



# Bodhi Leaves

A newsletter created by children for children

\* Summer 2001 Issue 4

## May the Buddha Dhamma Last Forever

This year two members of our Dhamma community left Winnipeg for ordination. Matthew Gindin will receive ordination under Ajahn Geoff at the Metta Forest Monastery in California and Quinn McDonald will receive ordination under Ajahn Luan at the Wat Pratatson in Thailand.

Both Matthew and Quinn are committed to the preservation of the Buddha Dhamma through full enlightenment under the Theravada forest monastery tradition. They left Winnipeg with the warm wishes of the Buddhist community and the blessing of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. May they attain their noble goal and be an inspiration and guide to future generations of Western Buddhists.

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## Inspired to Ordain

Last week our Dhamma friend Quinn McDonald came to our temple and gave us a talk on why she chose to be a Buddhist nun. She said she realized that the world was filled with uncertainties and that you had to be very careful in everything you do. She explained that it was very easy to perform wrong deeds and that there was one path that you could take that would make sure that you would not do so. This is the path the Buddha taught us. Quinn said that the life of a layperson was like walking on a very thin sheet of ice. You have to walk very carefully and think before each step you take. If you do not, you will fall through the sheet into an ice, cold, lake and therefore you will suffer.

Quinn also explained to us that she would be among the few Western nuns from North America in Thailand. She said that the Western Buddhists feel that the Buddhism in Asia is different as

they have many rituals, and that Buddhists in Asia feel that the Western way of practicing Buddhism was not appropriate. However, she explained that there was goodness in both methods if you really understood the Dhamma because both groups of people want to find an end to suffering.

Quinn also spoke to us about how meditation on metta (loving kindness) has many benefits. She told us that at first, she felt that meditation on metta was a very basic type of meditation that was only for beginners. She soon learned that her assumption was not true. One day when she was at a monastery alone in the mountains she was afraid and did not know what to do. She began to meditate on loving kindness and slowly her fear left her. It was after this that she realized how deep and important meditation on metta was.

The speech that Quinn gave was a very inspirational speech. I learned a lot from it. I am happy that she is go-

ing to be ordained soon and I wish her the best. I am also very happy because now I have a role model to look up to. The experience I had was very rare and I am very thankful that I was able to hear Quinn's inspirational speech.

#### Chayanika (14)



#### Cause for Downfall - Neglect of Parents

There are those who while leading the life of luxury feel that it is not necessary to repay their old, helpless parents for what they have done for them. These people have the means to support their aged parents, but they neglect their duty. These people are looked down upon by society. Neglecting one's aged parents is a cause of downfall.

The story of what happened to Sona during the time of the Buddha is a good example of this downfall. Sona and her husband had ten children. They looked after their children very well. They gave them toys, healthy food, and a good education. When the children grew up Sona and her husband found them good wives and husbands. Even after doing all of this for their

children, they neglected their parents needs. and went to live by themselves. Sona and her husband were left to live alone in a big empty house.

One day Sona's husband decided to leave his home and become a monk under the Buddha. Sona thought that living with her children was better than living by herself. Her children who were greedy for money agreed to look after her. Sona sold her house and shared the money equally between her ten children.

In the beginning her children let her stay with them, then slowly each one of the children passed her to the next child. Soon none of the children wanted to take care of her anymore.

Sad and hurt, Sona decided to become a nun. The Buddha said that even though her children were following a course of downfall, if you get sad, angry, and think about it all the time, you too are causing downfall to yourself. The Buddha encouraged Sona to practice the Dhamma. Sona attained enlightenment and was appointed by the Buddha as the nun foremost in effort.

My parents are helping me in a lot of different ways. I will never neglect them.

Even if children do not know about the causes of downfall, they should use their common sense to find out if they are doing the right thing or not.

#### Chaturika (13)

#### Cause for Downfall- Anger

Irritation and anger are qualities that destroy the harmony of life. Anger shatters family life and friendship. Sometimes when you are angry, you do not know what you are capable of doing. Because of this your friends could leave you. Slowly, you won't have any good friends and no one will respect you. This is why the Lord Buddha said

Captivated and maddened by anger he does what is unwholesome with ease. But in time when anger is spent, regrets he as one bunt by flames.

that anger is a cause of downfall.

A long time ago there was a king named Bimbisara. Everyone in the kingdom liked the king. His queen gave birth to a baby boy and they named him Ajasaththa. The king and queen took very good care of him.

Despite this when Ajasaththa was older, he wanted to overthrow his father and rule the kingdom. His father, King Bimbisara, who loved his son stepped down from the throne and

gave it to his son. Then Ajasaththa thought to himself, " My father was a great king and if I am not as great a king as he was the people might not like me. Then they will want my father back" He decided to kill his father by starving him in jail. He put his father in jail and no one was to visit him but his mother, the queen. When the queen went to visit the king she hid food in her clothes and gave it to her dying husband. When Ajasaththa found out he was furious. He then made sure that there was never any food in her clothes when she went to visit his father. After this, the queen started to hide food in her hair and go to visit her husband. Ajasaththa soon found out about the food in her hair and made sure that she could not do that either. Desperately thinking of ways to give food to her husband, the queen rubbed a thick but-tery syrup on her body and let her husband lick it off of her. When Ajasaththa found out about this he forbid his mother to visit his father. He then ordered a barber to cut his father's feet and make him walk over hot coals. When the barber came down to the former king's cell he thought that

Killing one's mother or father is one of the grave unwholesome deeds. The unwholesome effects of such a deed will follow one from birth to birth until one attains Nibbana

his son had finally realized that what he was doing was wrong and that he was going to be shaven and then set free.

Just at this time the news came that Ajasaththa's queen had given birth to a son. The young king was filled with love for his newborn son. He asked his mother if his father too had loved him. His mother then explained to him that when he was a baby, he had a boil on his foot and it was making him cry. She said that he would not stop crying so she interrupted the king's meeting to tell him. The king then started to suck the boil. The boil broke and the pus filled his mouth. Since the king knew that the feeling of the sucking soothed his son, he swallowed the pus and continued to do so. She then said that when Ajasaththa was born, the wise men said that he would kill the king and that it was better if they killed the baby. The king had so much love for his son that he told them not to kill his son.

After hearing this Ajasaththa regretted what he had done. He asked the guards to free his father, but it was too late. The king had already passed away. Resulting

from what he had done, at death Ajasaththa was reborn in Avichi Hell. Killing one's parents is one of the five grave sins with grave results.

### Charith (16)



### How the Buddha Explains the Inequalities Among Mankind

Kamma is a natural law in this world. It is always working, even if we don't know about it. Kamma is an intentional wholesome or unwholesome deed done through speech, action or thought. Kamma explains the differences between people such as why some are rich and others poor, why some are beautiful and others ugly.

Genetics is what scientists use to describe this but genetics only explains the similarities. Why you have some similar features as your mom or dad or why you and your mom have an interest in music. Another explanation scientist use to explain differences among people is the environment you are brought up in but twins who are brought up in the same house with the same parents are not going to be exactly alike. Shakespeare was a great

playwright but his parents couldn't read or write. You can't explain this using genetics but you can explain it using kamma.

The Buddha taught us that good deeds result in good effects and bad deeds result in bad effects.

1. If you stay away from harming any living beings and try to preserve life and not destroy it you will have long life.
2. If you control your temper and not get angry easily you will have beauty.
3. If you are generous you will be wealthy and rich.
4. If you question right and wrong and analyze before accepting something that is told to you, you will gain wisdom.
5. If you are compassionate to others by taking care of them when they are sick or hurt you will have a healthy life.
6. If you are not jealous of others achievements, then you will be born into a powerful family.

You can't get these six qualities by praying; the only way to get them is by doing wholesome deeds and creating good kamma for yourself.

**Thisaru (12)**



### The Effects of Kamma

When one does bad deeds the effects of kamma are stronger if you do it to a parent, a pure monk, or the Lord Buddha because they are the ones you have to respect more than any other living being

By oneself is evil done, by oneself is one defiled, by oneself is evil avoided, by oneself is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one can purify another.

in the world. This story will explain the effects of kamma.

Long ago in a forest under a tree there was a very pure monk who was meditating. Two

evil spirits (yakas) lived near the tree. One of the yakas said to the other, "let's hit this monks head", the other yaka said, "we must be wise, we should not hit this monks head if we know what is good for us because he is pure and harmless. The foolish yaka kept on asking the wise yaka to hit the monk but the wise yaka kept on saying no.

The foolish yaka went behind the pure monk and hit his head. Shortly after, the foolish yaka died and went to hell. The Buddha and pure monks have purified themselves over long periods. As such, bad deeds done to them

have grave results. In the same way our parents have done many things for us. Bad deeds done to our parents whom we should respect also have grave results.

**Ravindi (11)**

### Buddhism: The Path for Those who can Reason

I will begin by explaining the title, The Path for Those who can Reason. Buddhism is known as a religion, but when you look up the word religion in any common dictionary, you will find that the definition has to do with an all-powerful (omnipotent) God, worshipping that God, or a system of faith. Buddhism does not have an omnipotent God whom we all have to have faith in and must worship. It does not force us to do things or believe in things just because we are born into it or because someone tells us that it is the right thing to do. Buddhism gives the freedom to question right and wrong. That is why one calls Buddhism: A Path for Those who can Reason. We also learned that Buddhism is the fastest growing religion/path in North America. Our teacher told us about one of her friends who switched to Buddhism. She asked him why he chose Buddhism. He had told her that he could not believe in an om-

nipotent God who has caused so much suffering and pain in the world. He also could not believe how their God could be so mean and send all those who do not believe in him to hell. Then he tried to find a religion that was compassionate to all human beings and he found Buddhism. He found it surprising that we include ALL living beings, including animals, instead of just all human beings. That was why he changed his religion. When another person begins to tell me what they went through to change his religion I begin to notice small things that I take for granted. I also notice how really compassionate our religion really is and I am very happy that I am a Buddhist.

Nilupama (13)



### Reflections

Just before our Dhamma friend, Matthew, went for ordination to the Metta Forest Monastery we were fortunate to hear him speak. Matthew's talk was on why he decided to become a Buddhist monk. The children of the class were asked to write a small paragraph on

what they thought of his talk. This is what some of them wrote.

To me, Matthew's talk was very inspiring in many different ways. For one, I thought it was neat how he became interested in Buddhism at the age of 13 just by reading one book! What also surprised me was that Matthew's birth religion was Judaism, but he decided that Buddhism was more appropriate for him. I think that a lot of people in this world stay with the religion that they are brought up with. Not many will switch even if they are inspired by another religion. I think that the contribution that Matthew is making to Buddhism is great!

Thisauru (12)

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I was very interested in what Matthew said. It is not easy to give up your family and friends and leave home to become a monk. What Matthew did inspired me. I learnt that I too could achieve my goals and accomplish anything as long as I stay focused and concentrate on what I want.

Even I could achieve my goal and attain Nibbana.

Chayanika (14)

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I think what Matthew is doing for the world is great. He is helping everyone in the world by becoming a Buddhist monk. He became interested in Buddhism at age thirteen when he found a book in a local bookstore about Buddhism.

When a monk though young follows with confidence the path of the Buddha his light shines over the world, like the brightness of the moon free from clouds.

He found it appealing and kept on looking for more information about Buddhism. He used to be from the Jewish faith but then he changed his religion to be a Buddhist. Now his goal is to become a Buddhist monk. I think he's very fortunate to be able to do this and it is a great blessing for the whole world including him. I think just to be able to meditate for a long period of time without interruptions is also a blessing to him.

Chaturika (13)



## The First Mental Aspiration

Over three hundred thousand world cycles and 20 infinite periods ago, our Gotama Buddha was born in a poor family. When his father died he had to sell firewood and vegetables to earn money and support his mother. One day he decided to join a merchant ship on its way to Swarna Bumi. His mother did not want him to leave without her. So he let his mother come with him. A week after there was a strong storm. The ship capsized and many people drowned. The poor man took his mother on his back and with difficulty swam to shore.

... I also learned that a lot of the Sri Lankan parents go to the temple for their children. This is a very good thing, but unless the parents listen to, learn, and practice the Dhamma it will not benefit their children. They have to set an example for them

His mother said, "As you saved me from drowning in the sea so may you be able someday to save other beings from all their suffering". The poor man then made the first mental aspiration to Buddhahood. From this point onwards He was known as the Bodhisatta

Udesha (11)

### Inspiration of a Buddhist Nun

I certainly feel very fortunate not only to have

made it in the robes so young but to be with such a great teacher as well. In fact I have everything so good, received so much help, that I often don't feel worthy of it all. I remind myself everyday before I eat that these are all gifts from the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha and wish to live up to it by bringing these qualities into my heart. This I feel is actually my

greatest struggle right now, just getting to the place in my (meditation) practice where I feel good enough to receive alms from the villagers. I

think this would happen to anyone in my position who loves the Buddha as much as I do. I feel this emotion so strongly sometimes that I don't even want to look up at Ajahn. My heart can become filled with so much gratitude that if I did not restrain myself I would cry.

Mechee Quinn



Remember our purpose here is not to make more Buddhists; it is to make more enlightened beings. When you teach Buddhism don't encourage people to be Buddhists, just encourage them to cultivate the qualities of love, compassion, universal responsibility and wisdom within themselves. If some special people with strong karmic connections want to formally become Buddhists, then that is acceptable but in general the emphasis should be on a commitment to inner spirituality not to any specific religious traditions.

H.H. Dalai Lama

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