



# BODHI LEAVES

A newsletter created by children for children

\* Summer 1999 Issue

## Our Logo

We selected Bodhi Leaves as our logo because the Bodhi tree represents the Buddha. Devotees who came to see the Buddha in Savatthi were disappointed when He was not in attendance. They wanted a symbol that they could venerate when the Buddha was not in attendance. The Buddha asked for a sapling of the Bodhi tree to be planted in Savatthi. The Buddha then asked his devotees to venerate the Bodhi tree that had provided shade for him during his search for enlightenment. Ever since then Buddhists revere the Bodhi tree as they do the Buddha. The three leaves depict the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.



## Vesak 1999

As Buddhists, we celebrate Vesak during the full moon day in the month of May. Vesak is the day on which the Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, and passed away. The Buddha was born over 2500 years ago, and ever since, Buddhists everywhere celebrate Vesak.

The ceremonies began at 6:00 AM with observance of the eight precepts and some religious chanting. I don't use the word prayer here because they are not prayers. In prayers, one asks for things, but the goal of Buddhism is to destroy craving. If one asks for things, constantly then one is simply increasing one's craving. So what the songs or chants really mean, is simply a sign of respect to the Buddha, the Dhamma (teachings or literally "Truth"), and the Sangha (the order of monks and nuns). During the opening chants, we take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Then, we gave offerings to the Buddha. The offerings symbolize some of his teachings. The incense symbolizes purity, the flowers symbolize impermanence, and the lamps symbolize wisdom (or dispelling of darkness or ignorance). After this we offered a Buddha Puja, (breakfast) to the Buddha. It is all symbolic of course, since there is only a statue of the Buddha, but it is out of respect for Him that we do so.

36 devotees including 14 children observed the eight precepts.

It is only after this that we go downstairs and have our own meals.

My mother started the program with a talk on "What is Nibbana" which she conducted in both English and Sinhala. As part of the program, my mother gave me the podium. I had organised a reading from the Dhammapada (stories from the Buddhas teachings), for the children to read out loud. One by one, the children read their stories to the devotees, and after each story, my mother would explain their



meaning and symbolism. This was followed by a period of meditation. When this was

We meditated on loving-kindness and breathing awareness for fifteen minutes.

over, there was a question period where we could all ask questions. This is unique to Buddhism, because in many religions, one is commanded to do things, and one is not encouraged to question. But in Buddhism, the Buddha encouraged us to question and analyse His teachings before accepting it. After all, if it is the truth, why shouldn't you be able to ask questions? If the teachings are true, then all questions should have a logical answer and there would be nothing to hide. We ended the program with a 28 Buddha Puja.

The next day we went to the nursing home to give cake and ice cream to the seniors. We do this because we like to do good deeds on Vesak, and bringing happiness to so many lonely people is a very good thing to do. The adults also donated blood and gave the gift of life.

Chamal Abeysekera (16)

As Part of the Vesak program the children wrote essays. This is some of what they wrote

### Prince Siddhartha's Compassion



More than 2500 years ago, there lived a king and a queen named Suddhodana and Mahamaya who ruled the city of Kapilavastu. They had a son named Prince Siddhartha. Prince Siddhartha was a very kind and gentle prince who couldn't stand to see things being destroyed. The prince had many cousins. One of them, Devadatta, was actually the exact opposite of Prince Siddhartha.

One day Prince Siddhartha was taking a walk. Suddenly a swan came flying down. Prince Siddhartha had seen the swan falling and he ran towards it. When he saw the swan, he was filled with sadness. An arrow had hit the swan. Prince Siddhartha took the swan in his hands and gently pulled the arrow out and placed some soothing herbs on the wound. The swan slowly opened its eyes. Then the prince heard screaming. "Leave that swan alone," yelled Devadatta, the Prince's cousin, "its mine, I killed it!"

When Prince Siddhartha disagreed and said that he would not give the bird to

Devadatta, Devadatta became very angry. He went to the court and told them what had happened. Devadatta said that it was his bird because he had shot it. In response, Prince Siddhartha said, "it is not yours because your intention was to kill the bird but he did not die. My intention was to save him and he lived because of me, so I think he should be given to the person who saved him. If the bird had died, he would have been yours." The court agreed with Siddhartha who received the bird and let it go as soon as it recovered.

Himashi (12)

### The Four Signs

Before Prince Siddhartha attained Enlightenment He had a very comfortable and luxurious life in a palace. One day He decided to visit the city outside the palace. On one occasion He saw an old man. He had never seen an old man before and was puzzled by the sight of him. On a second occasion, He saw a sick man. He had never seen a sick man before and didn't know why he was this way. On a third occasion He saw a funeral procession and a man in a coffin with all the relatives upset and crying. He asked



questions about all three occasions and the answers that he got were that old age, sickness, and death were all forms of suffering common to all. On a fourth occasion, He saw a monk and He saw how peaceful and serene the monk's face looked. When the Prince saw how clam he was he decided that becoming a monk was the way to find a path to end suffering. The Prince gave up all his comforts to become a monk.

After many years, He attained Enlightenment and became the Buddha. The Buddha taught us that the only way to end suffering is to attain Nibbana. We remember this on Vesak Day.

Sohani (10)

### The Effects of Generosity

One day a beautiful young flower girl named Mallika decided to go eat lunch with her friends in the flower gardens. She packed a lunch of rice and started to head towards the flower gardens. On her way she saw the Buddha and a group of monks seeking for alms.

Not knowing that one of the monks she was looking at was the Buddha, she gave him her only packet of rice. She was overjoyed and happy with her good deed. She did

not know that the good deed that she had just done would result in her becoming the Queen of Kosala the very same day.

On that very day Mallika was dancing and singing in the flower gardens with the thought of her good deed. She didn't know that the King of Kosala was observing her. He dismounted from his horse and immediately asked her if she was married.

Mallika said no. The king then took her to his palace and that evening Mallika became the Queen of Kosala. She was also known as Mallika our queen who gives generously to the Buddha.

### Mallika's Question

One day Queen Mallika was thinking of how she went from being a poor, yet beautiful flower girl to the queen. She decided to go to the monastery where the Buddha was and ask him a question. Her Question was "Why is it that some women are beautiful and powerful, while some women are beautiful without wealth or power and yet others are ugly but wealthy, and some ugly with no power or wealth?"

The Buddha answered her by saying that those who are gentle and patient are

born beautiful. Those that have given generously are born wealthy. And those that are not envious and rejoice in the success of others are born with power. Rare is the person who has done all the deeds and is born beautiful, wealthy, and powerful.

From that day on Queen Mallika continued to be patient, generous, and to rejoice in the success of others.

She continued to provide alms to the monks and the Buddha and was never jealous of others.

Buddhists all over the world should always practice generosity, kindness, etc., so that when they die and are reborn they will be pleased with what they have.

It is not through prayers and vows that one gets beauty, wealth, and power, but through good deeds.

Chayanika (12)

### Queen Mahamaya's Dream



One night Queen Mahamaya had a dream. She dreamt that four Devas came from the heavens and took her to the lake Anotatha. She was bathed in the lake and dressed in lovely clothes. Then she saw a white baby elephant holding a white lotus



flower. It walked around her three times and entered Queen Mahamaya's body. The next morning she told her husband, King Suddhodana, about the dream. He called his wise men and told them the dream. The wise men said the queen would have a noble baby boy, and the King and Queen were very happy.

Ravindhi (8)

### False View

Once there was a hunter who lived in a small village in India. He had two very fierce dogs that helped him hunt. One morning, as he set off to hunt, he saw a monk who was on his alms round (which is how monks get their food).

At that time there was a superstition that if you saw a monk it was bad luck. However, this was not true because a monk is a holy person that has given up all his belongings to help mankind.

The hunter and his two dogs set off to hunt in the forest. The hunter was very angry when he didn't catch any animals that day. On his way home, he saw the same monk he had seen in the morning. The hunter, remembering the superstition, started to think that the monk was the reason he hadn't caught any animals.

The hunter started chasing the monk with his two dogs. Usually monks don't run, but this monk had no choice. The monk quickly scrambled up the nearest tree, with the two fierce dogs biting viciously at his feet.

Monks wear two layers of robes, the one on the inside is called the inner robe and the one on the outside is called the outer robe.

The monk scrambled up the tree to get a little higher because the two dogs were biting at his feet. As he was doing so, his outer robe got caught on a branch and fell on top of the hunter, who was standing under the tree.

The two dogs, having such a good sense of smell, sniffed the hunter. Thinking their master was the monk they jumped on top of the hunter and killed him. The tenth wholesome deed is correcting false view. The Buddha said that one should question before accepting anything.

Thamashi (9)

The gift of Dhamma excels all gifts. The flavour of Dhamma excels all flavours. The pleasure in Dhamma excels all pleasures. He who has destroyed craving overcomes all sorrows.

Dhammapada 354



Whatsoever treasure there be either here or in the world beyond, or whatsoever precious jewels there be in the heavens or Brahma realms. There is none comparable with the fully enlightened one. With confidence I say, in the Buddha is this precious jewel. By this truth, may there be happiness to all.

Ratana Sutta

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