



# Bodhi Leaves

A newsletter created by children for children

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## Gotama the Buddha

The Gotama Buddha is the most dynamic personality we know of, who lived and worked upon earth. He was a rational moralist, whose compassion for all living beings and whose devotion to their needs seem to have been boundless. The most striking feature about the Buddha is an almost unique combination of a cool scientific head and the profound sympathy of a warm and loving heart. This perhaps is the reason why the life of the Buddha has universal appeal. His teaching is clear and simple and in close harmony with modern ideas. It is, beyond all dispute, the achievement of one of the most penetrating intellects the world has ever seen. The path the Buddha showed us is the only path humanity must tread if it is to escape stress and suffering.

**Moni Bagchee**



## Radical Changes the Buddha made to Society

The Buddha was a great being; he introduced many teachings that changed society as we know today. I have selected three of the major changes he made for this article. The first change he initiated was he raised the condition of women, the second change he initiated was the abolition of the caste system and the third change he triggered was the allowance of free thinking, questioning and analysis before acceptance. These three important changes are still in effect and that is why it is significant to the people of today. If the Buddha hadn't made these three changes life would be very different, for each and every person.

The first of the three changes was that he raised

the condition of women. In India, during the time of the Gotama Buddha, women were treated extremely inadequately as they were treated as if they were an object created for the satisfaction of men. The Gotama Buddha was the first religious teacher to create an order of the nuns where the nuns could reach the same spiritual levels as the monks. The Buddha made it clear that women just like the men were capable of enlightenment. As the female order grew larger he appointed two female chief disciples just as he had two male chief disciples. He also showed his work in the Sigalovada Sutta, he stated that ensuring both the duties of the wife to husband and the duties of husband to the wife would result in happiness in the marriage.

The second radical change the Buddha initiated was that he abolished the corrupting cast system that was present in India during the time period of the Gotama

Buddha. There were four types of castes at that time, of which the Brahmins were believed to be the chosen ones by their creator the God, Brahma. Since they thought they were very high class they treated the lowest caste, the Chandala, with vast disrespect. The Buddha stated:

"By birth is not one an outcast  
By birth is not one a Brahmin  
By deed is one an outcast  
By deed is one a Brahmin"

With these words, Buddha stopped a major issue at that time and after his intervention it no longer mattered if one was born a Brahmin or Chandala. Birth did not prevent one from joining the order of the Sangha and receiving high positions.

The very last significant change that the Buddha made to society was that he gave everybody the right to question and analyze before acceptance. This meant that a follower of the religion is not commanded to do anything in Buddhism; you only do it after careful examination only if there is a (moral) benefit to you and others. Like it's said in the Kalama Sutta:

"Do not accept anything on mere hearsay, tradition,

rumors, inference, preconceived notions, supposition, or because it seems acceptable.

Do not accept anything thinking the ascetic who taught it is respected by all."

These are three of the radical changes the Buddha made to society that are as relevant and important today as they were at the time of the Buddha.

#### Nadith (14)



Reshan (12)

#### Three Qualities of the Buddha That I'd like to Incorporate in My Life

Lord Buddha is the greatest being that has the purest heart among all of mankind. His heart is filled with a myriad of great qualities and not a speck of bad thoughts. Compassion (and loving kindness), truthfulness and generosity are some of the major qualities of Buddha that I'd like to integrate into my life.

Buddha taught us to be kind-hearted towards all living beings, even to our enemies. He never believed in revenge; instead, he wanted to "Let one cultivate boundless thoughts of loving kindness towards all living beings" (Karaniya Metta Sutta). When the Bodhisattva was born as King Ekaraja, he was able to explain King Dababamalla about the significance of compassion by being kind and gentle himself. This quality of Buddha is also expressed when he was compassionate towards Sunita, Sopaka and many more people in need.

Truthfulness is another great aspect of Lord Buddha that I find to be extraordinary. When Bodhisattva was born as Prince Sutasoma he promised a cannibal who was called Kammashapada that he would sacrifice himself behalf

of the protection of his kingdom, if Kammashapada let him go back to his kingdom and allow him to listen to the teaching of a Brahmin. He was so faithful to his words that he went back to the cannibal unarmed, and succeeded in transforming Kammashapada into a better person by teaching him about the importance of righteousness.

Generosity is one of the major characteristic about Buddha that I'd like to develop in myself. When Bodhisattva was born as Prince Vessantara, He completed one of His ten perfections which is Dana by giving up the kingdom and even His wife and children. He was truly magnificent. After his death, he was born in Tusita Heaven as God Svetaketu where He waited to take His final birth as Supreme Buddha.

The heart of Buddha is full of great qualities. Compassion, truthfulness and generosity are some of qualities that I'd like to include in my daily life. In my opinion, it should be our utmost aspiration to develop as many qualities of Lord Buddha and become brilliant citizens in society.

**Malshi (14)**



**Prince Siddartha's Compassion to Animals**

This story happened long ago when our Buddha was a child known as Prince Siddartha. Siddartha and his cousin, Devadatha, learned how to use bows and arrows. One day Siddartha went to the lake to see the swans. As the swans flew, he saw one swan fall. He went to see what happened. When he found the swan he noticed there was an arrow in its wing. He tended to the broken wing and then noticed Devadatha with a bow and arrow.

Devadatha said that the bird belonged to him because he shot it. Siddartha said that the bird was his because he had applied medicine and saved its life. The two boys started arguing. Then Siddartha said that arguing would not help the situation and suggested that they go

to the king and ask who the swan belonged to. They came to the king and they told him what had happened. After considering the story, the king

stated that Siddartha deserved the swan because Siddartha treated the swan and made it better. One can see from this story that the Buddha's kindness to all beings began when he was a child. The moral of this story is that all living beings should be treated well.

**Lahiru (11)**



**Ven. Maha Kassapa's Contribution to the Preservation of the Dhamma**

The fourth Sangha Council was held in Sri Lanka at the Aluvihara in Matale around 80 BC. Five hundred Arahants participated in the Sangha Council which was held under the patronage of King Valagambahu. The Buddha Dhamma was documented, for the first time in history, on Palm (ola) leaves

Ven. Maha Kassapa was among one of the great disciples of the Lord Buddha. After Lord Buddha's passing away, one monk named Subhadda said to the other young monks who were sad and crying, "don't worry friends. He's not here now so we don't have to follow his rule and could do

what we like." Maha Kassapa noted this situation and he thought that such statements would cause problems for the

reservation and practice of the pure Dhamma. So he proposed holding a Sangha council where all of the Buddha's teachings were recited, discussed and preserved to memory.

The first Sangha council was held three months after the passing away of the Buddha. It was held in the capital of Rajagaha in Magadha in a large cave. Ven. Maha Kassapa selected 500 Arahants for the first Sangha Council. They recited and discussed the monastic rules for the Sangha (vinaya) and Lord Buddha's discourses (suttas). They organized the Dhamma into five nikayas and three pitakas.

Because of the success of Ven. Maha Kassapa's first Sangha Council, there were 5 more Sangha Councils held at later times. This Dhamma, which is known as Theravada or "Recitation of Arahants" is the one we use presently to learn the pure Dhamma taught by the Lord Buddha. Maha Kassapa was also called the "Father of The Dhamma" because of his contribution to the preservation of the Dhamma. Because Arahants were used for early Sangha Councils, we can accept that the true Buddha Dhamma was preserved for the future generations.

### **Samadhi (12)**



### **Our 2009 Dhamma trip to the (Old) Pinawa Dam**

Our trip to Pinawa Dam was very good this year even though we didn't have a monk join us.

The place was called (Old) Pinawa Dam because it was a beautiful Dam which is now not in use because a bigger and newer Dam was built. They called it Pinawa because the Dam was in a town called Pinawa.

The place we chose was beautiful and serene. It had flat rocks, rushing water and waterfalls. I think the reason Radhika aunty chose this place was because she wanted to show us a place where great monks such as Venerable Maha Kassapa might meditate.

Radhika Aunty told us the story of Maha Kassapa and his efforts for the preservation of the Dhamma. We then meditated for about 35 minutes on very flat large rocks in the open. It was actually very calm (listening to leaves, birds and water rushing). Aunty Radhika told us one of the many reasons she chose this place for our Dhamma trip was because not only was it a beautiful place but the Buddha, Maha Kassapa and other great monks meditated in places like Pinawa. She wanted us also to meditate in the forest near rushing water like they did.

We not only learned a lot from this trip, but we had a superb time too. I hope to do it again for many years to come.

### **Navi (11)**



## Emperor Asoka's contribution to the spread of the Dhamma

Asoka is a king who ruled ancient India. During his ruling period he went into war with neighboring kingdoms with the idea of expanding his own. These wars involved killing of innocent people and leaders of adjacent countries. Although he expanded his kingdom and became an Emperor, people called him "cruel" Asoka for his bad actions.

One day when the Emperor Asoka was at the palace he saw a little monk walking calmly in the palace garden. This little monk's behavior impressed the Emperor Asoka. He invited the little monk to visit the palace. The King Asoka realized that this was a monk who could lead his life to prosperity. The king offered him food. After the meal the

"...Therefore contact (between religions) is good. One should listen to and respect the doctrines professed by others. Emperor Asoka desires that all should be well-learned in the good doctrines of other religions."

**Emperor Asoka  
12<sup>th</sup> Rock Edict**

little monk made a sermon based on Buddha's teaching. King Asoka who became a Buddhist invited a lot of monks to his palace. Also, after becoming a Buddhist the Emperor Asoka built a temple called Asokaramaya in Pataliputra and other temples in different

places in ancient India. The king Asoka asked his son prince Mahinda whether he could be ordained as a Buddhist monk. Prince Mahinda was happy to accept this invitation. The king

asked his daughter Sanghamitta whether she too wanted to be a Buddhist nun. Princess Sanghamitta too agreed to join the female order and be a Buddhist nun.

One of the most important events that happened during his period was the third Sangha council. Under the patronage of Emperor Asoka the third Sanga council was held in India. Following the Sanga council Buddhism spread to nine different countries including Sri Lanka. Delegations

led by Arahants were sent to these countries to establish Buddhism. Emperor Asoka's Dhamma missions were admired for his peaceful approach and tolerance of other faiths. Arahant Mahinda brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka and later, Theri, Sangamittha visited Sri Lanka with a branch of the Bodhi tree and introduced the female order to the Island.

I respect King Asoka who established Buddhism in India during his period. By having third Sangha council under his patronage he helped the preservation of Dhamma and spreading of Buddhism to other countries. By sending his son Thera Mahinda and daughter Theri Sangamiththa with the message of the Buddha Dhamma and the Bodhi sapling he gave the biggest possible gift we Sri Lankans could ever imagine.

## Ashan (11)



## The Importance of Truth and Virtuous Friends

Virtuous friends (kalyana mitta), can help lead us to Nibbana (not be born again). The first thing we have to do is tell the truth, and all the other principles will depend on and follow the principle of Truth.

In the "Sutosama Jathaka" story, a cannibal attacks the Bodhisathava, (who at this time was a prince named Sutasoma) when the Bodhisathava was preparing to listen to some religious teachings. The cannibal, who was named Kamashapada, was trying to kill 100 princes. For this purpose, he kidnapped the Bodhisathava, but Prince Sutasoma was upset because he didn't get the chance to listen to the religious teachings. He promised the cannibal that he would go back and listen to the teachings and return to Kamashapada to be killed.

Prince Sutasoma set off to his kingdom and listened to the lesson and came back to the demons lair, but the cannibal didn't expect him to come back, so he was surprised and asked the prince to recite the teachings and the prince agreed to his request. The main idea of the teaching was to tell the truth and follow virtuous friends.

The cannibal allowed the prince 4 wishes for shar-

ing the teaching and the wishes that the prince chose were that the cannibal takes the vow of truth, cease from injuring living beings, freeing all of his prisoners and never again to partake in the devouring of human flesh. Inspired by the honesty of the prince, the cannibal changed his ways and followed the instruction and lived happily ever after. My opinion of this story is that truthfulness and having good friends is the key to the success of one's path to Nibbana.

### Charith (12)



### The Buddha's Advice to His Son, Rahula

In my article, I will talk about The Importance of telling the Truth. When you tell a lie, you are breaking one of the precepts. If you tell a lie, you'll make additional lies to cover up your own mistakes. Even worse, if your friends see that you're telling lies to them, they'll lose trust in you and not respect you. I will tell you a story about how Lord Buddha gave guidance to his little



**Ananda:** Lord, half the success of the holy life is a good friend.

**Buddha:** No Ananda, the whole success of the holy life is a good friend.

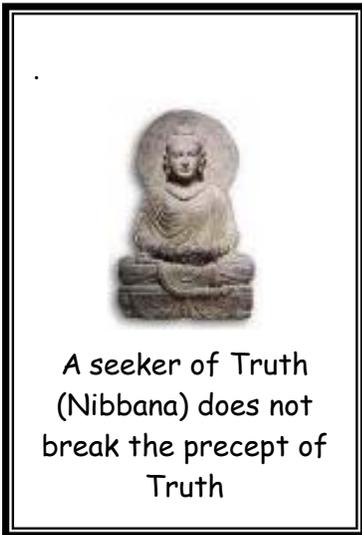
son, Rahula. The story is in the Rahulavada Sutta.

One day, when Rahula was washing the Buddha's feet, the Buddha showed Rahula that there was a small amount of water left in the pot. Then the Buddha said, "Same way Rahula, people who tell lies are worthless." Then the Buddha threw away the water that was left in the container. Then the Buddha said, "People who tell lies are ignored, discarded and lose respect from others." Then the Buddha turned the container upside down. The Buddha then Said, "Those who tell lies, are not strong and can be easily overturned or led astray." Finally the Buddha turned the container the proper way and said, "Those who tell lies are empty and

useless, just like this empty pot."

The morale from this story is that you should always be truthful. If you tell the truth, your friends and family will continue to respect you and trust you

### Kanchini (11)



### You Can Change with the Help of a Virtuous Friend- Story of Angulimāla

Angulimāla was a very innocent but a brilliant student named Ahimsaka. His cruel friends were jealous of him and told the teacher that one day he will become better than the teacher. Therefore the teacher believed them and tricked him to go in the wrong direction. The teachers asked him to get a 1000 finger garland in gratitude of his teaching. Since Angulimāla obeyed

his teachers he agreed to fulfill his wish.

One day as Buddha was looking for people to help he saw, with his wisdom eye, Angulimāla, who had now become a murderer. Angulimāla had 999 fingers for the garland for his teacher. He needed one more finger to fulfill the promise he made to his teacher, to get the 1000 fingers. Angulimāla was walking to look for the last person to kill and saw his very own mother. He was about to kill his mother.

Buddha thought, "I must help him." The Buddha went in between Angulimāla and his mother. Then Angulimāla thought, "Rather than kill my mother, I could kill this stranger to get the last finger needed." Angulimāla was running after the Buddha who was walking calmly. Angulimāla got exhausted and couldn't catch him anymore. "Stop, Stand still!" Yelled! Angulimāla. In a soft and gentle voice the Buddha replied, "I have stopped Angulimāla. It's you that needs to stop." Then Buddha taught him to stop killing and be kind to all beings. Angulimāla heard the Dhamma and became a changed person. He ordained as a monk and reached enlightenment. Buddha was a virtuous friend and was the best teacher of the Dhamma.

The moral of the story is that if we have good friends rather than evil friends we will go in the right direction. Virtuous friends lead us to be kind and caring.

### Nilusha (11)

If for company you find a wise and prudent friend who leads a good life, you should, overcome all impediments, and keep his company joyously and mindfully.

If for company you cannot find a wise and prudent friend who leads a good life, then, like a king who leaves behind a conquered kingdom, or like a lone elephant in the forest, you should go your way alone.

Dhammapada 328 & 329



## Effects of Associating Bad Friends

In grade 7 I had a friend. We both would hang out all the time and we would do class work and projects together. I was beginning to think that she was going to be my best friend! Then she started to talk to these girls who had a bad reputation of not studying and doing bad things and hurting others feelings. I knew that these people were not good people to hang out with, but she thought they were really cool and she started to talk to them and hang out with them instead of me.

I was really hurt. She was really nice but now she was different. She would not do her homework so this would get her in trouble with the teachers and this caused her grades to drop low. She was accepted by her new friends. She stopped hanging out with me after that. Thinking about this situation with me and my friend, it reminds me about some of the Lord Buddha's teachings about choosing friends.

In the Sigalovadha sutra the Buddha said that there are different kinds of friends. Some are good and will assist you in your spiritual path others will hinder your progress. There are 4 different types

The Fifth Sangha Council was held in Mandalay, Myanmar (Burma), 2415 years after the passing away of the Lord Buddha, in 1871, under the patronage of King Mindon. To ensure the preservation of the scriptures the Buddha Dhamma was inscribed on marble slabs.

Two thousand four hundred Bhikkhus began by reciting the scriptures in the traditional manner. The joint Dhamma recitation lasted five months. Then, with the help of skilled craftsmen, it was inscribed in seven hundred and twenty-nine marble slabs. It took seven years, six months and fourteen days to complete the work. The marble slabs were in the grounds of King Mindon's Kuthodaw Pagoda. These marble slabs are now known as the world's largest book.

of persons the Buddha recommended us not to associate. They are: a greedy person, a flatterer, a lip service friend, and a good for nothing person. These four types of friends won't help you in your spiritual path. They will just persuade you to do bad things and won't care if you get in trouble or not. On the other hand there are four types of friends that you should associate, these friends are called: the helper, the true friend, the friend who is a good counsel and the sympathetic friend. These friends will help you stay on the right path without getting into unnecessary problems

**Ashali (13)**



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