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September 99 Newsletter

The Ottawa Buddhist Society serves Theravada Buddhists of all nationalities. All Buddhists and non-Buddhists who support the society and its objectives are welcome to our events, and to join the Society

Ottawa Buddhist Society Newsletter September 99

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Would you like to submit an article for the Ottawa Buddhist Society's Newsletter? Anything that would be of interest to the general Buddhist community is welcome: Poetry, art, short stories, quotes, a passage from your readings, personal experiences; visits to monasteries; biographies; questions that you would like to ask a monk; letters to the editor; announcements about your meditation group; book reviews; TV programs; events; news items; listing of your Buddhist group. Send your article by email as a Word or WordPerfect document, or as a text document to amink@cyberus.ca

Dear Friends in Dhamma and Other Gentle People:

The Vesak 99 special edition of the newsletter featured several articles and you, the readers, were pleased with it. And so I will continue to include articles which I hope you find useful in understanding Dhamma and in applying it to your daily life.

This newsletter has several articles by Ajahn Sona: an article he wrote during the ten-day retreat in July he gave near Ottawa; a Questions to a Monk Column which Ajahn Sona will write regularly for this newsletter; and a Beginner's Reading List.

There is a report on the ten-day retreat in July and two personal accounts of the retreat from Andrea and Dilani.

Sanjaya recently attended a youth retreat at Bhavana Center. He has written an interesting account of his experience and about his views before and after the retreat. He is 14 and this was his first retreat.

Arundathi, another young writer, gives us her interpretation of the classic Buddhist story, The Mustard Seed.

Colleen wrote a poem inspired by a walk along the Canal one misty July morning.

Venerable Dhammasami , a Burmese monk in England sent an article explaining Dukkha.

Dr. Mary Jo Meadows sent an article on Clinging and Renunciation. Mary Jo has an impressive academic, professional, and spiritual background. She is able to bring the Buddha's message to Western people with a Christian background.

Myoshin, a Canadian born Dhamma teacher at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, explains the meaning of Taking Refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

Binh in Australia has allowed me to print his article on Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam from one of his websites.

Andre took time off from parenting (or little Karuna gave him time off) to write about Right Livelihood.

Bhikkhu Bodhi has given us permission to reprint his writings. His essays are literary and expository masterpieces.

Manoshi served a delicious vegan chocolate cake at a recent dinner. I was struck by the light texture of the cake and requested a recipe.

My thanks to the authors and readers for your interest and encouragement. I welcome your comments.

Yours in Dhamma,
Amin Kabani

September 6, 1999
Ottawa

Retreat in the Woods
By Ajahn Sona

Ajahn Sona was a professional musician before he decided to become a hermit in BC and thereafter to become a monk. He has lived a very full and rich life from which he can draw many examples to illustrate a Dhamma topic. He seems to have all the Suttas at his fingertips and can explain a Sutta in a lively, contemporary, Western idiom with wit and wisdom laced with humour. Editor

Amin asked me to write something for the newsletter. It's day 6 of a 9 day retreat at a wonderful outdoor center near Ottawa. The place is like a utopian commune - log buildings and cabins connected by sawdust and mulch pathways through the rich green forest of early July. The birds sing from morning to night, though at 6:30 PM, as I write, it seems we're down to only one species. This one is fantastically melodious with an enormous range - he just cannot resist his overflowing happiness that this little group of contemplatives have joined him in his green kingdom. I know how he feels. I'm also profoundly happy to be here and glad to be joined by many familiar and new meditation buddies. I've been watching all the retreatants in their amazing variety, here in the green shady forest, learning to sing the Buddha' song of peace and happiness: "Beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end", the truths which set you free.

Though all these human hearts are perfectly unique, yet the laws of peace apply to each of them. I glance at my notes from my day 5 Dhamma talk: "Loving -Kindness". Like stepping out of the cool wet forest into a patch of sunlight, you stop, you feel its warmth, you take a deep breath,

bathe in this golden warming light..... I'm trying to find words to the feeling which the human heart must find and craft, into a commandable and sustained flow. The retreat is for crafting the heart; a dozen crafts people applying their skills in the "golden art".

The woods are masters of therapeutic massage. They help to restore us while we work at our truth craft. I think of the sign in the downtown street of Ottawa: Ottawa: Population 1,000,000. I think of our handful of meditators. I remember the Baddha's saying "I don't say how many, I just say how"

QUESTIONS TO A MONK

Since I started following the Path and trying to adhere to the Dhamma in as many ways as I possibly can, I have found that I do not like to sing love songs any more. I can still interpret them, but do not feel the anguish or the passion that the music calls for. I do not know if it is good or bad to be "losing" that sensibility which helps musicians to reach their listeners. I also feel torn between my "need" to make music and the 7th precept.
Hoa.

Dear Hoa:

Music and the mind is a fascinating topic. I myself was a musician before becoming a monk. Of course, monks must abstain from making music and listening to it. People ask me, "wasn't it difficult to give music up?", "Not", I tell them, "I used to play the guitar with six strings, now I play the guitar with no strings." In music we seek pleasure, ease or stimulation. We can release emotion through music or produce it as well. But music, however wonderful, does not last. And so meditation is a way of seeking music which is finer than sound and lasts. Meditation also releases fine emotions, so fine, that music can seem coarse by comparison. So, romantic or

melodramatic music begins to seem coarse as our mind stabilizes through meditation. This is a natural progression. Perhaps you should let go of the romantic music and take up the more serene and delicate lightness of the renaissance. There is a lightness about earlier music which perhaps corresponded to more refined or spiritual emotions of the time. In sheer delicacy the lute and recorder and renaissance vocal style are more conducive to peace and serenity.

As for the precept to refrain from music and shows, it is for periods when you are seeking more refined states of meditative consciousness. You will have to decide which you prefer, the guitar with strings or the guitar with no strings.

A question that has been on my mind and I would like to ask Ven. Sona is: how important is it for a general Buddhist practitioner to choose one vehicle/path (Theravada or Mahayana) over the other?

Nicholas:

Dear Nicholas:

My own introduction to Buddhist meditation began with a Tibetan monk teaching me breath meditation. Eventually I went on to Zen practise, where a Korean monk taught me breath meditation. Finally I went to a Theravada monk, who again taught me breath meditation. The schools have many basics in common: kindness, compassion, equanimity, virtue, and concentration. I began with the Mahayana but found after a number of years my real school was the Theravada.

Everyone must decide for themselves based on some selfeducation in the basics of each school. As you increase in meditative practise and in basic information you will continue to refine your decisions about the similarities and differences between the schools. But at first, whichever school you are in, be generous, kindly and peaceful and continue to test and inquire until clarity appears. What else can you do?

AJAHN SONA'S 10-DAY RETREAT

By Dilani Hippola

The ten days between July 2nd and July 11th were days of wondrous serenity for members of the Ottawa Buddhist Society who were able to escape from their hectic worldly pressures and attend Ajahn Sona's 10-day retreat. The retreat was held at McSkimming Outdoor Education Center in Cumberland, just east of Ottawa. The setting was a wonderful pioneer village situated in the heart of a tranquil forest, complete with countless squirrels, chipmunks, birds of all kinds, and the occasional groundhog. The place was so filled with nature's loving-kindness, that even the many mosquitoes and black flies didn't bother the retreatants too much. An ideal setting for meditation, and for learning and reflecting upon the Dhamma.

Here to give the gift of Dhamma, was the very wise and virtuous Ajahn Sona. From his monastery in Princeton, B.C, Ajahn Sona traveled to Edmonton where he led a 10-day retreat, and then arrived in Ottawa to do the same. His teachings reflected his years of experience in the monastic way of life, and were received with great gratitude by all the retreatants. Specific topics covered in the ten days of Dhamma talks included the four sublime abidings (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity), the five hindrances (greed, anger, sloth & torper, agitation, and doubt), the five faculties / powers (conviction, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom) and other key topics which were all a great accompaniment to the sitting and walking meditation practice. Ajahn Sona explained difficult concepts through his collection of hilarious personal stories, and the wise similes of the Buddha. As the retreatants laughed through his tales, a great level of insight was transferred.

The entire retreat was held in what Ajahn Sona called "golden silence". When the retreatants had a slight difficulty adhering to this silence on the first day, Ajahn patiently reminded them that while right speech was silver - they were going for the gold! Early morning wake-up bells at 5:00 am began the days for these meditative minds. After some morning chanting and meditation, it was time for a hearty breakfast generously made by the resident-(soon-to-be)-nutritionist Yavor (last name?). Breakfast and lunch were eaten with mindfulness in golden

silence. Ajahn gave one Dhamma talk in the morning and a question-and-answer period in the evening which were both looked forward to by the group. Each day Ajahn Sona was also available for interviews and many of the retreatants took this opportunity to discuss their questions with him one-on-one. Aside from all this silver speech, the day was filled with silent sitting and walking meditation where the meditators had the chance to look inwards and find peace within. The retreatants were able to live directly by the Eight Precepts in this environment, and found this lifestyle to be pleasantly peaceful and calming.

As the ten days eventually came to a close, the group was faced with the inevitable reality that they would have to once again return to the hectic society from which they came. On the last day, the golden silence was broken and everyone was free to speak to their heart's content. Ajahn Sona suggested ending the retreat with a sharing circle where everyone shared what they had learned and what they felt about the retreat. There was an overwhelming feeling of closeness between all the retreatants - a feeling of communion, support, and understanding - a bond created with not a word exchanged for ten whole days. It was a higher level of interaction - and one which the retreatants all seemed to enjoy and respect. After the sharing circle, the retreatants and Ajahn Sona were all treated to a wonderful lunch prepared by some kind Ottawa Buddhist Society members. A pleasant end to a pleasant ten days. And finally, after ten days of tranquility and insight, it was time to return back home. As each of the retreatants packed their things, there was a sense of sadness that they had to leave this serene setting, but also a sense of conviction and hope that they could bring the sense of peace of the forest with them and sustain it in their daily lives.

Many thanks are due to all those who helped so greatly with the retreat. Special thanks go to the lunch caterers, those who kindly gave dana for lunch, Yavor for his excellent porridge (perfected on the last day!), all the many hard-working volunteers, and especially Anoma and Amin for their impeccable organization of the retreat. But most of all, our sincere and deepest gratitude goes to Ajahn Sona for the greatest gift of Dhamma which he has given to both the retreatants and the Ottawa Buddhist Society as a whole. His wisdom, compassion, and living example are all precious gifts which he gives from a heart full of loving-kindness. May he

attain the bliss of Nibbana. May all beings be at ease.

10 Day Retreat with Ajahn Sona - a Personal Account

By Andrea Rowe

Andrea Rowe has been interested in and practising meditation for a number of years. She is currently completing an Honours Degree in Anthropology from Carleton University and works as a Dance Officer at the Canada Council for the Arts in Ottawa.

In early July, I took a meditation workshop, this one a Buddhist meditation retreat offered by the Ottawa Buddhist Society. There were about 12 of us who signed up for the full 10 days and we met on the Friday evening outside Ottawa at a bird wildlife sanctuary and teaching centre called the MacSkimming Farm. We all took the vow of Noble Silence on the first evening which lasted until the last day of the retreat (unfortunately, due to events in my life, I was unable to stay past the eighth day). I shared a log cabin with another woman; I had thought I might be afraid to stay there because it had no electricity and was quite isolated in the forest, but once I found it in the dark (!) I loved being there to sleep. At night, I lay in bed and listened to the wind blowing in the tall trees; breezes blew from the screened windows and cooled me after the heat of the day. Birds sang. Most of all, it gave me further time to be alone with myself, to find that I could continue to be content and reflective on my own.

Why did I go? Like most of us, my life is very full and very busy. In a day I do a hundred different things, talk to dozens of people, read articles on diverse subjects in newspapers, think of my past and my future in a thousand different ways and from a thousand angles, question my abilities, bury what hurts me. I try to live in the present but it is hard. I believe I am evolving and becoming a stronger and better person but sometimes I lose my way, lose sight of what I know to be important, what my intuition tells me to be right. I am looking for ways to increase my awareness of the moment, to do more for the people I love, to make a difference in small ways!

The retreat was led by Ajahn Sona, a monk from the Birken Forest Monastery in British Columbia. Forty-five years old, he had started

his adult life studying to be a musician at the University of Toronto. He had married early in his twenties, but by the age of 30 he had left his earlier conventional lifestyle far behind. He moved to northern British Columbia and lived as a hermit for several years, eating only the barest of essentials, and focusing on meditation. He trained under Bhante Gunaratana at Bhavana Center where he was first ordained as a monk, then he travelled in the Far East and then, returning to Canada, established the monastery in the west several years ago.

My good friend Garry, who lives in Kamloops, recommended this retreat to me "I think you'll find him interesting" he promised, and he was right. Ajahn Sona gave talks each morning for an hour on the writings of the Buddha. Each Evening he spent about two hours answering questions we had anonymously written on Slips of paper during the day. We also could schedule private meetings with him to talk about our reflections. Ajahn Sona's talks were both erudite and full of engaging, often very funny, stories to illustrate his points. His topics Ranged widely, from loving-kindness to the five hindrances, to the very practical matter of how to sit as comfortably as possible on meditation cushions. In fact he frequently veered off his selected topics to other matters entirely. At The end of an hour, he might say in a rather bemused way, "Well, I see I have not covered much of what I intended to, today" but he would seem rather pleased with this when he said it! He believes in spontaneity, in living the moment. And one of his favourite expressions is "Don't worry, everything is out of control!"

The routine of this retreat was very simple and not physically too challenging: we rose at 5:00 a.m. to the sound of a bell swinging through the air, and began meditation in the main Hall shortly thereafter. Aside from the first meditation which was an hour, no sitting lasted longer than 3/4 of an hour and each sitting was generally followed by a walking meditation of half an hour outside through the beautiful forest. There were breaks throughout the day for breakfast, lunch, and a relaxation period in the late afternoon-early evening. What I found most difficult, and indeed eventually gave up on, was the practice of not eating after 12:00 noon until the next day. The physical weakness and emotional turmoil this caused eventually became such a distraction for

me that I decided to snack in the evenings on the leftovers of the day. For me, this was a good decision. I can describe all the things around the actual meditation practice, but to go into details about what was happening to me spiritually throughout the week during the sittings and the walking meditation is much harder, and perhaps not really something that can be shared. Certainly I experienced no flashing of white light as one person reported -- and which Ajahn Sona explained can be a sign that one has moved to a deeper state of consciousness. For me, the experience was more like cleaning out a cupboard: having the time to really look and see what's in there, admonishing myself gently when I find things I've been holding onto for years, even though when I really examine them they no longer have relevance or value. These I tried to let go of. On the plus side, I was filled with delight at some of what I discovered about myself, and I experienced some rather thrilling moments of joy, peace and utter fulfillment.

Although Ajahn Sona was the "official" leader of this retreat, everyone was giving lessons in their own way. A Sikh healer once told me that a teacher's expertise really only allows them to be in a position where they can actually go beyond their subject to teach what is really important, and that is often inadvertent, and by example. If that is true, and I believe it to be, I learned what loving-kindness really is from the organizers of the retreat. They were so lovely to me! I was told by one, "We are family now!" when I had to leave early; the other organisers smile and gentle ways are something I remember with fondness.

I know I am not a changed person by what I experienced and I would not Recommend this retreat for someone in crisis, someone hoping to change her life or to make profound decisions that will have far-reaching effects. This is not "real life", this is almost the opposite, and dramatic actions ("I'll quit my job!") that seem possible there have a way of dissolving once one is back home. I see myself coming perhaps another inch along my journey in life. What I want to practice is how to listen more to that soft, inner voice, my intuition, my Buddha, that knows what is best for me. I know that going on this retreat and letting its teachings (in all its manifestations) wash over me helped me in this way and was a very good thing for to do. I highly recommend it!

OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE FOREST
By Dilani Hippola

Have you ever watched a boiling pot of water and contemplated feelings of anger and aversion as the water came to a boil? Or witnessed some little children making a sandcastle on the beach and contemplated the abandonment of desire? Such comparisons would seem disconnected to the ordinary person - but not to the Buddha. The Buddha saw Dhamma in all aspects of life so clearly and precisely that every mindful moment held a lesson. With simplicity and wisdom, he translated this mindfulness to us through his profound use of similes throughout the Pali Canon. A simile is a comparison of two seemingly unlike things. The Buddha used these simple comparisons to explain countless difficult aspects of Dhamma.

Now imagine a bowl of water heated on a fire, boiling and bubbling over, such that a man with good eyesight examining the reflection of his face in it would not be able to know or see his face as it actually is. In the same way, when one remains with awareness possessed by ill-will, overcome with ill-will, and neither knows nor sees the escape, as it is actually present, from ill-will once it has arisen, then one neither knows nor sees what is for one's own benefit, or for the benefit of others, or for the benefit of both.¹

(SN. XLVI.55)

Just as when boys or girls are playing with little sand castles: as long as they are not free from passion, desire, love, thirst, obsession, and craving for those little sand castles, that's how long they have fun with those sand castles, enjoy them, treasure them, feel possessive of them. But when they become free from passion, desire, love, thirst, obsession, and craving for those little sandcastles, then they smash them, scatter them, demolish them with their hands or feet and make them unfit for play.²

(SN. XXIII.2)

These are just a couple of the profound similes which the Buddha used in his Dhamma discourses, and are well worth reflecting upon to gain right understanding.

On a recent ten-day retreat with Ajahn Sona, I was introduced to some of these similes of the Buddha. Ajahn's reference to these similes made some difficult concepts profoundly clear in understanding, and encouraged me to see Dhamma in all that was occurring around me. As the retreat came to a close, I had developed a resolve to study and analyze the Buddha's similes in greater detail through study of the scriptures. Little did I know that I was to experience the most meaningful simile of my life that very day.

It was the last day of the retreat, and we had just finished listening to Ajahn Sona's last dhamma talk of the ten days. We had decided to do some short walking meditation and then end off with a sharing circle of our thoughts and feelings about the retreat. Since we were scheduled to have lunch at a certain time, we shortened the usual forty-five minute walking meditation time to fifteen minutes and were then to return to the meditation hall. I went outside and began my walking, and then decided that since this was the last day I would be here, I wanted to have one last walk through the wondrous forest and "say goodbye" so to say. This was when my lesson began.

I began walking through the forest paths having the intention that I would make my way through the forest in one big loop, coming back on the other side of the meditation hall. I had the impression that the forest was only as big as what I had seen, and so I believed that whatever path I took, I could not go very far before returning to the simple loop. As I walked, I came to a point where the simple loop came to a crossroads. I decided that I would stray from the loop and go down another path. I wanted to experience the whole forest, and not just what I had seen. After walking down that path for a while, I came to the end of what I knew. In front of me was a bridge. I had a choice of either following that bridge into the unknown, or turning back and going the way I had come - back through familiar territory. I made the decision that I would follow the bridge into the unknown, all the while believing that the forest was not much bigger than what I had seen of it. I thought following this path would undoubtedly lead me back to the retreat group in a short time.

So I kept on walking with this perception of the forest in mind.

As I kept walking, I came to points where I had to choose which way to go. I tried to rely on my intuition to show me the correct path, and then followed it. There were times when I felt familiarity with the path and thought that I was coming very close to returning back to the group. I was positive that I had made it, not much further to go. Then I would have a sudden, somewhat uncomfortable realization that I was nowhere near "home" (the group) and that this had just been a deluded sense of the reality I was in. But I just kept going, choosing different paths, having this tremendous faith in the interconnectedness of the forest. The forest was in fact all interconnected. Like a maze, its paths intertwined. But my faith was not based on knowledge or wisdom of this fact. My faith was based on gullibility, and a deluded perception. This perception was soon to be challenged.

Time was quickly passing by, and I slowly began to open my eyes to the seriousness of the situation I was in. As I kept walking, I experienced a whole range of emotions. Doubt, worry, faith, determination, and a multitude of hindrances and motivators came to me as I walked through the forest. There were times when I felt my perception of the forest was wrong, and that the best thing for me to do would be to turn around and return the way I had come. But a strong sense of determination and faith simply wouldn't allow me to turn back. Eventually, I came to a point where I had no choice in the matter. The past steps which had brought me to that point were so complicated that my only choice was to keep going forward. I tried to listen to the very faint ringing of the bells which were calling the meditators back to the hall, but I could hardly hear them and could not sense where they were coming from. Now, I knew I was lost and had to focus all my energy on getting out. So I kept on.

Throughout this whole time I had remained very calm, but was walking at a somewhat brisk pace through the forest - not stopping to enjoy the scenery of my lost voyage. But soon, I arrived at a clearing in the forest where the entire environment seemed to change. Here I stopped for a moment to take in all that was around me. Unlike the dark and misty forest, the sun shone straight to the Earth with no shade from the trees. The grass was a different color and grew longer; even the flowers were different in nature. As I looked around, I could see down to the village of Cumberland complete

with all the houses, roads, and telephone wires that I had not seen for ten days. This was the first time I had stopped on this journey, and for a moment I just had to behold the splendor of this sight. From where I was positioned, the landscape was truly beautiful. But as beautiful as it was, I knew I had to get back to the group.

As I began to make my way through the clearing, I saw a sign saying, "Forest Edge." I realized that I must have wandered right out to the very edge of the great maze I was in. Now, I had a greater appreciation of the magnitude of this vast forest. I kept remembering to remain calm and keep focusing on the breath. But as I kept glancing at my watch, the time seemed to be passing at an unbelievably fast rate. I kept thinking how I was going to miss the sharing circle, and how the group might have been worrying as to my whereabouts. But then I realized I could not preoccupy my thoughts with such things. The only way I could ease their worry was to return, and missing the sharing circle would not be the end of the world. Worrying only led to anxiety and confusion. I decided the only way I was going to get out of there was to be in the present moment. When I did this, my anxiety lessened, and I could focus on the important task of getting back to the group. When I tried to assess my whereabouts, I came to the realization that I needed a map. I marveled at how much simpler getting through this maze would be if I could look down from the clouds, if I was out of and above this maze. But this was not an option, and I had not brought a map.

I continued on through the forest on its many winding paths, some seeming familiar, some I was unsure of, all the while remembering to stay calm and remembering that wonderful calming agent - the breath. I went through every possible emotion while on this journey through the forest - and finally ended up with a sense of equanimity towards the fact that I was undoubtedly lost in the forest. I realized that unless I came to accept that I was lost (and not just on a very long walk!), that this had occurred through my own delusion, and also that there was a way out and that I needed to focus all my efforts on finding my way back to the group, I would be lost forever.

I sensed a change in my perception at this point. I realized that although the forest was in fact intertwined as I had believed, I had largely underestimated the greatness and magnitude of it. Although I had enjoyed the experience, and had opened my eyes to a wide

variety of different views of the forest and different scenery that were all breathtaking, it had taken me a lot longer to get back to the group. And no matter how pleasing the scenic forest was, all that really mattered in the end was that I found my way back to the group. I realized that there were in fact many paths all eventually leading home. But there was no need to see what extremities these paths could take me to, or what kind of scenery they provided. There was one right path - the simple loop that I had known from the beginning. This loop took me through the forest and led me home.

After reaching familiar territory again, I realized that I had just experienced the most remarkable simile of life and of the samsaric journey. I had begun my journey with delusion, and unreasoned faith. As I walked through the intertwined paths, the five hindrances and five faculties all manifested themselves in different ways. The sound of faint bells ringing in the distance was the feeling of confusion or lack of clarity that we sometimes encounter when we have strayed from the simple path and are “in the thick of it”. The clearing was characteristic of society and worldly pleasures, or perhaps being born into the human realm. Reaching the forest edge was symbolic of the extremities we can sometimes reach in our journeys. Making the realizations that I was lost and that the cause of this fact was my own delusion and ignorance was symbolic of the first two of the four noble truths. And having faith that there was a way out, and that I could find the group once again somewhat mirrored the last two noble truths.

Although I had known the simple loop from the beginning, I now had the wisdom to see that I should have just stuck to this simple path which I knew would have led me home. In our samsaric journeys, doubt leads us to want to see the whole forest. Once we see the extremities we will inevitably see our delusion, and this will lead us to follow the simple loop “back home” to liberation. This is the path the Buddha followed. But lucky for us, once he reached Nibbana and transcended this forest, he gave us a map. He knew we must get through the forest ourselves, but he had the compassion to teach us the Eightfold Path in order to guide us through. Now it is up to us to accept this path as the right path, the only worthwhile path, the path to Nibbana.

When I finally made my way back to the meditation hall, the sharing circle was almost over. As it came to my turn to speak, I apologized for worrying everyone and missing

this very important sharing event. As I told them of my experience in the forest and my new understanding of the Right Path, the whole group (including myself) broke out into laughter. For the rest of the day, the others would ask me if I needed a compass wherever I was going - an indication that I wasn't going to live this down for some time. Amusing as it was, every word of this experience was truthful, and very insightful for me. Reading this, some of you might wonder as to whether all these things actually happened or whether I have gotten lost in some dreamy metaphor. I assure you that everything recounted here was what I experienced first-hand, and there are countless more insightful details which I could include.

I believe very strongly that this experience in the forest was neither rare nor unique. Every mindful moment of each of our lives has Dhamma in it. Throughout our own individual journeys through the forest of samsara, we must all attempt to open our eyes and experience these awe-inspiring lessons for ourselves. Whether we are in a serene forest or on a bustling city street, Dhamma is present all around us. By seeing the wise teachings of the Buddha in every moment of our lives, we are following the right path, the only worthwhile path, the path leading us out of the forest into the bliss of Nibbana.

Just as if He were to place upright what had been overturned, were to reveal what was hidden, were to show the way to one who was lost, or were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way the Blessed One has - through many lines of reasoning - made the Dhamma clear.”³
(SN. XLII.8)

May all beings find their way home.

All excerpts were taken from the Samyutta Nikaya - The Grouped Discourses

¹ Bojjhanga-Samyutta - SN. XLVI.55, Ahara Sutta - Food (for the factors of Awakening)

² Radha-Samyutta - SN. XXIII.2, Satta Sutta - A Being

³ Gamani-Samyutta - SN. XLII.8, Sankha Sutta - The Conch Trumpet

The moon in the water,
Broken and broken again,
Still it is there.
From Bhante Kovida of Toronto.

Anguttara Nikaya VI.55

Sona Sutta

For free distribution only, as a gift of Dhamma
Context of this sutta.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rajagaha, on Vulture Peak Mountain. And on that occasion Ven. Sona was staying near Rajagaha in the Cool Wood. Then, as Ven. Sona was meditating in seclusion [after doing walking meditation until the skin of his soles was split & bleeding], this train of thought arose in his awareness: "Of the Blessed One's disciples who have aroused their persistence, I am one, but my mind is not released from the effluents through lack of clinging/sustenance. Now, my family has enough wealth that it would be possible to enjoy wealth & make merit. What if I were to disavow the training, return to the lower life, enjoy wealth, & make merit?"

Then the Blessed One, as soon as he perceived with his awareness the train of thought in Ven. Sona's awareness -- as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm or bend his outstretched arm -- disappeared from Vulture Peak Mountain, appeared in the Cool Wood right in front of Ven. Sona, and sat down on a prepared seat. Ven. Sona, after bowing down to the Blessed One, sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Just now, as you were meditating in seclusion, didn't this train of thought appear to your awareness: 'Of the Blessed One's disciples who have aroused their persistence, I am one, but my mind is not released from the effluents...What if I were to disavow the training, return to the lower life, enjoy wealth, & make merit?'"

"Yes, lord."

"Now what do you think, Sona. Before, when you were a house-dweller, were you skilled at playing the vina?"

"Yes, lord."

"And what do you think: when the strings of your vina were too taut, was your vina in tune & playable?"

"No, lord."

"And what do you think: when the strings of your vina were too loose, was your vina in tune & playable?"

"No, lord."

"And what do you think: when the strings of your vina were neither too taut nor too loose, but

tuned (lit: 'established') to be right on pitch, was your vina in tune & playable?"

"Yes, lord."

"In the same way, Sona, over-aroused persistence leads to restlessness, overly slack persistence leads to laziness. Thus you should determine the right pitch for your persistence, attune ('penetrate,' 'ferret out') the pitch of the [five] faculties [to that], and there pick up your theme."

"Yes, lord," Ven. Sona answered the Blessed One. Then, having given this exhortation to Ven. Sona, the Blessed One -- as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm or bend his outstretched arm -- disappeared from the Cool Wood and appeared on Vulture Peak Mountain.

So after that, Ven. Sona determined the right pitch for his persistence, attuned the pitch of the [five] faculties [to that], and there picked up his theme. Dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And thus Ven. Sona became another one of the Arahants.

Then, on the attainment of arahantship, this thought occurred to Ven. Sona: "What if I were to go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, to declare gnosis in his presence?" So he then went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "When a monk is an arahant, his fermentations ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and is released through right gnosis, he is dedicated to six things: renunciation, seclusion, non-afflictiveness, the ending of craving, the ending of clinging/sustenance, & non-deludedness.

"Now it may occur to a certain venerable one to think, 'Perhaps it is entirely dependent on conviction that this venerable one is dedicated to renunciation,' but it should not be seen in that way. The monk whose fermentations are ended, having fulfilled [the holy life], does not see in himself anything further to do, or anything further to add to what he has done. It is because of the ending of passion, because of his

being free of passion, that he is dedicated to renunciation. It is because of the ending of aversion, because of his being free of aversion, that he is dedicated to renunciation. It is because of the ending of delusion, because of his being free of delusion, that he is dedicated to renunciation.

"Now it may occur to a certain venerable one to think, 'Perhaps it is because he desires gain, honor, & fame that this venerable one is dedicated to seclusion'...'Perhaps it is because he falls back on attachment to precepts & practices as being essential that he is dedicated to non-afflictiveness,' but it should not be seen in that way. The monk whose fermentations are ended, having fulfilled [the holy life], does not see in himself anything further to do, or anything further to add to what he has done. It is because of the ending of passion, because of his being free of passion, that he is dedicated to non-afflictiveness. It is because of the ending of aversion, because of his being free of aversion, that he is dedicated to non-afflictiveness. It is because of the ending of delusion, because of his being free of delusion, that he is dedicated to non-afflictiveness.

"It is because of the ending of passion, because of his being free of passion...because of the ending of aversion, because of his being free of aversion...because of the ending of delusion, because of his being free of delusion, that he is dedicated to the ending of craving...the ending of clinging/sustenance...non-deludedness.
"Even if powerful forms cognizable by the eye come into the visual range of a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, his mind is neither overpowered nor even engaged. Being still, having reached imperturbability, he focuses on their passing away. And even if powerful sounds...aromas...flavors...tactile sensations... Even if powerful ideas cognizable by the intellect come into the mental range of a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, his mind is neither overpowered nor even engaged. Being still, having reached imperturbability, he focuses on their passing away.

"Just as if there were a mountain of rock -- without cracks, without fissures, one solid mass -- and then from the east there were to come a powerful storm of wind & rain: the mountain would neither shiver nor quiver nor shake. And then from the west...the north...the south there were to come a powerful storm of wind & rain: the mountain would neither shiver nor quiver nor shake. In the same way, even if powerful forms cognizable by the eye come into the visual range of a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, his mind is neither overpowered nor even engaged. Being still, having reached imperturbability, he focuses on their passing away. And even if powerful sounds...aromas...flavors...tactile sensations... Even if powerful ideas cognizable by the intellect come into the mental range of a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, his mind is neither overpowered nor even engaged. Being still, having reached imperturbability, he focuses on their passing away."

When one's awareness is dedicated
to renunciation, seclusion,
non-afflictiveness, the ending of clinging,
the ending of craving, & non-deludedness,
seeing the arising of the sense media,
the mind is rightly released.
For that monk, rightly released,
his heart at peace,
there's nothing to be done,
nothing to add
to what's done.

As a single mass of rock isn't moved by the
wind,
even so all forms, flavors, sounds,
aromas, contacts,
ideas desirable & not,
have no effect on one who is Such.
The mind -- still, totally released --
focuses on their passing away.

Revised: 9 November 1998

<http://world.std.com/~metta/canon/anguttara/an6-55.html>

WHO IS TO SAY WHAT COULD BE ?

A poem inspired by a misty summer morning.
By Colleen Glass. July 99

There are small moments that make up the day
inconsequential as it may seem now
as we hurry from this place to that.

There come small moments
gathered into them is the helix and the handmaid.
They are who we are, up until that moment,
poised to respond, to wait, to become.

And yet, the small moment is formless
as its true nature is.
It may take a shape that we could not expect
or a confluence of interests and past events may
make
the outcome of any small moment - a foregone
conclusion.

Some are like that,
you knew before it came, what would be.
Some would say -
set in our ways we march out to meet the day.

There comes small moments,
intimate and surprisingly, straight-up.
Once, I saw one full-on
now I want to be in all of them,
for there are more.

It is as if you have managed to find a treasure
chest
and there,
on the edge - with the helix and the handmaid,
as you are about to open the lid,
you feel the mind is free - the heart open
and what will become of it all
is up to no one.

MY FIRST TIME AT A RETREAT: AN ENLIGHTENING EXPERIENCE

By: Sanjaya Mendis. Age: 14

As I reflect, even though I hate to admit it, I am grateful that my parents dragged me out to West Virginia. It was a great experience, spiritually and mentally. It was like to going to a full-service spa for my mind and for my stomach as well. One of the things Bhante G. said will always remain in my mind:

“Meditation is like the shocks of a vehicle,

It smoothens out the bumps on the road”

If I may re-phrase

*“Meditation is like the “shocks” of your mind,
It smoothens out the bumps on the road of life”*

The sun was bright and high up in the sky as my family and I left the outskirts of Ottawa around 7:30 a.m.; hopefully a sign of things to come. Our destination was West Virginia. We were going to the youth retreat at the Bhavana Society located in a densely forested part of West Virginia. My brother (Osh) and I were heading there not by our own free will but because our parents had pestered us to go - to add to my misery, there was no incentive offered for attendance either! By dusk our destination was still not met; no wonder, after the stops at the McDonalds's and factory outlets! So, we spent the night at a motel. The next morning, after getting a good nights rest, we were on the road again.

After about ten hours driving time in total, I found myself looking at a small, plain sign that read “Bhavana Society”. My stomach knotted in anticipation as I awaited the sight of the monastery. I expected a small run-down delapidated shack, but what I saw truly amazed me. The initial building was considerably large with about five little cabins (Kuttis) surrounding it. Later, I found out that there was actually seventeen Kutti's in all.

The centre was completely isolated. Something, I knew I needed; a break from my technology-filled life. My mind needed some calmness that I could not achieve in my house where t.v., computer, and music were priorities.

After meeting the monks and a few lay residents, my dad, brother and I drove up the short distance to the Men's dorm, where we would be staying while at the Monastery. Again, I was blown away. Inside the dorm, there were five separate rooms. Each of them comfortably spacious and each were furnished with a bunk bed, a lamp, a chest of drawers, a small clock and a fan that was built into the window. I wouldn't go as far as luxurious but the dorm was quite adequate.

After my little tour of the Monastery, I retired back to my room. Since we arrived on Thursday evening, I had a day to kill until the Youth Retreat started on Friday night.

Day 1: A Quiet, Restful Day and an Introduction to the Retreat

Then next morning I had to wake up by 6:15 a.m., that is if I wanted any break-fast. The next days were even worse! I managed to get up and walk half-asleep to the dining hall. After the monks went into the kitchen and got their food, we said a little gatha (chant) and then got our own food. There was a great selection ranging from cereal, to fresh fruit, and to yogourt. After a short break it was off to the meditation hall for chanting at 7:30 a.m. Next, I helped vacuum the huge hall. Beside the meditation hall there was a beautiful solarium where exotic and tropical plants were grown. It was a spectacular sight to view the rare plants and flowers that you hardly get to see in North America. Behind the solarium was a small garden where curvy squash and plump tomatoes were grown. For the rest of most of the day I read, slept, played some game-boy and listened to music. Except for a small break at 11:15 a.m. when a delicious lunch of rice and fixens were served along with a sweet apple crisp for dessert.

People (mainly Thai, a few Sri Lankan, and a few Westerners) started rolling in around 5:30 p.m. Orientation was at 7:00 p.m. During Orientation Drs. Pinit Piriya & Nee (the wonderful organizers of the retreat) basically told us what was going to occur. There were about 38 teens attending, which was a new record for the Bhavana Society. My brother (thirteen) and I were the youngest except for a kid who was twelve.

Following Orientation, Bhante Gunaratana gave a welcoming talk about the five precepts. We also did a little guided meditation. We returned to our rooms around 9:30 p.m. I took a quick shower and went to bed. To conserve water, everyone was allotted five minutes to take a shower, which to me, was no big deal.

On the retreat schedule which was posted, it read for the next day,

“5:30 a.m. Wake up with Happy Minds”

I couldn't believe it! I was going to have to wake up at 5:30, in the morning, which was bad enough but then, they had the tenacity to say, “Wake up with happy minds”!!! I knew, I sure wouldn't!

Day 2: The Real Work Starts

Well, the next morning, believe it or not, I actually got up. Of course, it wouldn't have been possible without the continuous pestering of my dad who to my good luck had volunteered to be the person who made sure everyone was up. At 6:00 a.m. we had a half-an-hour of guided meditation and then break-fast at 6:30 a.m. I had to wait about thirty minutes for my food, since I was in the last row. After break-fast we had a break until 8:00 p.m., upon where we were assigned different jobs. My bro and I were designated to the “Trail Maintenance” crew. We had to dig out huge rocks from a trail and then place them along the edge of that trail. It was real tiring but after we were done, I had a great feeling of satisfaction. This was followed by another 45 minute session of relaxing meditation and a lunch consisting of delicious spaghetti, savoury garlic bread, and fresh, garden salad. After lunch, we were handed back our gloves, hoes, shovels, rakes, and pick-axes and went back to work. After work, everyone went on a little trip. It was a ten-minute drive to the Washington National Forest for a nature hike, some more meditation in an open meadow, and a scrumptious cook-out. While meditating, an interesting thing happened, a guy was stung by a small insect. My brother commented to me how he had never been stung. Ironically, the very next morning while still lazily lying in bed, he screamed and jumped out - he was stung by a horse-fly!! After the hike we had a big cook-out. It was real tasty! There were juicy watermelon, salty chips, crunchy pickles, noodles, left-over spaghetti, tofu burgers and some sticky, yet mouth-watering fudge. Since the retreat was conducted in the Buddhist tradition of vegetarianism, almost everything is either tofu or soya. What is up with that?!? The tofu burgers were pretty good but far from the real thing, not matter how many pickles I added!

We came back to the Monastery around 7:00 p.m. I took a shower and rested until 8:00 p.m. upon where we had to go back to the Meditation Hall for some more meditation and a question and answer period with Bhante G. I found the question and answer period to be very insightful. I learned a lot, especially since Bhante G's answers are always complete with similes and also due to the fact that he always uses great emphasis! I noted while he was meditating, and when the lights were turned down he looked a lot like Yoda from Star Wars!

At around 9:40 p.m. all the questions had been answered with the care and precision they deserved. As soon as I got back to the dorm I went to sleep. It was easy after the exhaustive day I had.

Day 3: A Great Conclusion to an Even Greater Retreat

The next morning, the routine was basically the same as Saturday morning's. Although, it was even harder to wake up! Instead of work at 8:00 a.m. we were given a break - which I used to get some much needed sleep! At 9:30 a.m. there was some mediation and at 10:00 a.m. there was another fascinating Dhamma talk with Bhante G. This was followed by a well-prepared Thai lunch. Then right after, there was a follow-up discussion with Samenera Punna, Bhante Vimala, and Samenera Sudhamma. We were asked how we liked the retreat and what overall comments we had about it. Everyone got a fair and equal chance to speak. One girl was overcome with emotion when torn between her two religions - catholicism and buddhism- and broke down crying. One twenty year-old guy was actually amazed to see a nun. He said quote, "I've never seen a woman monk!" He had done his 'tour' as a buddhist monk in Thailand for a short period. One thing that almost everyone stated was that they had enjoyed the break from their hectic lives in our materialistic existence to the simple, peaceful and serene atmosphere we had experienced at the Monastery. That was it! Time flew as it usually does, and the retreat was over. My family didn't want to face the ten-hour drive that loomed, so we decided to stay another day and leave the next morning.

As I reflect, even though I hate to admit it, I am grateful that my parents dragged me out to West Virginia. It was a great experience, spiritually and mentally. It was like going to a full-service spa for my mind and for my stomach as well. One of the things Bhante G. said will always remain in my mind:

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If I may re-phrase
"Meditation is like the "shocks" of your mind,
It smoothens out the bumps on the road of life"

This is just one of many memories I now hold in my heart from West Virginia thanks

to my parents and all the monks and nuns residing at the Bhavana Society. I would recommend this kind of retreat to anyone. Whether it is just to give your mind a break, gain more knowledge on Buddhism or all of the above, this in my short-lived experiences is the **way to go**. A special heart-felt thanks to Bhante G. and Drs. Pirya & Nee Printit.

The Mustard Seed

By Arundathi Pussegoda . Age: 13yrs ; School: W.O. Mitchell E.S.

Interests: Swimming, Piano, Cross-Country Skiing

Kisa Gotami had a son who was very precious to her. One day, when she was working there was a quietness and Kisa Gotami went back in the house. When she entered her son wasn't breathing and she started weeping. With all the grief inside her she told her son "You cannot die...I won't allow it!" Kisa Gotami said this to convince herself that he wasn't dead.

She took her son and started to search for some medicine in the village. She gave her son to one of the villagers expecting them to find a cure for him. The villager explained to Kisa Gotami that her son was dead and that there wasn't any cure. She was not willing to accept the villagers response, therefore asked other villagers, but got the same answer. Finally, an old man felt sorry for her and told her that that the Buddha was staying outside the town and that he would be able to help her. She rushed to the Buddha and asked for his advice.

The Buddha told her to bring one mustard seed from a house where no one has ever died. Kisa Gotami went to several houses, but every house she went to has had a death sometime. Kisa Gotami realized that her son's death was not exceptional to any other death. She went back to the Buddha and told him that she had accepted her sons death.

Rather than make Kisa Gotami face the truth, the Buddha had given a task which allowed her to see it for herself.

The Moral of this story is: Death comes to everyone sooner or later and it is foolish to think that it should be different for any loved one as well.

Inquiry into Right Livelihood, Greed and Corporate Life

By Andre Vellino

Andre is a computer scientist working for a multinational telecommunications company. He has been promoting Buddhism in Ottawa by forming sitting groups, organising retreats, setting up possibly the first Buddhist website in North America, and a Buddhist newsgroup. He is the proud and devoted father of little Karuna.

For as long as I have been a Buddhist, I have wondered whether what I was doing, day in, day out, was "right livelihood". At times, I thought this was a simple question to answer: I wasn't trading in arms, dealing in drugs or alcohol or taking advantage of others by stealing from them. Indeed, being in the telecommunications field, it was easy for me to say that the work I was doing was "right livelihood" because I was working on ways to improve the communications channels between people. Furthermore, my company was the first large corporation to eliminate Freons from its manufacturing processes, thus paving the way for others to help reduce the size of the ozone hole in the atmosphere.

But I have recently discovered why my job and thousands like it are not as close to "right livelihood" as we would like to believe. Even if the work itself is good (and interesting too) and its product is good too (by and large) the harmfulness in a job can reside in the context in which it exists. The "context" in this instance is the corporation in which the job is held and the society of greed in which this corporation exists.

There are several aspects of corporations that can have harmful effects. The primary source of the harm is greed. Corporations that are publicly traded on the stock exchange are owned mostly by professional investors who depend on fear and greed to make a profit. The harm comes from the fact that value of the stock in a company depends on its expected profitability in the future compared with the expected profitability of other companies in the same industry. If the expectations for profit company A are less than the expectations of profit in another company B, stock traders (mutual fund managers, pension plan managers and even the individual stock-holders) will sell shares in A (thus lowering its value) and buy shares in B (thus increasing its value). What matters to the

traders isn't whether a company is profitable, or doing good work, or creating employment; what matters is whether it is more profitable or less profitable than a competing company.

Now, most publicly traded companies compensate senior management with options in stock (the right to purchase stock at a certain (low) price sometime in the future). Thus it is in the interest of managers (from the CEO on down) to see the price of their company's stock go up. Hence one thing that matters to them a lot is also what matters to professional stock-traders: how much more profitable their company is than the competition. This corporate goal has to be traded-off against the intrinsic value of the corporations' work, the employment it creates and even the profits that the company earns. It is not sufficient to do well or even to do very well; it becomes imperative to do better (from the point of view of profitability, or return on investment) than the competition.

Why is any of this of dubious moral value and how does this shed any light on the Dharma perspective for right livelihood? The dubious moral value of this situation in publicly traded corporations is the (often hidden) human cost to this increased competitiveness. This cost is often the loss of a job. In order to reduce costs for the company for which we work, individuals whose job is seen to be "unproductive" (e.g. researchers) are laid off. Those jobs are not critical to the near-term bottom line, and are expendable in the name of higher stock prices (a goal explicitly formulated by CEOs of many corporations).

Now, there are many situations in which layoffs are inevitable and even necessary. If there are no fish to catch, fisherman have to stop fishing. If no one wants to buy the coal you dig, there is no point digging it. But creating unemployment for the sake of greater relative profitability? That, I think is not ethical. The greed-driven behaviour of publicly traded corporations makes our participation in it--both as the employers of pension fund managers who invest in them and as employees who work in these corporations--questionable.

The other aspect of the corporate job, for those who have one, is the suffering caused by overwork. There are fewer jobs because corporations are getting larger and more efficient (corporate mergers, as everyone knows,

invariably cause layoffs). But usually, there is the same amount of work (if not more) to do in order to beat the competition. Thus more is demanded of fewer employees. Hence, corporate employees, especially those with a stake in the stock value of the corporation, voluntarily work overtime to get the job done. This increases stress in the work environment and in the home environment and hence increases overall suffering in society.

In short, the greed of stock traders and stock owners contribute to the suffering by both causing unemployment and increasing stress in the work-place. So, whilst your job might appear to be "right livelihood" (in the sense of not directly contributing to human suffering) if you are, like me, employed in a corporation where the suffering effects of greed can be felt at every level, there is some reason to be concerned about whether your job constitutes "right livelihood".

QUOTE FROM VEN. BUDDHADASA

The Supreme Buddhist Mantra

“They arise, establish, and then cease”:
this is the main mantra to use when “getting” rewards, status, praise, or any kind of happiness, so as not to indulge, forget ourselves, or be foolish.

“They arise, establish, and then cease”:
this is the main mantra to use when “losing” rewards, status, praise, or even wife and kids, so we aren’t weakened, confused, or distraught.

“They arise, establish, and then cease”:
this is the main mantra to use “at the end,” the best weapon for dealing with death, fully at peace having gone beyond Mara’s snares.

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

[translated by santikaro bhikkhu

*Evil is done by oneself
by oneself is one defiled.
Evil is left undone by oneself
by oneself is one cleansed.
Purity & impurity are one's own doing.
No one purifies another.
No other purifies one.*

From the Dhammapada.

Mind precedes its objects. They are mind-governed and mind-made. To speak or act with a defiled mind is to draw pain after oneself, like a wheel behind the feet of the animal drawing it.

Mind precedes its objects. They are mind-governed and mind-made. To speak or act with a peaceful mind, is to draw happiness after oneself, like an inseparable shadow.

I have been insulted! I have been hurt! I have been beaten! I have been robbed! Anger does not cease in those who harbour this sort of thought.

I have been insulted! I have been hurt! I have been beaten! I have been robbed! Anger ceases in those who do not harbour this sort of thought.

Occasions of hatred are certainly never settled by hatred. They are settled by freedom from hatred. This is the eternal law.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONE'S ACTIONS

From the A Handful of Leaves CD. (This CD is a copy of the materials on the Access to Insight website <http://world.std.com/~metta>. I highly recommend this website. Editor

"I am the owner of my actions (kamma), heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and have my actions as my arbitrator. Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir'...

"[This is a fact that] one should reflect on often, whether one is a woman or a man, lay or

ordained...

"Now, based on what line of reasoning should one often reflect...that 'I am the owner of my actions (kamma), heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and have my actions as my arbitrator. Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir'? There are beings who conduct themselves in a bad way in body...in speech...and in mind. But when they often reflect on that fact, that bad conduct in body, speech, and mind will either be entirely abandoned or grow weaker...

"A noble disciple considers this: 'I am not the only one who is owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and have my actions as my arbitrator; who -- whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir. To the extent that there are beings -- past and future, passing away and re- arising -- all beings are owner of their actions, heir to their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and live dependent on their actions.

Whatever they do, for good or for evil, to that will they fall heir.' When he/she often reflects on this, the [factors of the] path take birth. He/she sticks with that path, develops it, cultivates it. As he/she sticks with that path, develops it and cultivates it, the fetters are abandoned, the latent tendencies destroyed."

Praise and Blame

They blame you for being silent,
They blame you when you talk too much
And when you talk too little.
Whatever you do, they blame you.

The world always finds
A way to praise and a way to blame.
It always has and it always will.

Dhammapada

ASSOCIATION WITH THE WISE

by

Bhikkhu Bodhi

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The Mahamangala Sutta, the Great Discourse on Blessings, is one of the most popular Buddhist suttas, included in all the standard repertoires of Pali devotional chants. The sutta begins when a deity of stunning beauty, having descended to earth in the stillness of the night, approaches the Blessed One in the Jeta Grove and asks about the way to the highest blessings. In the very first stanza of his reply the Buddha states that the highest blessing comes from avoiding fools and associating with the wise (asevana ca balanam, panditanam ca sevana). Since the rest of the sutta goes on to sketch all the different aspects of human felicity, both mundane and spiritual, the assignment of association with the wise to the opening stanza serves to emphasize a key point: that progress along the path of the Dhamma hinges on making the right choices in our friendships.

Contrary to certain psychological theories, the human mind is not a hermetically sealed chamber enclosing a personality unalterably shaped by biology and infantile experience. Rather, throughout life it remains a highly malleable entity continually remolding itself in response to its social interactions. Far from coming to our personal relationships with a fixed and immutable character, our regular and repeated social contacts implicate us in a constant process of psychological osmosis that offers precious opportunities for growth and transformation. Like living cells engaged in a chemical dialogue with their colleagues, our minds transmit and receive a steady barrage of messages and suggestions that may work profound changes even at levels below the threshold of awareness.

Particularly critical to our spiritual progress is our selection of friends and companions, who can have the most decisive impact upon our personal destiny. It is because he perceived how susceptible our minds can be to the influence of our companions that the Buddha repeatedly stressed the value of good

friendship (kalyanamittata) in the spiritual life. The Buddha states that he sees no other thing that is so much responsible for the arising of unwholesome qualities in a person as bad friendship, nothing so helpful for the arising of wholesome qualities as good friendship (AN I.vii,10; I.viii,1). Again, he says that he sees no other external factor that leads to so much harm as bad friendship, and no other external factor that leads to so much benefit as good friendship (AN I.x,13,14). It is through the influence of a good friend that a disciple is led along the Noble Eightfold Path to release from all suffering (SN 45:2).

Good friendship, in Buddhism, means considerably more than associating with people that one finds amenable and who share one's interests. It means in effect seeking out wise companions to whom one can look for guidance and instruction. The task of the noble friend is not only to provide companionship in the treading of the way. The truly wise and compassionate friend is one who, with understanding and sympathy of heart, is ready to criticize and admonish, to point out one's faults, to exhort and encourage, perceiving that the final end of such friendship is growth in the Dhamma. The Buddha succinctly expresses the proper response of a disciple to such a good friend in a verse of the Dhammapada: "If one finds a person who points out one's faults and who reproves one, one should follow such a wise and sagacious counselor as one would a guide to hidden treasure" (Dhp. 76).

Association with the wise becomes so crucial to spiritual development because the example and advice of a noble-minded counselor is often the decisive factor that awakens and nurtures the unfolding of our own untapped spiritual potential. The uncultivated mind harbors a vast diversity of unrealized possibilities, ranging from the depths of selfishness, egotism and aggressivity to the heights of wisdom, self-sacrifice and compassion. The task confronting us, as followers of the Dhamma, is to keep the unwholesome tendencies in check and to foster the growth of the wholesome tendencies, the qualities that lead to awakening, to freedom and purification. However, our internal tendencies do not mature and decline in a vacuum. They are subject to the constant impact of the broader environment, and among the most powerful of these influences is the company we keep, the people we look upon as teachers, advisors and friends. Such people silently speak to the hidden potentials of our own being, potentials that will either unfold or wither under their influence.

In our pursuit of the Dhamma it therefore becomes essential for us to choose as our guides and companions those who represent, at least in part, the noble qualities we seek to internalize by the practice of the Dhamma. This is especially necessary in the early stages of our spiritual development, when our virtuous aspirations are still fresh and tender, vulnerable to being undermined by inward irresolution or by discouragement from acquaintances who do not share our ideals. In this early phase our mind resembles a chameleon, which alters its color according to its background. Just as this remarkable lizard turns green when in the grass and brown when on the ground, so we become fools when we associate with fools and sages when we associate with sages. Internal changes do not generally occur suddenly; but slowly, by increments so slight that we ourselves may not be aware of them, our characters undergo a metamorphosis that in the end may prove to be dramatically significant.

If we associate closely with those who are addicted to the pursuit of sense pleasures, power, riches and fame, we should not imagine that we will remain immune from those addictions: in time our own minds will gradually incline to these same ends. If we associate closely with those who, while not given up to moral recklessness, live their lives comfortably adjusted to mundane routines, we too will remain stuck in the ruts of the commonplace. If we aspire for the highest -- for the peaks of transcendent wisdom and liberation -- then we must enter into association with those who represent the highest. Even if we are not so fortunate as to find companions who have already scaled the heights, we can well count ourselves blessed if we cross paths with a few spiritual friends who share our ideals and who make earnest efforts to nurture the noble qualities of the Dhamma in their hearts.

When we raise the question how to recognize good friends, how to distinguish good advisors from bad advisors, the Buddha offers us crystal-clear advice. In the Shorter Discourse on a Full-Moon Night (MN 110) he explains the difference between the companionship of the bad person and the companionship of the good person. The bad person chooses as friends and companions those who are without faith, whose conduct is marked by an absence of shame and moral dread, who have no knowledge of spiritual teachings, who are lazy and unmindful, and who are devoid of wisdom. As a consequence of choosing such bad friends as his advisors, the bad person plans and acts for his own harm, for the harm of others, and the harm of both, and he meets with sorrow and misery.

In contrast, the Buddha continues, the good person chooses as friends and companions those who have faith, who exhibit a sense of shame and moral dread, who are learned in the Dhamma, energetic in cultivation of the mind, mindful, and possessed of wisdom. Resorting to such good friends, looking to them as mentors and guides, the good person pursues these same qualities as his own ideals and absorbs them into his character. Thus, while drawing ever closer to deliverance himself, he becomes in turn a beacon light for others. Such a one is able to offer those who still wander in the dark an inspiring model to emulate, and a wise friend to turn to for guidance and advice.

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The Four Noble Truths and Craving

This article by a friend of the OBS is based on a talk by Ajahn Viradhammo.

The four Noble Truths provide a good structure to facilitate contemplation of life's experience and practise insight meditation. Through repetition and memorizing, these noble truths become an echo in the mind. It is like reading a book or watching television so that it has an effect on the mind. Life's experience as seen through the Dhamma is analogous to medical diagnosis, according to which there is sickness, the cause and the cure or medicine. Sickness is the diagnosis that there is suffering or discontent. We need to first find its cause to come up with a cure.

The first Noble Truth deals with suffering. Suffering arises due to ignorance. Thus, the Noble Truth of suffering is important because it leads us to ponder suffering and discontent. The second Noble Truth states that suffering has a beginning or cause. It is due to our attachment to craving. The third Noble Truth shows that suffering has an end. Its cessation is Nibbana. The fourth Noble Truth shows the path to the end of suffering. This is the Eightfold path or the yearning for the truth. These four Noble Truths are very useful because they make us be aware of suffering and take responsibility for it. They are noble only if we contemplate on suffering or be aware of it as opposed to a

situation where we are inundated with suffering which crushes us and is very demeaning.

As mentioned before, the second Noble Truth deals with craving or desire. Desire has a very broad connotation. In a technical sense, craving or *tanha* in Buddhism has three types- craving to become or have things we like, craving to annihilate or get rid of things which are ugly or undesirable, and craving for sensual experience. The key message of Buddhism is to emphasize the limitations of sensory craving. It is limited because it is tenuous or impermanent. Craving for sensory pleasures could take many forms- good food, good music, good friendships, beauty, etc. For example, we tend to appreciate good music. But if we hear it too often, it becomes boring. The same is true of all other sensory experiences. Thus, if one understands that these experiences have a limitation, then one is able to appreciate the experience and not have an unrealistic expectation.

Note that desire in itself is not necessarily bad or evil. Inspiration, for example, is good whereas depression is bad. These refer to two states of mind. If we know their causes and limits, then we can appreciate inspiration and be patient with depression. We need to understand that these conditions arise and go. Suffering occurs when we develop an attachment to what is good (inspiration in this example) and crave to get rid of what is bad (depression). The more we cling on to inspiration, the more depressed we become, until it dawns on us that there is uncertainty attached to inspiration. When we realize this, we no longer put so much value on inspiration because we know that if we grab it, we are going to be more depressed. Thus once we understand the Dhamma perspective, we recognize that there is peacefulness between these two polarities-*ie.*, inspiration and depression- and that they are not so extreme as we originally thought. The more you contemplate on the uncertainty of desire, the more you become aware of the danger of craving.

Anxiety is another example of sensory experience. If we experience anxiety, we get a craving to annihilate or get rid of it. If we blame anxiety or try to avoid it, then there is no peace and it will not work. The same is also true of celibacy, which Buddhist monks are required to practise. Celibacy is one way of understanding sexuality. One cannot deny its existence or repress it. Instead, what you should do is to be aware of that energy but not follow through it.

Buddhism teaches sensory restraint, not sensory repression.

Our minds are conditioned by sensory experiences, whereas Buddhism talks about the unconditioned. Unfortunately, we cannot understand the unconditioned because our attention is always on the conditioned. The unconditioned cannot be sight, sound, body, thoughts or emotions because they are constantly changing. Craving is only looking for the conditioned. To let go of craving or uncondition the mind, we need to develop mindfulness or awareness. This approach based on inward looking leads to less and less reaction to emotions and sensory experiences, thereby making them less of a problem. The body becomes relaxed, the mind is still, and in this kind of silence, your mind becomes more profound. We need to look at craving, bear witness to it, be patient with its cessation, and see what happens.

The Concept of Dukkha
By Venerable Dhammasami

The Venerable Dhammasami was born in Shan State, Burma where he was ordained as a Buddhist monk. He spent six years in Sri Lanka for his post graduate studies before coming to London nearly two years ago. He speaks several languages fluently.

To understand the concept of Dukkha is very important if you want to understand the central teachings of Buddhism. The word Dukkha is not only keyword to the Four Noble Truths but to the other important teachings of the Buddha as well i.e.

The Three Characteristics of the World (Ti-lakkana) which is the Buddhist view of the this world and The Philosophy of Dependent Origination (Paticca-samuppada) which is the Buddhist understanding of how things work and relate to one another for their very existence.

So not understanding Dukkha in its true sense means not understanding Buddhism itself. As a result, you could be cherishing a pessimistic attitude, not just towards Buddhism but probably towards your own life as well.

Dukkha

Many translations of the word Dukkha into English have now been around for almost a century and a half since Buddhism was introduced to Europe. Dukkha

has been translated into English as suffering, illness and unsatisfactoriness. I would like to say that none of these retains the true meaning of Dukkha but instead the word Dukkha covers all these meanings and more. Actually, Dukkha embraces the whole of existence, whether sentient or non-sentient, animate or inanimate; happiness, suffering, like, or dislike, a pleasant or unpleasant condition or a neutral one, all come under Dukkha. Each of these is classified as Dukkha not necessarily because it is a kind of suffering as it is understood but simply because it is changing constantly, all the time, at any moment. All those things, happy or unhappy, they come and go, begin and end. The whole process of this world just operates in this way. For this very reason, they are Dukkha. The Buddha taught us in His First sermon in a very simple way: whatever is impermanent or changing, all that is Dukkha. (Yad aniccam tam Dukkham). Before he said so he observed the whole world and found nothing but a process of change. So changing means the world. The very characteristic of our existence that remains there all the time is but change whether for better or for worse.

We fall ill and we suffer. That is suffering and that suffering is Dukkha. It comes and goes. We enjoy good fortune and that fortune is not everlasting but will one day go. Human beings are born and will definitely die. That is Dukkha.

We get into a bus and sometimes we have to sit next to some one who appears to us very unpleasant. That is Dukkha. If you react to the situation by thinking, *Today I am very unlucky to be meeting such people, I am stupid to be here on this bus*, then you are creating Dukkha. We meet someone somewhere in our life and at a certain point, we each have to go our own way. So we feel sad. That is Dukkha. If you do not try to experience the meeting or the departing mindfully, as it is, but reacting - again, you are creating Dukkha out of it. We want a Mercedes Benz car and we get it. We are happy but now people say a BMW, or a Rolls Royce is better, more luxurious. We are no longer content with our Mercedes Benz. This is Dukkha. We feel frustrated at work. This is Dukkha. We want a word of thanks from someone, from our boss, from our neighbours but we are criticised instead. Therefore, this is Dukkha. To get it is all right. An appreciation is good. But if that makes us get caught up in that sort of esteem then we cling to it. We keep expecting to it more and more. This is Dukkha.

We want our child to behave in a certain way but it turns out just the opposite. So we feel disappointed. Disappointment is again Dukkha.

All these bear the nature of arising and falling away. They come and go.

In this world, we feel anxious, despairing, frustrated, irritated, upset, disappointed, discomfort, anguish, painful and disgusted. Therefore, these are Dukkha in their nature, not because the Buddha said they are Dukkha .

Sometimes we have a success and feel very satisfied with our own performance. However, this satisfaction itself is again Dukkha , simply because it does not stay forever. In a higher stage of meditation practice, you do not feel any mental annoyance at all. It is very calm and peaceful. It is called Sukha - happiness. Again, this happiness is Dukkha, not because it causes unhappiness or suffering at that moment but because it does not stay forever. It changes. It starts and finishes.

So it is Dukkha . You see Dukkha does not cover only the negative side of life but the positive one as well.

Actually Dukkha , I emphasise again, means the world. I just cannot see anything which is not Dukkha . Alternatively, to put it in a very simple way, all we experience is Dukkha - whether it is through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body or mind. To Buddhist analysis the world means only what we experience in our daily life through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. We experience the so-called world through these six sense doors. It is all Dukkha because of its inability to be satisfactory.

What to do then? Dukkha ! Suffering! Oh no, I do not want that, nobody wants to hear it, it attracts no one to listen to it. We want to end Dukkha , which appears mostly in a painful manner in this world. Can we just ignore or run away to get rid of it? It will not work. The human habit is to ignore it because they do not want it. With the desire to end Dukkha , you may form a serious idea of getting away from it. The idea itself is all right. Nevertheless, once you are caught in that idea, then that clinging again becomes Dukkha . Without understanding, what we tend to do is to cling to that idea.

So what to do?

There are two things we can do; first is to recognise that there is Dukkha and then to try to understand the nature of Dukkha . It means to learn about it as it is, and try to experience it the way it is without reacting in a habitual way, without judging its value.

The Lord Buddha said there is Dukkha instead of saying I am suffering or you are suffering. Notice this. Dukkha is there, not personal, it is common to Asians and Europeans, to Burmese, Sri Lankan, British, American and others. Dukkha is experienced in the same way by a homeless person and by Queen Elizabeth. Being with someone you do not really like is felt in just the same way by anybody whether it is to Princess Diana or a poor woman. Separation is painfully experienced by anybody ... be it the first lady of Peru or a wife of an Unknown Soldier.

Death brings painful experience to any one related to it. Mr. Onassis, the then richest man in the world found no relief over the death of his son. This kind of painful experience spares no one, rich or poor. You do not want to become old; neither do I. But this experience is just there as a fact.

The human experience is there. And Dukkha is there. It is the common bond that we all share.

What we have to do in this stage is, may I repeat again, to recognise that there is Dukkha. Dukkha is there but it needs recognition. It requires an acknowledgment. This is a starting point. From this, we can go on. The Lord Buddha spoke in a very clear and precise way. Dukkha must be understood, it must be penetrated (parinnyeya).

To understand it we must first be aware of the facts on which our daily life is based. This awareness is called mindfulness or Sati. With mindfulness, your mind will become contemplative, receptive, and not impulsive, not rejecting. Then investigate the real nature of that fact. This is called investigation of nature = Dhamma vicaya. Both form factors of enlightenment (Bojjhanga).

The remedy in Buddhism is the Noble Eightfold Path. Each of us has to walk on the Path on our own to get to our destination.(Paccattam veditabbo = the truth is understood individually, one of the six characteristics of the Buddha's teaching.)

To summarise my talk, the Lord Buddha said, "Look at the world as a pleasure, then as a danger and then there is liberation from that danger."(Assada , adinava , and nissarana). With understanding of Dukkha, compassion starts growing in our heart. Suffering is the object of compassion.

CLINGING AND RENUNCIATION

By Dr. Mary Jo Meadows

Dr. Mary Jo Meadow is a trained teacher of Vipassana meditation who has studied with Joseph Goldstein at the Insight Meditation Society, Barre, Massachusetts, and with Sayadaw U Pandita of Burma. She has meditated for 35 years in the Christian, Hindu yogic and Theravadan Buddhist tradition, and has spent three or more months a year in intensive Vipassana practice for the past ten years. She is vowed to the precepts of the nuns in the Theravadan Buddhist tradition, as well as being a lay associate of the Discalced Carmelites, a Roman Catholic contemplative order.

Dr. Meadow is a licensed clinical psychologist and a recently retired professor of psychology and religious studies at University of Mankato Minnesota. Past president of the American Psychological Association's divisions on the Psychology of Religion, and Humanistic Psychology, she is the author of several books including: Purifying the Heart: Buddhist Insight Meditation for Christians; and Gentling the Heart: Buddhist Loving-Kindness Practice for Christians. These works outline meditation instructions for vipassana and metta meditation respectively. Through a Glass Darkly is a further scholarly work outlining her view of the Psychology of faith.

For retreats in Canada with Mary Jo, contact Kate Partridge of the London Vipassana meditation Group. See listing at the end of the newsletter.

Mary Jo Meadow
Resources for Ecumenical Spirituality

The Buddha knew the tendencies of the human heart. When he decided in young adulthood to pursue the spiritual life, he asked himself, "Why, being myself subject to birth, aging, ailment, death, sorrow, and defilement, do I seek after what is also subject to these things?" (M.26) The suffering in our minds and hearts leads us to grasp at things that do not ultimately satisfy us. The Buddha found a better solution. His teachings list the major objects to which we cling, creating even more suffering for ourselves.

Clinging Sense Desires

The Buddha's first category of clinging is sense desires. He said we cling to these out of fear or greed. We think "I need this" or "I must have this." We feel empty, so we eat or drink too much, or distract ourselves with some other momentary pleasure. If we deeply fear being without such distractions, we may even lie, cheat, or steal to get them. Clinging to such things, the Buddha said, is like clutching a red-hot iron ball. We know they are hurting us, we know they bring pain rather than real joy, yet we stupidly refuse to let go.

Opinions The Buddha taught that clinging to opinions is a very serious mistake. Since many people consider clinging to religious opinions appropriate or even virtuous, hearing the Buddha say to let go of all opinions jars us a bit. Let us examine this more closely.

We can easily see the misery clinging to opinions causes ourselves and others. Religious fundamentalism, insisting that its own religious positions are superior to others, has made life unsafe for millions of people around the globe across history. We humans are quite prone to consider our own opinions the best simply because they are ours. We usually can more easily see this in traditions other than our own. Thich Nhat Hanh has reminded us that all systems of thought are only guiding means and not absolute truth. We should not be bound to our present views as if they were a changeless, absolute truth. We must stay ready to learn throughout our entire. Clinging to opinions closes off this openness.

Heavenly rewards A third clinging the Buddha discussed is wanting the rewards of a blissful afterlife. Buddhist cosmology describes many realms of existence, including delightful heaven realms of highly refined sense pleasures with unending delight. Buddhists define even higher heavens, beyond the senses, with extremely blissful states of mind. These all fall short of our true goal, of final, ultimate joy. Over and again, the Buddha explained that anything other than nibbana is a passing satisfaction that will not bring lasting happiness.

Rites and rituals

Another big trap, according to the Buddha, is clinging to rites and rituals. Many people believe that simply going through the motions of certain religious rituals guarantees salvation. The Buddha vigorously attacked this idea, pointing out that magic doesn't work, that

spiritual life involves the hard work of purifying conduct, mind, and heart.

Self-Sense

A final and most important clinging in Buddhist thought is clinging to self, to the idea of oneself as a separate entity or “thing.” Many people fear that accepting this teaching of the Buddha’s will make them “disappear” in some way or destroy their ability to function.

To stop clinging to self does not mean we should abandon ego strength, the capacity to function with psychological effectiveness. It does not mean we should not have good self-esteem. Buddhist teachings emphasize the need for proper self-love. There is enormous egoism in guilt, self-blame, feelings of inferiority or superiority, depression, scrupulosity; all these keep attention excessively focused on ourselves. When we are truly comfortable with ourselves, we transcend the excessive concern about personal functioning in which many of us are trapped.

Renunciation

Renunciation is the first of the traditionally-defined right aspirations in Buddhist thought. It is not, as many people suppose, suppression or heavy-handed self-control. It is a willing letting-go. Renunciation is great wisdom, for ultimately we must relinquish absolutely all objects of clinging for the purity of heart that can “touch” nibbana.

Types of renunciation Buddhist tradition defines five kinds of renunciation. First is renouncing bad conduct, behavior that causes suffering for ourselves or others. Everyone must renounce such immoral states. Another major renunciation, to which not everyone is suited, is ordination as a monk or nun, renouncing householder life.

We might not think of deep states of concentration as renunciation, but the Buddhist tradition does. These deep states, called jhana or absorption, suppress certain impurities of mind, effecting their renunciation. In deep concentration, we cannot dwell on mentally impure objects or be gripped by unwholesome states of mind.

When genuine insight comes in our meditation practice, we achieve another renunciation. Psychological insights make us renounce

understandings we had held about ourselves, dispel our illusions and make us see ourselves clearly. Spiritual insight makes us give up notions of permanence, satisfaction with earthly things, and separate selfhood. We see all too clearly that they are fictions.

The final Buddhist renunciation is nibbana, the Ultimate Reality. Touching nibbana in this life, dying into nibbana when consciousness is sufficiently pure, requires renouncing everything cosmic. Reflections inclining to renunciation The Buddhist tradition offers several reflections that incline us to renunciation, that make us want to give up clinging. These are the fact of impermanence, the importance of using our lives wisely, the pain and futility of craving, and the happiness of renunciation and simplicity. Although intellectually we know that all things pass and that every good thing we enjoy in life will eventually end, we often do not live as if we truly understand it. Simply doing insight practice makes impermanence apparent to us in unforgettable ways. Insight practice can also arouse spiritual urgency, the realization that we have spiritual work to do and need to be about doing it. We also see that satisfying cravings puts us to a lot of trouble. And gratifying cravings does not really take care of them, for either they return or another craving soon follows. Expecting that “scratching these itches” will bring any lasting relief or satisfaction is foolish. The happiness of letting go of objects of clinging, of what we felt we absolutely had to have, is great. Truly, it lays down a great burden.

TAKING REFUGE

By Myoshin Kelley

Myoshin Kelley is a Canadian who was trained as a teacher at IMS. She's been practicing meditation for over 20 years and has done intensive practice in Burma. She is married to the executive director of IMS and so has been living there for the past five years.

It is traditional at the beginnings of retreats take the refuges in order to help clarify our intention in being here and to help strengthen our motivation to practice. It also helps us to remember that we are not alone in our practice. There have been many people who have walked this path before us and many others who share this path with us now. In taking the refuges it is a way of reminding ourselves of the support we have from fellow travelers It is also helpful

when we take the refuges to inquire into our own hearts and minds as to what they mean to us, letting ourselves be honest. Some of you who have sat a lot of retreats may feel immense gratitude and a sense of coming home in hearing the refuges. By simply being here you may have a sense of refuge, a protection for the heart or as if you have entered into a sanctuary.

Others of you may be brand new and may have this feeling, as I did when I went to my first retreat, that you have dropped into foreign culture. I remember when I first sat a retreat with the Burmese monks, who have a very traditional approach to the teachings, my first reaction was that something was going to be put upon me. My fear was that my intention to come to understand my own mind would disappear under a new cloak of garments called Buddhism. When I continued with the practice, I started to see that this is not what was intended and that it really was about uncovering the truth of life. The refuges are meant to be a source of inspiration and support to the work that we are doing here.

The taking of refuge is not meant to be a believing in something outside of ourselves. When we take refuge it is a way of turning our hearts towards that which inspires us. It is a way of providing sanctuary for the uncovering and nurturance of our deepest aspirations. It is a way of stepping out of the business of everyday living and rekindling our energy and remembering what the potential of our lives can be. Taking refuge is often likened to walking through a desert and coming across a beautiful big tree that gives shelter from the scorching sun. Beside the tree there is a cool clear stream that quenches our thirst. It is a moving out of the harshness of life and tuning in to that which supports us.

Taking refuge is done in three ways. We can take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. When we go to the Buddha for refuge, it can mean a variety of things to each of us. Some of us may find great inspiration in the historical Buddha, the man who lived over 2,500 years ago. Although we so often think of him as a great teacher, he was a fellow human being who, even though he had been born into prestigious circumstances, still grappled with the same struggles we all face. Like us, he was faced with his own spiritual quest. Once his journey began, he dedicated his life to coming to

know and understand his own mind in a way that liberated him from suffering. Knowing that one man experienced freedom can inspire us to come to know this freedom for ourselves.

Or, we can take refuge in how we all have this Buddha nature within us. Buddha nature is not something that is confined to one man who was called Buddha. It is the essence of mind when it is unbound by habits of greed, hatred and delusion. Taking refuge in the Buddha mind is taking refuge in the truth that, no matter how clouded the mind may seem, freedom is possible for us. This is not to give us an excuse to live in a delusional reality, but to inspire us to peel away the layers of conditioning and habits of mind that cover over our true nature. We can also take refuge in the qualities of mind and heart that the enlightened mind embodies, qualities such as kindness, love, generosity, compassion and wisdom. These are qualities that manifest in the enlightened mind, or are present when we truly feel at home.

When we go to the Dhamma for refuge, we can understand the dhamma as truth, the lawfulness of life. This then helps us to take refuge in the way things are. Taking refuge in the dhamma allows us to let the dhamma unfold itself to us. Our life, our practice, is not a mistake: things are unfolding according to natural laws. The dhamma has its own time, and we can surrender to this process. Through our practice we come to see that the dhamma is not some truth out there, but is the very truth of this body and mind, and so realization of the dhamma is here/now. This very body is dhamma, this mind is dhamma. The realization of this brings us in to the current of life rather than dwelling in states of separation. When we take refuge in the Sangha, it too can have a variety of meanings. Sangha is the gathering together of people to practice and study these teachings, gathering together as a means of support to each other. We support each other in inspiring each other, helping to clarify the teachings, and being able to nudge each other gently when we get caught in delusion. The beginnings of the Sangha was through the ordained Sangha. These are the monks and nuns who have dedicated their lives to this practice and its teachings. They have helped to keep the light of the dhamma alive through the last 2,500 years.

There is also the noble Sangha, all those who have followed this path and have awakened. We find refuge in their wakeful presence. We can also take refuge in the innumerable beings who did not ordain, people like you and me who also have dedicated their lives to awakening. We can take refuge in our coming here together and supporting each other in our practice, being with like-minded people. Our Sangha consists of the people we share this practice with, those who help us to be here. You will probably notice at some point this weekend, when we may be in the depths of despair and wanting to give up, how the quiet and gentle support of those sitting around us gives us the strength to go on. It can also work the other way too. I remember one retreat in which a lot of my experiences were very pleasant, in the "good" category. There was another woman there whom I had noticed to be struggling. One day I saw her sobbing, and I was deeply moved by the strength of her commitment to be there in difficult times. We also feel the strength of the Sangha when we reflect on sitting at home and how hard it can be to sit still, or when we remember something we thought was totally urgent that needs to be done. It is so easy to get up and do it. Here, surrounded by the Sangha, we have the support of others to help us sit through this compelling desire, to begin to see the nature of the desire itself. There is a tremendous amount of support with us here in this room, and in this we can take refuge.

May you abide in well being,

The following article appears here by permission of the author. Thanks Binh. Editor.

THERAVADA BUDDHISM IN VIETNAM

By Binh Anson

About me:

-- I'm a Buddhist, born in Vietnam, and have been following the Theravada tradition for over 20 years. I live in Perth, Western Australia, where I am a senior engineer working for the state government. I'm also the current President (1998-1999) of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia. I have developed two Buddhist web sites:

<http://www.saigon.com/~anson/>

and

<http://www.iinet.net.au/~ansonb/bswa/>

Metta,
Binh

Buddhism came to Vietnam in the first century CE. [1]. By the end of the second century, Vietnam developed a major Buddhist centre in the region, commonly known as the Luy-Lau centre, now in the Bac-Ninh province, north of the present Hanoi city. That centre was established by Indian Buddhist missionary monks, following the sea route from the Indian sub-continent to China by many Indian traders. A number of Mahayana sutras and the Agamas were translated into Chinese scripts at that centre, including the sutra of Forty Two Chapters, the Anapanasati, the Vessantara-jataka, the Milinda-panha, etc

In the next 18 centuries, due to geographical proximity with China and twice annexed by the Chinese, the two countries shared many common features of cultural, philosophical and religious heritage. Vietnamese Buddhism has been greatly influenced by development of Mahayana Buddhism in China, with the dominant traditions of Ch'an/Zen, Pure Land, and Tantra.

The southern part of the present Vietnam was originally occupied by the Cham (Champa) and the Cambodian (Khmer) people who followed both a syncretic Saiva-Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism [2], although Champa probably had a Theravada presence from as early as the 3rd century CE, whilst Cambodia received the Theravada as

late as the 12th century. The Vietnamese started to conquer and absorbed the land in the 15th century, and the current shape of the country was finalised in the 18th century. From that time onward, the dominant Viet followed the Mahayana tradition whilst the ethnic Cambodian practiced the Theravada tradition, and both traditions peacefully co-existed.

In the 1930s, there were a number of movements in Vietnam for the revival and modernisation of Buddhist activities. Together with the organisation of Mahayana establishments, there developed a growing interest in Theravadin meditation and also in Buddhist materials based on the Pali Canon. These were then available in French. Among the pioneers who brought Theravada Buddhism to the ethnic Viet was a young veterinary doctor named Le Van Giang. He was born in the South, received higher

education in Hanoi, and after graduation, was sent to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to work for the French government [3].

During that time, he developed a growing interest in Buddhism. He started to study and practice the Pure Land and Tantric ways but was not satisfied. By chance, he met the Vice Sangharaja of the Cambodian Sangha and was recommended a book on the Noble Eightfold Path written in French. He was struck by the clear message in the book, and decided to try out the Theravada way. He learnt meditation on the breath (Anapanasati) from a Cambodian monk at the Unalom Temple in Phnom Penh and achieved deep samadhi states. He continued the practice and after a few years, he decided to ordain and took the Dhamma name of Ho-Tong (Vansarakkhita).

Buu-Quang Temple

In 1940, upon an invitation by a group of lay Buddhists led by Mr Nguyen Van Hieu, a close friend, he went back to Vietnam and helped to establish the first Theravada temple for Vietnamese Buddhists, at Go Dua, Thu Duc (now a district of Saigon). The temple was named Buu-Quang (Ratana Ramsyarama). Later, the Cambodian Sangharaja, Venerable Chuon Nath, together with 30 Cambodian bhikkhus established the Sima boundary at this temple [4]. The temple was destroyed by French troops in 1947, and was rebuilt in 1951.

Here at Buu-Quang temple, together with a group of Vietnamese bhikkhus, who had received training in Cambodia, such as Venerables Thien-Luat, Buu-Chon, Kim-Quang, Gioi-Nghiem, Tinh-Su, Toi-Thang, Giac-Quang, An-Lam, Venerable Ho-Tong started teaching the Buddha Dhamma in Vietnamese language. He also translated many Buddhist materials from the Pali Canon, and Theravada became part of Vietnamese Buddhist activity in the country.

In 1949-1950, Venerable Ho-Tong together with Mr Nguyen Van Hieu and supporters built a new temple in Saigon, named Ky-Vien Tu (Jetavana Vihara). This temple became the centre of Theravada activities in Vietnam, which continued to attract increasing interest among the Vietnamese Buddhists. In 1957, the Vietnamese Theravada Buddhist Sangha Congregation (Giao Hoi Tang Gia Nguyen Thuy Viet Nam) was formally established and recognised by the government, and the Theravada Sangha elected

Venerable Ho-Tong as its first President, or Sangharaja.

Ky-Vien Temple

During that time, Dhamma activities were further strengthened by the presence of Venerable Narada from Sri Lanka. Venerable Narada had first come to Vietnam in the 1930s and brought with him Bodhi tree saplings which he planted in many places throughout the country. During his subsequent visits in the 1950s and 1960s, he attracted a large number of Buddhists to the Theravada tradition, one of whom was the popular translator, Mr Pham Kim Khanh who took the Dhamma name of Sunanda. Mr Khanh translated many books of Venerable Narada, including The Buddha and His Teachings, Buddhism in a Nutshell, Satipatthana Sutta, The Dhammapada, A Manual of Abhidhamma, etc. Mr Khanh, now in his 80s, lives in the USA and is still active in translating Dhamma books by well-known meditation teachers from Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka.

Kathina Ceremony

From Saigon, the Theravada movement spread to other provinces, and soon, a number of Theravada temples for ethnic Viet Buddhists were established in many areas in the South and Central parts of Vietnam. As at 1997, there were 64 Theravada temples throughout the country, of which 19 were located in Saigon and its vicinity [5]. Beside Buu-Quang and Ky-Vien temples, other well known temples are Buu-Long, Giac-Quang, Tam-Bao (Da-Nang), Thien-Lam and Huyen-Khong (Hue), and the large Sakyamuni Buddha Monument (Thich-Ca Phat Dai) in Vung Tau.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of Vietnamese bhikkhus were sent overseas for further training, mostly in Thailand and some in Sri Lanka and India. Recently, this programme has been resumed and about 20 bhikkhus and nuns are receiving training in Burma.

Historically, there has been a close relationship between the Cambodian and the Vietnamese bhikkhus. In fact, in 1979, after the Khmer Rouge was driven out of Phnom Penh, a group of Vietnamese bhikkhus led by Venerables Buu-Chon and Gioi-Nghiem came to that city to re-ordain 7 Cambodian monks, and thus re-established the Cambodian Sangha which had been destroyed by the Khmer Rouge when they were in control [6].

Dhamma literature in the Vietnamese language come from two main sources: the Pali Canon and the Chinese Agamas, together with a large collection of Mahayana texts. Since 1980s, there has been an ongoing programme to publish these materials. So far, 27 volumes of the first 4 Nikayas and the 4 Agamas have been produced. Work is under way to translate and publish the 5th Nikaya. In addition, a complete set of the Abhidhamma, translated by Venerable Tinh-Su, has been printed, together with the Dhammapada, the Milinda-Panha, the Visudhi-Magga, and many other work.

In summary, although Buddhism in Vietnam is predominantly of the Mahayana form, the Theravada tradition is well recognised and is experiencing a growing interest especially in the practice of meditation, in Nikaya-Agama literature and in Abhidhamma studies.

Binh Anson,
04 June 1999

References

- [1] Nguyen Lang, 1973. Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luan, vol 1 (History of Buddhism in Vietnam)
- [2] Andrew Skilton, 1994. A Concise History of Buddhism
- [3] Le Minh Qui, 1981. Hoa Thuong Ho-Tong (Biography of Maha Thera Ho-Tong)
- [4] Nguyen Van Hieu, 1971. Cong Tac Xay Dung Phat Giao Nguyen Thuy tai Viet Nam (On the work of establishing Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam)
- [5] Giac-Ngo Weekly, no. 63, 14-06-1997
- [6] Thich Dong Bon, 1996. Tieu Su Danh Tang Viet Nam (Biography of Famous Vietnamese Monks)

The Fence

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down.

He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence. Finally the day came

when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out One nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one. Friends are a very rare jewel, indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear, they share a word of praise, and they always want to open their hearts to us...."

Six-Minute Chocolate Cake
Contributed by Manoshi Ghosh

Manoshi and her husband David are followers of the Dalai Lama. They are on the organising committee that is bringing the Nuns of Khachoe Ghakyil to Ottawa. For more information about the nuns' visit to Ottawa call (613) 729-6633 or check the website <http://www.globalserve.net/~drgould/>

From Moosewood Restaurant Cooks At Home by The Moosewood Collective

- 1 1/2 cups unbleached white flour
- 1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup cold water or brewed coffee
- 2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp. vinegar

To make cake, preheat the oven to 375. Sift together the flour, cocoa, baking soda, salt, and sugar into an ungreased 8-inch square or a 9-inch round baking pan. In a 2-cup measuring cup, measure and mix together the oil, water or coffee, and vanilla. Pour the liquid ingredients into the baking pan and mix the batter with a fork or a small whisk. When the batter is smooth, add the vinegar and stir quickly. There will be pale swirls in the batter where the baking soda and the vinegar are reacting. Stir just until the

vinegar is evenly distributed throughout the batter. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes. Set the cake aside to cool.

OBS MONTHLY DAY OF MINDFULNESS

Each month, MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF Ottawa Buddhsit Society observe a Day of Mindfulness on a Saturday on or before a full moon to commemorate Prince Siddhartha Gautama's enlightenment under a full moon. The program begins at 8:00 AM and finishes at 3:30 PM. For more information call Amin at 730-2417 or Anoma at 226-8160, or write to amink@cyberus.ca

There is a vegetarian potluck lunch. For meal coordination call Udula at 825-9370.

Members can borrow books and the tapes from our small collection.

The Ottawa Buddhist Society encourages members and friends of the Society to actively participate in the Day of Mindfulness. Let me know if you would like to give a short talk, do a reading, or share some thoughts with others.

Monthly Days of Mindfulness for 1999.
January 23; February 20; March 27; April 24;
May 22; June 26, July 24; August 21; September 18;
October 23; November 20; December 18.

The Ottawa Buddhist Society will be offering a course on Buddhism starting on September 18th and ending in April 2000.

Classes will be 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM on the Days of Mindfulness.

COURSE TITLE Basic Buddhism
TEXT: The Buddha and His Teachings, by Narada Thera. Mahayana Suttas will be supplied by Vinh for \$10.
TEACHERS: Ian Prattis and Vinh Nguyen
Ian is professor of Anthropology at Carleton U., and Vinh is an aeronautical engineer with the National Research Council. Vinh is also an Dharmachariya in Thich Nhat Hanh tradition.
PREREQUISITES: An interest in Dhamma and a commitment to attend the classes.
TIME: 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM
FALL 99 TERM: September 18, October 23, Nov 20, Dec 18.
WINTER 2000 TERM: To be announced

MORE INFO: 730-2417, amink@cyberus.ca

YOUTH DHAMMA CLASSES

Beginning this Fall, we invite you to participate in a monthly Dhamma discussion group aimed at youth aged 12 - 18 years. Our objective is to have a forum for young adults to discuss and reflect upon the importance and relevance of Dhamma in today's society. The guides are all young adults themselves, and will attempt to present the Buddha's teachings in an easy-to-understand and interesting manner for young people today. The group will meet monthly and will take part in various types of Dhamma-related activities. Our first session will be a "Meet and Greet" where we will all have a chance to meet each other and discuss some ideas for activities and teachings we can focus on in the upcoming months.

We encourage all to come to the "**Meet and Greet**" at the next day of Mindfulness.

MEET AND GREET

Youth Dhamma Group

September 18, 1999 at 3:00 pm

Tu-An Pagoda, in the Main Dining Hall 1359
Albion Road

Please confirm your attendance at the "Meet and Greet" on September 18th and/or your general interest in attending the monthly classes by September 11th with: Dilani Hippola: 824-7424, dhippola@chat.carleton.ca

Looking forward to seeing you all there!

GUIDES:

Amila De Silva 226-8160,

adsilva@chat.carleton.ca

Asanka De Silva 226-8160,

asankadesilva@yahoo.com

Dilani Hippola 824-7424,
dhippola@chat.carleton.ca

OTTAWA BUDDHIST SOCIETY

ADDRESS: c/o 84B Fulton Avenue, Ottawa,
Canada K1S 4Y8

CONTACT: Amin Kabani

TELEPHONE: (613) 730-2417

EMAIL: amink@cyberus.ca

FOCUS: The OBS focuses primarily on
Buddhist teachings in the Theravadin tradition
as practised in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma.
Serves Theravada Buddhists of all nationalities
in and around Ottawa

LANGUAGE: English

ACTIVITIES:

- Monthly Day of Mindfulness
- Occasional weekend and longer retreats
- Talks
- Dhamma classes
- picnics

PUBLICATION: Quarterly Newsletter
/magazine. New feature (Aug 99): Questions
to a Monk Column by Ajahn Sona of Birken
Buddhist Forest Monastery. Email edition is free.
To subscribe write to amink@cyberus.ca

SPIRITUAL MENTORS: Bhante Gunaratana
(Bhavana Center), Ajahn Viradhammo
(Amaravati), Bhante Rahula (Bhavana), Ajahn
Sona (Birken)

Next AGM: October 23rd 99, 4:00PM, at the Tu
An Pagoda

Vesak 2000: Bhante Gunaratana, founder of
Bhavana Center and author of the best-seller
"Mindfulness in Plain English", has accepted our
invitation to come and celebrate Vesak with us in
Ottawa during May 12-14, 2000.

20th Anniversary Celebration of Vietnamese
Canadian Buddhist Association; September 26th,
10:30 AM- onwards. Veg pot luck lunch;
entertainment by Tu-An Buddhist Youths.
Members of the Ottawa Buddhist Society are
invited.

Tibetan Nuns of Khachoe Ghakyil Ling from
Nepal, September 21st and September 22. They
will give a performance at Alumni Theater at
Ottawa U. For details contact David at (613)
729-6633 and drgould@iprimus.ca. Also

look at the website:

<http://www.globalserve.net/~drgould/>

Name of Group: Theravada Buddhist
Community of Toronto

Type of Group: Theravada

Teacher: Ajahn Viradhammo and Others

Language: English

Activities: At The Healing Arts Centre, 717
Bloor Street West at the Christie subway station)
include meditation sittings on Sunday mornings
from 10 to 12 and a meditation/study group to
which people commit to meeting Monday
evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 for six week periods.
We also organize weekend and nine day retreats,
primarily with Ajahn Viradhammo, Abbot of
The Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in England.
Ajahn Viradhammo is a Canadian Buddhist
monk, ordained in 1974 in the forest monastery
tradition of Ajahn Chah, a renowned meditation
master from north-east Thailand.

Contact Person: Wendy Walker through our
Telephone number (416) 462-4289

Tel: (416) 462-4289

Secretary: Sue Frepons: sfreypon@uoguelph.ca

Mailing Address: TBC Secretary: Sue Frepons,
82 Blackthorn Avenue, Toronto ON M6N 3H5

WESTEND BUDDHIST CENTER

1569 Cormack Crescent , Mississauga Ont., L5E
2P8, TEL: (905) 891-8412

PUBLICATION: The Dhamma Wheel with a
Comprehensive listing of events and groups in
Ontario. Produced by Bhante Ariyavansa
(ariyavansa@netcom.ca.)

WEBSITE: www.netcom.ca/~ariya

Name of Group: London Vipassana Meditation
Group

Type of Group: Theravada

Teacher: No specific teacher (yet). We are a new
group, with mainly beginning meditators. We're
trying to bring in as many teachers to our area
as we can - hopefully one day we will find our
very own.

Language: English

Activities: Weekly meditation sittings, Sunday
mornings 9 - 10:30 a.m., Sept - June

Buddhist study group, meets once or twice a
month. Organizing Vipassana meditation retreats
of various types and lengths (Next retreat
organized: Buddhist Christian retreat led by Dr.

Mary Jo Meadow, March 9 to 16, 2000, at the Guelph Spirituality Centre)

Type of Practice: Vipassana

Meeting Times Sunday mornings, September 12/1999 to end of June 2000, and Days: 9 - 10:30 a.m.

Meeting Place: Karen Major's Centre for Massage Therapy and Iyengar Hatha Yoga
575 Richmond St., 2nd floor, (above a shop called Saffron Road, between Albert and Central Streets on the west side of Richmond, in London, Ont.)

Contact Person: Kate Partridge

Tel: 519-438-8591

Fax: 519-438-1918

e-mail: partridg@julian.uwo.ca

Mailing Address: London Vipassana Meditation Group, 798 Talbot St., London, ON N6A 2V6

TU-AN PAGODA MEDITATION GROUPS

Sundays, 4: 00 PM

The Tu-An pagoda meditation group was founded in the summer of 1994 to promote the practice of both the Pure Land School (Tinh Do Tong) and the Mahayana Buddhism (Thien Tong). We meet at 4:00PM every on Sundays. Each meditation session lasts about one hour and a half. We start with sitting meditation (for about half an hour) and complete the session with a walking meditation ('kinh-in'). The second part of the meeting session is devoted usually to the study of Buddhist teachings. This study session takes different forms: One time we listened to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh's Dharma talk on cassette tape, another time we discussed about the talk (Dharma discussions). Once every three months, we recited the 5 Buddhist precepts. From time to time, we recited the sutras or we evoked the Bodhisattvas' names (an example is given below). The sutras we often use comprise the Prajnaparamita Sutra, the Discourse on Love and the Discourse on Happiness. Recently, we started sharing our practice while studying the book 'the Heart of the Buddha's Teaching' written by Thây Nhat Hanh (published by Parallax Press, California).

Our members also involved in organizing retreats and days of mindfulness. We are grateful to the following monks and nuns for their teaching and guidance in the practice: Ajahn Viradhammo (from Amaravati, England), Thay

Giac Thanh (Plum Village, France), Thay Tri Sieu (France), Sister Annabel Laity (Green Mountain Dharma Center, Vermont, USA) and Sister Chan Giai Nghiem (Plum Village, France).

CONTACT: Vinh Nguyen vnguyen@cyberus.ca

MEDITATION CUSHIONS with zippered washable outer cover, C\$13 only. You can fill the inner bag with sunflower seeds for a couple of dollars. Money collected is for a Vietnamese charity. For more info contact Vinh Nguyen at vnguyen@cyberus.ca

MINDFULNESS PRACTICE before work.
7:00 AM-8:00 AM Mon, Wed, Fri with Carolyn and Ian. Call 726-0881 for more info

Name: Birken Forest Monastery

Abbott: Ajahn Sona

Address: P.O Box 992

Princeton, B.C. V0x 1W0

Tel/Fax: (250) 295-3263

Name: Bhavana Center

Abbott: Bhante Gunaratana

Address: Rt. 1 Box 218-3, High View, WV 26808 USA

Tel: 304-856-3241 Fax: 304-856-2111

Email: bhavana@access.mountain.net

Website:

Name: Amaravati Buddhist Monastery

Address: Great Geddesden

Hemel Hempstead

Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ

England

Here is a good source of authoritative and inexpensive materials on Theravada Buddhism.

THE BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

The BPS is an approved charity dedicated to making known the Teaching of the Buddha, which has a vital message for people of all creeds. Founded in 1958, the BPS has published a wide variety of books and booklets covering a great range of topics. Its publications include accurate annotated translations of the Buddha's discourses, standard reference works, as well as original contemporary expositions of Buddhist thought and practice. It first arose. A full list of our publications will be sent upon request with an enclosure of U.S. \$1.00 or its equivalent to cover air mail postage.

Write to:

The Hony. Secretary
BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
P.O. Box 61
54, Sangharaja Mawatha
Kandy Sri Lanka

READING LIST FOR BEGINNERS. By Ajahn Sona

Meditation

- Introduction to Insight Meditation. Amaravati Publications, Amaravati Buddhist Centre, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ, England. ISBN 1-870205-03-0.
 - Mindfulness in Plain English. Ven.Gunaratana; Wisdom Publications.
 - Calm and Insight. A Buddhist Manual for Meditators. Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Curzon Press, London. ISBN 0-7007-0141-9
- Buddhist Teachings and Practice

- The Power of Mindfulness. Ven.Nyanaponika; The Wheel Publication No.121/122; Buddhist Publication Society (BPS), Kandy, Sri Lanka.
- The Word of the Buddha. Nyanatiloka Thera, BPS (BP 201S), Kandy Sri Lanka.
- Going for Refuge. Taking the Precepts. Bhikkhu Bodhi. The Wheel Publication (WH), No.282/283/284.
- The Noble Eightfold Path. Bhikkhu Bodhi, BPS (BP 1055).
- The Buddha and His Teachings. Narada Mahathera. BPS (BP 102S).
- Metta. The Philosophy and Practice of Universal Love. Acariya Buddharakkhita. BPS (WH 365/366).
- Mudita. The Buddha's Teaching on Unselfish Joy. Nyanaponika Thera, Ed., BPS (WH 170).
- Dana: The Practice of Giving. Bhikkhu Bodhi, Ed., BPS (WH 367/369).
- Kamma and Its Fruit. Nyanaponika Thera, BPS (BP 413S).

Suttas

- Everyman's Ethics. Narada Mahathera, BPS (WH 14).
- The Scale of Good Deeds. Susan Elbaum Jootla, BPS (WH 372).
- The Buddha's Teaching In His Own Words. Bhikkhu Nanamoli, BPS (WH 428/430).

Notes:

Ajahn Sona has sent an additional, two-page, hand-written reading list. I can email a copy as a graphic file. Editor.

Here is the address for the BPS
BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
P.O. Box 61
54, Sangharaja Mawatha
Kandy
Sri Lanka



**C/o 84B Fulton Avenue, Ottawa, Ont K1S 4Y8, (613) 730-2417, amink@cyberus.ca
OTTAWA BUDDHIST SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP**

The objectives of the Society are:
(a) To propagate, promote and advance the teachings of the Buddha by practising the religious observances, tenets and doctrines of Buddhism, with emphasis on those of Theravada Buddhism, and to promote the practice of these teachings in everyday life.
(b) To promote an awareness of the contributions made by Buddhism to humankind's intellectual advancement, and spiritual and physical well-being.
(c) To engage in charitable activities within Canada to alleviate suffering, whether physical, mental or spiritual, without regard to the species, gender, race, nationality or religion of the sufferer

The Society serves Theravada Buddhists of all nationalities in and around Ottawa. All Buddhists and non-Buddhists who support the Society and its objectives are welcome to our events and to enrol as members.

I would like to enrol as a member of the Ottawa Buddhist Society.

PLEASE PRINT

Name Last: _____ First: _____ Tel: _____

Address: _____

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Signature: _____ Date _____

Annual Dues: Single: \$25; Family: \$50; Student: free

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Mail this with your payment to the Treasurer Ottawa Buddhsit Society, 11 Longboat Ct., Kanata, Ont. K2K 2T3. For more information about the Society contact Amin at amink@cyberus.ca or (613) 730-2417, or Anoma at (613) 226-8160.

VOLUNTEERS FOR OTTAWA BUDDHIST SOCIETY.

Ottawa Buddhist Society is looking for volunteers to help with the following:

Accounting; Taxation; Greeting at events; Graphic Design; Art; Preparing Poster Translation (English <--> French and other languages); Organising Social Events ; Library; Charitable projects; Others

I would like to be responsible for the following activities/projects:

