

**THE
SASHI-ZHOZ
MADHISHI**



*Quarterly Newsletter of the
Washington
Buddhist Vihara
Spring 2009*

This edition of the Washington Buddhist Vihara is dedicated to the loving memory of Mrs. Ngoc Bich Trien (Soma), the Vietnamese lady who was so devoted to the Monks. She was so beloved by all the Monks that they called her "Mom". She lived 99 years and was well taken care of by her children and grandchildren. She passed from this life in January in Virginia. We wish her a happy journey in the Sansara and may she reach enlightenment as soon as possible.



*Mrs. Ngoc Bich Trieu (Soma), Beloved Mom
She loved the Monks like her own children*

N E W S



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L E T T E R

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Vihara Weekly Schedule

Sunday	9.30 a.m.	Sunday Dhamma School for Children (meets every other Sunday through the academic year)
	3.00 p.m.	Vandana service open to the public
	7.00 p.m.	Meditation (Washington Mindfulness Community)
Wednesday	6.30 p.m.	Yoga Class
Friday	7.00 p.m.	Sutta Study Class (every other Friday)
Saturday	6.00 p.m.	Dhamma Class
Saturday	7.00 p.m.	Meditation Class (Anapanasati or Breathing Meditation)
By arrangement	By arrangement	Sinhala Class for adults

Sunday Dhamma School

A Sunday Dhamma School for Children is conducted in English on every other Sunday in the Fall and Spring semesters. Topics of study and discussion include the life of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Arahats, and Jataka tales. Please call Bhante Dhammasiri at (202) 723-0773 or Email Udaya at uranawaka@hotmail.com or Romesh at romesh70@hotmail.com for schedules.



Notes and News Spring 2009



We are happy to inform our members and friends about a new temple affiliated with the Washington Buddhist Vihara that was re-opened on January 1, 2009. The temple is located at Friesdorfer Street 75, 53173 Bonn, Germany. Bhante Dhammasiri brought Ven. Thalpwila Kusalagnana from Sri Lanka to be the chief incumbent of this re-opened temple.



H.E. Consular General for Sri Lanka in Germany addressing the congregation gathered at the re-opening ceremony of the Bonn Temple. Our friends and members are cordially invited to visit this temple when traveling in Europe.

Notes and News



Bhante Dhammasiri laying the first stone for the proposed Narada Stupa at Vajirarama, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. "Children of Ven.Narada" - a group of Vietnamese devotees living in the USA, France and Australia funded this great project. Ven.P. Abhayasiha and Ven.Upali also are in the picture. January 2009.



Washington Buddhist Vihara Executive Secretary Susan Singh was commended by the Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine for her activism on behalf of laboratory animals (dogs) at the University of Michigan's Medical Laboratories. As a result of the letter writing campaign in which she participated, the University will no longer use live dogs in its trauma training courses. The campaign is currently being carried out to help dogs utilized in Newark, New Jersey University Hospital training courses.

Notes and News



Mrs. Noeline Hemalatha from Virginia Beach sponsored the Fall 2008 Kathina ceremony which was held on Sunday, October 26, 2008. Many friends and well-wishers attended this auspicious event. Dhammasiri Nayaka Thera, Bhante Vidura and Bhante Indaratna gave dhamma talks. About 400 people belonging to many different ethnic groups gathered to enrich this very important ceremony.



This year Vesak will be celebrated in Sunday May 3 at the Washington Buddhist Vihara. All are welcome to participate in this very important and auspicious occasion. The observances will begin at 9:00 a.m.

A Buddhist Perspective on Global Economic Meltdown

By Bhikkhu Saranapala



Maybe some of you are thinking that I, as a Buddhist monk who has chosen to live a homeless life of poverty and celibacy, am immune to the impact of the current crisis and the credit crunch that is spreading like some infectious disease! Don't be so sure, my friends! These days, when we happen to see the food that some devotees in their religious fervor and generosity put in our begging bowls, with no frills and trimmings as before, but with a lot of *'trimming'* we know for sure, there is a crises and a crunch in the making in the community! Although it does not affect our serenity, our hearts go out to our parishioners in sympathy – the men and women who have lost their jobs due to lay-offs, closures and bankruptcies the present crisis has triggered and are hard pressed to make ends meet.

Let's ask a few honest questions. Is today's crisis real? Is it the natural consequence of some prevalent conditions that hide reality and make us all go mad, sending us in all directions looking for solutions, searching for miracle workers to fix things, when solutions are right in our own backyard? Mahatma Gandhi once said: "The world has enough for people's needs, but not enough for people's greed." If Mahatma Gandhi's remark was true then, it is even truer today that our planet still has enough for us to survive and to live happy lives and even share with others. Experts know it. If we exert our minds a little to know the truth, I'll know it and you'll know it! Then why do we always feel like it's not enough for us?

Buddha identified greed as the root cause of suffering and dissatisfaction in the human race. Buddhism informs us that in order to enjoy the fruits of the earth to the fullest, individuals and nations have to be frugal without giving in to the overabundance of greed deeply rooted in every one of us. The very media that helped create monster crooks of the stock market - some of whom are now under house arrest, languishing in their million dollar condos on the heart of New York - that very media have taken a 180 degree turn and have begun to preach frugality and prudence exposing unpardonable excesses of their one time favorite sponsors. This is a good sign.

Who's to blame? For this enormous crisis global economic downturn that is now unwittingly pushing us into good old virtues of frugality, prudence, concern for the less fortunate and for the mass of humanity that had made the mistake of chasing after illusory pipe dreams of future stability and security – who is to blame? His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in a media conference in Brussels in December 2008, queried: “Market itself is a creation of human beings. What then is the real cause of this sort of economic crisis?” His answer was, “Too much speculation and ultimately greed! So, if you want to help, here's the secret! Reduce greed and increase self-discipline!”

Buddhism is a humanistic religion, the centre of which is the human being, the individual, the only one who has the freedom of choice to make intelligent decisions beneficial to him self and others. Buddhism emphasizes individual responsibility and accountability and suggests that man has to change his way of thinking and attitude toward himself and others. Whatever he does has to be based on compassion, love, broader understanding and human dignity. Then only a solution is possible for the current crisis. In the context of the global crisis, it is first the individual who has to become frugal in his effort to reduce natural greed. It is he/she who has to make a decision to get that unaffordable mortgage or car – even for the sake of *keeping up with the Joneses*'.

Therefore, harkening back to good old moral values and virtues of frugality, prudence and common sense seems to be the need of the hour! This is not exclusively a Buddhist solution alone, since these virtues have been in vogue from time immemorial in different cultures and societies around the globe. Virtues of a calm bearing, simplicity, being persons of few wants, with equanimity and concern for others have always been praised by religious leaders and poets through the centuries.

Now what of our Rulers and Governments which are composed of individuals? Listen to what Buddha has to say in this matter that touches on the very crisis the world is experiencing today:

Of a herd of cattle if the leading bull goes crooked,
All the followers go crooked, not knowing that they do so
Even so among humans if the one considered the chief,
Is unrighteous, all the following become unrighteous
If the king is unrighteous, the whole country rest unpleasantly
Of a herd of cattle if the leading bull goes straight,
All the followers go straight, not knowing that they do so
Even so among humans if the one considered the chief,
Is righteous, all the following become righteous
If the king is righteous, the whole country rest pleasantly.
(Adhamma Sutta – Unrighteous (AN 4.7 Pattakamma Vagga)

This simile explains, then, the sense of responsibility or accountability a head of a state or the head of a company ought to possess. In either case, if a decision is based on immoral intention, everything becomes immoral. Thus it leads to economical, social and political crisis and instability. In the same way, if the decision is based on moral intention, everything becomes moral. Thus, it leads to peace and stability in the world. If for an example, America as most influential nation in the world and a super power does resolve to be upright and moral in her dealings with the rest of the world, this is a good example that is definitely going to have a positive impact on the rest of the world.

Now, let me draw your attention to two cardinal principles of Buddhism: firstly to the doctrine of cause and effect and secondly to the Four Noble Truths – the heart of Buddhism.

Cause and Effect

Once, a wondering ascetic asked from the Venerable Assaji, an enlightened disciple of the Buddha, who was on a mission: “Brother, you look so serene and peaceful. You must have found the true way to wisdom and liberation from suffering. Who is your teacher? What does he teach?”

Then the Venerable Assaji told him: Brother, I became a disciple of the Buddha very recently. I have not learned much about his teaching yet. However, I have learned a phenomenal and universally practical teaching from him as follows:

Of things that proceed from a cause,
Their causes the Buddha has told,
And also their cessation or ending:
Thus teaches the great ascetic.

This clarifies that whatever we have in life has a necessary cause and condition. Thus, Buddhism teaches causal links, called in Pali “Paticca-Samuppada” – the Dependent Co-arising (Dependent Origination). This has further been explained as follows:

If this is/exists, that is/exists.
With the arising of this, that arises.
If this is not, that is not.
With the ceasing of this, that ceases.

Based on this key principle of Buddhism let me shed light on what Buddhism has to say about the current economic crisis. Buddhism does not see one single cause behind crisis in the world. It sees multiple causes. Even for the present economic downturn! There are also moral and individual causes, elaborated in another discourse of the Buddha called the “Discourse of Great Cause.”

“Craving is dependent on feeling, seeking (investigating/research) is dependent on craving, acquisition (gain) is dependent on seeking, ascertainment (inference and attribution) is dependent on acquisition, desire and passion are dependent on ascertainment, attachment is dependent on desire and passion, possessiveness is dependent on attachment, stinginess is dependent on possessiveness, defensiveness is dependent on stinginess, and because of defensiveness, dependent on defensiveness, various evil, unskillful phenomena come into play: the taking up of sticks and knives; conflicts, quarrels, and disputes; accusations, divisive speech, and lies.”

(Mahanidana Sutta)

As it is clear from this quote, one cause leads to another. Craving is the primary cause that begets sorrow and fear. If one can lead a life free from craving, in other words greed and desire, then he/she cannot have sorrow and fear at all. As I mentioned before the heart of Buddhism is the teaching of Four Noble Truths. These are as follows:

There is Suffering ; know it for certain!
There is the Cause of Suffering; eliminate it!
There is Cessation of Suffering; attain cessation!
There is the Path to the Cessation of Suffering; Meditate in it and follow it!

In terms of the current economic crisis we see as said before, the Cause of this suffering is uncontrolled desire/craving/greed/stinginess. Cessation of suffering is the healing, recovery or liberation from present economic crisis. The world is not going to experience current economic crisis forever. There is a healing and solution to the problem or crisis. ***If man created the problem in the first place, man can solve it too.*** The Path to cessation of suffering is the recovery plan. This recovery plan or road map must come from both individual and collective efforts.

Buddhist Recovery Plan for Current Economic Crisis

The Buddha outlines the basic framework of Buddhist ethics for rulers and it is set out in the "Ten Duties of the King" called in Pali *dasa - raja - dhamma*. The ruler as a first citizen and guardian of a country must follow these duties and must be endowed with qualities below:

1. Generosity (in Pali Dana) – The head of the state must practice giving and charity. He/she “should not have craving and attachment for wealth and property, but should give it away for the welfare of the people.”
2. Morality (in Pali Sila) – The head of the state must be of a good conduct and “high and moral character.” He/she “should never destroy life, cheat, steal and exploit others, commit adultery, utter falsehood, or take intoxicating drinks.”
3. Sacrifice (in Pali Pariccaga) – The head of the state should be able to sacrifice everything for the good of the subjects. He/she “must be prepared to give up all

personal comfort, name and fame, and even his life, in the interest of the people.”

4. Honesty and integrity (in Pali Ajjava) – The head of the state “must be free from fear and favour in the discharge of his duties, must be sincere in his intentions, and must not deceive the public.”

5. Gentleness and kindness (in Pali Maddava) – The head of the state “must possess a genial temperament.”

6. Austerity (in Pali Tapa) – The head of the state “must lead a simple life, and should not indulge in a life of luxury. He must have self-control.”

7. No enmity and envy (in Pali Akkodha) – The head of the state “should bear no grudge against anybody.”

8. Non-violence (in Pali Avihimsa) – The head of the state “should harm nobody...should try to promote peace by avoiding and preventing war, and everything which involves violence and destruction of life.”

9. Patience and tolerance (in Pali Khanti) – The head of the state “must be able to bear hardships, difficulties and insults without losing his temper.”

10. Non-opposition (in Pali Avirodha) – The head of the state “should not oppose the will of the people, should not obstruct any measures that are conducive to the welfare of the people. In other words he should rule in harmony with his people.”
(Read “What the Buddha Taught” by Walpola Rahula for more detail)

As we expect the rulers to follow these tenfold duties, we as citizens also have to change and do our own part by following certain principles.

Some Salient Advice to Laymen

In the *Vyaggajapajja Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikaya*, the Buddha gives advice to a group of lay people as conducive to their own economic well-being and happiness here and now.

Utthana Sampada – “Perseverance and diligence” – a person must be really enthusiastic, diligent and energetic in performing his/her job “whether it is farming, a trade, business or a profession.”

Arakkha Sampada – “Protection and Security” – a person must protect his/her wealth.

Kalyana Mittata – “Good friendship” – a person must associate with good friends who are wise and virtuous. Good friends protect and help their own friends, and guide them into the right direction.

Samajivita – “Balanced livelihood” - a person must not be too generous spending more than his/her means allow. He/she must not be niggardly clinging to his/her wealth. A person has to avoid the extremes and must spend in proportion to his/her income.

Right Livelihood

In addition to advice given in the discourse above, the Buddha in the Noble Eightfold Path laid down four standards of harmoniously right livelihood to which a lay follower should conform:

- A person must acquire wealth through legal means only
- A person must acquire it without any harm and violence
- A person must acquire it with honesty
- A person must acquire wealth in ways which do not hurt or harm others.

If world citizens follow these principles I am of the view that the global economy would thrive beyond measure. Now let me conclude my presentation with following twelve suggestions for our own personal healing, economic well-being and social and political stability in our own physical world:

1. The head of state or company must be righteous in tune with Tenfold Duties of a King
2. His decision has to be made in consultation with right people
3. The act of Giving must be practiced by all alike
4. Those who are wealthy must share with those who are in need

5. We need to minimize stinginess and greed – if not remove them from our hearts for an utter liberation from suffering
6. We all need to be content with whatever we have.
7. We need to adopt a simple life
8. We must have fewer needs
9. We need to understand one key principle: “one day you gain another day you lose. One day you lose another day you gain.”
10. Sing the kindergarten nursery rhyme: “Row, row, row the boat, gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.”
11. We must understand that everything is impermanent.
12. Nothing belongs to you. Therefore, don’t hang onto whatever you experience in the journey of life

Finally I would like to conclude my presentation by stating the Buddhist economic plan for all as follows:

“One portion of money should be designated for personal consumption.
One should keep two portions for conducting one’s business.
The fourth portion should be kept in reserve,
For one might need it in times of difficulty!”

My Friends, I leave these thoughts with you! These are not my words but those of Gautama Buddha, uttered in compassion for a human race, for individuals and institutions, slipping away, just as today, from their secure moorings of morality, peace and stability.

May the rains come in good season for a rich harvest for all citizens; may the world be prosperous and full of peace and harmony! May our rulers be righteous!

This article was prepared for an interfaith conference on a timely topic, “Global Economic Meltdown: Secular Religious Response” and was delivered as a talk at the Multi - faith Centre Auditorium St. George Campus, University of Toronto. The author is Buddhist Chaplain, at the university of Toronto.



“ As a lotus am I” – the Buddha said....

“ As a lotus of glorious hue and fragrance,
That is born in the mud, in the mud it lives,
But rising above the muddy waters of the pool,
It blooms; spreading its fragrance far and wide,
No murky droplets stay on its glossy petals,
No mud can soil this beautiful bloom;
Yet it lives there – forsaking not the muddy water
Which gave it birth; so am I like the lotus
Born among men, and living too beside them,
Never leaving them;
Yet, unsoiled by lust, by hatred and by delusion
Which mark the creed of human life:
I rise above these petty ills,
Thus am I, a Samma Sambuddha –
A Peerless, Incomparable, Perfect Being.”
With these words the Buddha replied
The brahmin Dona, who seeing the blessed footprints
On the path the Buddha trod,
Confused he asked of Him, “Who could you be...
a deva, a yakka, a gandhabba or any other being...?”

WORDS

(The Buddha's words on how to choose words with care)

Words we utter every day
To our parents, to our elders,
To our teachers, to our friends;
Sometimes to a stranger, or a beggar at our door,
Do we stop to think, what it means to them?
A twist of the tongue and lips do form
The thoughts and tones of each little word;
Do they bring happiness, as balm to the heart
Or do they bring pain, like a dagger, or a sword ?

See if your words are good and right;
Sift them all and see how they measure
On the scale of the Buddha's word,
Are they **kind and gentle** – honey-sweet,
Are they **heartwarming**; are they **endearing**;
Are they **pleasant to hear**; and **courteous** too
Are they **pleasing to many**, are they **liked by all** ?
Are they **good and right**, and are they **true** ?
Let every word be a chosen one,
Spoken with wisdom and care,
At a moment opportune, helpful and moderate;
Mild and meaningful, good to hear;
To speak such words - no wealth do we need,
From the mightiest king to the humble and lowly
There's none too rich nor, none too mean,
To offer them to - or for one to receive.

- compiled by: Srīma Warusawithana -

**When the going gets tough,
mindfulness can keep us going!!**
By Iromie Meegama-Kuruppu, Ph.D.



As the news unfolds each day, I realize that my mind runs away creating and building all kinds of stories related to “what if’s” in life. Then after the world has “come to an end” in my mind I realize that I have just gone on a “mind trip” carried away by my imagination completely forgetting the basics of what I try to practice as a Buddhist. Then, just a few moments or seconds after realizing my absence of presence, off I go again – this time I’ve sued someone and I’m fighting for what I rightfully believe is mine.... and so on...you may be surprised with the number of mind trips that I can run away with on each day. When I catch myself trying to be some place else instead of the present, I find it quite funny ...but let’s admit it, there are more of us who do this than would care to admit the fact. These mind trips are not new; they are as old as life itself.

It is so easy to go on these imaginary journeys – but again, it’s also important to remember that as humans we can each think only a single thought within a moment. It is not physically possible to think more than one thought at a time; one may think thoughts in rapid succession all in a single millisecond but it’s important to be aware that each of these multiple thoughts occurred as a single thought at a time. Think back to a time when you were multi-tasking or doing two things at once—for eg. driving while listening to music; talking on the phone and pouring a glass of water -- yes, each of these were being processed in very rapid sequence but at no time were these thoughts overlapping although there may be a misperception of overlap and simultaneity in thoughts.

My point is that the mind can only think of one thing at a time – and that brings us to the present moment. Now in these present tough times, life can be tough and it is all the more important to practice being mindful for several reasons.

Previously, I understood mindfulness as a concept that can be best practiced mostly in a temple, while praying or perhaps if I were a monk or nun. Then I realized that this is just another “mind trip” or “imagined story” that I’ve told myself because the only true Buddhist way of life is by being mindful in every moment, even as a lay person.

Mindfulness as described by Walpola Rahula¹ is to be diligently aware, mindful and attentive with regard to (1) the activities of the body (*kaya*); (2) sensations or feelings (*vedana*); (3) the activities of the mind (*citta*); and (4) ideas, thoughts, conceptions and things (*dhamma*).

While there are instances and examples of mindfulness within our own lives and society, one highly publicized outcome of mindfulness stands out for me – It is none other than the Hudson river landing of US Airways Flight 1549 by Captain Sullenberger in January this year. While one may argue about how closely this incident will match up with a formal definition of mindfulness, it’s hard to challenge the fact that given the circumstances, the pilot had to have been completely present and mindful aligning his thoughts, speech and action to accomplish the miracle landing that he did. The pilot had to have had mindfulness resulting in focus and COMPLETE presence despite the stress and pressures of this extremely tough situation.

Similarly, the world is going through tough economic times, some of us may believe that we are worse off than others and there are others among us who may be coping to the best that they can through the power of presence. While these economic times are tough, they also offer opportunities for daily mindfulness practice. Often when times are well, we can get distracted with the happiness and fun in life. However, in today’s world filled with negative news, mindfulness may be the key to stay focused to make the best of the present time as well as find opportunities that we never knew or saw before.²

Prepared by Meegama-Kuruppu, Ph.D., a layperson who tries to find ways to infuse Dhamma into everyday life.
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¹ Rahula, Walpola: What the Buddha Taught (Grove Press, New York, 1974)

² For more information: Read “The Power of Mindfulness” by Nyanaponika Thera

Support the Vihara by Becoming a Member!

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Membership Application

Dear Sir,

I, Mr./Mrs/Miss/Dr/Rev (Circle One)

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Zip _____ Home Phone _____

Work Phone _____

I wish to enroll myself as a member of the Washington Buddhist Vihara Society, Inc., and enclose herewith a check for my membership: Life membership \$250.00, Annual Standard membership \$25.00, Annual Student membership \$15.00 (Circle One)

I am a Buddhist/friend of Buddhism (circle one)

Date: _____ Signature _____



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The Washington Buddhist Vihara, founded in 1965, and incorporated as a Society in 1966, under the patronage of Most Venerable Madihe Pannasiha Mahanayaka Thera, with Venerable Bope Vinitha Thera as its first President is a religious and educational center dedicated to presenting Buddhist thought, practice, and culture. It is staffed by resident monks who are available to discuss the various aspects of Buddhism, teach meditation, offer informal courses and by invitation, give lectures and meditation workshops at universities, schools, churches, and community groups.

The Vihara also operates a Buddhist Book Service with a mail order service; a free list of current stock is available on request. The Vihara Library contains works covering all facets of Buddhism. Every Sunday at 3.00 p.m. there is a devotional service which is followed by Dhamma discussion and meditation. We teach meditation on every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. Please refer to the time table. Visitors, regardless of religious affiliation, are invited to participate in Vihara activities as well as come in and browse in the library and Book Service. The shrine room is always open by appointment for individual meditation and devotion. For more details, please visit our website : buddhistvihara.com.

(The Logo & Seal of the Washington Buddhist Vihara were created by Mr. S.A.D Subasinghe in 1965)

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