emotion (*sanvega*) in the faithful. Which are they? Here the Tathagata was born is the first place. Here the Tathagata attained supreme Enlightenment is the second. Here the Tathagata set in motion the wheel of the *Dhamma* is the third. Here the Tathagata attained the Nibbana element without remainder is the fourth..... Any who die while making the pilgrimage to these

shrines with a devout heart (*saddha*) will, at the breaking up of the body after death, be reborn in a heavenly world." When we see these places we become contented because we have completed an important event in our lives. There are two terms which are very significant. *Sanvega*



means a sense of urgency. When we see these places we develop an idea that the Buddha had experienced supreme bliss and we cannot give up. Life is so short. We have to set out on our spiritual journey right now. We should not waste time on useless pursuits, but dedicate ourselves to the attainment of liberation. The second word is *saddha* which means confidence based on knowledge, and

is a vital mental power for living in accordance with principles and the goals to be achieved.

For Buddhists the major pilgrimage of their lives is paying homage at the *Vandana* sacred sites associated with the Buddha's life or *Dambadiva Vandana*. Usually we spend one month on this journey. We believe that a pilgrimage to the holy places of the life of the Buddha is very inspiring, it is a high point of our life, a great privilege and an historic event. In the Asokan inscriptions *Dharma Yatra* means the journey of Dharma. The great king Asoka paid visits to the most sacred places of the Buddha and erected pillars as a mark of the visit. It was Asoka's pillar which enabled archaeologists to pin-point the birth place of the Buddha at Lumbini. The pillar bears an inscription saying that "Sakyamuni Buddha was born here".

The climax of a pilgrimage is worship of the Buddha and the site. When the pilgrims reach the place they stay there and observe special precepts like *atasil*. Then they also practise *dana*, *sila*, *bhavana*, the threefold wholesome (*kusala*) actions. They recite *gathas* and do

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Chief Executive: Ven. B. Seelawimala Nayaka Thera

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chanting. We experience serenity of mind stemming from the intensity of our devotion and whole-hearted commitment. There is a Sanskrit stanza which says, *Mukham pavitram yadi Buddha vakyam, cittam pavitram karuna gunasyath hathram pavitram pradadati danam padam pavitram gamanam subhanca*. "One's mouth becomes pure by reciting the words of the Buddha. Mind becomes pure with the quality of compassion and loving-kindness. Hands become pure by practising generosity. Legs become pure because they have gone on a sacred journey."

Going to the local temple on religious days or special occasions may seem to be a simple matter, but it is also a little pilgrimage. Whilst for most of us it is not feasible to go to India in order to visit the four sacred sites, we can still treat a visit to our local temple or *vihara* at this season of Vesak as a pilgrimage provided we approach it in the right state of mind. A pilgrimage may involve a physical journey to a sacred site, but the real journey is an inner journey along the spiritual path.

This means that we are all pilgrims. We are responsible for our life, which is itself a journey or a pilgrimage, no matter whether we are a lay person or a monk. Before you make your visit, check your motivation. Why are you going to the *Vihara*? Is it just an automatic action you always

take at this time of the year? Or do you think carefully about what it is we are celebrating? The full moon day of Vesak marks the day when the Buddha was born, the day when he attained Enlightenment and the day when he passed away. What is the significance of these events for us today? These have taken place only once in our era. They are unique events and are of immense importance to the way we live our lives. The Buddha has left us a body of teaching which can radically change our lives, enabling us to find true happiness both in this life and the life to come. We have this precious human birth. We have been born at a time and in a place where we can still receive these teachings. If we are to be born again into another existence, we do not know what the circumstances will be. Therefore let us make effort now and not waste this special opportunity. If your head is on fire, you will take immediate action and not delay until some later occasion. Therefore your visit to the *Vihara* can be an occasion for several things. First, there may be a sense of gratitude for what the Buddha has given us, then a sense of awe and wonder at the immensity of what he achieved by himself without the assistance of a teacher, an appreciation of this special opportunity which we have to hear and practise these teachings, and a renewed sense of personal commitment to follow the path untiringly and with complete

dedication.

Our route is the Noble Eightfold Path of *sila, samadhi, panna*, or the Middle Way. This inner pilgrimage is a journey in which we are involved every day of our lives. We are directed to the destination having seen the map through the development of Right View. Detachment, non-violence and loving-kindness are wholesome attitudes for the journey. We need strong discipline for our speech, which should be pleasant, meaningful, harmonious and based on the truth. Our bodily actions should be governed by what is good for oneself and good for others. Our livelihood should be firmly compatible with non-violence. Another very important quality for the journey is effort. We can reflect on whether we are making proper effort towards the attainment of our goals. We all have previous experience in our practice. We need to see the next step in our progress. We should get rid of our defilements, if not we have to "top up" our spiritual feeling with practice and update our wisdom by experience. Finally we experience serenity of mind and awareness of the ever-changing process of mind and body, *nama-rupa*. At last we experience impermanence, non-self and unsatisfactoriness on our samsaric journey and direct our pilgrimage to the city of *Nibbana*.

## THE GIFT OF FOOD

**O**n one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Koliyans, at a town called Sajjanala. One morning the Blessed One dressed, took his upper robe and bowl, and went to the dwelling of Suppavasa, a Koliyan lady. Having arrived there, he sat down on the seat prepared for him. Suppavasa the Koliyan lady attended to the Blessed One personally and served him with various kinds of delicious food. When

the Blessed One had finished his meal and had withdrawn his hand from the bowl, Suppavasa the Koliyan lady sat down to one side and the Blessed One addressed her as follows:

"Suppavasa, a noble woman-disciple, by giving food, gives four things to those who receive it. What four? She gives long life, beauty, happiness and strength. By giving long life, she herself

will be endowed with long life, human or divine. By giving beauty, she herself will be endowed with beauty, human or divine. By giving happiness, she herself will be endowed with happiness, human or divine. By giving strength, she herself will be endowed with strength, human or divine. A noble woman disciple, by giving food, gives those four things to those who receive it." (An. iv, 57)

# THE PROBLEM OF CONFLICT

by *Bhikkhu Bodhi*

It is one of the bitterest ironies of human life that although virtually all human beings cherish a desire to live in peace, we continually find ourselves embroiled in conflict, pitted against others in relationships marred by tension, distrust or open hostility. This irony is particularly poignant because it is immediately evident to us that cordial, harmonious relations with others are a necessary condition for our own genuine happiness. Not only do such relations allow us to pursue undisturbed the goals we consider essential to our personal fulfillment, but they bring us the deeper joy of meaningful communion with our fellow human beings. Contentious living, in contrast, is always intrinsically painful, involving a hardening of our subjective armour, a tightening of the knots of anger and hate. Indeed, whatever the outcome of conflict may be - whether victory or defeat - the result itself is ultimately detrimental for both victor and victim alike.

Nevertheless, although harmonious living promises such rich blessings while discordant relations entail so much harm and misery, for the most part our lives - and the lives of those around us - are entangled in a ravelled net of quarrels and disputes. Conflict may simmer within as silent suspicion and resentment or it may explode into violent rage and devastation. It may implicate us at the level of personal relationships, or as members of an ethnic group, a political party, a social class or a nation. But in one or another of its many manifestations, the presence of conflict in our lives seems inescapable. Peace and harmony hover in the distance as beautiful dreams for a summer's night or noble ideals to which we pledge formal allegiance. But when reality knocks and dreams are dispelled, we find ourselves drawn, usually against our better judgment, into an arena where the pleasures that

we seek exact as their price the hard cash of struggle and contention.

The teachings of the Buddha, while framed around the goal of individual deliverance from suffering, are also expounded for the purpose of instructing us in how we can live in harmony with others. Such harmony is desirable not only as a source of satisfaction in itself, but also because it is a prerequisite for treading the path to the higher freedom. The final peace of enlightenment can arise only in a mind that is at peace with others, and the mind can only be at peace with others when we are actively committed to a course of training that enables us to extricate the roots of conflict that lie buried deep within our hearts.

Once, in ancient India, Sakka the ruler of the gods came to the Buddha and asked: "By what bonds are people bound whereby, though they wish to live in peace, without hate and hostility, they yet live in conflict, with hate and hostility?" The Master replied: "It is the bonds of envy and avarice that so bind people that, though they wish to live in peace, they live in conflict, with hate and hostility." If we trace external conflicts back to their source, we will find that they originate not in wealth, position or possessions, but in the mind itself. They spring up because we envy others for the qualities they possess which we desire for ourselves, and because we are driven by an unquenchable avarice to extend the boundaries of what we can label "mine."

Envy and avarice in turn are grounded in two more fundamental psychological conditions. Envy arises because we identify things as "I," because we perpetually seek to establish a personal identity for ourselves internally and to project that identity outward for others to recognise and

accept. Avarice arises because we appropriate: we attempt to carve out a territory for ourselves and to furnish that territory with possessions that will titillate our greed and sense of self-importance. Conflict being thus rooted in envy and avarice, it follows that the path to non-conflict must be a course of relinquishment, of removing the constrictive thoughts and desires that pivot around the notions of "I" and "mine," the drives to identify and to possess. This course reaches consummation with the full maturity of wisdom, with insight into the empty, egoless nature of all phenomena; for it is this insight which exposes the hollowness of the notions of "I" and "mine" that underlie envy and avarice. However, although the final liberation from clinging may lie far away, the path leading to it is a gradual one, growing out of simpler, more basic steps that lie very close to our feet.

Two such necessary steps are changes in attitude with the power to transmute envy and avarice. One is altruistic joy (*mudita*), the ability to view the success of others with the same gladness we experience at our own success. The other is generosity (*caga*), the readiness to give and to relinquish. The former is the specific antidote for envy, the latter the antidote for avarice. What is common to both is a lifting of the sense of identity from its narrow fixation on the self, and a broadening of it to encompass others who share our desire to be happy and free from suffering.

As private individuals we cannot hope to resolve by our will the larger patterns of conflict that engulf the societies and nations to which we belong. We live in a world that thrives on conflict, and in which the forces that nurture conflict are pervasive, obstinate and terribly powerful. But as followers of the Enlightened One

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# THE BODY IN JHANA

by

*Indaka Weerasekera (M.A.)*

The practice of the *jhānas* occupies a central place in Buddhist *samatha* (tranquillity) meditation practice. Given that the purpose of *samādhi* (the meditative unification of mental and physical energies) is to experience the natural state of the mind, radiant pure and free from all impurities (AN.I.10), one can see why many previous studies into the nature of *jhāna* have tended to focus on the experience of the mind. Instead, this short enquiry focusses on the nature of the physical body in *jhāna*. By interpreting the similes used by the Buddha to describe the cultivation and transcendence of spiritual joy and happiness in *jhāna*, this study shows that the physical body remains throughout the process of *jhānic* absorption. What is then perceived as material body is radically altered.

The sublime effects of *jhāna* (or meditative absorption) can be explained by the arising of wholesome non-sensual energies as the physical senses are gently and calmly eased away from their sense objects in *samatha* practice. This happens as unwholesome thought patterns (hindrances/*nīvaraṇas*) are suspended and wholesome mental energies (*jhāna* factors) intensify. One of these *jhāna* factors is spiritual joy

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what we can do and must do is to testify by our conduct to the supremacy of peace: to avoid words and actions that engender animosity, to heal divisions, to demonstrate the value of harmony and concord. The model we must emulate is that provided by the Master in his description of the true disciple: "He is one who unites the divided, who promotes friendships, enjoys concord, rejoices in concord, delights in concord, and who speaks words that promote concord."

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(*pīti*). *Pīti* is described in the *Visuddhimagga* as involving various felt effects in the physical body (Vism. IV.94-5). But it is the kind of joyful energy that pervades the whole body (Vism.IV.99) that is considered in the *suttas* to lead to and remain in first *jhāna*: 'He makes the joy and happiness born of seclusion drench, steep, fill and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the joy and happiness born of seclusion' (MN.I.276).

Unlike the pleasures that arise through sensual experience, *jhānic* joy and happiness are bodily energies 'born of seclusion', i.e. the 'withdrawal' of the senses from their usual objects. These spiritually efficacious energies are brought forth through the calming and letting go of the grasping tendency of the mind. However, the seclusion of the senses does not mean that the physical body is not experienced at all in the *jhānas*. Spiritual joy and happiness (*sukha*) are brought forth and experienced by the whole (mental and physical) body. This must be what the Buddha means when he refers to 'this body' (*kāyama*) in the non-sensual spiritual energy pervading the whole person (MN.I.276).

In the similes used by the Buddha to describe the effects of *pīti* and *sukha* in the *Mahā-Assapura Sutta* (MN 39), references to the physical body can be found to show that mind and body both work together and experience together the holistic effects of *samādhi* in the first three *jhānas*. The effect of first *jhāna* is compared to soap powder first 'moistened with water then kneaded into a soft ball in a copper bowl.' The mind here is like the soap powder moistened by joy and happiness. The copper bowl is significant in this image as it shows the importance of the physical body as the meditation object and resource for skilfully clarifying

the mind (soap powder). Thus only as wet powder rounded into a ball by the bowl do mind and body together experience joy and happiness in first *jhāna*. The mind in second *jhāna* is compared to 'a deep lake supplied and cooled by wells below it'. Here the physical dimension of *pīti* and *sukha* is acknowledged by the presence of coolness, a quality of the temperature material element (*rūpa-dhamma*) present in the physical body. In this case, the fire element (*tejo*) is subdued of its heat. In the third *jhāna*, *pīti* is abandoned but *sukha* remains in equanimity and mindfulness. The experience is compared to coloured lotus flowers submerged in water. The richness of imagery associated with the lotus is clearly meant to demonstrate a more spiritually superior state of being. According to the canonical *Abhidhamma* (the *Paṭṭhāna*), *jhāna* is considered one of the mental states that can 'originate' certain material form. But rather than implying the creation of something from nothing, the *Abhidhamma* refers to this kind of materiality as being an alteration or 'alignment' of the four existing material elements in the physical body (earth, fire, water and air). According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the experience of happiness as a result of the third *jhāna* is felt in the mental body and experienced as a kind of 'superior matter' enriching the physical body after emerging from third *jhāna*, (Vism.IV.175). However, this does not preclude the immediate physical effects whilst also remaining in third *jhāna*. As the *Visuddhimagga* also points out, *jhāna* is a co-nascent condition for the material states that arise with it: 'For the materiality arisen at the time he is joyful [or happy] is smooth, tender, fresh and soft to touch' (Vism. XX.71).

In the fourth *jhāna* references to physical body appear to be transcended.

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# AN A - Z OF BUDDHISM

**KALYANA\_MITTATA** : - noble or good friendship. This is a Buddhist concept of "spiritual friendship" within Buddhist community life, applicable to both monastic and householder relationships. One involved in such a relationship is known as a "good friend," "virtuous friend," "noble friend" or "admirable friend" (*kalyāṇa-mitta, -mitra*).

Since early Buddhist history, these relationships have involved spiritual teacher-student as well as communal peer groups. In general, such is a supportive relationship based on shared Buddhist ethical values and the pursuit of enlightenment.

In the Pali Canon's *Upaddha Sutta* (SN 45.2), there is a conversation between the Buddha and his disciple Ananda in which Ananda enthusiastically declares, 'This is half of the holy life, lord: admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie.'

The Buddha replies: 'Don't say that, Ananda. Don't say that. Admirable

friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the holy life. When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, & comrades, he can be expected to develop & pursue the noble eightfold path.'

The Buddha elaborates that, through such friendships, one develops each of the path factors through seclusion, dispassion and cessation. Further, the Buddha states that through spiritual friendship with the Buddha himself followers have gained release from suffering.

In traditional schools of Buddhist thought, a spiritual friendship is a friendship not between one's peers, but a friendship between a student and their spiritual teacher. From the aforementioned *suttas*, we can see that the Buddha believed it vital for spiritual growth to have a spiritual friend. This friendship is built on a deep respect for the teacher's knowledge and the student's potential, and, through this respect and friendship, the two individuals learn constructive behaviour. Constructive behaviour in Buddhism is to think, speak, and behave in a constructive way towards life, leading to personal happiness, and, then, to enlightenment.

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Happiness is subdued together with all pleasure and pain: 'He sits pervading this body with a pure bright mind...just as though a man were sitting covered from the head down with a white cloth...' (MN.I.277-8). The 'white cloth' describes the purity and brightness associated with the mental experience of equanimity (*upekkhā*) which now succeeds all other states. This simile clearly presents the fourth *jhāna* as a special condition on the physical body. But even here the similes do not neglect the physical body. Instead, the focus is placed on the sublime mental experience of equanimity. Elsewhere in the *suttas*, fourth *jhāna* is where all breathing (as the bodily formation) ceases (SN.IV.217). So as the

physical senses become purified of all their grasping, the mind in equanimity transcends even the most subtle experience of the physical body. But even if the physical body is not 'experienced' in fourth *jhāna*, it is perceived with greater degrees of subtlety due to the effects of spiritual joy and happiness in *jhāna* states leading up to it. At fourth *jhāna*, the purity and brightness of the 'white cloth' of equanimity pervades the whole body. What is experienced in fourth *jhāna* of what might normally be called the physical body are the five physical senses now bright and purified of grasping and unified with the mind free from its normal psycho-physical conditioning and usual patterns of perception.

## MOTHER AND CHILD

by *Bhikkhu K. Nanananda*

*The birth of a child is, at the same time, the birth of a mother into the world.*

*Child is the symbol of a mother. That love for the child, that tenderness of the heart which characterises a mother, is so significant that it is often associated with the change of red-blood into milk.*

*Metta - usually rendered by that cross-bred term loving-kindness - is the universal love for which the mother's love for her child is the unit. The Buddha speaking about metta says for instance, "Just as a mother would protect her only child even at the risk of her own life, so should one develop a boundless heart towards all beings".*

*A mother is not only born with the child she brings forth, she also grows up with the child she brings up. Her growth is in terms of the other three Divine Abidings or Brahma Vihara - compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. In bringing up her child, sometimes a mother has to be stern and tactful. Her soft tender love matures into a compassionate sternness, when the child is passing through the unruly boyhood and reckless adolescence. But that hardness of her heart melts at the correct moment, like butter.*

*The child has now reached manhood. He can stand on his own feet with enviable self-confidence. The mother also grows up with sympathetic joy enjoying the fruits of her labours. Her complacency, like curd, is serene and has nothing meddlesome about it.*

*The bringing forth and the bringing-up is over. The time comes now to let go - of the attachments and involvements regarding the child. But for that separation too, the mother, now mature in her experience, is fully prepared with equanimity. Like a pot of ghee, she is not easily upset.*

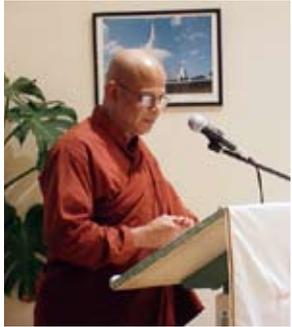
*Universal love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity are the four Divine Abidings a mother practises in a limited sense in the course of her motherly care for the child. Charity begins at home. These four are homely virtues in the first instance, to be remembered like milk, butter, curd and ghee. The four Divine Abidings are to be developed, however, in a boundless measure until one's heart is fully released in them. A mother bears testimony to the practicability and the reciprocal value of these Divine Abidings which hold the prospects of spiritual growth, peace and harmony for society at large.  
(From *Topsy-turvydom to Wisdom* Vol. 1, Page 6)*

## NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS - 2012



*A large gathering came to receive blessings for the New Year 2012. Throughout the day, Ven. Seelawimala Nayaka Thera, Head of the Vihara, and resident monks chanted Buddhist suttas to bless the devotees. Representing the Sri Lanka High Commission in UK, Mr. P.M. Amza, Acting High Commissioner of Sri Lanka participated. (Photo by Tissa Madawela)*

## INTERFAITH WEEK



*InterFaith week was celebrated at the Vihara in November 2011. Mr. Brian Pearce, O.B.E. was among the guest speakers which included representatives from all the major faiths. Dhamma School children also participated.*

## KATHINA CELEBRATIONS - 2011



*The annual Kathina Ceremony was held at the Vihara on 6th November 2011. This year Kathina Puja was sponsored by Mr Amara & Dr. Mrs. Dhammi Makalanda and family and friends. They also presented a casket including the relics of the Buddha. (Photo by Tissa Madawela)*



*A special inter-faith ceremony was held at the Lambeth Palace in London to mark the Diamond Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II on 15 Feb 2012. Ven. Bogoda Seelawimala Thera, the chief incumbent of the London Buddhist Vihara, headed the Buddhist delegation. He presented a small stupa to the Queen. The picture shows the chief monk describing the features of the stupa to the Queen and Archbishop Dr Rowan Williams. Ajahn Amaro the Abbot of the Amaravathi Monastery and Dr Desmond Biddulph, the President of the Buddhist Society look on. This silver stupa embedded with valuable Sri Lankan gems was donated by Mr. Kosala Ratnayaka of Kandy.*



**FELICITATION CEREMONY**

*A Felicitation Ceremony for Ven. Pandith W. Wimalajothi, resident monk of the London Buddhist Vihara, was held at the London Buddhist Vihara on Saturday 17th March. After serving 14 years as a Dhammaduta monk to the Buddhist community in UK Ven. Wimalajothi decided to leave as a resident monk of the London Buddhist Vihara to return to Sri Lanka.*

*The Ceremony was organised by the well-wishers under the guidance of Ven. Bogoda Seelawimala Nayaka Thera..  
(Photo by Bandula Manage)*

**FAITH LEADERS OLYMPIC VILLAGE TOUR**



*Ven. Seelawimala joined other faith leaders for a tour of the Olympic village on 8 November. He has also been appointed as a Buddhist chaplain for Olympic Games 2012 London.*

**VESAK FULL MOON DAY CELEBRATION - 2011**



*On the 14th and 15th May 2011 Vesak celebrations were held at the Vihara. On 14th May, children's Vesak Day, over 100 children observed eight precepts. On 15th May, the programme started with hoisting the Buddhist flag by Mr. P. M. Amza, the Acting High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in the United Kingdom and lighting the oil lamp by a representative of the Vihara Management Committee. Guest speaker was Prof. Richard Gombrich. Ven. Seelawimala, Ven. Bandula, Ven. Wimalajothi and Ven. K. Ariyaratana gave sermons. At the end parents of the Dhamma School presented a devotional song programme.  
(Photo by Tissa Madawela)*

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# VIHARA ACTIVITIES - 2011/12

## July

2 Ven. monks attended a chanting ceremony at Thames Buddhist Vihara.

7 Visit from by Ealing High School for Girls. Talk given by Venerable Ariyaratana.

11 Conducted the funeral service for Mr. Sivagnanam Somasundaram at Mortlake Crematorium.

13 Attended the Annual General Meeting of the Inter-Faith Network UK in Birmingham.

17 Esala Dhammacakka programme. Keynote speech given by Mr Anil Gunawardene, barrister-at-law.

23 Special talk given by Professor Asanga Tilakaratna, Head of the Department of Buddhist Studies, Colombo University.

24 Attended the 75th anniversary celebrations of the World Congress of Faiths held at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London.

## August

06 Conducted funeral service for Mrs Somawathie Wijesekara Subasinghe in Hounslow

10 Theravada Sangha Meeting held at LBV.

16 Ven. Bandula attended a blessing ceremony in Italy.

15-16 Ven. Bandula attended a religious ceremony in Shannon, Ireland.

11 Conducted the funeral service for Mr. Ajith Samarasingha in London.

## September

1 Visit from H.E. Dr. Chris Nonis, the newly-appointed High Commissioner for Sri Lanka.

13 Ven. Bandula conducted the funeral service for Mr. Senaratna Perera in Brighton.

16 Ven. Bandula conducted the funeral service for Mr. M. S. Fernando in Reading.

17-18 Founder's Day Lecture given by Dr. Amal Gunasena (School of African and Oriental Studies) to mark the 147th anniversary of the birth of Anagarika Dharmapala. The chanting ceremony was attended by 21 monks and lasted till midnight.

19-20 Ven. Bandula attended a religious service in Limerick, Ireland.

23 15 devotees from the LBV, led by Venerable Seelawimala, were invited by the Master of the Royal Household to visit Buckingham Palace.

## October

5 Attended a meeting of the Interfaith Network UK.

7 Fifteen devotees, led by Venerable Seelawimala, visited Westminster Abbey at the invitation of Canon Reiss.

9 Attended the Sikh Awards UK ceremony, held at the Hilton Hotel, London.

16 Ven. Bandula attended the Kathina ceremony at the Lumbini Vihara, East Ham.

17 Received Dana at Buckingham Palace given by the Master of the Royal Household.

22-24 Participated in several religious ceremonies at Sravasti, India.

22 Talk given by Ajahn Brahmavamsa, Bodhiyana Monastery, Australia.

22 Ven. Bandula attended the anniversary celebrations at the Maha Vihara, Birmingham.

29 Ven. Bandula attended the Kathina ceremony at the Samadhi Meditation Centre, Edmonton.

30 Ven. Bandula attended the Kathina ceremony at the Dhammaniketanaya, Letchworth.

31 Ven. Ariyaratana participated in a meeting of the Richmond Humanitarian Group.

## November

1 Met Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and also Mr. Noel Wijenaikie, chairman of the ADT.

4 Ven. Ariyaratana gave a lecture at Latymer School, Hammersmith.

6 Kathina Ceremony at the London Buddhist Vihara.

8 Visited the site of the London Olympic Park at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

10 Ven. Bandula conducted the funeral service for Miss Wendy Hall at Leatherhead Crematorium.

13 Attended the State Ceremony of Remembrance at the Cenotaph.

17 Participated in the Inauguration Ceremony of the new High Commissioner for Sri Lanka, H.E. Dr. Chris Nonis.

18 Ven. monks participated in a chanting ceremony at the Sri Lankan High Commission in London on the occasion of the birthday of the President of Sri Lanka.

20 Visit by staff and students of the Department of History of Art and Archaeology, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

21 Attended the inaugural meeting of Interfaith Week at Central Hall, Westminster.

22 Visited and gave a talk to Orchard House School.

24 Interfaith Ceremony held at the LBV with the chief guest Mr. Brian Pierce, advisor on interfaith affairs to the Government.

## December

3 Ven. Ambagamuwe Soratha arrived to start a six-month period of residence at the LBV.

11 Sanghamitta Day celebrations.

16 Ven. Seelawimala participated in the Christmas celebrations of the Sri Lankan High Commission in London.

17 Dana given on the fifth anniversary of the death of Most Venerable Dr. M. Vajiragnana.

## January 2012

11 Attended London Faith Forum at Central Hall, Westminster.

12 Conducted the funeral service for Ms. Leela Asmadale at North-East Surrey Cemetery.

16 Ven. monks officiated at the funeral service for Mr. Peter Smith at Mortlake Crematorium.

18 Conducted the funeral service for Mr. Nanda Nimalasooriya at New Southgate Crematorium.

21 Attended the annual blessing ceremony at Redbridge Buddhist Vihara, Ilford.

22 Conducted the funeral service for Mr. M. P. Hewage at Chilterns Crematorium, Buckinghamshire.

## February

4 Conducted the Buddhist observances inter-religious service for Sri Lanka Independence Day at the Sri Lankan High Commission.

4 Navam Poya Day full-day programme.

7 Attended reception to mark Independence Day at the Sri Lankan High Commission.

15 Led the Buddhist delegation to Lambeth Palace for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, accompanied by Dr. L. Panagoda, Mr. S. Abeyakoon and Mr. Robert Macphail.

18 Attended the Samadhi Meditation Centre, Edmonton for their annual Founder's Day ceremony.

27 Visit from 1st Ealing North St. Benedict's Scout Group.

## March

1 Ms. Sheena Napier attended a fund-raising lunch organised Faith Leaders' Live Below the Line.

5 Chaired a Christian/Buddhist Dialogue at the Buddhist Society organised by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

6 Attended a meeting concerning Awareness of Crime, organised by the police and held at the Sikh Gurdwara, Shepherd's Bush.

10 Conducted the funeral service for Miss Bihari Payagala at Mortlake Crematorium.

12 Attended and read a prayer at the Commonwealth Day Observance in Westminster Abbey.

17 Felicitation ceremony for Ven. W. Wimalajothi at the London Buddhist Vihara.

19-22 Attended a retreat at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery.

24 Annual Founder's Day Ceremony at Letchworth Dhamma Niketanaya.

31 Conducted the funeral service for Dr. S. B. Disanayake North-East Surrey Cemetery.

*Continued on page 9*

# The Simile of the Snake-Catcher and Religion

by *Bhante Henepola Gunaratna*

The simile of the snake-catcher is used by the Buddha in the discourse titled *Alagaddupama* (N0.22), of the Middle Length Sayings. This is an indispensable discourse in illustrating the danger of the wrong grasp of any religion. If a man who does not know how to catch a poisonous snake were to hold the snake either by his body or by his tail he may get bitten by the snake and consequently suffer severe injury or death. The message in this simile once realised fully would facilitate better understanding of the tension from the increase of violence and crime in the name of religion in modern society. A wrong grasp of religion can lead man to justify his greed, hatred and foolishness. His distorted views, distorted perception and distorted consciousness force him to grasp a religion wrongly and undermine its very foundation, causing more pain and suffering - just like the wrong grasping of a snake.

A wrong grasp of religion can defeat the very purpose of religion and encourage people to commit atrocities in the name of their faith. People sometimes not only cling to religions but naively obey any man or woman who, being a persuasive speaker, may promote and justify violence and unethical practices in the name of the faith. By supporting such a person with their time, skill or wealth, they only increase his or her greed, hatred and ignorance. Blinded by religious beliefs they may even try over-zealously to protect their religions, not only by inculcating hatred and fear in many of their gullible followers' minds, but also even by advocating murder in the name of their beliefs.

The simile of the raft is also given in the discourse above. According to this simile, if a man simply clings to the raft after using it to cross over the ocean, instead of leaving it on the shore for someone else to use he

will not do the wise thing either. He just makes the raft a heavy burden on his shoulder. The raft is made out of reeds, sticks, branches and foliage, bound by a rope. Similarly this body is made up of form, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness, bound together by ignorance and desire. Just as this man clings to the raft made up of reeds, sticks, branches and foliage, we may cling to the body and mind made up of form, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness, tied up with craving and ignorance. The man clinging to the raft, which helped him to cross over the vast expanse of water, may continue to carry the burden of the very same raft. Similarly, by clinging to our mind-body complex and our religious beliefs we continue to carry their burden. This body and mind, together with its feelings, perception and mental formations, exist not for clinging but only for gaining the knowledge and insight necessary for attaining liberation from Samsara.

"Monks," said the Buddha, "you should let go of even good teachings, how much more so false ones." Good teaching benefits us only if we use it, just like the raft. No teaching, however good it is, can help us if we simply cling to it. Clinging even to good teachings can cause pain and suffering. Just imagine how much more painful it will be when we cling to bad things! The man who uses a raft to cross over a body of water has to be wise. Similarly, one who uses this body-mind complexity to cross over the ocean of Samsara has to be wise. Therefore, do not cling to this body-mind complex at all. If we do, then we will stymie our efforts to attain enlightenment.

Clinging to beliefs without practice can also make people religious fanatics who seek refuge in violence to resolve problems. They are then totally ignorant of what their

religion teaches them. People unaware of the message of their religion may live in constant fear of criticism of their religion and wish to protect it by destroying people who have different beliefs. The fear of criticism arises in the mind ill-directed by an ambivalent belief system which cannot vouch for true security and the realities of our existence. The Buddha said: "Your ill-directed mind can do you more harm than all your enemies in the world together can do." Similarly, he said: "A well directed mind can do you more good than all your parents, friends and relatives together can do for you."

Although the Buddha never implied causing harm to anybody, there are some even among Buddhists who believe they should protect their country, killing as many as they think necessary in order to protect Buddhism, the religion of peace, harmony, compassion and loving friendliness. Killing or even the thought of killing any living being, let alone human beings, is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the most compassionate and loving Buddha, who said: "He is called virtuous and wise who, wishing success, does not commit crimes for the sake of oneself, for the sake of one's own children, for the sake of others, for the sake of wealth, or even for the sake of the country".

The Buddha's teaching stands above all notions of countries, cultures, languages, ethnic affiliations and everything else, for he taught only the truth, which is permanent, eternal and bound by nothing in the world. When you embark upon the raft you should check it very carefully to verify whether it is secure and properly put together, lest you may drown by using a defective vehicle. Similarly, you should carefully learn and critically examine any religion before accepting or rejecting it. Patient listening to someone who criticises the

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Buddha, Dhamma or the community of Sangha is highly recommended in the teaching of the Buddha: "If for that others revile, abuse, scold and insult the Perfect One (Buddha) on that account, O monks, the Perfect One will not feel annoyance nor dejection nor displeasure in His heart.

"And if others respect, revere, honour and venerate the Perfect One, on that account the Perfect One will not feel delight, nor joy, nor elation in His heart. If others respect, revere, honour and venerate the Perfect One, He will think: 'It is towards this (mind-body aggregate) which was formerly fully comprehended, that they perform such acts. Therefore, O monks, if you, too, are reviled, abused, scolded and insulted by others, you should on that account not entertain annoyance, nor dejection, nor displeasure in your hearts. And if others respect, revere, honour and venerate you, on that account you should not entertain delight, nor joy, nor elation in your hearts. If others respect, revere, honour and venerate you, you should think: 'It is towards this (mind-body aggregate) which was formerly comprehended, that they perform such acts'"

Analytical investigation and critical knowledge of Dhamma are essential factors of enlightenment in Buddhism. For if you know for sure that what you practise is true you should not be alarmed by criticism. You should be glad to welcome critical

investigation so you can look at what you practise from a different perspective. If you know gold as gold, for instance, you would without any hesitation let any well-trained goldsmith test it by cutting, burning, rubbing and hammering it, for you are certain he will not determine your gold to be copper. Only if you give him a gilded piece of lead saying it is gold would you have reason to fear his test. The Buddha advised us not to be alarmed by criticism, but to listen to criticism carefully and mindfully without getting upset with what we hear and measure it by the text. After thorough investigation, we certainly will find no fault in the Buddha, Dhamma or Sangha.

We may find out that the criticism has come from anger, prejudice, frustration, fear, neuroses, paranoia, etc. Then, of course, instead of getting angry with people who have all these problems, we should try to help them with loving friendliness. They deserve our loving friendliness and compassion rather than our hate. No hate is ever going to solve any problem in the world and it never has, for hate is never appeased by hatred in this world, but by love alone. In the teaching of the Buddha, one finds no room for resolving any problem through violent means. We are supposed to use the Buddha Dhamma without clinging to it, only to cross this cycle of birth and death—*Sam-sara*.

*(Bhavana Society News Letter March 2012)*

## OBITUARY

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

**Mrs. Somawathie Wijesekera Subesinghe** passed away on 31st July 2011 and the funeral was held on 6th August at Hanworth Crematorium. She is survived by her loving husband Elbert Munasinghe and three children Devika, Sarath and Chandana.

**Mr. Ajith Samarasinghe** passed away on 7th August 2011 and the funeral was held on 11th August at Breakspear Crematorium. He is survived by his loving wife Ayoma and four children Shamil, Niran, Sohan and Alama.

**Mr. Senaratha Perera** passed away and the funeral was held on 13 September 2011 at Brighton Crematorium. He is survived by his loving wife Ramya and daughter Samantha.

**Mr. Wimalasiri Perera** passed away on 9th October 2011 and the funeral was held on 15th October at Hanworth Crematorium. He is survived by his loving wife Kanti and daughter Rasika.

**Mr. Nanda Niimalasooriya** passed away and the funeral was held on 18th January 2012 at New Southgate Crematorium. He survived by his loving wife Sujata and four children.

**Mr. Peter Smith** passed away on 8th January 2012 and the funeral was held on 16th January at Mortlake Crematorium. He is survived by his loving wife Pat and two children Paul and Deborah.

**Ms. Leela Asmadale** passed away and the funeral was held on 12th January 2012 at Northwood Crematorium.

**Miss Bihari Payagala**, loving daughter of Rohan and Sumeda and loving sister of Osura passed away on 23rd February 2012 and the funeral was held on 10 March at Mortlake Crematorium.

**Dr. Senarath Dissanayaka** passed away and the funeral was held on 31st March 2012 at North-East Surrey Crematorium. He is survived by his loving wife Ari and three children Lakmali, Shiromali and Sanjeewa.

**May they all attain the bliss of Nibbana!**

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### April

1 Rahula Dhamma Day Celebration.

2 Meeting of the Sri Lanka Sangha Sabha was held at the London Buddhist Vihara.

6 Ven. Wiloye Wimalajothi, our resident monk, completed his Dhammaduta service and went back to live in Sri Lanka.

7 Monthly Dhamma talk given by Dr. Sunil Kariyakawana, Buddhist Chaplain to H.M. Armed Forces.

14 Attended Hounslow Janahanda Sinhalese New Year celebration.

17 Attended chaplaincy meeting at Ealing Hospital.

21 Attended the Heladaru Waruna Children's New Year

### **\*10th Annual Blood Donation\***

at

### **The London Buddhist Vihara**

The Avenue,  
Chiswick W4 1UD

**Sunday 10th June 2012**

**9.30-12.30 & 14.00 - 16.00**

**Save a life - give blood**

### Purification of Mind (Cittavisuddhi)

This is the second of the seven stages of purification, which we are reviewing one-by-one in our editions of Samadhi. The bodily and verbal restraint established by purified virtue paves the way for mental restraint, which brings the next stage of purification, Purification of Mind. This purification comes through concentration (*samadhi*), which can be reached by two approaches, the vehicle of serenity (*samathayana*) or the vehicle of insight (*vipassanayana*).

There are 4 conditions which aid the process of purification:

1. The two spiritual faculties, faith and wisdom, must be kept in balance.
2. All five spiritual faculties (faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom) must function with a unity of purpose.
3. The right amount of effort must be applied.
4. Constant and repeated practice must be maintained.

To develop concentration, all one's actions – large or small – must be done with mindfulness. This can be done in all four postures of the body – sitting, standing, walking and lying down. It is the development of mindfulness and concentration that is called “progress in meditation”.

Purification of Mind is achieved when the degree of concentration becomes sufficiently strong to cause the suppression of the five hindrances (*panca nivarana*). These are sensual desire (*kamacchanda*), ill will (*vyapada*), sloth and torpor (*thinamiddha*), agitation and remorse (*ud-dhaccakukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchha*).

There are three kinds of concentration qualifying as Purification of Mind: access concentration (*upacara-samadhi*), absorption concentration (*appana-samadhi*), and momentary concentration (*khanika-*

*samadhi*). The first two are achieved through the vehicle of serenity (*samatha*), and the last through the vehicle of insight (*vipassana*). Momentary concentration possesses the same strength of mental unification as access concentration. It aids the attainment of insight knowledge. However, because it does not serve directly as a basis for jhana as such, it is not called access concentration.

Here we will discuss that attainment of Purification of Mind via the approach of serenity (*samathayana*). The fullest form of Purification of Mind is absorption concentration, which consists of eight meditative attainments (*attha samapatti*): four absorptions called jhanas, and four immaterial states (*arupas*). The main preparatory stages leading to up to a jhana are called preliminary work (*parikamma*) and access (*upacara*). In the stage of preliminary work, one must go on attending to the subject of meditation for a long time until the spiritual faculties become balanced and function with a unity of purpose. Once the spiritual faculties gain that balance, the mind drops into access. In the access stage, the five hindrances do not disrupt the flow of concentration. The original gross object of meditation is replaced by a subtle mental image called the counterpart sign (*patibhaga-nimitta*). During the access stage, the mind becomes powerfully unified upon its object. When the mind, as it were, sinks into the object, this signals the arising of the jhanic mind known as absorption. On reviewing the first jhana, one discovers that it has five distinguishing components called “jhanic factors”, namely: applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicara*), joy (*piti*), bliss (*sukha*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggata*). The meditator should practise repeatedly attaining to and emerging from the jhana, then he should practise advertent and reviewing. The jhanic factors should be reviewed

in direct and then in reverse order. As the meditator becomes skilled in this process some factors will appear gross because they have a tendency towards the hindrances. By concentrating again on the counterpart sign, the second jhana is attained which is free from applied thought and sustained thought. By means of further practice, the meditator comes to feel that joy is also gross and so he attains the third jhana which is free from joy. Then he may determine that bliss is also gross and he attains the fourth jhana which is free from bliss. The only remaining jhanic factor is one-pointedness.

Beyond the fourth jhana are four higher attainments called “immaterial states” or “immaterial jhanas” since even the subtle material form of the jhanas is absent. They are attained by perfecting the power of concentration, not through refining the mental factors (which has already been done), but through training the mind to apprehend increasingly more subtle objects of attention. These are the base of infinite space (*akasanancayatana*), the base of infinite consciousness (*vinnanancayatana*), the base of nothingness (*akincannayatana*), and the base of neither-perfection-nor-non-perception (*n'evasannanasannayatana*).

We said at the start that purification can be reached by two approaches, the vehicle of serenity (*samathayana*) or the vehicle of insight (*vipassanayana*). Let us now look briefly at the vehicle of insight. This too aims at the elimination of the five hindrances through the development of concentration. Here the approach is to gain momentary concentration (*khanika-samadhi*) by contemplating changing phenomena with mindfulness. When Purification of Mind is accomplished and the mind has become concentrated, the meditator is prepared for insight meditation in order to develop wisdom.

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○ 2012  
**(FULL MOON)  
POYA DAYS**

January	○	08
February	○	07
March	○	07
April	○	06
May	○	05
June	○	04
July	○	03
August	○	01
August	○	31
September	○	29
October	○	29
November	○	27
December	○	27

**2012  
CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

Feb 04	Navam Full Moon Day
April 01	Rahula Dhamma Day
May 06	VESAK - Buddha Day
June 03	POSON
June 10	Blood donation Session
July 08	ESALA - Dhamma Day
Sept. 16	FOUNDER'S DAY
Nov. 04	KATHINA
Dec. 16	SANGHAMITTA DAY

**WEEKLY EVENTS**

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

**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**

This issue of Samadhi is sponsored by  
**Mrs. Rohini Abeyasinghe**  
and  
**Miss Manisha Abeyasinghe**  
in loving memory  
of  
**Mr. Harischandra Noel (NJP) Abeyasinghe.**

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