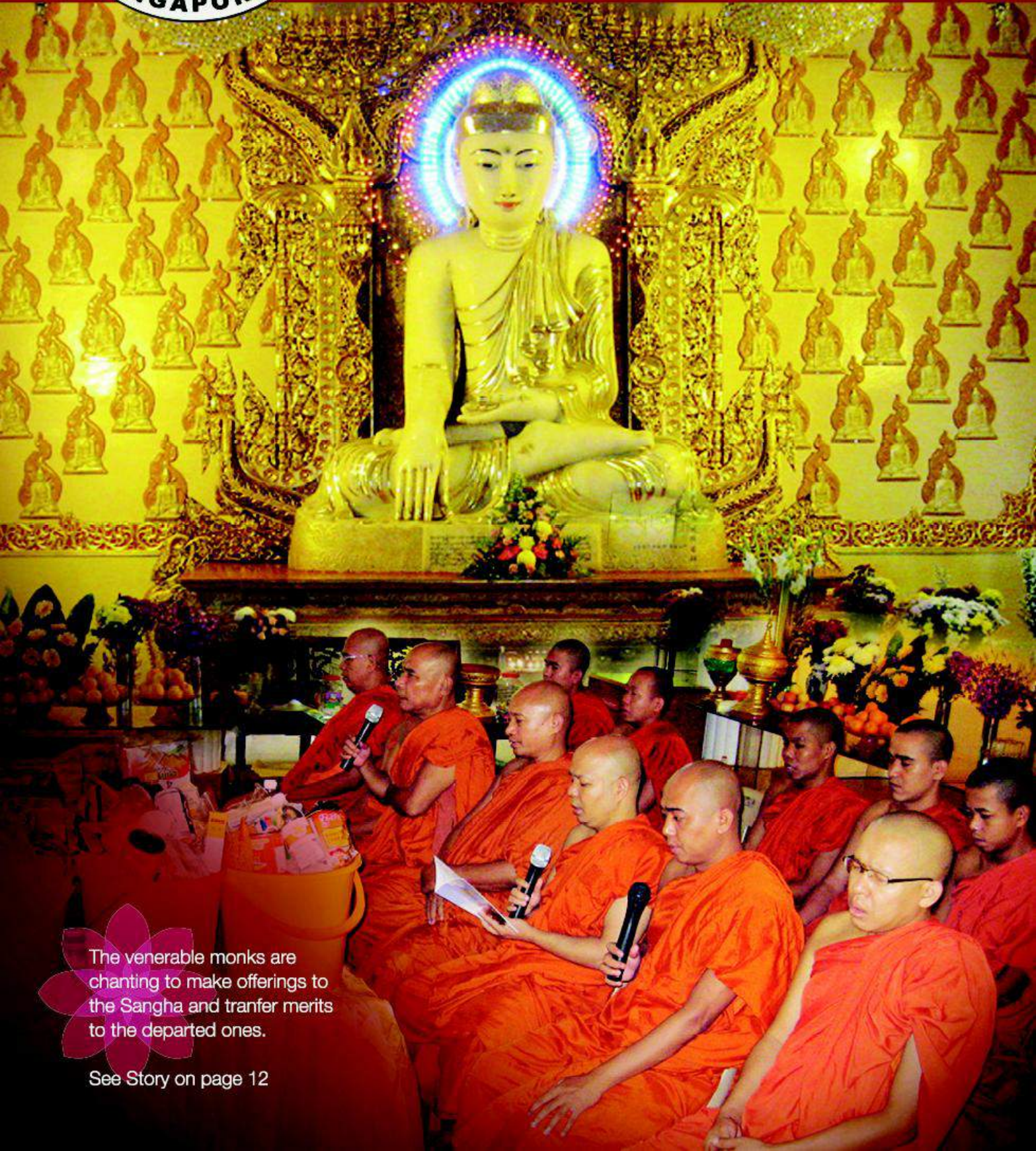




# Burmese Buddhist Temple *Newsletter*

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The venerable monks are chanting to make offerings to the Sangha and transfer merits to the departed ones.

See Story on page 12



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## Editorial

What is a temple for? Many may think that a temple is for the monks to stay, for keeping a Buddha image and for letting devotees to do their worshipping. To some it could be a place for social gathering to meet old friends and relatives especially for devotees who are foreigners residing in that country. At the Burmese Buddhist Temple many Burmese residing in Singapore hold wedding parties at the temple for the newly weds to get blessing and to make offerings to the Triple Gem as well as to catch up with old friends and relatives

Just as important, a Buddhist temple is meant for devotees to develop their spirituality. It is a place to do meritorious deeds by looking after the welfare of the Sangha. The Sangha is like a field for cultivating merits. Performing meritorious deeds may lead to happy rebirths in the human realm or in one of the heavens. Still, what the right hand does, the left hand may do differently. One may practice generosity but in the recess of the mind there linger greed, hatred and delusion.

Going to heaven is not the same as attaining Nibbana. A rebirth in heaven will finally lead to another rebirth in one of the planes of existence. In life, any type of life, birth is suffering, sickness is suffering, old age is suffering and death is suffering. Only the attainment of Nibbana will end rebirth and only Nibbana gives everlasting happiness.

The Buddha's teaching is to encourage people attain Nibbana ultimately. A temple is for the cultivation of the mind to attain Nibbana. There is Dhamma to learn and meditation to practice. The monks are there to be teachers. They are there to prepare the recipe of life for you. (Read article Recipe for Happiness on page 13)

As Buddhists we should take advantage of the situation. Talk to the monks, let them teach Dhamma and meditation. Then we do the striving to attain Nibbana. The Buddha has shown the way.

**Tan Geok Koon**

# The Benefits of Offering Water

Devotees of Burmese Buddhist Temple are encouraged to make donations for the purchase of bottled water which is distributed to devotees who believe that water from the temple is blessed. Donation of water is an offering to the Buddha.

In several suttas it is said that offering of water to the Buddha will benefit donors in 10 ways.

1. A body that looks clean with smooth skin.
2. Good reputation .
3. Having many attendants.
4. Leading active live.
5. Never suffer from thirst.
6. Long life.
7. Good look.
8. Happy life .
9. Strength or energy.
10. Intelligence.

**1 A body that looks clean with smooth fair skin.**  
Born pretty and handsome he will have smooth fair skin and good appearance.

**2 Good reputation**  
Educated and rich he will have good reputation.

**3 Having attendants**  
In life he will have attendants to wait on him.

**4 Leading active life**  
Having the ability to think and work quickly he is active and prosperous.

**5 Never suffer from thirst.**  
He will never suffer hunger and thirst wherever he is born.

**6 Longevity**  
He will be healthy and have long life.

**7 Happy life.**  
Endowed with good physic and intelligent mind he will be wealthy and happy.

**8 Good look**  
He will be good looking as if purified by water.

**9 Strength and energy**  
Born with strength and energy he will rise to power.

**10 Intelligence**  
Endowed with intelligence he will also have good health and much strength and energy.

Reference: Research and Illustration Dictionary  
Translated into English from Burmese language by  
Ven. Ujjota M.A. Dhammacariya.

# Images of The Buddha

Images of the Buddha are made to remind us that once in history, a Buddha, Sakyamuni Buddha, existed in history about 2500 years ago. He was not a legendary figure or a myth. Buddhists worship the Buddha directly even without having images. Images of the Buddha are sometimes used for meditation purposes. The best way to worship the Buddha is to know and study the Dhamma, put it into practice and finally realise the wisdom of the Buddha's teaching, the Dhamma. The Buddha said, 'He who sees the Dhamma sees me.'

It is believed that images of the Buddha began to appear only during the 1st century A.D., about five or six hundred years after the passing away of the Buddha into Parinibbana.

Images of the Buddha can be classified into four different postures – sitting, standing, walking and reclining in a lying position. More importantly, the hand gestures reveal the meaning of an image as explained in the following:



1. Image with *Bhumiphasa Mudra*

touching the ground. The Earth Goddess, Vasundari, responded by rising from the earth, and wringing her long wet hair. Her action raised a torrential flood that drowned the demons. Mara fled and left the Buddha unscathed and in peace.

## **1 Hand gesture pointing to the earth (Bhumiphasa Mudra)**

This image shows the Buddha in sitting position under the Bodhi tree of Enlightenment. He was tempted by Mara, the evil force, who questioned Him the right to occupy the Invincible Throne. Riding on Girimekhala, the ferocious elephant, Mara came under heavy storm with his army of demons and monsters to attack the Buddha. Three beautiful women, daughters of Mara, appeared to seduce Him. The Buddha remained calm and steadfast.

The hand gestures (mudra) signifies the call upon the Earth Goddess to witness the Ten Perfections which he fulfilled during his bodhisatta days in his previous lives on earth. The left hand lies on the lap with the palm facing upward. The right hand bends over the right knee with fingers pointing down slightly

## **2 Hand gesture showing the sign of fearlessness (Abhaya Mudra)**

This hand gesture (Mudra) could be seen on the image of the Buddha either in a standing, sitting or walking position. The right hand bent and raised outward with an open palm and the extended fingers pointing upwards. The left hand hangs down at the side. The image of the standing Buddha at the third floor in the Burmese Buddhist Temple shows the right hand symbolising absence of fear and protection from danger and peace to those who go to the Buddha. The left hand is a symbol of generosity and compassion.



2. Image with Abhaya Mudra

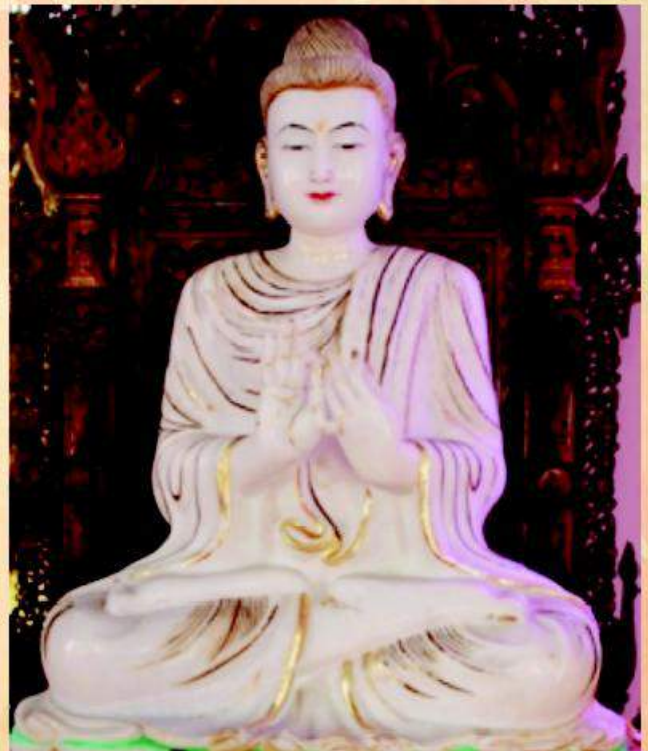
Once, while the Buddha was walking on the street accompanied by His disciples, an intoxicated elephant Nalagiri came to charge towards him. It was discharged by a mahout under the direction of Devadatta, enemy of the Buddha. Calmly, the Buddha posed himself in the Abhaya Mudra position and sent loving kindness towards the approaching animal. Nearing the Buddha the elephant was no more in rage. It knelt down calmly to pay respect to the Buddha. A dangerous situation and a tragic event had been averted.

### 3 Hand gesture that signifies deep meditation, Jhana (Dhyana or Jhana Mudra)

This image shows the Buddha in a sitting position with both hands placed on the laps and the palms facing upwards. Mostly, the Buddha is in half-lotus position. But in some instances the Buddha is seen sitting crossed legged in deep meditation with the soles of both feet exposed. This gesture is also known as yoga mudra. When used for meditation purposes it gives better concentration that gets rid of distractions like anger or worry.



3. Image with Jhana Mudra



4. Image with Dhammacakka Mudra

#### **4 Hand gesture that signifies the preaching of the First Sermon (Dhammakka Mudra)**

In this image the Buddha is in sitting position with both hands held close to the chest. The palm of the right hand is facing outward towards the disciples listening to a sermon. The palm of the left right hand is facing close to the body. The thumb and the index finger in each hand touch at the tips to form a circle with the three other fingers remain extended. This hand gestures (mudra) signifies the teaching of the First Sermon to the first five disciples of the Buddha at the Deer Park. The sermon is known as Turning the Wheel of Dhamma (Dhammacakkapavattanna Sutta)

#### **5 Hand gesture that signifies teaching of the Dhamma (Vitakka Mudra)**

This image shows the Buddha in sitting or standing position with the left hand held close to the chest. The tips of the thumb and index finger of the right hand touch each other to form a circle. All the three fingers are extended and pointing upwards. The right



5. Image with Vitakka Mudra

hand is on the lap. The earlier images had only the right hand doing this gesture. Later on, both hands are in this gesture. This mudra signifies the exposition of the Dhamma.

#### **6 Image of the Buddha in reclining position**

This is an image of 'reclining Buddha'. It is not correct to call it 'sleeping Buddha'. The meaning of this image can be interpreted in two ways. If the right hand is supporting the head it denotes the Buddha is in resting position. (Picture 6a)

If the right arm is laid straight next to the body it implies that the Buddha has passed away into Pari Nibbana. (Picture 6b)



6a. Reclining Buddha (Resting)



6b. Buddha into Parinibbana

– Ashin Dhammissara  
– Tan Geok Koon

# The Arahant

An Arahant is an Accomplished One.

- 1 He has removed totally all defilements and habitual tendencies without remainder and has thereby distanced himself from them.
- 2 He has cut off all defilements with the sword of Arahant Path.
- 3 He has broken and destroyed the spokes of the wheel of Dependent Origination, beginning with ignorance and craving. There is no more rebirth for him.
- 4 His virtue (sila), concentration (Samadhi) and wisdom (panna) are unsurpassed. The Buddha (Arahant) is paid the highest reverence by the Brahmas, devas and men.
- 5 He does not do evil by body, speech and mind even when in seclusion and unseen.

Reference: Knowing and Seeing

- Ven. Pa -Auk Tawya Sayadaw.



# DHAMMA IN ACTION



*Ashin Dhammisara and his  
Dhamma students.*

*Ven Ujotta with his  
Dhamma students.*

*Dhamma teachers  
and students.*



# Outting for BBT Dhamma Teachers and Students

Sunday 19th Sept 2010  
Hay's Dairy Goat Farm



*Dhamma teachers and students in a farm*



*Breathing in farm air, fresh*



*All eyes on the goats being milked*



*Spending time in a modern dairy farm*

# Gratitude to Parents

Children tend to forget that their parents have done much to bring them up over the years, from the time they are babies right up to the time they are grown ups as adults. The Buddha in several sermons at different time and different places brought up the issue of children's duty to repay the parents' kindness.

'Not to carry out the duty to support one's parents is the downfall of man.'

– *Parabhava Sutta*

The Buddha said that a man who makes no acknowledgement of the help given to him should be considered an ungrateful person with no integrity. A man who acknowledged the help given to him should be considered a grateful person with integrity. Two persons who everyone is most indebted to are one's father and mother. Why? Because parents care for their children, nourish them and introduce them to the world.

## **H**ow to repay the parents' kindness

It is not enough to repay the parents with material wealth alone, no matter how much. It is not enough even if 'one should carry about one's mother on one shoulder and one's father on the other even for one hundred years, or set them up as supreme rulers having absolute power over the whole wide world about with seven treasures.

A child 'more than repay what is due to his parent's kindness if he establishes his unbelieving parents in the faith of the Triple Gem, establishes them in virtue whenever they fail in virtue, encourages them to be generous when they are less generous and helps their parents to be more discerning when they are naive.

– *Anguttara Nikaya: Bk 2 sutta, 32*

On one occasion the Buddha taught a Brahmin youth, Sigala, that a good relationship between parents and their children should be based on mutual respect in carrying out the family duties.

Children should show respect to their parents by carrying out their duties in five ways:

1. They should support their parents.
2. They should help in carrying out the parents' duties.
3. They must keep up the lineage and tradition of the family.
4. They should be worthy of their heritage.
5. On the parents' death they should do good deeds and dedicate the merits to them.

Parents should show respect to the children in five ways:

1. They should prevent the children from vice.
2. They should exhort them to be virtuous.
3. They should encourage them to pursue education and acquire a profession.
4. They should arrange for their marriage when the time is ripe.
5. They should hand over the inheritance to their children at an appropriate time.

The Buddha also said that in a home where parents are compassionate and are revered by the children, the family is living with Brahma (god) or living with superior teachers or living with those worthy of gifts. Parents are worthy of these designations because they have looked after the children well. Wise are the children who pay homage to their parents, honour them with food and drinks, provide them with lodging and also wash their feet. They will be praised now and they will rejoice in future rebirths.

– *Sigalovadda Sutta*

The Buddha exhorted His disciples to be mindful of their parents' kindness too. A monk should think thus: I was born through much toil. I was nursed for nine months in the womb. I was suckled for three years. My bottom was cleaned and my diapers changed by them. I was fed with delicacies while my parents worked hard. Only then did I manage to grow up. They hoped that I might glorify the family name, carry on its name and perform offerings to the dead ancestors. But now I have left the home and become a disciple of Sakyamuni Buddha.

*Continue to next page...*

Neither could I offer delicacies to my parents nor sweep the ancestral graves. While my parents are alive I cannot look after them and support them. After they have died I could not help them in a spiritual way. I have caused them a double loss and this is a serious transgression. I contemplate and come to the conclusion that I will follow the Buddha way through hundreds of kalpas and in thousands of lives and then save beings everywhere throughout

the ten directions in the three periods of time (past, present and future). I will rescue my parents in this life as well as my parents of previous lives. I will also bring my parents as well as everyone else's parents across to the shore.

*The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*

*– Ven. Ujotta M.A. Dhammacariya*

# Ceremony For Transferring of Merits

(Chinese Seven Lunar Month)  
22 August 2010

For the first time by popular requests, Burmese Buddhist Temple is conducting a ceremony to transfer merits to the departed ones on a day in the seven lunar month. The practice of transferring merits to the departed ones originated from the time of the Buddha. The first person to hold such a ceremony was king Bimbisara. He was instructed by the Buddha to offer

dana to the Sangha and transfer his merits to the Petas (Hungry Ghosts) who had been his relatives in his past births. The concept of Hungry Ghosts and the practice of transferring of merits to the dead were readily accepted by the Chinese when they came to know Buddhism because these were similar to their beliefs in ancestor worship related to filial piety.



*Offerings to the Sangha*



*Service to transfer merits to the departed ones*

# Recipe For Happiness

The Buddha teaches us how to live happily in this life and prepare for happy future rebirths until Nibbana is attained. As the mind is the source of our verbal and bodily activities a happy thought is the beginning of a happy life. With happy thoughts of loving kindness and compassion we practice Morality (sila), Concentration (Samadhi) and Wisdom (panna) to attain Nibbana, the ultimate happiness. These three practices, considered as the recipe for a happy life, are found in the Eightfold Path, the Middle Way.

## Morality

To develop morality, fill your mind with loving kindness and compassion to practice Right Speech, Right Action and Right livelihood. 'Right' implies completely good or completely wholesome.

## Right Speech

Right speech is to abstain from lying, divisive and abusive speech, and idle chatter. Right speech means speaking the truth and deceiving no one. Abstaining from divisive speech a man does not tell tales to break up a personal relationship between people. He reconciles those who are broken apart and brings closer those who are already close. He creates concord among people. Abandoning abusive speech he speaks soothing words that appeal to the heart and please everyone. Scolding he does not do. Abandoning idle chatter a man speaks of what is factual at appropriate time. All these abstinences prevent a person from doing harm to others. For positive thinking, talk about the Dhamma and Vinaya always.

## Right Action

Right Action means abstaining from taking life, from taking what is not given and from committing sexual misconduct. By carrying out all these abstinences you gain the trust of those you associate with and there is peace and harmony in your home and in society.

## Right Livelihood

Right livelihood means not being engaged in trades or occupations that directly and indirectly harm other beings. Avoid business dealings in weapons and arms as well as slave trade, human trafficking and prostitution, sale of intoxicants and sale of addictive drug and poison. Imagine the amount of misery you could cause to many others if you were to be involved in all these harmful activities.

## Concentration (Samadhi)

Morality must be strongly established so that your mind is not guilt ridden. Morality is the foundation for the development of Concentration which consists of Right Mindfulness. Right Concentration and Right Effort.

## Right Mindfulness

In practising Right mindfulness (Samma Sati) the mind is kept at the level of bare attention and have an awareness of what is happening within us and around us without being swept away by distracting thoughts. The mind is to note whatever comes up and watch each experience as it arises and passes away. This mental activity gives serenity and insight into the impermanence of life.

Right mindfulness can also be cultivated through meditation on the four foundations of mindfulness : contemplation of the body in the body, the feelings in the feeling, the states of mind and the phenomena. It can culminate in the attainment of different levels of Jhana and insight that see things as they are. Insight eradicates greed, hatred and delusion and leads us to Nibbana.

## Right Concentration (Sama Samadhi)

The aim of practicing Right Concentration is to achieve one pointedness of the mind. When the mind has an unbroken attentiveness to an object it becomes calm and tranquil. It develops serenity through

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samatha-bhavana and insight through vipassana-bhavana. There are forty subjects of meditation from which a person can choose one that suits him. Among them are the four Brahma Vihara-- meditation topics on Lovingkindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Appreciative Joy (Mudita) and Equanimity (Upekkha). A successful meditation could end up in four jhanas (absorption) and finally the attainment of Nibbana, the ultimate happiness.

### **Right Effort (Viriya)**

Basically, Right Effort means: preventing the arising of unwholesome states that have not arisen, abandoning unwholesome states that have already arisen; arousing wholesome states that have not yet arisen, and maintaining wholesome states that have already arisen. Right Effort gives energy that can be applied to Morality, supports right concentration which is balanced by right mindfulness. Specifically, Right Effort needs to be applied to the five hindrances that prevent successful meditation. The five hindrances are sensual desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and worry and doubt about the Dhamma.

### **Wisdom**

Training in morality restrains unwholesome bodily action and verbal activity and prevents defilements from reaching the stage of transgression. Training in concentration builds up the power of the mind to resist against defilements being put into practice. All these forms of spiritual training are mere safeguards against the problems of life. Still one may remain ignorant (avijja) of life. Wisdom is needed to eradicate ignorance.

Wisdom includes

1. Right View towards life and
2. Right Thoughts.

### **Right View**

To begin with, one's attitude towards life determines the type of life we lead. Most people defined happiness in terms of sense pleasure and indulge in activities that excite the senses. They then conclude that life is a happy event. This is a wrong view. The right view is that:

1. Life is Duka (suffering). Birth, sickness, ageing and death are suffering.

2. Suffering is caused.
3. Suffering can end.
4. There is a way to end suffering, the Middle Way or the Eightfold Path. These are the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha.

Right View also includes the understanding of the Law of Kamma which states that for every action (Kamma) there is cause and effect. Kamma in past life or lives determine whether a child is born poor or rich, intelligent or dull-witted, healthy or sickly. His kamma in the early part of his life shapes his status when he grows up as an adult. To believe in Fate is a wrong view. His overall kamma in present life will influence his future rebirths.

### **Right Thoughts**

Right Thoughts consist of thoughts renouncing worldly pleasures and developing selflessness, thoughts of loving kindness as against hatred and thoughts of compassion or harmlessness against ill will.

Renouncing worldly pleasures is important because all activities that excite the senses create illusion of sensory happiness that ends up in suffering. It is a calm mind that gives happiness. Thoughts of loving kindness and compassion too generate spiritual happiness. When the mind is calm and peaceful and not disturbed by worldly attachments wisdom will also arise.

Wisdom includes the realisation of the three characteristics of life (tilakhana).

1. The first is the Realisation that things are impermanent and there is no point in looking for permanency in them.
2. The second is the Realisation that life is full of dissatisfaction (duka). Birth, sickness, aging and death are forms of suffering. Unfulfilled desire for sense pleasures is a form of suffering. Sense pleasure is not lasting. Lasting happiness is spiritual and can be found only in Nibbana.
3. The third is the Realisation that there is no permanent self to cling to. The conventional self can be analysed into mind (nama) and matter (rupa). Matter consists of the body, and mind consists of feeling, perception, mental formation (idea and concepts), and consciousness. These are not permanent substances that can survive on their own as they are dependent on arising.

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To summarise. When insight penetrates the basic mode of life, wisdom (panna) arises, ignorance (Avijja) is destroyed. Nibbana, the ultimate happiness or supra mundane happiness, is achieved.

The practice of Morality, Concentration and Wisdom is a lifelong undertaking. Along the way the practitioner can experience spiritual happiness. One day he will attain Nibbana, the ultimate supramundane bliss.

### **Happiness out of Morality**

Do not regard the rules of Morality as a traffic rule and feel being forced to observe them. Carry out the rule of morality voluntarily out of Love and Compassion for oneself and for others. You would feel happy having restrained yourself from grasping at what you see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think. You get a sense of achievement as guardian of your senses and happy that you have been leading a life blameless of evil deeds.

### **Happiness out of Concentration**

A meditator or a monk who is accomplished in concentration is happy that he has overcome the five hindrances. Having abandoned worldly desire he feels contented living on simple food and clothing and simple lodging. Feeling sufficient he is free from greed. With thought of loving kindness and compassion for the welfare of all beings his mind is purified of ill will and hatred. With mindfulness and awareness he abolished sloth and torpor. Abandoning worry his mind is calm and his heart peaceful. Abandoning doubt, his faith (sadda) in the Triple Gem is firmly established.

His happiness is like one feeling liberated from disasters, like a business man who has paid up his loan, like a man after recovering from a long illness, like a prisoner who has been freed without paying a fine, like a man freed from slavery, like a merchant who has reached safely at a village after a dangerous journey in a wilderness.

With a concentrated mind the meditator feels gladness and delight, tranquillity and joy. Being detached from sense desires and unwholesome state he enters into first jhana and go on to second jhana when is filled with delight and joy. Filled with equanimity and

mindfulness he remains in the third jhana. Having given up pleasure and pain he remains in the fourth jhana which is beyond pleasure and pain purified by equanimity and mindfulness.'

'Happy is he who dwells with equanimity and mindfulness.' The Buddha said.

With the mind concentrated, purified, and cleansed, unblemished, free from impurity, malleable, workable, established, and having gained imperturbability, he directs and inclines his mind towards knowing and seeing. He begins to know things as they are. He realised the difference between mind (nama) and matter (rupa). Mind is consciousness while the body is made up of the four elements of earth, water heat and air and the body is mind-made.

With the same concentrated mind etc as mentioned earlier, the meditator could perform supernormal feats like one becoming many, making himself disappear and walk through walls, sinking into the ground and emerging from it, walking on water, flying in the air like birds even touching the moon and sun or travelling in the body to as far as Brahma world.

Then he develops divine ear that could hear sound from a great distance. He could read the mind of others. He could apply his mind and direct it to his previous existence or more. With a divine eye he could see beings passing away. Then he could see the destruction of corruption (suffering), the cause of corruption, the cessation of corruption, the path leading to the cessation of corruption ( an insight into the Four Noble Truths). Finally, his mind is delivered from the corruption of sense desire, corruption of becoming, corruption of ignorance. Then knowledge of his deliverance arises.

*- Ven Ujotta M.A. Dhammacariya  
- Tan Geok Koon*

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**Chief Monk** Ven U Pannya Vamsa

**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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