



# Burmese Buddhist Temple *Newsletter*

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*In this picture the Buddha came in between Angulimala and his mother to prevent him from killing her. Later, after being moved by the Buddha's words Angulimala begged the Buddha to admit him into the Sangha. Out of Compassion the Buddha acceded to his request and said, "Come Bhikkhu!" This was how Angulimala was ordained. See story on page 10.*



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### IN THIS ISSUE

2

Editorial

3

Our friends and  
Foes

5

Meritorious Deeds

8 & 9

Dhamma in Action  
2012

10

Angulimala  
was a murderer

13

What is important in life?  
Wealth or Health?

15

Requently  
Asked Questions

15

Training the Heart

2

## Editorial

Recently, my friend told me that when he entered Burmese Buddhist Temple he felt serene and peaceful. Later after attending the pujas regularly he felt his faith in and devotion to the Buddha, Dhama and Sangha increased. I told him that I had the same experience and a handful of devotees had told me the same thing.

Well, all this wonderful feelings is due to the power of chanting (suttas) which cannot be explained scientifically.

In chanting, we practise mudita, the act of appreciating others' greatness or success. Mudita is one of the four aspects of Brahma Vihara, the other three being. Love, Compassion and Equanimity. Here, we are giving our praise to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha which is uplifting. The power of mudita is purifying.

In our chanting book we begin by reciting "Buddha guna, Dhamma guna and Sangha guna" which means praising the Power or Virtue of the Triple Gem. This is followed by praising the nine virtues of the Buddha, the six virtues of the Dhamma and the nine virtues of the Sangha. Beginning with "Iti piso..." we praise the Buddha as the Perfect One, the Fully Enlightened One, Endowed with wisdom and virtue, Well gone, Knower of the world, Incomparable charioteer of men to be tamed, Teacher of gods and men, the Blessed One. Then we praise the Dhamma as one that is well expounded by the Buddha, to be self realized, giving immediate result when practised, can be approached, open to investigation, practical in nature and can be realized by the wise each for himself. We praise the Sangha for its good conduct, its upright conduct, its wisdom and its proper conduct. It is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings and worthy of salutations and an incomparable field of merits (nine virtues). Indeed, praising the Triple Gem is the greatest paritta that protects us from danger and evil influence.

Then, taking the refuge in the Triple Gem by reciting the formula openly and together in the assembly we feel protected by the Triple Gem from evil influence and from doing evil. We also feel protected from rebirth into the lower realms of suffering and are assured of happy rebirths.

Further to confirm our faith, we, with loving kindness and compassion, commit ourselves to observe the Five Precepts. This is the first step in our endeavour to practise Sila (morality). This is important because the Buddha said, "He who sees the Dhamma sees me." The emphasis is on practising the Dhamma rather than on rituals and blind faith.

We also chant Abhaya Paritta (Paritta Against Fear) and Metta Sutta (Discourse on Loving Kindness) to protect ourselves from danger. At the same time we share our thoughts of loving kindness with all sentient beings which is a practice unique to Buddhism.

Finally, we end the puja with sharing our merits with all sentient beings.

All these wonderful feelings are real personal experiences which can be felt only by attending the puja.

Come and join us every Sunday morning, Wednesday evening for the pujas in Pali and Dhamma talk in English. In the evening on Saturday we have pujas in Pali (Dhammacakka pathana suta) and Dhamma talk in Burmese.

**Tan Geok Koon**



# OUR FRIENDS AND FOES

We regard our colleagues at work as friends. Our neighbours are our friends. Relatives are friends too. Only when some one tries to harm us do we realise that they are actually our foes.

In the Sigalovada Sutta the Buddha taught the young Brahmin how to know the difference between a friend and a foe.

“There are many enemies disguised as friends. They are “the taker”, “the talker”, “the flatterer” and “the reckless companion” said the Buddha.

## The taker

“The taker can be identified by four characteristics. He always takes a lot of things from you. If he does give something in return he gives a little. When he helps you, it is done as a duty out of fear and not as a service done out of friendliness. Often, he offers his services in order to gain something out of you.

## The talker

The talker can be identified by four characteristics. He talks about his own past generosity. He will talk about his plan to be generous in the future. He talks a lot about empty words and kindness. When he is called to help he would talk about his own personal problems or misfortune and evade helping you.

## The flatterer

“The flatterer can be identified by four characteristics. He supports both your good

behaviour and bad behaviour indiscriminately. He praises you in your face but putting you down behind your back.

## The reckless companion

The reckless companion can be identified by four characteristics. He accompanies you in drinking alcoholics. He goes around roaming at night. He goes partying at night with you and goes gambling with you.

**Take note of these four good-hearted friends:** The helper, the friend who endures in good times and bad time. The mentor and the compassionate friend.

## The helper

**The helper can be identified by four characteristics:**

He protects you when you are in a vulnerable position. He protects your wealth. He is a refuge to you when you are in fear and in trouble. When he provides help he will do double of what is requested.

## The enduring friend

**The enduring friend can be identified by four characteristics:**

He tells you his secrets. He guards your secrets closely. He does not abandon you when you suffer misfortune, He will even die for you.



## **The mentor**

**The mentor can be identified by four characteristics:**

He restrains you from wrongdoing.  
He guides you in doing good actions.  
He tells you the good you ought to do.  
He shows you the path to heaven.

## **The compassionate friend**

**The compassionate friend can be identified by four characteristics:**

He would not rejoice in your misfortune.  
He delights in your good fortune.  
He prevents others from speaking ill of you.  
He encourages others to praise your good qualities.

**In brief the Buddha summarises thus:**

The friend is always a helper,  
The friend through thick and thin,  
The friend who gives good counsel,  
He is a compassionate friend.

These four are friends indeed,  
The wise understand this.  
He attends on them carefully,  
Like a mother her own child.

The wise endowed with virtue  
Shine forth like a burning fire,  
Gathering wealth as bees do honey  
And heaping it up like an ant hill.  
Once wealth is accumulated,  
Family and household life may follow.

After reading the above we ourselves should try to behave like a good friend to others and get rid of bad habits that we used to practise, perhaps unintentionally, that can be considered as harmful and unfriendly. We should also avoid people who may, intentionally or otherwise, behave as an enemy disguised as a friend.

***Tan Geok Koon***

*Reference: Sigalovada Sutta*





# MERITORIOUS DEEDS

In life it is important to do meritorious deeds or good deeds. Merits done out of love and compassion purify the mind of greed, hatred and delusion. For example, generosity (Dana) purifies your character of greed. Morality (Sila) keeps a man away from wrong doings. It builds a strong foundation to support training in concentration (Samadhi). Doing merits prevent rebirths into the lower realms and ensures happy rebirths until Nibbana is attained. Merits that we do remain in our possession all the time. No one can steal them from us. They cannot be destroyed by fire or water and can not be taken by thieves or robbers.

In Buddhism, there are ten types of merits that one is encouraged to do. They are:

- |                                             |                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Generosity (dana)</b>                 | <b>6. Sharing of merits (Patti dana)</b>                                          |
| <b>2. Morality (Sila)</b>                   | <b>7. Rejoicing at others' merits and appreciating them.<br/>(Pattanumodhana)</b> |
| <b>3. Meditation (Bhavana)</b>              | <b>8. Listening to Dhamma (Dhammasavana)</b>                                      |
| <b>4. Respecting others<br/>(Apacayana)</b> | <b>9. Teaching others the Dhamma (Dhammadesana)</b>                               |
| <b>5. Serving others (Veyavaca)</b>         | <b>10. Straightening one's view (Ditthhijukama)</b>                               |

## 1. Generosity (dana)

Generosity means giving away one's material wealth to the poor and needy, giving away one's body, limb and life to save the lives of others and to give up life for a virtuous principle. By practising generosity attachment is reduced. At the same time, by the law of Kamma, a donor is rewarded with long life, beauty, happiness, strength and intelligence just as the recipient enjoys the same benefits from his generosity. An act of generosity must be spontaneous done out of goodwill or genuine intention (cetana) without being forced or pressured by others. The results of merits can be experienced through many rebirths.

## 2. Morality (Sila)

To practise morality one has to observe moral precepts daily throughout the whole life. As Buddhists we observe the five precepts as taught by the Buddha. Observing precepts is a merit by itself. Morality is one of the three kinds of training in the Eightfold Path for the attainment of Enlightenment. The other two categories of training are concentration (Samadhi) and wisdom (panna). A man who is morally upright is free of guilt, his mind is calm and peaceful. He leads a happy life. He is said to have five blessings: good fortune, good reputation, self-confidence, a peaceful unconfused mind at the time of passing away and a happy rebirth.



### **3. Meditation (Bhavana)**

Meditation implies the cultivation of the mind. By nature our mind is very active at every moment of the day. It is never quiet and still. It has to be trained or cultivated to become still and calm. There are two types of meditation. One is to meditate to achieve a calm mind or tranquility (Samatha). The other one is Insight meditation (Vipassana) which develops wisdom. Generally, one begins meditation with Samatha and proceeds to Vipassana. At the time of meditation the mind can be peaceful without being disturbed by greed, hatred and delusion. It can be quiet and peaceful. When there are no mental hindrances the mind can reach access concentration that gives blissful experiences.

### **4. Paying respect to others (Apacayana)**

Out of courtesy we show respect to one another according to social etiquette. Generally, we appear to show more respect to the elderly people. The Buddha teaches that the act of respect should be done sincerely and only to those who are worthy of respect. They should not only be old in age but be more matured in virtue and wisdom. Such an act of respect is, indeed a merit.

### **5. Rendering services to others (Veyyavaca)**

We live together in a society. Out of loving kindness and compassion it is good that we help others when possible. We have our own problems but we should make space in ourselves to help others too. Doing community work or volunteering is a meritorious act. Generally, in a small way, try to help the people around us when they need help. The result of being helpful to others is that we will get help readily when we need help too. This is how the law of Karma operates.

### **6. Sharing of merits (Patti dana)**

'Patti' means what has been gained. "Dana" means sharing of merits "Patti dana", literally means sharing of one's merit with others. This teaching is unique to Dhamma, the teaching of the Buddha. The "word" sharing here does not imply giving away to others. It is a wish that others will appreciate and take delight in our own good doing. Another example is like lighting the candle in our hand with another candle. The result is that there is a brighter environment without losing our own candle and light. In practice we say "May all beings share my merit." By sharing our merits with others we increase them by many folds.

### **7. Rejoicing at the merits of others. (Pattanumodhana)**

Pattanumodhana means we wish that others will rejoice in our merits. We hope that others will share the feelings of joy in our merits. This may avoid the arising of jealousy. According to the teaching of the Buddha when we offer food and robes to the Sangha in memory of the past relatives, the latter can rejoice or take delight in our merits. "They will say sadhu" in appreciation. By doing so they will be relieved of their suffering if they are petas (hungry ghosts) in the peta realm. Consequently, as petas they can be reborn in the happier planes of existence. These merits cannot be appreciated by those reborn as animals or human beings.



## **8. Listening to Dhamma (Dhamma ssavana)**

Listening to Dhamma talk and reading Dhamma books are also doing merit. There are five benefits from this merit. They are

1. **It increases knowledge of the Dhamma.**
2. **It increases greater and deeper understanding of the Dhamma**
3. **It eliminates sceptism and doubt of the Dhamma.**
4. **It develops right view of life.**
5. **It increases faith in the Triple Gem and develops wisdom.**

## **9. Teaching the Dhamma to others (Dhammadesana)**

After having a good knowledge of Dhamma one should teach Dhamma to others. Sharing Dhamma with others is a merit. As the saying goes: The gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts. This is because if a piece of Dhamma can change a person's life to a happier one or one of less suffering then a merit has been done.

## **10. Having a Right View (Ditthijukamma)**

People are deluded about life. As a result they do things that bring lots of suffering upon themselves and to others. But when they do things with the right view they will get happiness. Having the right view of life is a merit too. Right view can be at mundane or supra mundane level. When we consider the result of action about worldly matters we are at mundane level. When we consider life from the point of view of the Four Noble Truths with wisdom and insight we are at the supramundane level.

By knowing these ten meritorious deeds we could spend our time and energy doing them properly and enjoy the good results in this life and in rebirths.

*Ashin Dhammesara.*





# DHAMMA IN



Visit to Haw Par Villa on 9th September, 2012 by teachers and students of Sunday Dhamma Class







# ACTION 2012



Teachers and students of Dhamma class in Burmese at Burmese Buddhist Temple.



Teachers and students of Sunday Dhamma Class at Burmese Buddhist Temple.



# ANGULIMALA WAS A MURDERER

"Angulimala" means "a garland of fingers". As a robber he wore a string of human fingers taken from the victims he had murdered after robbing them. He was converted to the Dhamma after an encounter with the Buddha..

He was named "Ahimsaka" meaning "Harmless" by his father after it was predicted that he had a criminal tendency in his temperament. At the time he was born all the weapons in the house suddenly sparkled without any apparent reason. His father was the Royal Chaplain to King Pasenadi of Kosala.

He grew up as a well behaved boy and was sent to study at the university of Taxila. As the most intelligent student among his classmates and a favourite of his teacher he was often invited to his teacher's home for meals. This aroused the jealousy of his classmates. They told his teacher, "Ahimsaka is plotting against you." This was told by several students but not one. After some time the teacher became convinced of this false report.

One day, his teacher said to him "My dear Ahimsaka, it is a duty to make a gift of honor to his teacher after a student has completed his duty."

"Certainly, master! What shall I give you?" said he.

"You must bring me a thousand human little fingers of the right hand. This will then be your concluding ceremonial homage to the science you have learned."

Ahimsaka was hesitant initially. But consented after being pressurised by the teacher. What moved Ahimsaka finally to accept his teacher's macabre demand? It could be the unquestioning obedience to the guru which he thought as a rule of higher principle.

Equipped with a large sword Ahimsaka went into the wild Jalini forest in his home state, Kosala. There he lived on a high cliff from where he could see approaching travellers on the road below. After slaying each of them he took a finger from each victim. He threaded the finger bones and wore them as a garland. From that he received the nickname "Angulimala".

As he went on killing, people shunned that forest, not even the firewood gatherers would visit it. Angulimala now had to go into the vicinity of villages for his victims. He even went so far as to enter houses at night in several villages, killing the inhabitants. Out of fear, people had to leave their homes. They went to the city of Savatthi and made a plea to King Kosala to capture Angulimala.

Angulimala's mother heard about the king's command to arrest him. She set out alone for the forest area where Angulimala was hiding. She wanted to save him and to implore him to renounce his evil life.

That day, the Buddha in his daily survey of the world, saw the grave danger Angulimala would be in. By



committing matricide he would be reborn in the lowest hell. To save him, the Buddha walked thirty miles in silence to meet Angulimala in the forest in spite of being warned of the danger of seeing the fierce murderer.

Angulimala, from his look-out, saw first his mother approaching. Though recognizing her, he thought of completing a thousand fingers by killing her.

At that moment the Buddha appeared on the road between Angulimala and his mother. Seeing him, Angulimala thought: "Why should I kill my mother for the sake of one finger when there is someone else?." Taking up his sword and shield and buckled on his bow and quiver he followed behind the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One performed such a feat of supernormal power that the bandit Angulimala, going as fast as he could, was unable to catch up with the Blessed One, who was walking at his normal pace. Then he thought: "It is marvellous! Formerly, I caught up with even a galloping elephant and seized it. Now, though I am going as fast as I could, I am unable to catch up with this monk who is walking at his normal pace." He stopped and called "Stop, monk! Stop, monk!"

"I have stopped, Angulimala. Have you stopped, too?"

Angulimala answered, "While you are still walking, you tell me you have stopped. But now, when I have stopped, you say I have not stopped. What is the meaning of it?"

The Buddha answered, "Angulimala, I have stopped for ever,

Forswearing violence to every living being;

But you have not restrained towards things that breathe;

So, that is why I have stopped and you have not."

Moved by the the words of the Buddha, Angulimala shouted "I will renounce all evil." Flinging his sword and weapons into a pit he knelt down at the Buddha's feet and asked for the Going Forth. Out of Compassion the Buddha said, "Come bhikkhu." So Angulimala was ordained as a member of the Sangha.

All this while, King Pasenadi had set out with the best group of his soldiers to the Jailini forest. On his way he stopped at the Jetavana Monastery where the Buddha had just arrived. He told the Buddha that he was looking for Angulimala.

Then the Exalted One said:

"But, great King, if you were to see Angulimala with shaven head and clad in the yellow robe, gone forth from the home life into homelessness, living the life of purity in virtue and noble conduct — how would you treat him?"



"Venerable Sir, we should pay homage to him, invite him to accept the four requisites of a monk, and should arrange for his protection.

The exalted said, "Here is Angulimala ordained as my disciple."

"It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvelous how the Blessed One subdues the unsubdued, pacifies the unpeaceful, calms the uncalm. Him whom we could not subdue with punishments and weapons the Blessed One has subdued without punishment and weapon."

Later, when Angulimala was going on alms-round, he was not respected by the people. They even threw stones at him.

One day, while on his alms round, he heard a woman crying, having much difficulty in bringing forth her child. At that, compassion arose in him. On his return to the monastery, he told this to the Master who said:

"In that case, Angulimala, go into Savatthi and say to that woman: 'Sister, since I was born I have never purposely deprived a living being of life. By that truth may you and the infant be safe!'"

"Venerable Sir, by saying that I would knowingly speak a falsehood? For many living beings have been purposely deprived of life by me."

"Then, Angulimala, say to that woman: 'Sister since I was born with the noble birth, I have never purposely deprived a living being of life. By this truth may you and the infant be safe!'"

Angulimala had it announced of his going to the woman. A curtain was put up in the woman's room. Sitting on a chair outside, he made the asseveration of truth as taught by the Buddha. Then, there was a safe delivery for mother and child.

Thus he who had destroyed so many lives was able to give life and well-being to others.

After this incident the people began to respond with respect to his daily alms.

Today the paritta known as Angulimala sutta is still being recited to help a woman in labour .

He is now reckoned as among the eighty eminent arahants of the Buddha.

**Tan Geok Koon**





# WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN LIFE ? WEALTH OR HEALTH ?

There are some who think that wealth is most important in life. Without wealth there is much suffering and there is no enjoyment in life. Others think that health is more important than wealth because without health life is suffering. Without health all the wealth in the world becomes useless. This argument is unnecessary because it looks at life with a narrow perspective. For a holistic view, life should be considered at both the materialistic and the spiritual aspects.

Once the Buddha was dwelling among the Koliyans. A man by the name of Vyagghapajja asked the Buddha how should lay people with families live happily and avoid misfortune.? At that point of time his community was living quite comfortably with some wealth.

## **Conditions for worldly progress**

The Buddha said that in life there are four conditions that are conducive to a happy life. They are :

- 1. The accomplishment of persistent effort.**
- 2. The accomplishment of watchfulness.**
- 3. Good friendship.**
- 4. Balanced livelihood.**

### **1. The accomplishment of persistent effort.**

A householder who earns an honest living as a trader, a farmer or a servant of the king should be skilful in his trade, efficient and not lazy. He is endowed with power to discern the right and wrong ways of doing his work. He should allocate proper duties to his subordinates. This is called the accomplishment of persistent effort.

### **2. The accomplishment of watchfulness**

A householder, who has acquired wealth by honest means by the strength of his arm, by the sweat of his brow, should look after it and guard or watch over it so that the king would not seize it, thieves do not steal it, fire would not burn it, flood would not carry it away or unworthy heirs dispose it. This is the accomplishment of watching after the wealth or guarding it against natural calamities. This is called the accomplishment of watchfulness.

### **3. Good friendship.**

A householder has friends in his village or a town with whom he converses or discusses business dealings. They may be young or old and highly cultured. They should be men of faith, virtuous, generous, full of wisdom. This is called good friendship.



#### **4 .Balanced livelihood**

In a balanced livelihood the householder will not spend more than what he earns. He is neither extravagant nor miserly.

Normally, wealth has four sources of destruction: debauchery, drunkenness, gambling and companionship with evil doers. It is just like a tank of water with four openings letting out water away while the holes for filling in water are closed.

There are four sources to increase wealth: abstinence from debauchery and drunkenness, non – indulgence in gambling and companionship with good friends. Just like a water tank that collects water and its outlet holes are closed.

#### **Conditions for spiritual progress**

The Buddha also said that there are four conditions that are conducive to a householder's happiness. They are :

- 1. Accomplishment of faith (saddha-sampada)**
- 2. Accomplishment of virtue (sila-sampada)**
- 3. Accomplishment of charity (caga-sampada)**
- 4. Accomplishment of wisdom ( panna sampada)**

#### **1. Accomplishment of Faith**

A householder who is possessed of faith believes in the Enlightenment of the Perfect One (Tathagata): Thus, indeed, is that blessed One: he is the pure one, fully enlightened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, well-gone, the knower of worlds and blessed. This is the accomplishment of faith.

#### **2. Accomplishment of virtue.**

A householder abstains from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and from intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness. This is called the accomplishment of virtue.

#### **3. Accomplishment of charity**

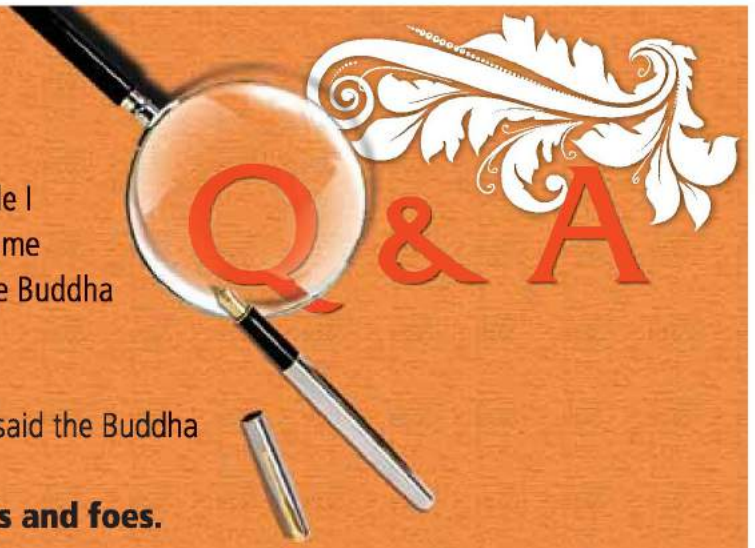
A householder dwells at home with a heart free from the stain of avarice, devoted to charity, open-handed, delighting in generosity, attending to the needy, delighting in distribution of alms. This is called the accomplishment of charity

#### **4. The accomplishment of wisdom**

A householder is wise if he understands the arising and cessation (of the five aggregates of existence), that is, a being is made of five aggregates of form, perception, feeling, mental formation and consciousness which will disintegrate at time of death without any remainder. There is no-self. He is also possessed of the noble penetrating insight that leads to the destruction of suffering. This is called the accomplishment of wisdom.

**Ven Ujotta**

*Reference; Dighajanu (Vyagghapajja) Sutta: Conditions of Welfare*



I have been disappointed in life many times. Several people I regard as friends turn out to be enemies. Instead of giving me support in time of trouble they back bite me. What has the Buddha said about the characteristics of friends and foes?

"There are many enemies who are in disguise as friends" said the Buddha

**Please turn to page three for details on friends and foes.**



# TRAINING THE HEART



**Meditation and developing the heart are similar.**

The nature of the heart is such that whenever it clings and grasps there is agitation and confusion. In meditation, there will be thoughts and feelings moving about, wandering even while we are practicing and trying to attain peace. This is way of the heart. If we understand this then we can detach from thoughts and feelings. When there is understanding it lets go of everything. Thinking and feeling will still be there but they will be deprived of their power.

The heart can be at peace when there is right understand. You detach, you let go from any feeling of clinging because you know feeling is feeling.

If we let go, then form is merely form, sound is merely sound, odour merely odour, taste is merely taste, touch is merely touch and the heart is merely the heart. The Buddha lived with form, sound, odour, taste, touch and thought. He was an Arahant( Enlightened One), so he turned away rather than go towards these things. If we think in this way, there is detachment and seperateness.

If we run away from home to ordain, it is not running away to get lost in delusion. It is to train and to master ourselves and to follow the Dhamma. The Dhamma becomes clearer and clearer. The one who understands the Dhamma, understands himself and vice versa.

There is no need to escape anywhere, instead escape through wisdom and through intelligence. Escape through skill. Don't escape through ignorance.

Defilements are just defilements. The heart is just the heart. Whenever we detach and separate them, there are just these things as they really are.

The Buddha said, "Listen to me, monks. Do not cling to dhammas (conditioned phenomena). " Everything is dhamma. Love and hate, happiness and suffering are dhammas. "

All conditions that are born in our heart, all conditions of our mind and body, are always in a state of change.

Clinging to the path of the Buddha doesn't bring suffering, because the Path is simply let go.

"Let go" does not mean don't have to practice. It means we have to practice following the method of "letting go".

**Venerable Ajhan Chah**

*Reference: Bodhinaya by Venerable Ajhan Chah*



## **Management Committee of the Burmese Buddhist Temple for the Year 2012-2014**

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