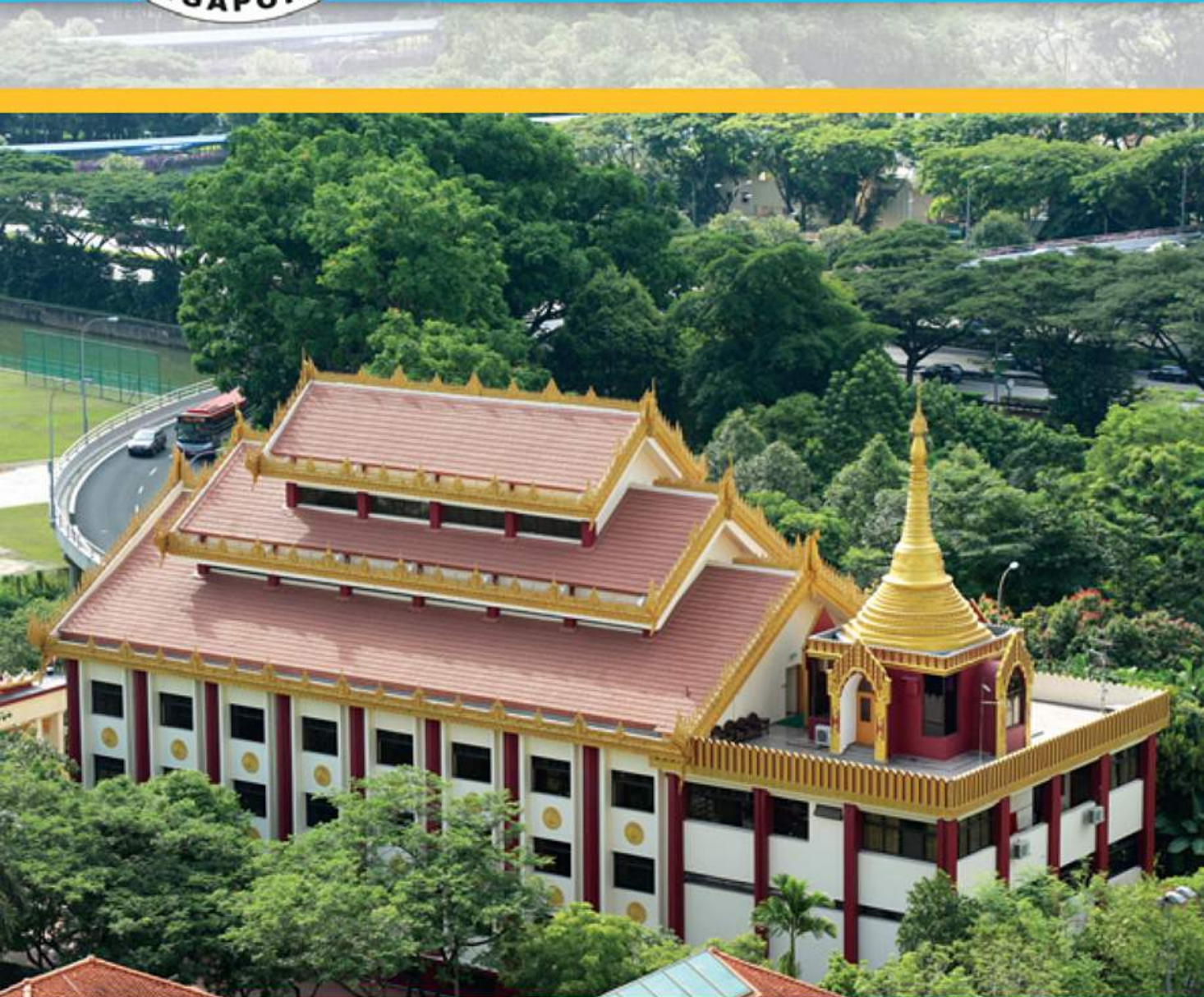




# Burmese Buddhist Temple *Newsletter*

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Aerial view of the pagoda-shaped Sima House at Burmese Buddhist Temple (Maha Sasanaramsi)

## Editorial Board

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## Editorial

Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice when you are chanting the Suttas. Feel happy when you are chanting and paying homage to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Feel happy because you are uttering words of praise about the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha! This is spiritual happiness in contrast to material happiness. This is Mudita, translated as "Appreciative Joy" which can mean "Rejoice". Mudita is one of the four feelings of spiritual happiness known as Brahma Vihara. The other three being Compassion (Karuna), Loving-kindness (Metta) and Equanimity (Upekkha). Mudita is the joy of praising the success of others. It is against the feeling of jealousy at others' success. Mudita is the way to having happy rebirth just like the other Three Brahma Viharas.

Heaven is a happy place to be reborn in. But Heaven is different from Enlightenment. An Arahant who is enlightened is not reborn in any plane of existence. He has attained Enlightenment, the Ultimate Happiness.

As Buddhists we should be happy that we come to know of the Buddha who is so great. What is more he is our greatest teacher. Who else can teach us the way to Enlightenment? Who else can teach us the way to liberate ourselves from the bondage of suffering? Only the Buddha has the wisdom and power to do that. Know the meaning of every word of praise we chant. Rejoice every moment of it.

So we chant in praise of the Buddha:

Iti piso (Such indeed) is he Bhagava (the Blessed One) Araham (The Perfect One) Samma-sambuddho (The Fully Enlightened One) Vijja sarana sampano (Endowed with Knowledge and Virtue) Sugato (Well gone) Lokavidu (knower of the worlds) Anuttaro purisadhamma Sarathi (Tamer of men) Satta Deva-manussanam (Teacher of gods and men) Buddhho (The Enlightened One) Bhagavati (the Blessed One).

Indeed, in praising the Buddha we look up to his Perfect Wisdom and Boundless Compassion

In Buddhism we always think of the Buddha in relation to His teachings (Dhamma) and the Community of His disciples, the Sangha.

We continue chanting in praise of the Dhamma, teachings of the Buddha). So we chant:

Svakato Bhagavata Dhammo (Well expounded is the Dhamma by the Blessed One) Sanditthiko (to be self realised) Akaliko (with immediate effect) Ehipasiko (to be but approached to be seen) Opanayiko (capable of being entered) Paccattam veditabbo vinnuhiti. (to be attained by the wise, each for himself)

We rejoice in praising the Dhamma because it is the Truth, a gift presented to us by the Buddha, a gift that teaches us the way to attain Nibbana. We feel happy that the Dhamma is not dogmatic. We are invited to come and see, to investigate the Dhamma before putting it into practice. It is not wrong to question it to clear our doubts, if any. There is no mystery about it. It is practical. The wise has practised it and attained Nibbana, on his own effort. The Dhamma is the Truth.

Then we continue rejoicing in praise of the Sangha chant:

Supatipanno Bhagavato savakasangho (Of good conduct is the Sangha) Ujupatipano Bhagavato savakasangho (Of upright conduct is the Sangha) Nayapatipano Bhagavato savakasangho (Of wise conduct is the Sangha) Samicipatipano Bhagavato savakasangho (Of dutiful conduct is the Sangha) Yadidam catari purisayogani atthapurisa puggaala (The four pairs of persons in the Sangha) Esa Bhagavato Savakasangho, Ahuneyo, (are worthy of gifts) Pahuneyo, Dakkhineyo, Anjalikaraniyo, (Are Worthy of hospitality, offerings and salutations) Anuttaram punna khetam lokassati. (It is an incomparable field of merits in the world.)

Indeed we feel happy in knowing that the Sangha is pure and worthy of reverence in several ways. Now that we have chanted happily the nine qualities of the Buddha, the six qualities of the Dhamma and the nine qualities of the Sangha we have done a very meritorious deed for ourselves. This merit is multiplied over many times if we chant in a group.

By cultivating the feeling of joy in praising the Triple Gem above we purify our minds of jealousy and other defilements like craving hatred and delusion. In the Dajjaga Sutta the Buddha suggests that when one is in trouble he should chant the above in praise of the Triple Gem and the problem will be resolved!



# THE SIMILE OF THE ELEPHANT FOOTPRINT

Once while the Blessed One was staying at Anathapindikā's monastery in Jeta's Grove, Politika, the wanderer, met with a Brahmin, Janussonin.

**Politika said:** Sir I have come here from the presence of Gotama the contemplative.

**Janussonin asked:** What does a wise person think about the Gotama's acuity of discernment?

**Politika answered:** Sir, who am I to know the acuity of discernment of Gotama the contemplative? Wouldn't one have to be his equal to know of his acuity of discernment? He is praised as the best of beings, human or divine!

**Janussonin responded:** Seeing what reasons for having such high confidence / faith does Master Politika have in Gotama the contemplative.

**Politika said:** Sir, suppose an elephant hunter were to enter an elephant forest and see a large elephant footprint. He would come to the conclusion the presence of a big bull elephant. In the same way when I see the footprint of Gotama the contemplative I conclude that the Blessed One is rightly self-awakened, the Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practised rightly.

Politika came to this conclusion after he had heard what happened to four groups of people who had been converted by the Blessed One. They were a Brahman, a householder, a noble warrior and a group of pundits who were subtle, skilled in debates like hair splitting marksmen.

Before going to see Gotama the contemplative, they would think of the questions to ask him, anticipate the answers and would refute them accordingly. They would also think of ways to deal with Blessed One.

In all cases, the people who had the intention to challenge Gotama the contemplative, were urged, aroused and encouraged to understand the Dhamma. After that they were converted and asked to go forth from the home life into homelessness.

After becoming the disciples of the Buddha they admitted that before going forth into homelessness they were arrogant, not truthful to themselves and to others. They claimed to be true Brahmans and arahants when they were not. But after going forth they became true Brahmans and Arahants.

After having heard what Politika had said about Gotama the contemplative, the brahman repeatedly exclaimed three times:

"Homage to the Blessed One, worthy and rightly self-awakened."

Then he proceeded to see the Blessed One and revealed all that Politika had said to him.

Then the Blessed One said that he would explain in complete detail the simile of the elephant footprint.

The Blessed One said that when a skilled hunter saw a footprint of an elephant in a forest, long in extent and broad in width he would not conclude



it was that of a bull elephant because he knew there were dwarf female elephants with big feet there.

As he went along, the skilled hunter came across another big footprint of an elephant and some scratch marks high up. He would not conclude it was that of a bull elephant because he knew there were around tall female elephants with prominent teeth and big feet.

Later the skilled hunter saw another big footprint of an elephant and some scratch marks as well as tusk slashes high up. Still he would not conclude that it was that of a bull elephant because there were female elephants with tusks and big feet.

As he went along he saw big elephant footprints of an elephant with some scratch marks and tusk slashes high up and some broken off branches. Looking around suddenly he saw a bull elephant at the foot of a tree, walking, standing, sitting or lying down. Only then could he conclude that a bull elephant was around as he got to see one alive.

In the same way, one would not conclude about the wisdom of the Triple Gem by looking at the footprint of the Tathagata. The achievements of Jhanas one gets, stage by stage are should not lead one to conclude: "The Blessed one is rightly self awakened, the Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practised rightly." Only until he has attained Nibbana and has been "Released" from rebirths and suffering would he conclude fully about the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

The Blessed One said, "The Tathagata appears in the world, worthy and rightly self-awakened. He

teaches the Dhamma admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle and admirable in the end, He proclaims the holy life both in its particulars and in its essence, entirely perfect and surprisingly pure."

The Blessed One gave a description of training a disciple and his spiritual attainment stage by stage.

### **The Training of Virtue**

Having gone forth and endowed with the monk's training and livelihood he abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his rod and knife laid down. He is scrupulous, merciful and compassionate for the welfare of all beings.

Abstaining from taking what is not given he takes only what is given or accepted only what is given. He lives not by stealth but by means of a self that has become pure. This too is part of his virtue.

Abandoning celibacy, he lives a celibate life, aloof, refraining from the sexual act that is the villagers' way.

Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, was firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world.

Abandoning divisive speech, he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart. Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord and speak things that creates concord.

Abandoning abusive speech, he abstains from



abusive speech. He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing and pleasing to people at large.

Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma and the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal.

He abstains from damaging seed and plant life.

He eats only once a day, refraining from evening meal and from food at the wrong time of day.

He abstains from dancing, singing and instrumental music.

He abstains from wearing garlands and from beautifying himself with scents and cosmetics and from watching performances.

He abstains from high and luxurious beds and seats.

He abstains from accepting gold and money.

He abstains from accepting uncooked grain, raw meat, women, girls, male and female slaves, goats and sheep, fowl and pigs, elephants, cattle, steeds and mares, fields and property.

He abstains from running messages ... from buying and selling ... from dealing with false scales, false metals and false measures ... from bribery, deception and fraud.

He abstains from mutilating, executing, imprisoning, highway robbery, plundering and violence.

He is content with a set of robes to provide for his body and alms food to provide for his hunger. Just as a bird, wherever it goes it flies with its wings as its only burden. So too a noble disciple carries only his barest necessities along.

Endowed with this noble aggregates of virtue, he is inwardly sensitive to the pleasure of being blameless.

### **Sense Restraint**

On seeing a form with the eye, he does not grasp at any theme or details. If he were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the eye, evil and unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. On hearing a sound with the ear ... On smelling an odor with the nose ... On tasting a flavor with the tongue ... On touching a tactile sensation with the body ... On cognizing an idea with the intellect, he does not grasp at any theme or details. If he were to dwell without restraint over his faculties, evil and unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. Endowed with this noble restraint over the sense faculties, he is inwardly sensitive to the pleasure of being blameless.

### **Mindfulness & Alertness**

When going forward and returning, he acts with alertness. When looking toward and looking away ... when bending and extending his limbs ... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, and his bowl ... when eating, drinking, chewing, and tasting ... when urinating and defecating ... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and remaining silent, he acts with alertness.



## Abandoning the Hindrances

Endowed with this noble aggregates of virtue, this noble restraint over the sense faculties, this noble mindfulness & alertness, he seeks out a secluded dwelling: a wilderness, the shade of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a forest grove, the open air, a heap of straw. After his meal, returning from his alms round, he sits down, crosses his legs, holds his body erect, and brings mindfulness to the fore.

Abandoning covetousness with regard to the world, he dwells with an awareness devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness. Abandoning ill will and anger, he dwells with an awareness devoid of ill will. He is sympathetic with the welfare of all living beings. He cleanses his mind of ill will and anger. Abandoning sloth and drowsiness, he dwells with an awareness devoid of sloth and drowsiness. Being mindful, alert, percipient of light he cleanses his mind of sloth and drowsiness. Abandoning restlessness and anxiety, he dwells undisturbed, his mind inwardly stilled. He cleanses his mind of restlessness and anxiety. Abandoning uncertainty, he dwells having crossed over uncertainty, with no perplexity with regard to skillful mental qualities. He cleanses his mind of uncertainty.

## The Four Jhanas

Having abandoned these five hindrances — imperfections of awareness that weaken discernment — then, quite withdrawn from sensual pleasures, withdrawn from unskillful mental qualities, he enters and remains in the first jhana: rapture and pleasure born from

withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought and evaluation.

This, brahman, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, a scratch mark of the Tathagata, a tusk slash of the Tathagata, but a disciple of the noble ones would not yet come to the conclusion: 'The Blessed One is rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma is well-taught by the Blessed One; the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced rightly.'

Then, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters and remains in the second jhana: rapture and pleasure born of composure, one-pointedness of awareness, free from directed thought and evaluation — internal assurance.

This, too, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, a scratch mark of the Tathagata, a tusk slash of the Tathagata, but a disciple of the noble ones would not yet come to the conclusion: 'The Blessed One is rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma is well-taught by the Blessed One; the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced rightly.'

Then, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert of sense pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.'

This, too, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, a scratch mark of the Tathagata, a tusk slash of the Tathagata, but a disciple of the noble ones would not yet come to the conclusion: 'The Blessed One is rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma is well-taught by the Blessed One; the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced rightly.'



Then, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain — as with the earlier disappearance of elation and distress — he enters and remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity and mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain.

This, too, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, a scratch mark of the Tathagata, a tusk slash of the Tathagata, but a disciple of the noble ones would not yet come to the conclusion: 'The Blessed One is rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma is well-taught by the Blessed One; the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced rightly.'

### The Three Knowledges

With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives. [3] He recollects his manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many aeons of cosmic contraction and many aeons of cosmic expansion, 'There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance, such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance, such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.' Thus he recollects his manifold past lives in their modes and details.

This, too, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, a scratch mark of the Tathagata, a tusk slash of the

Tathagata, but a disciple of the noble ones would not yet come to the conclusion: 'The Blessed One is rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma is well-taught by the Blessed One; the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced rightly.'

With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to knowledge of the passing away and re-appearance of beings. He sees — by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human — beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: 'These beings — who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views — with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But these beings — who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views — with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in good destinations, in the heavenly world.'

This, too, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, a scratch mark of the Tathagata, a tusk slash of the Tathagata, but a disciple of the noble ones would not yet come to the conclusion, 'The Blessed One is rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma is well-taught by the Blessed One; the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced rightly.'



With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the ending of the mental fermentations. He discerns, as it has come to be, that 'This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress ... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress ... These are mental fermentations ... This is the origination of fermentations ... This is the cessation of fermentations ... This is the way leading to the cessation of fermentations.'

This, too, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, a scratch mark of the Tathagata, a tusk slash of the Tathagata. A disciple of the noble ones has not yet come to conclusion, 'The Blessed One is rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma is well-taught by the Blessed One; the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced rightly.' [5]

His heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the fermentation of sensuality, the fermentation of becoming, the fermentation of

ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"This, too, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, a scratch mark of the Tathagata, a tusk slash of the Tathagata, and it is here that a disciple of the noble ones has come to conclusion: 'The Blessed One is rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma is well-taught by the Blessed One; the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced rightly.'"

When this was said, Janussonin the brahman said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One — through many lines of reasoning — made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One to the Dhamma, and to the Community of monks for refuge. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life."

**Reference:**

**Cula - Hatthipadopama Sutta: The Shorter Sutta on the Simile of the Elephant Footprint**

**Summerised by Ven. Ujjota and Tan Geok Koon**







# HOW TO SHAPE YOUR FUTURE?

Time has three aspects: the past, the present and the future. What you will be in the future is determined by what you have done in the past and what you are doing now in the present. It means that the way you spend your time shapes your future. Whatever you are going to do, do it immediately. When you procrastinate, time just flies off and you cannot get it back. It is said time and tide wait for no man. The Buddha said: Do not waste time. Do whatever you want to do now. If you do things correctly with right effort you will get what you desire.

We have to do good deeds in Dana (generosity), Sila (morality) and Bhavana (concentration). To practice generosity feel free to give away your material possessions to the poor and needy, provide services to help others, donate blood and your organs and finally your life, the highest form of generosity. Out of loving-kindness and compassion, the practice of morality can be done in two ways, Varitta Sila and Caritta Sila. Varitta Sila means abstentions from doing evil. For example when you observe the Five Precepts you abstain from taking life, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from telling lies and from taking drugs and alcohol that leads

to heedlessness. Caritta Sila means doing good deeds like looking after your parents, learning the Dhamma, and offering free services to help others when there is a need. To practice Bhavana means to do meditation. Consult a meditation master who can help you to choose a topic of meditation that is suitable to your character and temperament. The Buddha has mentioned forty topics of meditation for you to choose from.

To be successful in life you have to have a definite purpose in what you do. Know your target. Do it with your body, speech and mind in an appropriate manner. You will get what you want in the end.

To be successful in what you do, you must have faith or confidence in yourself.

Finally, do not waste time. Take immediate action to do what has to be done to achieve your goal. It is said time is gold. By managing your time well in the present you will shape your future well.

**Venerable Gandhasara**

# DHAMMA IN ACTION



Mr. Lau Ng Siong receiving his B.A degree scroll from Ven. Dr. P. Gnanrama, the Principal of the Buddhist Pali College, Singapore on 10th July, 2013 at Colombo, Sri Lanka. The degree is issued by Buddhist and Pali University, Sri Lanka.



On 29<sup>th</sup> September 2013, Dhamma students of the Burmese Buddhist Temple Sunday Dhamma class were brought to Marina Barrage to fly kites. The outing was organised by Youth Group leader Ms Tay Yu E. The Dhamma teacher seen in the picture (right) is Mr Tay Sin Hwa.



# ON VEGETARIANISM

Vegetarianism is the practice of abstaining from eating meat, fish and egg. Some Buddhist monks and nuns adopt vegetarianism as a precept while others do not. Those who practice Vegetarianism are the Mahayanists while some Theravada monks may opt to practise vegetarianism.



Mahayana, The Big Vehicle, is prevalent in countries like China, Korea and Taiwan while Theravada, Teaching of the Elders, is prevalent in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Followers of these two major Buddhist sects are not against one another. They are all followers of the Buddha, Sakyamuni Buddha, The founding Teacher of Buddhism (in Mahayana Buddhism) and The Teacher of gods and men (in Theravada Buddhism). Similarly, they worship the Buddha, they take the Three Fold Refuge in the Buddha,

Dhamma and Sangha and are committed to observe moral precepts. The lay Buddhists observe the Five Precepts at least while the monks and nuns observe more precepts including those of monastic rules. All Buddhist nuns and monks shave their heads.

The difference between Mahayana and Theravada monks and nuns lie in the way of worship, the way they dress and the food they consume. All Theravada monks put on the yellow or ochre coloured robes of various shades while all Mahayana monks put on robes of grey and blue daily. Black robes are for ceremonies.

Regarding their eating habits all Mahayana monks and nuns adopt vegetarianism while all Theravada monks, generally, eat meat, fish, eggs





and vegetables. Some Theravada monks have the option to practice vegetarianism on their own accord. Members of Mahayana Sangha have three meals a day: breakfast, lunch and dinner. While members of Theravada monks have breakfast and luncheon before noon every day. They can drink water after twelve noon but not milk which is considered as "food". In Mahayana monasteries or temples food is cooked for the members of the Sangha, none is required to go for alms at meal time. Theravada monks go out to the streets for daily alms except on days when they are invited to the devotees' home. By eating only twice a day they reduce the trouble of the lay people who have to prepare food for them. The monks have more time for meditation. Food is to be eaten to stop hunger and not for pleasure. Request for any food for one's own liking or showing any dislike for it is not allowed. Just be contented with what is being served. Whatever food is suitable for a lay person should also be suitable for the members

of the Sangha.

The Buddha's advice to the members of the Theravada Sangha is that they should avoid taking meat on occasions when they know or suspect that the animals are slaughtered specifically for their consumption. Also, they should avoid eating the meat of ten beings: human (cannibalism), elephant and horse (considered as royal animals), dog and snake (considered disgusting by people generally), lions, tigers, leopards, bears and hyenas (which make the human body of those who consume them smell like the meat of the animals. This smell will attract the relevant animal which will attack the eater of its meat).

According to Theravada tradition eating meat and fish does not make one morally impure. It is evil thoughts and actions that make a man morally impure.

Ashin Dhammissara



# 31 Planes Existence

4 Formless Realms (Arupaboka)

16 Realms of Form (Rupaloka)

11 Realms of Sentient Existent (Kamaloka)

6 Realms of devas / gods :

1. Paranimmitavasavatti

2. Nimmanarati

3. Tusita Heaven

4. Yama Heaven of Yama who judges the dead

5. Tavamtisa Heaven of 33

6. Catummaharajika

(Heaven of the 4 Guardians of Universe)

1 Realm of human beings

4 Realms of suffering beings

1. Realm of Asuras who are against the gods

2. Realm of petas (hungry ghosts)

3. Realm of animals, which is in this world of ours

4. Realm of extreme suffering

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31 Planes of existence

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# Q&A?



## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN Heaven AND Enlightenment?

This questions is often asked by people who try to compare Buddhism with other religions.

In Buddhism, The Buddha teaches that the aim in life is to attain Enlightenment.

In some religions the aim in life is **"to go to Heaven"** .

Thinking that all religions are the same, some people tend to think that the concept of Enlightenment is the same as the concept of heaven.

This is not true.

Some religions teach that a person lives only once in this life. When he passed away, he either "goes to heaven" or "goes to hell " eternally.

The Buddha teaches differently. According to Buddhist teachings, a man is reborn many times. This life is only one of many lives he has had. When a man passed away he will be reborn in one of the 31 Planes of Existence. See diagram on page 14. This process of rebirths or cycle of rebirths is called samsara. A person can be reborn in heaven or in hell but he is not to be there eternally. After a period of time, perhaps a very long time, he will be reborn as a human being again or in one of the 31 planes of existence. The only way to stop rebirths is to attain Enlightenment.

According to Buddhism, heaven is a place of happiness and hell is a place of suffering. A life as an animal happens to be in this human world, it is still a suffering realm.

Enlightenment cannot be described. It is not a place. It is beyond the understanding of the mind of man. It is beyond the highest of heavens too. Only references can be made to it like "the cessation of repeated births", "the cessation of suffering", "Peace and Happiness".



*Tan Geok Koon*



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