



Bodhi Leaves

A newsletter created by children for children

* Winter 2002 Issue 6

Our Appreciation

We started Dhamm classes in Winnipeg over ten years ago with five children and about 1 devoted adults. We now have four Dhamm classes and a meditation class each Sunday. More than fifty children and a like number of adults have the opportunity to hear and practice the Dhamma.

This transformation from a barren land without the Dhamma to a land flowing with the compassion and wisdom of the Buddha was possible because of the commitment and devotion of our parents. We thank our Board of Directors, teachers, and parent volunteers for the gift of Dhamma, the gift that excels all gifts. May you have good health and the peace of Nibbana!

A Closer Look at the Great Renunciation

A lot of pain and suffering can result when someone abandons his or her family. Buddhism teaches us to make sure that our actions do not cause pain and suffering to other living beings. Yet, the Gotama Buddha had to leave His own son and wife when He left in search of Nibbana. One might argue that this is proof that He was not a righteous person or that it justifies the abandonment of our responsibilities even. However, before making any such conclusions the situation must be clearly examined.

Based on the life story of The Buddha Gotama we know that leaving His family was not easy for Him. Upon hearing that Princess Yasodhara had given birth to a baby boy, the first word that Prince Siddhartha said was "Rahu," which means an obstacle. Thus, His son was named Rahula because he made Prince Siddhartha's decision to leave

extremely difficult. This proves that leaving His family was not a thoughtless action but a sacrificial one for Prince Siddhartha. In fact, it shows great strength of character rather than a flaw.

A flawed character is revealed when a person abandons his or her family out of greed or selfishness, hindering the family's survival. However, The Buddha left His wife and son with good intentions in mind. First of all, He knew that being royalty, both Yasodhara and Rahula would be well taken care of and provided with a comfortable lifestyle. Secondly, His life story tells us that He intended on becoming an ascetic so that He could find a way in which His son, wife, and all of mankind could be freed from the suffering caused by old age, sickness, and death. Obviously His intentions were not selfish or greedy in any way.

Selfish or greedy intentions would have caused Princess Yasodhara to be bitter when her husband left. However, her life story shows us that she was loving and sup-

portive of his decision, Wise men had foretold that Prince Siddhattha would leave the palace and renounce His crown to become a Buddha, Informing her of this prediction her father cautioned her against the marriage. Yasodara, however, was determined to be his wife.

Yasodara remained devoted to the Buddha even after he had left the palace. Upon hearing of the lifestyle the Buddha had chosen to lead, the princess gave up her jewels, wore yellow robes, had only one meal a day, slept on low/hard beds, and

To acquire the full benefit of the wholesome deed of generosity one should sustain the wholesome intention before the act of giving, during the act, and after the completion of giving

gave up the beautiful garlands and perfumes she owned to emulate His actions. When her relatives sent messages of young men who wanted to marry her, she did not even glance at a single one.

Seeing the Buddha for the first time after enlightenment, Yasodhara wanted to pay reverence to Him although He had been gone for six years. Kneeling down she revered Him by bowing at his feet.

Yasodara was one of the first five hundred princesses who entered the order of nuns. She attained Arahantship and was declared the

chief female disciple to develop supernormal powers to recall infinite eras of the past.

Her super normal powers allowed her to recall her assistance to the Buddha in many past births when He was striving for perfection. As she was dying she informed the Buddha with devotion that she had, as his consort, helped

Him to achieve in 100,000 world cycles and four infinite periods what other Buddhas take eight and sixteen infinite periods to achieve. This shows that the

relationship between Yasodara and Prince Siddhattha had started many, many years ago. In fact, it was when our Bodhisatta received the definite proclamation of Buddhahood from the Dipankara Buddha that Yasodhara, born a noble lady by the name of Sumitra, aspired to be His consort and helpmate and to support Him actively in His quest for Buddhahood.

Perhaps Yasodara's support and love for the Buddha are best revealed in the poem "The Lion of Men." This poem contains the words she used to introduce The Buddha to their little son Rahula. These

caring words encouraged Rahula to go to his father, and ordain as a monk at the tender age of seven. He too, like his mother, showed great love and reverence for the Buddha and eventually attained Arahantship after following the Buddha's teachings.

After careful and logical examination as the Buddha taught us to do in the Kalama Sutta of the Anguttara Nikaya, we can see that The Buddha's act was an entirely selfless and therefore admirable one. It is due to this selfless noble act that we have the peace and comfort of the Dhamma today.

The Dhamma itself stands as evidence to prove the Buddha's boundless compassion. Neither by proclamation nor by example has the Buddha taught us to commit acts that cause pain and suffering to living beings.

Hasantha (17)



2002 Vesak Celebration

Buddhists celebrate Vesak on the full moon day in the month of May. The Buddha was born, attained enlightenment and passed away on a full moon day in May. On Vesak

day we think about the Buddha and his teachings.

To celebrate Vesak we observed Ata Sil early in the morning. Ata Sil is when we stop all our day to day activities, take eight precepts, and concentrate on the Buddha and his teachings. That day we woke up at 5:00 AM to go to the temple, and we wore white clothing so that we were clean and pure. We spent the morning listening to Dhamma talks and meditation.

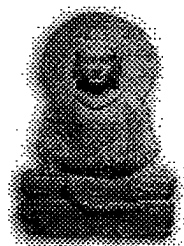
In the evening we had an Atavisi(28) Buddha Puja. We placed a plate with a lamp, flowers, fruit juice and medicine in front of each of the 28 Buddha statues. These are some of the Buddha's that our Buddha made verbal aspirations in front of. 24 of these Buddha's gave the definite proclamation to our Gotama Buddha.

The adults and children sang many beautiful devotional songs about the Buddha. We also had an offering of light (Pahan Puja) where we walked around the Buddha statue 3 times while reflecting on the virtues of the Buddha by chanting the Ithipiso Sutta.

I really enjoyed observing Ata Sil, singing devotional songs, and taking part in the 28 Buddha Puja and the Pahan Puja. This is a special day for all Buddhists because they spend a full day concentrating

on the Buddha's teachings, and practicing the 8 precepts.

Udeesha (12)



Perfecting Generosity

To become a Buddha one has to complete the ten perfections. They are generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, patience, truth, determination, loving kindness and equanimity. I will be writing about how the Buddha completed the perfection of generosity.

A long time ago in India in the city of Jetuttara there was a prince named Vessantara (who was the Buddha in a previous birth). Prince Vessantara was very compassionate and generous. One day a jealous neighboring king sent his men to ask Prince Vessantara for his royal elephant because

the king heard that the prince would not say no to an act of generosity. In those days a royal elephant is very precious so the villagers in the kingdom were very mad when they heard that Prince Vessantara had given away the royal elephant.

As punishment Prince Vessantara was sent to live in a forest. When Prince Vessantara went to say goodbye to his father and wife, Princess Maddi, his wife took both of their children and prepared to live in the forest with him.

Many days passed by since they first came to the forest. One day Princess Maddi went deep into the forest to gather some fruit. Prince Vessantara and the children were playing when an old Brahmin came by. He told the Prince that his wife was old and needed help. He asked the prince for the children. This request hurt the Prince greatly but remembering his aspiration to Buddha hood He gave up the two

children.

When Princess Maddi came back the Prince told her of his great gift. Even though she was very sad she calmed down as she understood that what the Prince had done was a

The Ten Perfections

Generosity
Morality
Renunciation
Wisdom
Effort
Patience
Truth
Determination
Loving kindness
Equanimity

great act of generosity required for completing the perfection of generosity.

That same day Sakka, the King of the heavens, dressed up as an old man and asked the Prince for Princess Maddi. The Princess walked calmly towards the Prince. The Prince gave his beautiful wife to Sakka and completed the virtue of generosity. The earth shook and a gentle rain fell at this great act of generosity. All of a sudden Sakka turned to his normal figure and gave Princess Maddi and the children back to the prince and said, "... hail to the future Buddha".

Ravindi (12)



The St. Norbert Nursing Home

There are many things that I look forward to in the Vesak ceremonies, but my favorite event is visiting the St. Norbert nursing home where we perform deeds of loving kindness. There are many seniors living there and afterwards seeing how happy they are makes you feel very happy as well.

We performed our dances from the Sri Lankan New Year

The Two Wolves

An Apache elder was teaching his grandchildren about life. He said to them, "A fight is going on inside of me, it is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, competition, superiority, and ego. The other stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you and inside every other person too."

They thought about it for a moment, and then one child asked him, "Which one will win?" The old man simply replied, "The one you feed."

Party. First the 3-7 age group danced and then the 11-16 age group danced. Afterwards, we went around serving cake and ice cream.

I enjoyed performing for them and they looked like they were enjoying watching us. It was a very enjoyable afternoon; dancing, serving cake and talking with them.

Nilupama (14)



Devotional Songs

This past Vesak, the children in our Buddhist community sang 2 devotional songs or bakthi geetha. One of them is called Samadhi Buddhu Pilime and describes the Samadhi Buddha statue in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. This

is a translation of the song we sang:

In the beautiful Maha Mevuna Park in Anurudhapura,
Is the serene Samadhi Buddha Statue,
From the half closed eyes of the Samadhi Statue,
Flows the stream of the Buddha's virtues - Loving Kindness, Sympathetic Joy, Compassion and Equanimity.

These virtues of the Blessed One, cool and soothe the heart of the beholder.

Like a cascading waterfall,
The virtues of the Buddha Ease the weariness of travelers in Samsara,

And lead them on the Path to Nibbana.

It is amazing how the sculptor was able to capture all these qualities of the Buddha in this beautiful statue.

Sohani (14)



Significant Events from Prince Siddhartha's Life

1. When Prince Siddhartha was born he took seven steps and lotus flowers appeared on the ground and he proclaimed that it was his last birth and that there was no rebirth for him.
2. When prince Siddhartha was small, ascetic Asitha, who was King Suddhodana's teacher came to visit prince Siddhartha. At that moment the prince put his foot on Asitha's head.
3. When Prince Siddhartha was seven he went to a ploughing festival. After some time when the maids looked away, prince Siddhartha meditated and floated in the air.
4. At age sixteen, the prince married the beautiful princess Yasodhara
5. At age twenty-nine, the prince saw an old man, a sick man, and a dead man for the first time in his

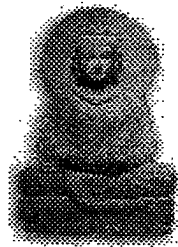
life. He was very upset about this for he had never seen anything like it before. He then saw a monk walking and was so impressed that he decided that was the path in which he wanted to follow.

6. On the same day prince Siddhartha's son was born He left the palace to find out if there was an end to suffering.

7. Prince Siddhartha crossed the Neranjana River with his friend Channa and his horse Kanthaka.

8. Six years later, at the age of thirty-five, prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment under the Asatha Bodhi tree and became the Lord Buddha

Uma (9)



Preservation of the Buddha Dhamma

It has been over 2500 years since the passing away

of the Gotama Buddha. One can easily wonder how the teachings of the Buddha have been preserved and if over the years, they have changed. The words of the Buddha were handed down by word of mouth. He ensured the preservation through a lot of repetition and memorization. Meditation also allowed the monks to be able to retain all the suttas by memory.

After the Buddha passed away, the third most pre-eminent monk in the Buddha's retinue, Maha Kassapa began concentrating on the preservation of the Dhamma. Maha Kassapa then proposed holding a Sangha Council where the Dhamma and the rules for the Sangha would be reviewed. For the first Sangha Council Maha Kassapa had selected 500 members of the Sangha. It was called the Pancasatika because 500 Arahants took part in it. All were Arahants except for Ananda. Ananda was known as the guardian of the Dhamma because of his excellent memory and detailed knowledge of the 84 000 suttas dispensed by the Buddha and His great disciples. Upali, a former barber was now an Arahant and led the monastic discipline. He was declared by the Buddha to be foremost in monastic rules.

Since the first Sangha council there have been five more Sangha Councils under the Theravada tradition and one under the Mahayana tradition. The second Sangha Council was held 100 years after the passing away of the Gotama Buddha. 700 Arahants attended this council and because of the 700 Arahants who participated, it was known as the Sattasatika.

The third Sangha Council was held 235 years after the passing away of the Gotama

Buddha. 1000 Arahants recited the teachings and discipline. This Sangha Council took nine months to complete. It was only after this Sangha Council that the word of the Buddha was spread to countries outside of India.

It was at the fourth Sangha Council that the word of the Buddha was documented for the first time. It was documented in Matale, Sri Lanka at the Aluvhahra under the patronage of King Vatta Gamini Abhaya. 500 members of the Sangha who were all Arahants took part in this Sangha council.

The fifth Theravada Sangha Council was held in Mandalay Burma. It was held 2415 years after the passing away of the Lord Buddha under the patronage of King Mindon. The scriptures which were written on palm leaves in Sri Lanka, would eventually deteriorate. To ensure their

"...But so long as there is respect and regard for the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, the training, and for meditative concentration, on the part of monks, nuns, and male and female devotees the Dhamma will remain free of obscurations and will not disappear."

Samyutta Nikaya

preservation, the Buddha Dhamma was inscribed on marble slabs. Inscribing the marble slabs took seven years, six months, and fourteen days to complete. These slabs were placed in Pitaka Pagodas

in the grounds of Kind Mindon's Kuthodaw Pagoda at the foot of Mandalay Hill.

The sixth Theravada Sangha Council was known as the Kaba Aye, and was held in Yangon Burma in 1954. It was sponsored by the Burmese government led by the Honorable Prime Minister U Nu. He authorized the creation of an artificial cave similar to the cave in which the first Sangha council was held. The sixth Sangha Council was important because well known Theravada Bikkhus from eight different countries took part in the recitation.

It is very interesting to learn about how something so amazing as the Dhamma has been preserved over thousands of years. One can only hope that the Dhamma will last for many more years, so that there will always be the opportunity for people to study, practice and change their lives by the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha.

Chayanika (16)



The Gift of Life

This year the members of our organization, the Manitoba Buddhist Vihara, had two blood donations. Our organization has donated blood before, but this year was special for me as it was my first blood donation.

Initially I was nervous and afraid because I don't like getting needles. After some thought, however, I went ahead with it understanding that the small pain of a single needle would be nothing in comparison to the pain that I could alleviate from others who might need my blood to live. I was surprised to discover that a single pint of blood can be used to help four needy people. With this in mind, I donated blood, happy

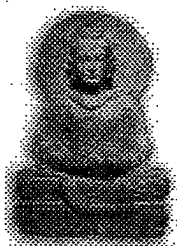
to be able to help in a small way.

The experience itself was quite different from what I had previously imagined. All of the staff were kind and considerate and seemed to understand my nervousness. The needle, though it looked intimidating, didn't hurt more than a playful pinch from a friend. As I lay in the donation chair I was glad that I had come. It was actually a fun experience with the community. After the donation had been completed we were given cookies and juice while we were waiting for the others.

I thoroughly enjoyed my first blood donation experience and look forward to doing it again. I can truthfully say as the youngest donor in our group that you don't have to be afraid to give blood. If you go once you will understand what I mean.

Our goal for 2003 is 40 donations. I strongly encourage everyone to participate, especially my fellow university students.

Chamal Abeysekera



The 12 months of Dana

The Manitoba Buddhist Vihara has organized 12 different opportunities for our community to practice Dana. Reflecting on the example our Buddha set, we should all support these events and use them as an opportunity to practice generosity. The 12 months of Dana organized for the year 2003 is as follows:

January - Donation for the completion of the Dhamma Sala at the monastery in Thailand where Mechee Quinn ordained.

February - Winnipeg Harvest. Canned and other dry food will be collected each Sunday.

March - Hot dog day for the inner city youth at the Rossbrook House.

April - Working at the soup kitchen at the mission.

May - Tea party and cultural dances at the St. Norbert Nursing Home.

June - Blood donation. Give the gift of life for Posen.

July - Garage sale for the Manitoba Buddhist Vihara building fund and volunteering at hospitals for the youths.

August - volunteering at hospitals for the youths.

September - Take Pride Winnipeg. Join us in keeping our City clean.

October - Good quality used baby clothes and toys for the aboriginal teenage mothers at Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre.

November - Delivering half the Halloween candy collected by our children to the inner city youth at Rossbrook House.

December - Blood donation. Give the gift of life for Sanghamitta day.

We need 12 adult volunteers to coordinate our 12 months of Dana. Please contact Udaya and offer your services.



Manitoba Peace March

I joined thousands of Manitobans and walked from City Hall to the legislature Building in -30 temperatures to show my solidarity for peace. Even though it was a cold day, there were people of all ages bundled up and taking part in the march. This was the first time I had ever had the opportunity to walk in the middle of Main Street and Portage Avenue. This was only allowed because the roads were all blocked off, and there were thousands of people walking.

This was the first time that I had ever taken part in an event such as this one. When I realized how many people had come down to take part in the demonstration I felt a chill run down my spine.

I felt very proud that I was able to be a part of it, and make a difference.

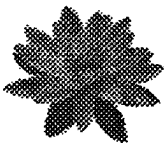
What I enjoyed the most was the fact that it did not matter what nationality you were, or what religion you practiced. People from all beliefs who wanted the same thing

banned together to make a difference. It was an overwhelming experience.

As we were walking, people were cheering to keep us all motivated. Almost every car that passed us honked their horn to give us support. The cold weather did not stop people of all ages from participating. There were elderly people walking hand in hand, and there were little children holding signs that said 'peace'.

Taking part in the Peace March was an amazing, life changing experience. It was something that I had never done before, and is something that I will never be able to forget.

Chayanika (16)



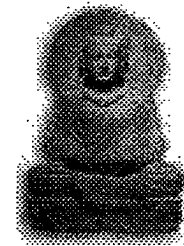
The Buddha's Tolerance

The Buddha's tolerance of other religions is captured beautifully by Emperor Asoka

of India in the third century BC. In the twelfth rock edict the task of the missionaries is defined thus:

Beloved of the Gods (Emperor Asoka), honours both ascetics and the householders of all religions, and he honours them with gifts and honours of various kinds. But Beloved of the Gods, does not

value gifts as much as he values this that there should be growth in the essentials of all religions. Growth in essentials can be done in different ways, but all of them have as their root restraint in speech, that is, not praising one's own religion, or condemning the religion of others without good cause. And if there is cause for criticism, it should be done in a mild way. But it is better to honour other religions for this reason: by so doing, one's own religion benefits, and so do other religions, while doing otherwise harms one's own religion and the religion of others. Who ever praises his own religion, due to excessive devotion, and condemns others with the thought 'Let me glorify my own religion' only harms his own religion. Therefore contact (between religions) is good. One should listen to and respect the doctrines professed by others. Beloved of the Gods desires that all should be well learned in the good doctrines of other religions



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Most Sri Lankans have confidence in the Buddha Dhamma by birth. You can change that to confidence through knowledge by reading. Read books on the Dhamma and develop confidence in the Dhamma through knowledge.

Circulate this newsletter by passing it on to another child.

Visit us on the web at:
<http://www.bodhileaves.com>

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