



BODHI LEAVES

A newsletter created by children for children

* Winter 1999 Issue

Sanghamitta Day

Sanghamitta was the nun who brought the female order and the Bodhi Tree to Sri Lanka. On Sanghamitta day, the full moon day in December, we honor the nun Sanghamitta through religious observances.

Despite the blizzard in Winnipeg, 29 Sri Lankans including 7 children observed the eight precepts and listened to a talk on the effects of Buddhism on the role of women. This was followed by veneration of the Bodhi Tree and by a Dhamma discussion on Buddhism and vegetarianism. We also radiated compassion and loving-kindness to all living beings through the practice of meditation on loving-kindness. The adults donated blood as part of the program.



How the female order and the Bodhi Tree came to Sri Lanka

Once a great emperor named Asoka ruled over India. He got his leadership by killing his many brothers and sisters. Everyone called him Chandasoka (Asoka the evil) because of all the evil things he had done. But later on, he met a Buddhist monk and, inspired by him, sought refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha. Instead of being mean and cruel, he became kind and compassionate. Because of this, the people started to call him Dhammasoka.

Emperor Asoka had one son and one daughter, Mahinda and Sanghamitta. He gave permission for both of his children to enter the Holy Order.

Mahinda was sent to Sri Lanka to spread Buddhism. Later on, Sanghamitta was sent to Sri Lanka, at the request of Queen Anula to start the order of nuns. King Devanampiyatissa (The King of Sri Lanka) also requested a

branch from the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha had attained enlightenment.

Emperor Asoka agreed, but he was very sad to cut a branch off the holy tree. He went and asked for advice from the monks. They told him that the Buddha had predicted long ago that an Emperor named Asoka would take the south branch of the Bodhi Tree to Sri Lanka. The monks also told him that the south branch would separate from the Bodhi tree when touched by Emperor Asoka and that he was to place it in a golden bowl full of rich soil so that it could be taken to Sri Lanka.

The Buddha's prediction was accurate. The branch grew into a small Bodhi Tree that was taken to Sri Lanka by ship along with Sanghamitta and the retinue of female nuns.

To show his respect to the Bodhi tree, Emperor Asoka followed the ship (that contained the Bodhi tree) until he was neck deep in water. In Sri Lanka, it was greeted the same way. King Devanampi-

yatissa walked neck deep into the water upon its arrival. The new tree and Sanghamitta were escorted by royal procession to Anuradhapura.

Sanghamitta ordained Queen Anula and 500 ladies. Sanghamitta continued to support the retinue of female nuns until she died at the age of 59. To honor her, Buddhists celebrate Sanghamitta day on the full moon day in the month of December.

**Nilupama
Wanigasekera (11)**



**Establishment of the
Female Order**

The female order was established due to the courage and determination of Maha Pajapati Gotami, Prince Siddhattha's foster mother.

Her name was Gotami, but she was called Maha Pajapati Gotami because it was predicted that she would be a leader of a large following. When the Buddha visited the palace to preach to his father, she attained the first stage of sainthood. Since both Prince Siddhattha and Prince Nanda had given up the lay life, after King Suddhodana's death she decided to do the same. She visited the Buddha

at Kapilavastu and begged Him to allow women to enter the order.

When the Buddha was at Vesali, she wore yellow robes and together with 500 Sakyan Princesses, visited the Buddha. They suffered many hardships along this 150-mile walk. Ananda, who saw this, approached the Buddha and made the same request on her behalf.

During the Buddha's time, women in India did not have the same status as men. However, the Buddha realized that women were intellectually capable of becoming Ara-

hanths. The Buddha agreed, but only on condition that Maha Pajapati accept the eight chief rules. She gladly accepted them, and the First Female Order was established. Later the Buddha added more Vinaya rules to help Bikkhunis protect themselves. The Buddha preached to Maha Pajapati Gotami and the Sakyan Princesses, all of whom attained Arahantship.

By establishing the order of Bikkhunis, the Buddha changed the way society treated women. We remember this on Sanghamitta Day.

Sohani Amerasekera (11)

The Buddha was the first religious teacher to establish the order of the nuns.

**What the Buddha Did
for Women**

* The Buddha comforts the distraught King Pasenadi Kosala at the birth of his daughter by saying, "A female offspring, O king, may prove even more noble than a male..."

* The Buddha informs Ananda that women are as capable as men in reaching spiritual heights and enlightenment.

* The Buddha appoints two chief female Bikkhunis to help with his growing congregation of nuns, just as he appointed two chief male Bikkhus to help with the monks.

* The Buddha teaches the duties of the wife to the husband and the duties of the husband to the wife that will result in a happy marriage.

* Dr. Dewaraja, in the book, *The position of women in Buddhism*, concludes that Buddhism saved the daughter from indignity, elevated the wife to a position approximating equality, and retrieved the widow from abject misery.

Four Noble Truths

The Bodhisatta realized the four noble truths including the Noble Eight-fold Path - the path to Nibbana in the third watch of the night, on the day He attained enlightenment. From this point onwards He was called the Buddha.

The first noble truth that He realized was that suffering exists in this world from birth until death. He called this suffering Dukka.

Birth is suffering both to the mother and the baby. Sickness is suffering and so is old age and death. There are also many other things in this world that cause suffering like poverty or abuse. Even happy instances are suffering because they always come to an end and since we don't want it to end, we cling on to it. Since we can't keep the happy instance we become angry or upset. If it is an unhappy instance, than we try to push it away and when we can't, then we get angry which is suffering. The Buddha now knew that suffering exists in this world because all things come to an end.

The second noble truth that the Buddha realized was that the cause of Dukka (suf-

fering) was craving and attachment. When a death occurs in our family, we feel a very sharp pain because we know that we will never see them again but certain members of the family feel different amounts of pain. For example if the child in a family dies, the people who feel the

most pain are the parents and the siblings. They would feel more pain than a cousin would because they are more attached to that person. The Buddha called this craving Tanha. He

realized that it was not the event itself that caused the pain but the way a person responded to the event.

The third noble truth that the Buddha realized was that the only way to end this Dukka (suffering) and the chain of birth, sickness, old age and death was to eradicate craving. Craving and attachment are the causes of suffering because when you are attached to something and don't want to let go and when it goes away you suffer. When we eradicate the craving we destroy suffering. The Buddha realized that Nibbana (the absence of craving) is the only way to destroy suffering.

The fourth noble truth that the Buddha realized was the path that lead to the total

eradication of suffering or the path to Nibbana. All Buddhists follow this path called The Noble Eight-fold Path. This path is comprised of generosity, morality, compassion, loving-kindness, and wisdom. The Buddha realized that the Noble Eight-fold Path is the only way to reach Nibbana.

The Buddha calls his teaching the Dhamma, which means the truth. The Buddha realized the truth and taught the path for mankind to follow. The Buddha was a great teacher; He was not a savior. As such it is up to us to follow the path and attain enlightenment and reach Nibbana.

Himashi Hettige Dona (12)



Monks, 'Brahma', is a term for mother and father. 'First Teacher', is a term for mother and father. 'Worthy of offering' is a term for mother and father. Mothers and fathers do much for their children; they bring them up, nourish, and introduce them to the world.

Gotama Buddha

The cause of suffering is not the event. It is one's response to the event. One's strong response of craving (Tanha).

The Importance of Truth

Truth is very important among Buddhists. It is one of the ten virtues that the Bodhisatta must complete before he can become a Buddha and it is one of the five precepts. Truth is the most important of the five precepts and is also probably the most difficult to complete. Truth is the most important because someone who often tells lies will break one of the other precepts and tell a lie to cover up their misbehavior.

The Buddha explained the importance of truth to his little son Rahula in a simple discourse. The discourse is now called the Rahulavada Sutta.

Rahula had just finished washing his father's feet when the Buddha explained to him that in the vessel his feet were washed in, was a small insignificant amount of water left. Then he said, "Similarly Rahula insignificant is the character of those who are not ashamed of telling lies." Then he discarded the small amount of water and said, "similarly discarded or set aside and not recognized is the character of those who are not ashamed of telling lies." The Buddha then overturned the vessel and

said, "similarly easily overturned is the character of those who are not ashamed of telling lies." Lastly the Buddha placed the vessel upright and showed the empty vessel to his son and said, "Rahula do you see this empty vessel that is void of water? Similarly, empty and void is the character of those who are not ashamed of telling lies."

A seeker of Truth should not break the precept of Truth.

Dhamma means truth. We are all seekers of the Dhamma. That means we are all seekers of the truth. As seekers of the truth, we must ensure that we never tell lies.

Chayanika Abeysekera (12)

The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God, avoid dogmas and theology. Covering both the natural and spiritual it should be based on the religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual and a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism.

Albert Einstein



Be a Leader, Say "No!" to Drugs and Alcohol

Alcohol is a problem that plagues mankind. It wreaks havoc on families, friends, and relatives. It takes many forms, but is essentially the same in all. Alcohol causes suffering. Alcohol also causes delusion and is a destroyer of wisdom.

Temptation to drink is an experience that is common to everyone. Unfortunately, resisting the temptation to drink is very difficult, especially for teenagers who have to put up with crushing peer pressure. The only way to resist the temptation of alcohol is to be a leader not a follower. A follower will give in to temptation and drink, but a leader on the other hand is strong. A leader resists temptation and refuses to drink knowing that it is detrimental to his or her well being.

Most children are known to follow their parent's example. Thus, if their parents drink, the children are more likely to drink. The best way for parents to protect their children from alcohol is to set a good example by not drinking at all.

The Buddha advised us not to drink for good reason. As Buddhists, our goal is to find the truth. Alcohol does not assist us in that quest. Instead, it hinders us. Alcohol destroys wisdom and creates delusion. This delusion blocks out the wisdom needed to find the truth. Alcohol numbs the senses and dulls the mind to the point where we are no longer in control of ourselves, instead, the alcohol is. Alcohol also causes heedlessness that results in the breaking of the other precepts that Buddhists follow.

Some people think that the occasional drink is acceptable. However, this is not true. Have you listened to a mother who has lost her only son or a sister who has lost her only brother to a driver who had just one drink? We did in our Buddhism class. One drink can cause immense suffering. The Buddha advised us *never* to drink. Alcohol, being completely detrimental to our spiritual and physical development, is of no benefit to us whatsoever, and therefore should never be taken. As it is difficult to stop once you have started it is best not to start at all. The following excerpt written by 16 year old Tony Overman in *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* explains clearly the peer pressure that we experience.

The Leader

*If only they knew
how hard it is for me
I'm turning 16,
the world I begin to see.
My friends began to change,
right before my eyes,
and now they seem to laugh,
and tell all sorts of lies.
They hang around together
in groups of three or four;
the language they use
isn't gentle anymore.
The kids that seem most
lonely
wind up in their pack,
and those that stand alone,
they talk behind their back.
Somehow I feel rejected
because I don't conform.
Those that step to their own
beat
don't seem to be the norm.
I watched a few just fade,
away
with drugs and alcohol;
and many more have given up,
too many to recall.
Alcohol is an option for every-
one in my school.
I've lost a friend to booze
again;
I will not be a fool.
And sex, it seems so open,
for everyone to explore.
Three girls I know that came
to school
don't come here anymore.
If only I could make a differ-
ence,
what could I do or say?
I would go to school and try
my best*

*each and every day.
There is one thing I'd like to
do before I graduate.
I'd like to touch them one by
one
before it is too late.*

Parents and elders can help us by setting a good example and abstaining from drinking.

Chamal Abeysekera (16)



The Evil Effects of Jealousy

Once, long ago, in the city of Kapilavastu, there lived two princes named Prince Siddhartha and Prince Devadatta. They were cousins, but Devadatta was a little jealous of Prince Siddhartha. He was jealous because Prince Siddhartha was kind to animals and people, so that everyone loved him. On the other hand, Devadatta was not so nice; in fact he was really mean. Therefore nobody liked him.

Later, Prince Siddhartha attained Enlightenment and became the Buddha. At first, Devadatta joined the order and attained the Jhana. After a while, he became very jealous of the Buddha's popularity and large following. So, Devadatta tried to kill the Buddha. His first plan was to push a rock down a mountain and make it hit the Buddha.

He tried that, but it didn't work. Instead a piece of the rock chipped off and hit and cut the Buddha's foot. This was very painful for the Buddha, but He didn't die. Devadatta's next plan was to give an elephant some alcohol and make him charge at the Buddha. That, too, didn't work. When the elephant came charging, the Buddha practiced meditation on loving kindness, and the elephant stopped and bowed to the Buddha.

By this time, Devadatta knew that he couldn't kill the Buddha. So he tried to take some of the Buddha's followers by saying that there was a better way to make your mind pure. Some of the monks believed Devadatta and followed him (although there was no better way.) The other monks stayed with the Buddha because the monks had heard the bad stories of Devadatta. At the end, Devadatta realized his folly and went to the Buddha to seek forgiveness, but he was too late. He died before he reached the Buddha and was reborn in Hell, due to his cruelty.

This is why the Buddha teaches us not to be jealous of other people.

Thisaru Nilmalgoda (10)

We celebrated the dawn of the 2544 Buddha Era with a 28 Buddha Puja, chanting of

paritta, and a movie on Dhambadiva.

Why 28 Buddhas?

There is a special reason that we worship the 28 Buddhas. Many, many years ago there was a period called the Kayapanidhana Kala in which our Bodhisatta actively completed the ten perfections. This period started with the Dipankara Buddha. At this time our Bodhisatta was Ascetic Sumedha and he received the definite proclamation from the Dipankara Buddha. In the Kayapanidhana Kala there were 25 Buddhas including our Buddha Gotama. Our Bodhisatta met each of the Buddhas and received the definite proclamation and was encouraged by the Buddhas to complete the 10 perfections.

Because the period is so very long, it is measured in world cycles or Mahakappa. In the first world cycle of the Kayapanidhana Kala, there were 3 other Buddhas called Tanhankara, Medhankara, and Saranankara. Our Bodhisatta, however, was not as yet ready to receive the definite proclamation from these three Buddhas. And so we include these 3 Buddhas in this very long period and venerate 28 Buddhas.

Ravindi Gunsekera (9)

Our Teacher Mrs. Abeysekera gave a talk on

"Leading your life to achieve Nibbana" to 150 students in the world religion class at the University of Manitoba.

At the end the students were asked to write briefly what they found most interesting. Here are two of their comments:

I never thought of suffering as being the result of craving. This lecture has given me a chance to think about it. It makes uncanny sense Buddhism seems to be a practical set of morals, not a religion in a traditional sense. It's a great philosophical description that they aren't trying to make Buddhists, but rather encouraging the cultivation of loving kindness, universal responsibility, and wisdom. Very cool, not pushy at all.

Robert Richmond

I found it interesting that Einstein recognized Buddhism and praised it for its scientific approach. Buddhism encourages to doubt, study, and learn.

Samantha Finley

Circulate this newsletter by passing it on to another child. Visit us on the web at: <http://www.winnipeg.freenet.mb.ca/slam/buddhism/>

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