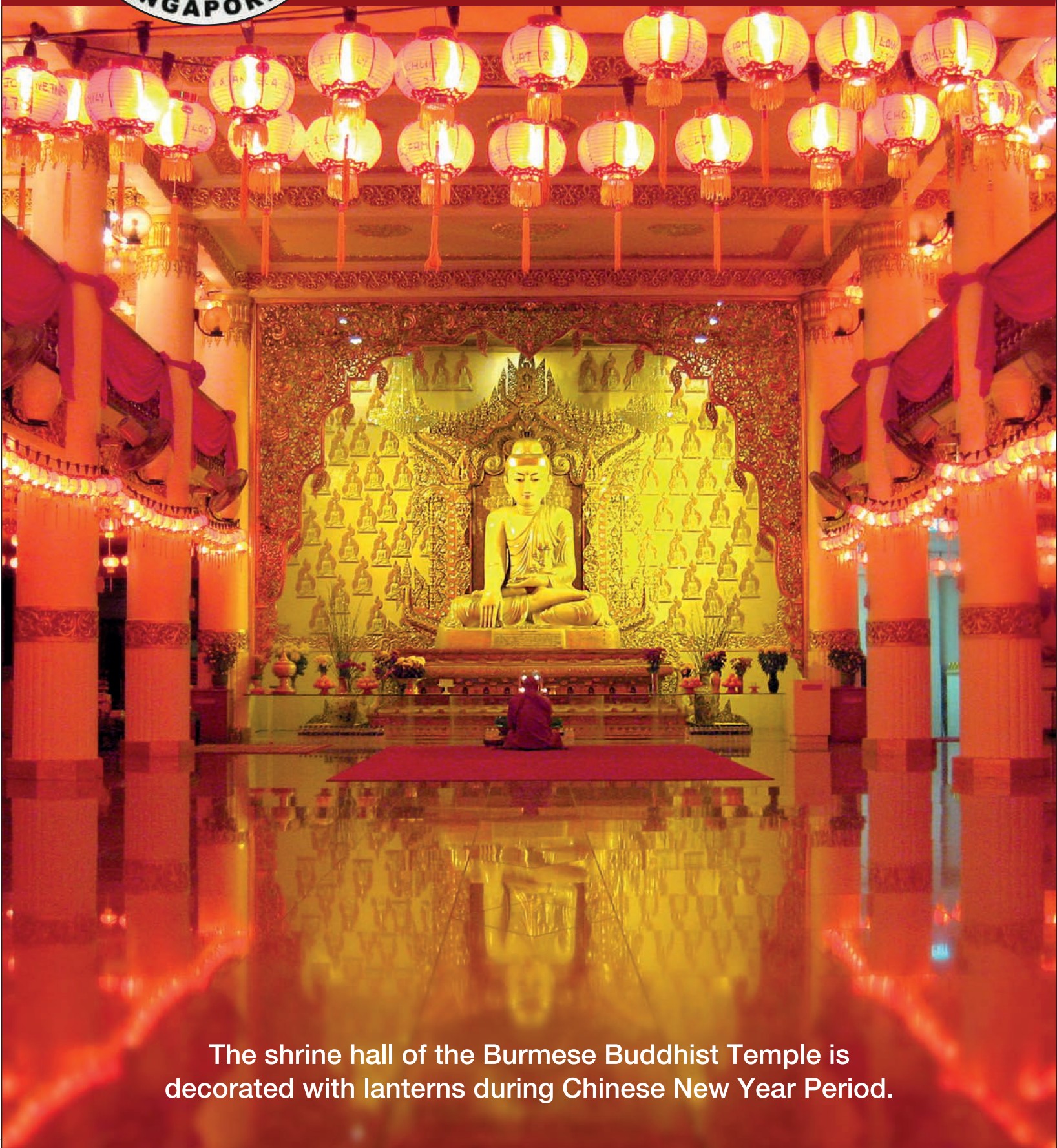




# Burmese Buddhist Temple *Newsletter*

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The shrine hall of the Burmese Buddhist Temple is decorated with lanterns during Chinese New Year Period.



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# Editorial

Singapore is a multi cultural, multi racial and multi religious society. The teaching of the Buddha being a peaceful and tolerant one fits in well with the principle of religious harmony upheld in Singapore.

Two thousand five hundred years ago during the time of the Buddha, many religious leaders glorified their own teachings but for the doctrines of others, they reviled them, showed contempt for them, and disparaged them. This matter was reported to the Buddha when he visited Kesaputta, a town of the Kalamas.

“Which of them was speaking the Truth”, the Kalamas asked the Buddha.

If the Buddha had claimed that His teaching was the True one and others were not he would be just like one of the other religious leaders. This would not solve the problems of the confused Kalamas who were bewildered by the conflicting claims of the various religious leaders who quarreled among themselves.

Instead the Buddha advised the Kalamas to test a teaching by the results it yields and check it against the experience of the wise. A teaching should be abandoned if it contained qualities that were unskillful, blameworthy, being criticized by the wise and qualities that, when adopted and carried out, led to harm and to suffering. A teaching should be embraced only when it had qualities that were skilful, blameless, praised by the wise. When adopted and carried out, it led to welfare and happiness.

Equipped with this method of testing a religion the Kalamas should not embrace a religion just by hearing reports, nor by mere tradition, nor by listening to rumour, nor by scripture, nor by being influenced by bias opinion of some people.

By the method of questioning, the Buddha led them to realize that greed, hatred and delusion, being conducive to harm and suffering for oneself and others, had to be abandoned but the opposite qualities like generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom being conducive to benefit oneself and others should be appreciated and put into practice.

The Buddha next explained that a noble disciple, devoid of covetousness, ill will and delusion dwells pervading with the Four Brahma Vihara of boundless loving kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity. Being purified of hate and malice he enjoys here and now four types of solace: They are: 1.If there is an afterlife and kammic results, then he will have pleasant rebirth. 2. If there is no afterlife he still lives happily here and now. 3. An evil results befall an evildoer, then no evil will befall him as he has not done any wrong. 4. If evil results do not befall on an evil doer then he is purified anyway.

As a result of the sermon the Kalamas went for refuge to the Triple Gem.

As Buddhists let us appreciate the wisdom of the Buddha and feel happy that we always have the peace of Dhamma with and in us.

# The Seven Treasures

A treasure consists of gold, silver and gems which are of great value. All these can be turned into large amount of money to buy all the comforts of life. A treasure is greatly appreciated for the benefits that can be derived from it.

Once, the chief minister of King Pasenadi, Ugga, approached the Buddha and expressed his admiration for the treasures and resources Migara had amassed. He had one hundred thousand pieces of gold besides silver and other valuables.

The Buddha replied that he would not deny that Migara had amassed a treasure. However, his treasure being of worldly materials could be destroyed by fire and flood, stolen by thieves, seized by kings or inherited by undeserving heirs. The Buddha said that there is another type of treasure that could not be taken away from the owner by natural disasters, by human beings nor by devas. These are spiritual treasures which are seven in number: faith, virtue, the feeling of shame to commit immoral acts, feeling of remorse after having done wrong, the willingness to learn and acquire knowledge, generosity and wisdom.

## 1 Treasure of faith (Saddha)

The treasure of faith is the faith in the Buddha, the Perfect One. The faithful appreciates the nine qualities of the Buddha,... The Buddha is 1. The Worthy One (Arahat), 2. the Fully Enlightened One (Samma Sambuddha), 3. the One endowed with knowledge and virtue (Vijja carana sampanno), 4. the One Well gone (Sugato), 5. the Knower of the World (Lokavidu), 6. An incomparable trainer of men (Anuttaro Purisadamma Sarathi), 7. A Teacher of gods and men (Sattha deva- manusanam), 8. the Enlightened (Buddho) and 9. the Blessed One (Bhagava). Faith in the Buddha leads a person to take refuge in the Buddha. He accepts the teaching of the Buddha and puts it into practice. He is guaranteed of happy rebirths. Taking refuge in the Buddha is the first step towards the attaining of Nibbana. This is why faith in the Buddha is a treasure.

Without Faith in the Buddha a person does not accept the Dhamma. He may become immoral and lead an unhappy life and suffer now and have miserable rebirths that end in hell.

## 2 Treasure of virtues (Sila)

The treasure of virtue consists of moral precepts regarding one's actions (kamma) in body, speech and mind. The Buddha teaches man to observe the precepts of abstaining from five immoral actions like, (a). destroying the life of a being, (b). taking what is not given, (c). committing sexual misconduct, (d). telling lies and (e). taking intoxicating drugs and alcohol that causes heedlessness. Abiding by these five precepts a man leads a peaceful and happy life here and now and will have happy rebirths. In view of the innumerable benefits obtained from observing these five precepts one should regard sila taught by the Buddha as a treasure.

## 3 Treasure of feeling ashamed (Hiri) of committing an immoral act

The treasure of hiri means the feeling of being ashamed to commit an unwholesome act in body, speech and mind. Many people behave immorally without feeling ashamed of being laughed at by the wise, the elderly and by their morally upright peers. They follow what others do immorally in order to enjoy sense pleasures. Consequently, their immoral living causes them much suffering in this life and also in future rebirths. If they have the feeling of hiri they would behave morally and be respected by the wise and elderly. They will also lead a peaceful and happy life now and will have a happy rebirth. In view of the innumerable benefits one gets by being sensitive to moral shame the practicing of hiri is a treasure to possess.

## 4 Treasure of feeling remorse (Otappa)

Feeling remorse is to feel sorry for having done something wrong. There are some people who do not feel sorry for their mistakes. Instead they feel proud of doing them and even try to justify their misdeeds. They will repeat their mistakes and suffer the consequences in this life as well as in their rebirths. Those who feel remorse for their misdeeds will repent and stop doing them. They will turn a new leaf. Then they will live peacefully and happily now and will have happy rebirths. In view of these innumerable benefits one gets by having remorse, otappa is a treasure to possess.





## Treasure of learning and acquiring knowledge of (Suta) the Dhamma

There are some who like to know and learn the Dhamma while others find it even boring to read or listen to the Dhamma. Knowing the Dhamma is of great spiritual value because it leads to the attainment of Nibbana, the cessation of suffering. Therefore, having the enthusiasm to learn (suta) the Buddha's teaching (Dhamma) is a treasure to possess.



## Treasure of generosity (Caga)

Usually children are taught that money is hard earned and should be carefully managed. Being tight fisted is considered a virtue. It is forgotten that compassion is a virtue and should be put into practice. Compassion can be expressed in the form of generosity which means giving money or possession and services to the poor and needy. The Buddha teaches that the more you give materially the more you get spiritually. The rewards you get from generosity ranges from happiness in this life here and now to happiness in rebirths until Nibbana is attained. Generosity is indeed a treasure to possess because of the innumerable spiritual benefits that can be derived from it.



## Treasure of wisdom (Panna)

To have wide knowledge of nature and life is not wisdom. Wisdom is the realization of the Four Noble Truths, the rising and falling of phenomena, the realization of the three characteristics of life, that all conditioned things are impermanent, all conditioned things are dukkha and all conditioned things are without substance.

It is common for people to think about themselves. They ask the question "who am I?" After much pondering they come to the conclusion that a man is made up of the physical and spiritual self and when the physical self dissolves at death there is still the spiritual self that survives beyond death. The spirit seems to live forever. This is wrong knowledge about self.

To have the true knowledge about self is the wisdom to realize that a man consists of the five aggregates only, as what the Buddha teaches. The five aggregates consist of (1) the physical form, (2) feeling, (3) perception, (4) mental formation and (5) consciousness. At death all these five aggregates dissolve and there is nothing left of them.

The next event to happen is rebirth as a being and the five aggregates come into existence again according to the process of evolution in nature.

Having realized about the nature of the five aggregates one begins to stop craving as one realizes that there is nothing lasting to crave for. When there is no craving there is no more suffering and there is peace and happiness.

In fact wisdom is the pre-requisite to Enlightenment, Nibbana. This is the ultimate supra mundane benefit to be derived from wisdom.

As Buddhists we possess these seven treasures though at times we may forget about them. We are owners of the seven treasures as mentioned. Spiritually, we are billionaires.

Be happy and never give up our seven treasures!

**Ven. Ujjota (M.A, Dhammacariya)**







# We Are In Control Of Our Life

A newly born child is innocent. He has neither done anything good nor committed any mistakes in life. Yet some are born beautiful and intelligent into a rich family while others are born ugly and dull witted into a poor family. Many think that it is Fate like a whimsical fairy that decides the status of a child at birth.

The Buddha teaches that there is no such thing as Fate. The factor that decides the status of a child at birth is his Kamma in his past life. To give a simple example, if in his previous life he was a generous person then he would be born in a rich family and continue to lead a rich life. If in his previous life he was a miser and even a swindler he would be born in a poor family and continue to live in poverty throughout the whole life. This is how the law of Nature or law of Kamma works.

In this life he continues to live and his kamma (whatever he does in this life ) will shape the type of life he leads till the end of it. Born poor he could become rich, but born into a rich family he could die a poor man. This is the material aspect of life. However, spiritually, whether a man is born poor or rich he could develop his loving kindness, compassion and wisdom according to his will. The type of life he leads will determine the type of life he gets in his next birth.

The Buddha said that from one life to another, a man can fall into one of four categories of life :

- 
- (1) from darkness to darkness**
  - (2) from darkness to light**
  - (3) from light to light**
  - (4) from light to darkness.**
- 

## **1 From darkness to darkness**

A man, born poor, ugly and dull witted, is raised in a family that is not spiritually inclined. He has no opportunity to develop materially and spiritually in this life. In his next life he will be born at a disadvantaged position again. He is said to be going from darkness to darkness.

## **2 From darkness to light**

A man born poor, ugly and dull. In life he develops himself materially and spiritually. He develops loving kindness and compassion in him. He puts the Dhamma into practice and leads a purposeful life, generous and helpful to others. Next life he will be reborn into a good family and live happily. He is called a person going from darkness to light.

## **3 From light to light**

A man born into a rich family with good look and intelligence. He grows up into a successful man who is also spiritually matured. Kind and compassionate he develops wisdom too. The next life, he is reborn again happy materially and spiritually. Such a person is said to go from light to light.

In one sermon, called, Cakka Sutta (Sermon of the Wheel) the Buddha said that a man (1) having done merit in past life would be born into good life. (2) The society he lives in is a civilized society, (3) He will make friends with noble ones like monks and nuns and (4) he will direct his life in the right way. These four factors of a happy life the Buddha likened to four wheels that roll to a man and bestow on him crops, wealth, status, honour and happiness.

## **4 From light to darkness**

A man is born in a happy situation with good look and much intelligence. In life he leads a spoilt life. He is immoral, committing unwholesome actions. He lacks love and compassion and is not spiritually inclined. Such a person will be reborn in a disadvantaged position. He is said to be going from light to darkness.

In conclusion, it can be said that our life is within our control. Our action, kamma in past life determines the beginning of our life but throughout our live we can make or break ourselves with our actions (kamma). Consequently, kamma of present life, which is all of our own doing, will determine the next status of our next life. Do not believe in Fate.

**Ashin Dhammisara**

# F.A.Q

## Frequently Asked Questions

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*Some people say,  
“Buddhists cannot go to  
heaven.” Is it true ?  
What is the concept of  
heaven in Buddhism ?*

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1. I will deal with the concept of heaven first before going any further. According to the Buddha's teaching heaven exists. It is a plane of existence in the spiritual realm where heavenly beings live happily as a contrast to hell, a place of extreme suffering. Only the Buddha (Lokavidu, Knower of the Universe) has the supernormal power to know about these spiritual realms.
2. Many people think that there is only one heaven where good people go to when they pass away from this world. The Buddha says that there are many heavens. The lower heavens are filled by heavenly beings called devas. The higher heavens are filled by heavenly beings called Brahmas and Maha Bramahs
3. The Buddha says that altogether there are 31 planes of existence from the lowest hell to the highest heaven including the human plane of existence. (see page 7). These planes of existence fall into five categories: the human realm and the heavens are considered to be happy realms and the unhappy realms are those of the animals, the hungry ghosts (petas) and the hell. When a being passed away from this human realm he will be reborn into one of these realms according to his kamma, his good and bad deeds done through out his life. To put it simply, the good can come back and be reborn as a human being again, or go to one of the heavens and the wicked will be reborn as animals or become hungry ghosts (petas) or go to hell to be punished for their misdeeds.
4. To your question whether Buddhists can go to heaven; the answer is that anyone can go to heaven irrespective of his religious belief, including Buddhists. It is his Kamma, his good deeds together with his morally upright life that lead him to heaven.

(See story of How Magha Became King Sakka on page 10). In fact, good deeds are expressions of loving-kindness (Metta) and compassion (Karuna). If your mind is filled with loving-kindness and compassion you will go to heaven in your next life.

5. However, it is stated in the Dhammapada commentary that the followers of the Buddha could be reborn in a heaven if they have deep faith in the Buddha, Dhamma (His teachings) and Sangha. (the Community of monks). They are the Tavatimsa heaven or Tusita heaven. (See story of Mattha Kundali on page 12). He was reborn in heaven out of pure faith in the Buddha without doing any good deeds. He was too young to do good deeds.
6. Once the Buddha said, “No disciples, male or female, who seek refuge in the Triple Gem, that are endowed with such peerless excellences, are ever reborn into hell and the like state; but released from all rebirth in the states of suffering, they pass to the Realm of Devas (heaven) and there receive great glory.” \*
7. One important point to note is that according to the Buddha's teaching, life in heaven does not last forever. When the force of his good kamma has been spent, a being will be reborn again in any one of the planes of existence. In the same way, life of suffering in hell does not last forever. A time will come when the being will be reborn after being punished enough and he will be reborn in another plane of existence which could be heaven. (See story of the queen being reborn in heaven after spending seven days in hell on page 13.) This process of rebirths will continue on and on until Nibbana is attained.
8. Many people think that the ultimate aim in life is to go to heaven. To the Buddhists the ultimate aim in life is to attain Nibbana. If Nibbana cannot be achieved in this life then a Buddhist would go to the realm of Devas. However, the way to attain Nibbana is to lead a life according to the Eightfold Path as taught by the Buddha. See the article on The Noble Eightfold Path on page 14.

**\*Apannaka Jataka,  
Jataka Stories Vol. 1**



# 31 Planes Of Existence

## The Formless Realms

**4 planes of existence**

## The Realm of Form

**16 planes of existence**

## The Sensual Realms

**7 planes of existence**

- i. The greater heaven of creation
- ii. The heaven of creation
- iii. Tusita heaven
- iv. The heaven of Yama, the Judge
- v. Tavatimsa heaven
- vi. Heaven of the Four Protectors of the universe
- vii. Manussa - human world

## The Unhappy Realms (Realms of suffering)

**4 planes of existence**

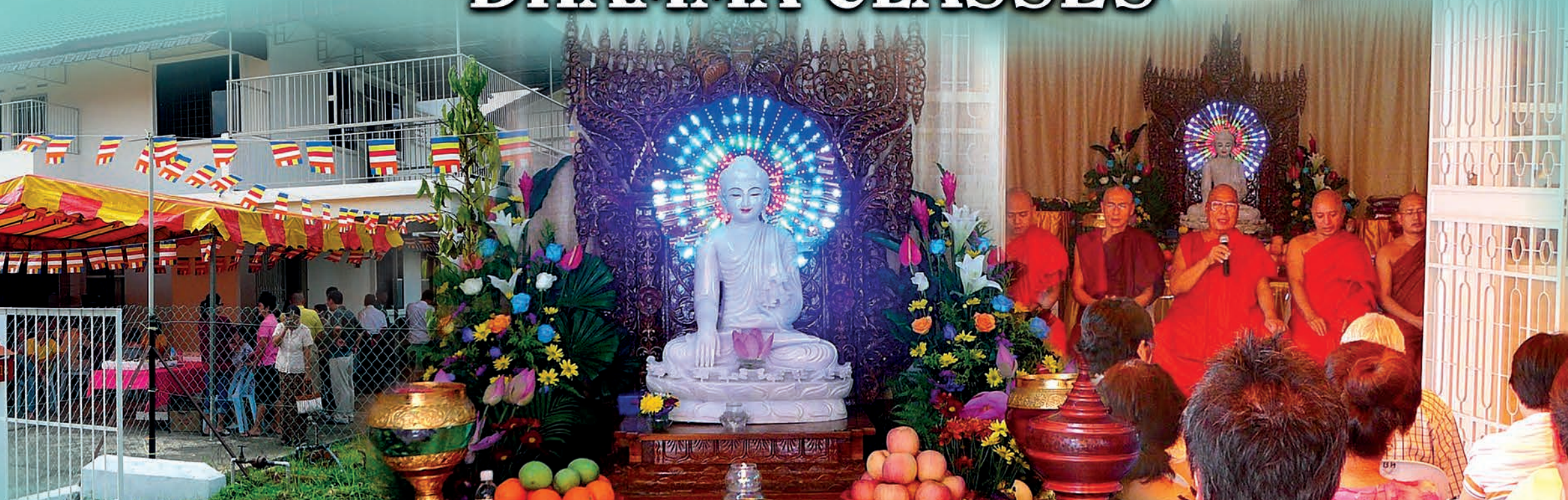
- i. Niraya - Hells
- ii. Tiracchanayoni - Animals
- iii. Petaiyoni - Ghost and unhappy spirits
- iv. Asurayoni - Demons

**Total 31 realms of existence**





# DHAMMA CLASSES





# How Magha Became King Sakka

A man of good character, Magha, popularly known as “Magha the Brahmin” was leading a good moral life by observing the Five Precepts. Out of love and compassion he spent much time in doing community service.

His habit was to stand in a market place and watch the world go by. As the area around the market was dirty, strewn with rubbish and fallen leaves, he had to clean a spot before standing on it. One day, a friend from the same village came to talk to him and by and by asked him to give up the spot. He obliged him. He looked for another spot and had to clean it up before occupying it. Soon another man came and asked him for it. Again he obliged him. This happened again and again for several times. All his friends who came to him were from his own village. There were about thirty of them.

Having won over their friendship, he got them involved in his community service. Together they cleared highways of stones, cut down trees that blocked roads, leveled uneven roads, built bridges, dug wells and built community halls. Under his influence all the thirty men observed the Five Precepts and abstained from doing things evil.

The village headman disliked Magha because he realized that when the men were converted to good life they stopped the habit of taking alcoholic drinks and this affected his business. At the same time, the men had refrained from committing petty crimes. As a headman of the village he used to keep the fines that the king imposed on them but by then this source of income diminished.

Desperate, he lied to the king that the village had been harassed by a group of criminals. The king then empowered him to arrest the criminals. Consequently, Magha and his friends were presented as criminals to the king who straight away ordered them to be trampled to death by an elephant without further investigation.

Magha and his friends were made to lie down in rows for the punishment. To prepare them for the worst Magha told his thirty fellow villagers to bear in mind the Five Precepts and to radiate loving-kindness to the village headman, the king and the elephant as well. There shouldn't be any fear in their mind for they were not guilty of any crimes. They should not allow fear to disturb their thought of Loving-kindness..

Soon an elephant was brought into the court to trample the men to death. Surprisingly, the elephant turned tail and walked away trumpeting loudly. A second elephant was brought in. Again it walked away. This was repeatedly done several times without success.

The matter was reported to the king who suspected that the men might be in possession of a drug that drove the elephants away. A search was made on the bodies of Magha and his friends but no evidence of drug was found.

Then the king ordered the village headman to ask whether they had muttered a spell to drive away the elephants. To this question Magha said that he and his friends had been reciting the words of the Five Precepts and radiating loving-kindness to the King, the village headman and the elephant too. The Five Precepts are: abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies and taking alcoholic drinks. He also told the king that he and his thirty friends had been doing charity work and community service for the country.

Pleased with what he had heard and realizing that the village headman had been slandering, the king arrested the village headman and released Magha and his friends. He also confiscated the wealth of the village headman and gave it to Magha and his friends. Magha was appointed the village headman instead and he was to keep the elephant as a gift from the king. The village headman was made a slave to Magha.

After being relieved of this almost tragic event Magha and his thirty villagers undertook to build a big community hall. Many months were spent to complete the project.

The women in Magha's house became anxious to know what he was up to, being away from home most of the time. When they realized that Magha and his men were involved in building a community hall for the village they requested to be involved in it. Initially, Magha was reluctant to let the women participate in the project for he thought that it should be an all-men activity. His friends questioned the validity of his idea. Finally, he allowed them to make contributions to it.

The women in the house were named Goodness, Thoughtful, Joy and Highborn. Except the last one all the other three would



like to be part of the project. It came about that finally, Goodness was able to contribute the construction of a decorated roof for the community hall. Thoughtful caused a garden to be built, where many types of fruit trees and flower plants were planted. Joy contributed a pond to be built with beautiful lotuses grown in it. Highborn just kept quiet and made no contribution.

After the project had been completed Magha felt convinced that villagers had accepted his leadership. He thought that he was obliged to uplift their spiritual development and consequently taught them to uphold seven virtues in life.

He said :

1. One should cherish one's mother.
2. One should cherish one's father.
3. One should honour the elders.
4. Speak the truth.
5. Avoid harsh speech.
6. Eschew slandering.
7. Shun miserliness.

Then he added in verse: He who cherishes his parents and honour the elderly, is always gentle, friendly and slandering not, polite, truthful, and not be a slave to wrath. Him, even the Heaven of the Thirty Three shall hail as good.

Because of his good deeds and good character Magha was reborn in the Heaven of the Thirty Three as King Sakka, the king of (devas) gods. All the thirty men were also reborn in the same heaven.

After some time Goodness, Thoughtful and Joy were reborn there too. In heaven there arose a mansion for Goodness who contributed a decorated roof for the community hall. It was studded with heavenly jewels and occupied by king Sakka. A garden called Creeper's Grove arose for Thoughtful because she donated a garden to the community hall. Joy had a pond to enjoy. All the three of them became handmaiden to King Sakka.

After some time, King Sakka thought of Highborn. With his power he was able to locate the place where Highborn was reborn. To his sorrow he discovered that Highborn, due to her miserliness, was reborn as a crane in a forest. He came down to earth and brought her to see the Heaven of the Thirty Three and showed her how Goodness, Thoughtful and Joy were having a heavenly life there as a result of their good deeds. He also told Highborn that she was reborn to suffer as a crane because of her miserliness. Then he taught her to observe the Five precepts. She promised to do as instructed.

Sometime later, King Sakka tested her faith. He appeared as a dead fish at her feet in a pond. Seeing her staple in front of her the crane gladly picked it up. But suddenly the fish wriggled its tail. Realising that it was a live fish the crane dropped it away so as not to break the first of the Five Precepts, to abstain from taking life. With great devotion she continued observing the Five Precepts till the end of her life. As a result of her forbearance she was reborn as a daughter of a potter.

To reward her King Sakka appeared on earth as a vegetable pedlar selling gold cucumbers to those who observed the Five Precepts. Many women tried to purchase them but all of them were turned away because they never knew what the Five precepts were about much less of observing them.

The potter's daughter heard all that was going on between the cucumber seller and the other women. She said to herself, "The cucumbers must be meant for me". Then she approached the cucumber seller and asked for some.

"Do you observe the Five Precepts?" asked the man.

"Yes I do." She replied.

"It was for you alone that I brought them." said the man.

Leaving the cucumbers, cart and all at her door he departed.

In her next life Highborn was reborn as a princess of an Asura King. When she was mature enough to be married she was brought to the assembly hall of the king to choose her life partner from among many who turned to ask for her hands. King Sakka appeared in the form of an asura and presented himself to her. At once he became the chosen one because of an affinity had been established between them in their former lives. Immediately king Sakka brought her to the Heaven of the Thirty Three and made her chief of the dancing girls.

**Tan Geok Koon**

*\* The Five Percepts: to abstain from destroying life, take things not given, committing sexual misconduct, making false speech and consuming intoxicants that cause heedlessness.*

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Reference: Kulavaka Jataka Vol.1 No 31

Important points to note :

1. In the story, giving up a space in the market place symbolized giving loving kindness to others.
  2. Doing community service is the way to heaven.
  3. All Magha's actions are motivated by Love and Compassion. This together with his leadership quality led him to be the King of Heaven.
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# Mattha Kundali

Mattha Kundali, a young Brahmin, was seriously ill with jaundice. His miserly father, Adinnapubbaka, had called the doctor too late to cure him. By then Mattha Kundali was put in the verandah so that visitors could see him without having to enter the house and view the expensive and beautiful decorations in the sitting room.

That morning, while surveying the world with His divine eye, the Buddha saw in his vision that Mattha Kundali was in serious illness and he needed to be saved. Soon the Buddha went to Savatthi and proceeded to Mattha Kundali's house. He stood at the door and sent forth a ray of light to attract the boy's attention. Lying on his side facing the inner portion of the house he could hardly turn his head but he was fully aware of the Buddha's presence. He developed deep sense of devotion to the Buddha. When he passed away he was reborn in Tavatimsa heaven.

In heaven Mattha Kundali saw his father crying and mourning for him in the cemetery. To comfort his father and assure him that he was living happily in heaven, Mattha Kundali appeared in the likeness of his old self. He told his father to accept the Triple Gem\* as his refuge for life and to practice generosity.

Out of his love for his late son the rich merchant listened to what the latter had said. Soon he invited the Buddha and His disciples to a lunch treat and called his friends and relatives to come along. This was a generous activity he would never have done before. After the meal the Buddha delivered a sermon. Mattha Kundali's father attained Sotapana, the first stage of Arahant. He later donated all his wealth to the cause of the Buddha's teaching. This was a marvelous act of generosity for a man who was once a miser.

After the meal, a question was raised among the guests whether a person like Mattha Kundali could be reborn in heaven because of his devotion to the Buddha alone without observing moral precepts and without practicing generosity. To prove that Mattha Kundali was in heaven the Buddha willed that he appeared in the presence of guests in celestial attire. Mattha Kundali told the audience that he was from Tavatimsa heaven too. Then the Buddha also confirmed that as Mattha Kundali's mind was filled with devotion to the Buddha, he was reborn in heaven even without doing much good deeds.

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*The Buddha said:*

*Mind is the forerunner of all good states.  
Mind is chief, mind made are they. If one  
speaks or acts with a pure mind, Because of  
that happiness follows him. Even as one's  
shadows never leaves.*

*Dh. V 2*

---

Significant points in the story: The point to emphasize is that it was Mattha Kundali's last thought moment, being that of devotion to the Buddha that, led him to heaven. He was too young to do meritorious deed when he was alive. His father was a miser and never instill in him the spirit of generosity. For one thing he never commit any evil. He was an innocent young man.

Triple Gem means the Buddha, the Dhamma (His teachings) and Sangha (the Community of monks led by the Buddha).

According to the Buddha's teachings a person who takes refuge in the Buddha also takes refuge in the Dhamma and Sangha. It means that he makes an effort to know the Dhamma, put it into practice and realize the wisdom of the Dhamma which will liberate him from Samsara, the cycle of rebirths, and attain Nibbana. It is also implied that he takes refuge in the Sangha which means that he will regard the Buddha and His disciples as teachers of Dhamma who will guide him in his journey to Nibbana.





# The Queen Who Finally Went To Heaven

Queen Mallika was a devout lay-follower of the Buddha. Out of loving kindness and compassion she did many good deeds to help the poor and needy. One day while she was bending down to wash her feet in the bathroom her pet dog came licking her buttock.

It happened that at that moment King Pasenadi was watching her through a window. Later he accused her of misbehaving herself with the dog. Mallika denied any wrongdoing. Instead she said that anyone who looked through the window could have an optical illusion of seeing strange things happening which did not really occur in the bathroom.

She suggested that the king enter the room while she be the observer from the window. The king agreed. The next day after the king had come out of the bathroom she told the king that she saw the king misbehaving with a she-goat. The king also denied any wrongdoing and accepted the idea about people having optical illusion when looking through the window of the bathroom.

After the event she felt remorseful for having deceived the king with a lie. This guilt feeling persisted in her for a long time until it became her last thought moment before she died. As a result of that she was reborn in the woeful realm. Only the Buddha knew what happened to her.

After the funeral, King Pasenadi wanted to know where she was reborn. To spare him the feeling of disappointment and the loss of faith in the Dhamma, the Buddha made him forget to ask the question about her rebirth. King Pasenadi experienced forgetfulness for seven days. Every day before seeing the Buddha he thought of asking

the Buddha about Queen Mallika but forgot to do so during the meeting.

On the eighth day after the death of Queen Mallika the Buddha was invited to the palace for lunch. By then Queen Mallika after spending seven days in the suffering realm was reborn in Tusita heaven because of her devotion to and faith in the Triple Gem. That day King Pasenadi was made to remember his question to the Buddha. The obvious answer was that Queen Mallika was in Tusita heaven.

King Pasenadi was pleased with the answer but revealed to the Buddha that after Mallika's death he found life meaningless. To console him the Buddha reminded him that human body when old would decay just like the old royal chariots of his father and grandfather.

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*The Buddha said:*

*Even ornamented royal chariots wear out.  
So too when the body reaches old age.  
But the Good Dhamma grows not old.  
This is what the Arahats say among themselves.*

*Dh. V 151*

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On hearing this teaching of the Buddha, King Pasenadi was much comforted.

*The morals of the story.*

- 1. Those who are devout followers of the Buddha and generous like Queen Mallika would go to heaven.*
- 2. Her last thought moment was full of guilt. This negative thinking led her to hell which could last for a very long time. But it lasted only for seven days because her devotion to the Buddha was the saving grace.*



# The Noble Eightfold Path

Many people think that the ultimate aim in life is “to go to heaven.” To a Buddhist, one who has taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, the ultimate aim in life is to attain Enlightenment or Nibbana which is beyond heaven. This is by going the way of life as laid out in the Eightfold Path as taught by the Buddha. A Buddhist who has faith in the Triple Gem will have happy rebirths until he attains Nibbana .

By putting the Noble Eightfold Path into practice one develops insight into the true nature of phenomena

(or reality), eradicates greed, hatred and delusion in this life and gets liberation from the cycle of rebirths. Nibbana itself is the ultimate spiritual happiness

The Eightfold Path consists of eight factors, namely, 1. Right Understanding, 2. Right Thought, 3. Right Speech, 4. Right Action, 5. Right Livelihood, 6. Right Effort, 7. Right Mindfulness, 8. Right Concentration. The word “Right” here denotes completion, togetherness, and coherence. It can also suggest “perfect” or “ideal”.

## 1. Right Understanding or Right View

Right View means the right way of looking at life, nature and the world as they really are. It is to understand how reality works. It is knowledge about suffering (dukkha), the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the practice leading to the cessation of suffering. These are known as the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha in the first sermon to His first Five Disciples.

There are two levels of right view: the mundane and the supramundane.

At the mundane level it is about moral law of Kamma, every action ( by way of body, speech and mind) will have kammic results. Wholesome and unwholesome actions will lead to favourable and unfavourable results respectively in the realm of samsara ( cycle of rebirths) It is about moral process of the world.

At the supramundane level, it will lead to awakening and liberation from the realm of samsara.

Right view involves the understanding of the following reality :

- Moral law of Kamma.
- The Three characteristics of phenomena. Everything that arises will cease (impermanence). Mental and body phenomena are source of suffering (dukkha) and there is no substantial self. (anatta)
- The purpose of right view is to clear one’s path of confusion, misunderstanding and deluded thinking and to know the phenomena as they really are.

## 2. Right Intention or Right Thought

Right Thoughts are thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of freedom from ill-will and thoughts of harmlessness or compassion.

- Thoughts of renunciation is non-attachment to material pleasure and the transcending of all sensual pleasures
- Freedom from ill will implies having the feeling of loving-kindness to all beings.
- Thoughts of harmlessness or compassion is the tender feeling that quivers at the suffering of others. It is manifested in non-violence and harmlessness.

## 3. Right Speech

Right speech implies abstaining from lying or false speech, from divisive speech, from abusive speech and from idle chatter.

- Abandoning from false speech a man speaks the truth. He is no deceiver of the world.
- Abandoning from divisive speech a man does not tell tales from one man to another to break them up. He reconciles those who have broken apart or bring together those who are united closer. He enjoys concord and speaks things that create concord.
- Abandoning abusive speech a man speaks soothing words that are affectionate, that go to the heart. His words are polite, appealing and pleasing to all. Scolding he does not do.



- d. Abandoning chatter a man speaks what is factual at appropriate time. He speaks about the Dhamma and Vinaya relating to the goal of attaining Enlightenment. His words are reasonable, circumscribed and connected with the goal. They are like treasures.

## 4. Right Action

Right Action means right conduct. It means abstention in three ways of bodily action: abstaining from taking life, from stealing, from illicit sex .

- a. Abstaining from taking life a man dwells with his knife laid down. He is scrupulous, merciful and compassionate for the welfare of all living beings.
- b. Abstaining from stealing implies abstaining from taking what is not given. He does not take, in the manner of a thief, things in a village or at a common place that belong to others which have not been given to him.
- c. Abandoning illicit sex or sexual misconduct he does not get sexually involved with those who are protected by their parents and relatives or their Dhamma and those who are married.

## 5. Right Livelihood

Right livelihood means not being engaged in trades or occupations which directly or indirectly result in harm for other living beings.

There are five harmful businesses not to be undertaken:

Business dealing in all kinds of weapons and instruments for killing.

- a. Business in human beings: slave trading, prostitution or buying and selling of children or adults.
- b. Business in meat of animals . Breeding and slaughtering of animals are included.
- c. Business in intoxicants: manufacturing or selling intoxicating drinks or addictive drugs.
- d. Business in poison: producing or trading any kind of toxic product designed to kill.

## 6. Right Effort

Right Effort is making a persistent endeavour to abandon all the wrong and harmful thoughts, words and deeds and to give rise to what is good and useful in thoughts, words and deeds without a thought of difficulty or weariness involved.

There are four ways of doing right effort.

- 1 The practitioner persistently endeavours to prevent the non-arising of evil that has not arisen.
2. The practitioner persistently endeavours to abandon evil that has arisen.
3. The practitioner persistently endeavours to generate the arising of skilful qualities that have not yet arisen.
4. The practitioner persistently endeavours to uphold the maintenance, development and culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen.

## 7. Right Mindfulness

Right Mindfulness is cultivated through the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness. It consists of the contemplation of the body, of feelings, of states of mind and of phenomena.

“The mind is deliberately kept at the level of bare attention, a detached observation of what is happening within us and around us in the present moment. The mind is trained to remain in the present, open, quiet, and alert, contemplating the present event. All judgments and interpretations are suspended, or if they occur, just registered and dropped. The task is simply to note whatever comes up just as it is occurring, without getting swept away by the tides of distracting thoughts.” (Bhikkhu Bodhi in The Noble Eightfold Path, Way to end Suffering)

In the Maha Satipatthana Sutta it is said that observing all phenomena mindfully, a person begins to discern its arising and falling. He realises the Three Characteristics of all conditioned things in direct experience which leads to the arising of insight and the qualities of dispassion, non-clinging, and release.

## 8. Right Concentration

In Right Concentration the practitioner concentrates on an object of attention until he reaches full concentration and a state of meditative absorption. (jhana) This practice of Concentration (samadhi) can be developed through mindfulness, through visual objects (kasina), and through repetition of phrases. Samadhi is to eradicate the five hindrances\* that obstructs the attainment of jhana an instrument used for developing wisdom by cultivating insight and using it to examine true nature of phenomena with direct cognition. This leads to getting off the defilements, realizing the dhamma and finally, self-awakening. During the practice of right concentration, the practitioner will need to investigate and verify their right view. In the process, right knowledge will arise followed by liberation from Samsara, the cycle of rebirths. This is Enlightenment or Nibbana.

**Tan Geok Koon**

\* The five hindrances are: i. Sensual desire ii. Illwill iii. Sloth and torpor iv. Restlessness v. Doubts about the teaching of the Buddha .



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**Resident Monks**

Ven U Pannya Vamsa • Ven U Tilokasiri • Ven U Sandawintha  
Ven U Pyinnya Nanda • Ven U Siridhamma • Ven Ujjota • Ven Ashin Dhammissara



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