



Bodhi Leaves

A newsletter created by children for children

* Spring 2004 Issue 9

The Dawn of a New Year

The Buddhist community in Winnipeg celebrated the dawn of the New Year on January 1st 2004 (2547 Buddha era) with a 28 Buddha Puja and a milk rice dana. More than 125 devotees gathered at our temple to start the year with the Dhamma.

The ceremony was very beautiful and moving. The brass Buddha statues were arranged in a row and were surrounded by crimson flowers. The 28 little lamps glowed and lit up the faces of the statues. It was a vision of beauty in crimson and gold.

The community chanted the 28 Buddha paritta in harmony. The whole ceremony was a wonderful start to the dawn of a New Year.

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The Buddha the Greatest Physician

As a part of our New Year's Day service, our devotees participated in an interactive Dhamma talk. The topic to be discussed was: "The Buddha the Greatest Physician". Webster's dictionary defines the word physician as a doctor of medicine. It was this definition that came to my mind first when the topic was announced.

Initially many of our devotees, myself included, tried unsuccessfully to form an intrinsic connection between the Buddha and medicine. It wasn't until a few moments of thought had passed that I decided to go back and broaden my definition of physician. Physician in a broader sense is defined as one who exerts a remedial or salutary influence. It was with this definition that I began to understand how the Buddha could be hailed as the greatest physician.

To make the comparison completely understandable

to the broad age range our group is comprised of, my mother, who gave the talk, started with an example. A young boy falls sick and goes to the doctor. The doctor, being a physician, has a problem placed before him and is required to produce a solution to the problem. The problem is the little boy's ill health and the solution will be the remedy to return him to health. Using a stethoscope he performs a diagnosis and discovers the boy has pneumonia, the root cause of which is a bacterial infection. He prescribes antibiotics as the solution to eradicate the infection, making it clear that the medication should be taken three times a day for two weeks. The boy takes the medication regularly for a week and begins to feel better. After a while he starts to skip doses as he is forgetful and careless. At the end of the two weeks, several doses have been missed and the boy has a relapse.

The point of this story is to draw parallel to the Bud-

dha's role as a physician. He too was confronted with a disease - the universal disease of stress and suffering. In this case the root cause, instead of a bacterial infection, was craving. Strong craving led to greed and hatred. Greed and hatred stemmed from delusion. As the greatest physician, the Buddha realized that eradication of greed, hatred and delusion would lead to freedom from stress and suffering. He then prescribed the means with which to overcome these "bacterial infections". The cure to greed is selfless generosity. The cure to hatred is compassion and boundless loving-kindness. The cure to delusion is meditation that leads to awareness and insight. So did the Buddha prescribe the cure to the greatest, most widespread disease of all, stress and suffering.

However, the Buddha like any physician, could only show us the path to the cure, he could not walk it for us. If we do not follow the prescribed dosage, we will not be cured. Even so, if we do not perform generosity, loving kindness, and mental-purification, Nibbana (freedom from stress and suffering) too will elude us. The

cure has been determined and the prescription has been given in detail, it is up to us to read the prescription and follow it correctly and fully in order to be free of stress and suffering.

Chamal



The Meaning of Good Fortune

Every one of us wants to experience good fortune in our lives. When aspiring for good fortune, we often wish for wealth so that we may acquire lavish material possessions. We do this hoping that these possessions will somehow improve our well being. Ultimately when we aspire for good fortune we are aspiring for happiness and satisfaction.

In the first term the advanced class studied the Mangala Sutta (the sutta on good fortune). Students were asked to write about the real life application of this sutta.

In the Mangala Sutta the Buddha addresses the meaning of good fortune. However, The Buddha's description of good fortune is

quite contradictory to the way we tend to think of it. The following lines from the Mangala Sutta sum up The Buddha's thoughts on the topic of good fortune: "A mind that, when touched by the ways of the world, is unshaken, sorrowless, dustless, secure: This is the highest good fortune." In these lines The Buddha is saying that the highest good fortune is acquired through the development of one's mind and not through craving and the attachment to the materialistic ways of the world, which are impermanent and sorrowful.

Modern world circumstances show us that this indeed is true. Even extremely wealthy businessmen and celebrities do not experience complete happiness and satisfaction as a result of their wealth and material possessions. Often we hear of these individuals meeting with unfortunate circumstances like lawsuits or committing substance abuse. At the same time we hear of rare people like Mahatma Gandhi or Mother Teresa who have renounced their material possessions and devoted themselves to relieving the suffering of others. These people seem to have lived meaningful and fulfilling lives and continue to be respected and revered after death.

The Buddha's Mangala Sutta teaches us to redefine our perception of good fortune. It teaches us that to attain happiness and satisfaction we should aspire to developing our minds instead of developing our wealth.

Hasantha



The Mangala Sutta

During the time when the Buddha was residing in the city of Savaththi, a certain god (deva) asked Him about the greatest fortune that can be experienced by a person. This being the case, the Lord Buddha dispensed the Mangala Sutta for the benefit of gods and men.

In modern days many people tend to equate good fortune to material possessions such as having an expensive car, owning a large house or a prestigious job. In simple terms people tend to view that there is a direct linkage between good fortune and wealth. The Buddha, however, had a different interpretation of good fortune. He preached that the greatest fortune is to attain Nibbana (the total eradication of suffering).

In order to achieve Nibbana one has to develop one's mind progressively. Knowing the difficulties that lay people face, the Buddha used a graduated teaching method, where the first step was to associate the wise and disassociate the foolish. In the context used by the Buddha the word "foolish" does not mean uneducated or stupid; it means those that will lead us towards ignorance and wrong doing.

In one instance when Venerable Ananda (the Buddha's personal attendant) asked the Buddha if having a good friend was *half* the success of achieving Nibbana, the Buddha replied, "Ananda, having a good friend is not *half* the success to Nibbana; it is the complete success of achieving Nibbana." To stress this point the Mangala Sutta starts with the importance of associating the wise and disassociating the foolish.

Starting with the support of good friends (kalyana mitta) the Buddha gradually takes one through other blessings that result in good fortune such as supporting one's parents, providing assistance to one's family members and practicing generosity. He then moves on to greater fortunes such as broadening one's knowledge, disciplining one's self, respect and gratitude to the worthy and listening to

the Dhamma. After the person has Dhamma knowledge He encourages Dhamma discussions and acquaintance with meditating monks.

By showing us that the practice of generosity, virtue and meditation as opposed to the accumulation of wealth is good fortune, the Buddha leads us to the highest fortune - the supreme bliss of Nibbana.

Suki



The Importance of Disassociating the Foolish

In the beginning of grade seven I had a friend. She was very nice to everyone. Everybody trusted her and went to her for help. She was always there to help us.

Then, slowly she began moving away from our group of friends. Whenever she would be with us, she would be silent, staring at this other group which was very different to ours. This group loved to experiment with new things such as drugs, getting drunk on weekends, sleeping around with guys, and backstabbing their friends. She became very friendly with this group, so friendly that she began to do less things with us. We were worried about her, so

some of us went to talk to her. She answered, "Come on guys, they are really nice, you should give them a chance". When we pointed out the fact that their values were different from ours she replied, "It's not like I am gonna do half the things they do, come on, just give them a chance, they are so nice".

A little later she started to do more and more things with them. She went over to their houses almost every weekend and got drunk and did things that she normally would not have done with us. She would talk behind everyone's back, continually backstabbing them, exactly like her new friends. She had hung around them so often that she had become one of them.

Nilupama



Respect to Parents

As children it is our duty to respect and take care of our parents. They took care of us from the time we were born and they are always there when we need them. They have done much for us. The best way to repay them is by respecting them, listening

to them and taking care of them when they are older.

The Lord Buddha told us to treat our parents like how others treat Brahma (God). He said that the qualities that are said to be in God - Loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity - are in our parents. Our parents help and comfort us when we are sick (compassion). They educate us and help us to succeed in the future by telling us the right path to take when we are in difficulty (loving kindness). They teach us manners and how to behave ourselves and how to stay away from trouble (loving kindness). When we get good marks and do well in school, they rejoice in our success (sympathetic joy). And finally when we grow up and get married, or leave home for our education they let go and allow children to move on (equanimity) while still being there for us when the need arises. As the qualities that are in God are in our parents the Buddha said that Brahma (God) is in your home. Buddha has advised us to respect and take care of our parents as follows:

"Parents are as Brahma (to their children). Worthy of gifts are they. Compassionate unto their children.

Thus the wise should worship and pay them honors due.

Serve them with food, drink, clothing and shelter.

Anoint their bodies, bathe and wash their feet.

For service such as this,

To parents, given in this life

Sages praise (such a person)

And he hereafter, has reward, of joy in heaven."

Our parents are Brahmas (Gods) in our homes. They took care of us and taught us so many things through out our lives. Respecting them and taking care of them when they are old is the only way we can repay them for all the things they have done for us.

Charith



The Tibetan Monks Visit to Winnipeg

In November our community was overjoyed because we were given the opportunity to host 9 Tibetan monks in our temple. Never before had we seen so many monks chanting. The event was memorable because it made our temple international. Along with our Vietnamese friends and other Buddhists, our temple had come together to give dana and learn the Dhamma from the Tibetan monks.

The monks were on a world wide tour to spread

awareness of the unfortunate invasion of their country. Their monastery had been destroyed and the monks were traveling the world raising funds to build a new temple. They were also using this opportunity to teach the Dhamma.

The Tibetan monks practice Vagirayana Buddhism which is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism. Their spiritual leader is His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Even though there are many similarities between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, such as the four noble truths

and the doctrine of dependant origination, there are also differences. The monks taught us their views on Bardos, a teaching unique to the Vagirayana tradition. Bardos is the period of time, up to 49 days, between the death of a person and their new place of rebirth.

After the Dhamma talk, the monks did some throat chanting. Throat chanting is common in Tibetan Buddhism. The deep sounds were unique and very moving. I had never before heard such beautiful chanting. This was my most memorable moment of the evening. I was amazed

and taken back by the calm, serene, monks, and their beautiful chanting.

The next day we went to a ceremony where the Sand Mandala that the monks had built over the past week was

In 1949 Tibet was invaded by the People's Liberation Army of China. They destroyed many monasteries, cultural centres, and temples. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and some of his followers fled to India. The Tibetan people were displaced in their own land. The Dalai Lama and his monks have brought awareness of the plight of the Tibetan people through peaceful means.

being destroyed. A beautiful piece of art made with coloured sand that makes various patterns and symbols. It had four doors which represented the four noble truths. In the centre was a lotus

flower with eight petals. Each colour that was used had a meaning and every symbol had a story behind it. After learning about the Mandala, it was slowly broken down by one of the monks to symbolize impermanence. Little portions of the sand were then given to anyone who wanted a small part of the beautiful Mandala.

Overall, the visit of the Tibetan monks to Winnipeg was a great success. Everyone who had a chance to meet and hear their views was delighted and inspired. The monks brought awareness and educated us about a different

form of Buddhism. I really enjoyed their visit and it inspired me to learn more about Tibetan culture and religion.

Chayanika



Sanghamitta Day

Sanghamitta day is a special day for Sri Lankans because Venerable Sanghamitta was the nun who brought the female order to Sri Lanka along with the south branch of the bodhi tree. We celebrated Sanghamitta day in the month of December.

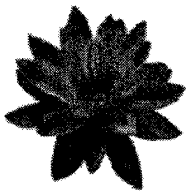
The community observed a sil (the 8 precepts) and practiced them throughout the day. We watched a movie of "The Life of the Buddha" which was one of the best I have seen. We had meditation on loving kindness which we spread to every living being in the universe.

The Bodhi tree played an important role in the Buddha's goal of attaining enlightenment. It provided shade, and shelter from the elements. Veneration of the Bodhi tree was done by having all the children carry candles three times around the shrine room to symbolize the actual way of venerating the Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka. The adults chanted

on the side while the candles went around.

We ended the program with a Dhamma talk which began with a talk about the effects of kamma. This was followed by the story of the male disciple Venerable Maha Moggallana who died a horrible death because of his past crime to his parents. We learnt a lot and overall, the day was a great success due to the hard work and commitment of our community.

Roshan



Why We Need Our Own Temple

The temple is a very important place for me. It's a place where I can go to learn the Dhamma, which helps me to choose the paths I will take in my life. I enjoy learning about the Buddha and his relatives in our Dhamma classes. Meditation sessions help me to calm down after a busy week at school. Also, every week when I go to temple, I get to see my Sri Lankan friends!!!

For several years now, the Vietnamese Buddhist Community has kindly allowed us to use their temple for our Sun-

day services. Every week we have our Buddha pooja as well as a Dhamma class or meditation session. However, around mid-January something very terrible happened. Due to the - 50 degree weather we had been getting, the hot water pipes in the building froze causing the entire heating system to break down. Because of this, for over 4 weeks our community was without a place to hold the Sunday services. However, this event made our community aware of how helpful it would be to have our own temple.

Having a temple of our own would be extremely helpful in many ways. First of all it would be accessible at all times and there would be very little time restrictions. That would allow us to expand our services as well as other special services we have such as Vesak, Poson and Sangamittha Day. Another thing is that we could make temple on Sunday mornings instead of afternoons. That way it would make Sunday afternoon free to get ready for school the next day. Also, having our own temple will allow us to have our own monk!

I hope that one day soon we will be able to have our very own temple!

Thisaru



If I meet the Buddha I would tell him how happy I am to be a Buddhist and have the opportunity to learn and practice the Dhamma. Many of my fellow students in school do not have the Dhamma to support and uphold them at times of need. The values that I have learnt at the temple have given me the guidance and strength I require to make the right decisions.

Sohani

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