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*Quarterly Newsletter of the
Washington
Buddhist Vihara
Winter2008*

-Dedication-

This issue of The Washington Buddhist is dedicated to commemorate
Arahant Sanghamitta,
whose day we celebrated on Sunday March 23, 2008.

When Emperor Asoka (3rd Century B.C.) was crown prince, he married a beautiful princess and had two children: Prince Mahinda and Princess Sanghamitta. Both of these royal children joined the Sangha. Emperor Asoka sent his own son, Ven. Mahinda, as a missionary to Sri Lanka, where his mission was very successful. Among his new converts was Princess Anula (Sotapanna) who requested ordination. Ven. Mahinda sent for his sister, Ven. Sanghamitta. King Asoka cordially sent Ven. Sanghamitta with ten other learned bhikkhunis to give ordination to the Sri Lankan princess and her retinue.



Ven. Sanghamitta is considered the first bhikkhuni to carry the ordination lineage to Sri Lanka, where the lineage was well established. In 433 A.D. the Sri Lankan lineage went to establish the bhikkhuni lineage in China; this lineage has been kept alive up to present. History tells us that Ven. Sanghamitta carried a branch taken from the south side of the Bodhi tree, the tree under which the Buddha achieved enlightenment, to Sri Lanka. This tree has the longest recorded history of any tree in the world. The Bodhi tree can still be seen in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka today, and is one of the most valued and respected Buddhist treasures.

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Vihara Weekly Schedule

Sundays	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
	7.30 p.m.	Meditation Class (Metta or Loving Kindness Meditation)
Thursday	7.00 p.m.	Meditation Class (ZEN)
Friday	7.00 p.m.	Sutta Study Class (every other Friday)
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.

ANNUAL VESAK CELEBRATION COMMEMORATING THE BIRTH, ENLIGHTENMENT AND PASSING AWAY OF THE BUDDHA



The Washington Buddhist Vihara cordially invites you and your family to attend the Vesak Celebration on Sunday 11th May. The program will commence at 9:00 a.m. and will include observing eight precepts, Buddha puja, Dhamma talks, Dhamma discussions, and a keynote speech on “The Sangha” by Swarima Wickramaratne.

The Vassaradhana and Kathina ceremony for 2008 will be sponsored by Dr. Esiri and Mrs. Chandrika Karunaratne of Pennsylvania. They are strong supporters of the Buddhist Vihara. The day for the Kathina Ceremony will be published later on.

Notes and News Spring 2008



The annual Kathina robe offering was held on November 4, 2007 at the Washington Buddhist Vihara, Venerable Katugastota Vidura Thero conducting. Twenty-eight Venerable bhikkus from Sri Lanka, Indiana, West Virginia and Pennsylvania participated in this year's ceremony. Venerable Thalangama Devananda Thero of Indiana Buddhist temple concluded the ceremony with a special 'Ashirwada pooja' to all the devotees who attended.



The sacred and meritorious deed of the 2007 Kathina robe offering was sponsored by Vajira Wickramaratne, Anura Wickramaratne, and Kamini Wickramaratne, in memory of their loving parents Mr. and Mrs. Wickramaratne of Nugegoda.

The new address of the Indiana Buddhist Vihara, which provided the text for this article, is:
7528 Thompson Road
Hoagland, IN 46745
(260) 447 5469
www.indianatemple.org

Notes and News



January 2008:
Siri Vajiranana Dhamma School of Maharagama Dharmayatana was chosen again as the best Sunday School in Sri Lanka. It has over 7000 students and around 250 teachers- all graduated. Dhammasiri Nayaka Thera speaks at the award giving ceremony to the outgoing teachers. Ven.Ananda Anunayaka Thera and Ven.Sumanasiri Thera, the Principal, are also pictured.



On Sunday, 23rd March, the Washington Buddhist Vihara Community held the Asian Food Bazaar, Sanghamitta Day and Annual General Meeting. Events commenced at 9:30 a.m until 5:00 p.m. and included a Vandana service, Buddha puja, and blessing service (Seth Pirith). Ven. Dhammasiri, Chief Incumbent of the Washington Buddhist Vihara, delivered the keynote speech, "Silence in Buddhism".

Notes and News



On 29th March, 2008, Bhante Dhammasiri and Bhante Vidura participated in the opening ceremony for the new Dhamma Sala at the Sakyamuni Sambuddha Vihara, Melbourne VIC Australia. This temple was founded by Ven. Soma Thera, a brother monk of Bhante Dhammasiri and Bhante Vidura, who passed away in Russia in 2003. The present Chief Incumbent is Rajakeeya Pandita D.Vimalananda, also of Bhikkhu Training Centre, Maharagama, Sri Lanka. This beautiful new Dhamma Sala was completed under the guidance of Ven. D.Vimalananda Maha Thera.

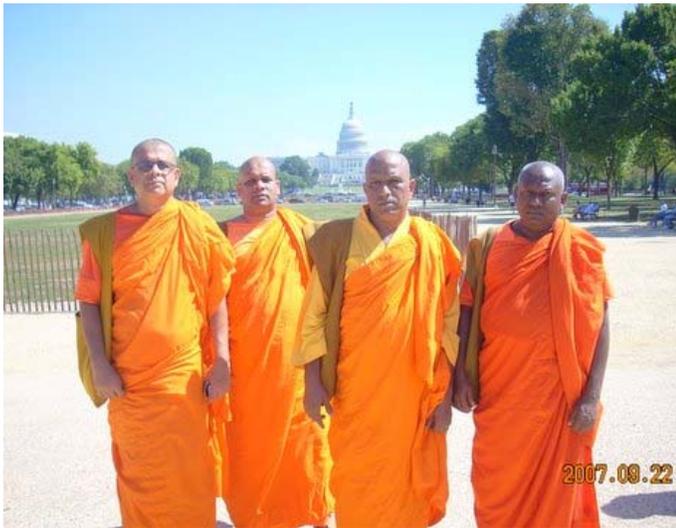


April 5, 2008 saw the opening ceremony of the SAMADHI STATUE at the Queensland Buddhist Vihara in Australia, headed by the chief incumbent Ven.S.Sugathasara. Bhante Dhammasiri- President of the Washington Buddhist Vihara- participated, declaring open the new statue on this date.

Notes and News



This is a photo of the Buddha Statue in the new Brisbane Buddhist Vihara headed by Ven. Vinayachariya Sitanamaluwe Sugathasara. Bhante Dhammasiri joined the ceremony to inaugurate the newly built Buddha Statue on 5th April 2008.



Many important monks from all over the world visit the Vihara time to time. From left to right: Ven.K.Vimalavansa , Ven.W.Dhammasratana, Ven.T.Chandaratana and Ven.H.Pannarama were among them last year.

SILENCE IN BUDDHISM

By Ven. M. Dhammasiri

Keynote Speech Delivered on Sanghamitta Day 2008
at the Washington Buddhist Vihara



In the study of early Buddhist texts, or sutta literature, we encounter a great and noble practice in Buddhist monasticism. It is said to have been highly praised and recommended by the Buddha. This practice has been described as “silence of the noble one” (*ariyassa tunhibhavo*). Likewise, the disciples of the Buddha are consistently urged to observe it as a noble practice of the Noble Ones.

In some discourses, the Buddha has been portrayed as a great sage who appreciated noble silence. Among his contemporaries he was known for practicing noble silence. Whenever he visited other religious congregations for a friendly conversation or spiritual discussion, the leaders of such groups immediately informed their followers that he was a great practitioner of noble silence, and admonished them to observe silence upon his arrival. This was done because they had accepted the Buddha as a Silent Sage and did not want to disturb their guest, an attempt to create a good impression about them in Buddha’s mind.

Thus, some questions regarding silence of the noble ones could arise in our minds: What does it mean to be silent? What good accrues to the practitioner of noble silence? Why have monks been encouraged to observe it? My sole intention in this article is to address these important questions, and to analyze the role silence has played in Buddhist monasticism. Furthermore, I would attempt to question whether noble silence is the key experiential knowledge in gaining the ultimate liberation from suffering.

First of all, I would like to look into the root of this word in Pali. Silence in Pali is called “*tunhi*” and it derives from the verb “*tussati*,” meaning “to be quiet, contented, to be satisfied, pleased and happy”. This indicates that to remain in silence is “to be satisfied, pleased and happy.” It also suggests that silence is related to inner spiritual progress, which gives rise to the cultivation of the quality of happiness in the practitioner. The English word "silence" comes from the Latin word “*silentium*” meaning "to be silent". The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers the definition of silence as “complete absence of sound.” The utter presence of silence gave birth to the beautiful phrase “silence is golden,” as well as to a practical proverb "it is often wise to say nothing."

Now let me examine the general role of silence in Buddhist monasticism. Even though observance of noble silence has a quality of contentment, which I will analyze later, it had other functions in the Buddha’s daily life and in Buddhist ecclesiastical acts. In the Buddhist monastic system, the act of silence has generally been portrayed as an act of unanimous approval and agreement. On Uposatha days, Buddhist monastics gather in a boundary area (called a *Sima*) for the recitation of the *Patimokkha*, which is disciplinary code of monks and nuns. A senior monk recites each section of the *Vinaya* rules, and after the end of each recitation he informs the monastics who gathered to contemplate and determine whether they have breached any rule. Those who have are asked to speak, and those who have not will remain in silence. If they remain silent, then the senior monk would assume the complete purity of the monks and he would continue with the recitation of the next section. In this case, silence is the sign of approval and consent, and allows one to proceed to the next task.

In addition to the sign of approval, silence has another role in Buddhist monastic tradition. It is a sign of the acceptance of an invitation from a donor. This aspect of silence has been portrayed in some discourses and stories. According to the sources, people gathered in the Buddhist monasteries to hear a sermon from the Buddha. After listening to the sermon, someone would invite the Buddha to accept a meal on certain days. If the Buddha had no prior commitment, he would remain in silence, indicating that he would be available, together with the monks. This is an act of silent acceptance of the invitation (*adhivasesi Bhagava tunhibhavena*).

Silence also has been portrayed as agreeing or disagreeing, viz. not subscribing to a particular view or statement made by a questioner. Once a wanderer by the name *Vaccha* went to see the Buddha, expecting answers to some burning questions.

He asked the Buddha if there is a self. The Buddha remained silent (*Evaṃ vutte, bhagavā tuṅhī abosi*). Is there no self? He remained silent. Disappointed, Vaccha rose from the seat and left. The venerable Ananda, who happened to be nearby during the "conversation" between the Buddha and Vaccha, and being puzzled by the silence of the Buddha, asked him urgently as to why he remained silent to Vaccha's questions. The Buddha explained to the venerable Ananda that if he were to say yes to Vaccha's questions, Vaccha then would begin to subscribe to a view called eternalism; if he were to say no, then Vaccha would subscribe to annihilationism. Both eternalism and annihilationism would cloud Vaccha's vision. Having seen the futility in these two views, the Buddha remained silent out of compassion for Vaccha. This suggests that for the benefit of the other party one should remain silent some times. Silence speaks the truth and it unfolds the true vision. On some occasions, answered the questions in silence. However, Vaccha, who could not grasp the meaning, left disappointed.

Now let us look into another salient aspect of noble silence depicted in the Buddhist discourses. In the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*, sutta 26 of the *Majjhima Nikaya* or the *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, the Buddha suggests to a group of monks that they either discuss the Dhamma or observe silence of the noble ones. The background story in this Sutta tells us who should observe noble silence and how to do it. Once, a group of monks were discussing the Dhamma in a hermitage. When the discussion was finished, the Buddha occupied a seat especially prepared for him. Then the Buddha asked if he had interrupted their discussion. They said they had been talking about the Buddha himself and the Dhamma. Then the Buddha said that for those who have gone forth from the home life into homelessness, it is well for them to discuss the Dhamma. If there is nothing to discuss about the Dhamma, then they should observe the silence of the noble one (*Sannipatitanaṃ vo, bhikkhave, dvayaṃ karaniyaṃ – dhammā vā kathā, ariyo vā tuṅhībhavo*).

A question could arise in our minds as to why the Dhamma must be discussed, and what does it mean to be following the silence of the noble one. Dhamma in Buddhism is what the Buddha taught--the true way to liberation. It can be identified with the basic doctrinal teachings: the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the three forms of existence, dependent co-arising, etc., which reveal the truth. Discussion of such Dhamma generates insight which is conducive to the understanding of the true nature of existence and life. Insight (*pañña*) is a necessary condition in liberating oneself from clinging.

Social talk does not lead to liberation, but to conflict and problems which give birth to suffering. Socio-political talk paves the way to grasping false views with reference to the world and one's life. Hence, a mind conditioned with such experiences can never be free from inner-chatter. Accordingly, it is called silence of the noble one because those who became liberated were able to achieve liberation by closing their minds to such talk. This avoidance led them to realize the true nature of life, and thus they became liberated, realizing lofty ideas which made them noble.

Sutta 76, the *Sandaka Sutta*, of the *Majjhima Nikaya*, sheds light on the kinds of socio-political talk which must be avoided. It includes:

Talk of kings, robbers, ministers, armies, dangers, battles, food, drink, clothing, beds, garlands, perfumes, relatives, vehicles, villages, towns, cities, countries, women, heroes, streets, wells, the dead, trifles, the origin of the world, the origin of the sea, whether things are so or not so.” (*Rājakathaṃ corakathaṃ mahāmatthakathaṃ senākathaṃ bhayakathaṃ yuddhakathaṃ annakathaṃ pānakathaṃ vatthakathaṃ sayanakathaṃ malākathaṃ gandhakathaṃ nātikathaṃ yānakathaṃ gāmakathaṃ nigamakathaṃ nagarakathaṃ janapadakathaṃ itthikathaṃ sūrakathaṃ visikhākathaṃ kumbhattānakathaṃ pubbapetakathaṃ nānattakathaṃ lokakkhāyikaṃ samuddakkhāyikaṃ itibhavābhavakathaṃ iti vā.*)

Yet, this Sutta points out another important aspect of noble silence which would help seekers of the spiritual goal find inner peace. Once, the Venerable Ananda, a close and personal attendant of the Buddha, was going to a hermitage of wanderers. A wanderer by the name Sandaka and his fellow wanderers engaged in the above-mentioned pointless talk by making a big noise. Meanwhile, when the Venerable Ananda was approaching nearer, the wanderer Sandaka told his fellow wanderers to keep quiet. He further told them that the Buddha’s disciples have been disciplined and trained to observe noble silence, that they like silence and commend the practice of silence. Sandaka also told them that if the Venerable Ananda finds them to be quiet, he would join the wanderers’ group for the holy practice. The *Sandaka Sutta* tells that socio-political talk soils the mind, paving the way to corruption and unprecedented problems in society.

When we examine the biographies of Buddhist monks and nuns in the *Theragatha* and *Therigatha*, it becomes clear that lofty goals of spiritual life have been achieved through silent minds. The cultivation of the mind has to be done in silence. When the mind engages in pointless talk, it becomes hectic and thus clouds the vision. The scattered and agitated mind has no potential to bring calm and bliss. True mental cultivation can be experienced only when mind becomes silent.

In the attainment of the second of the four *jhanas*, the mind has to be kept still and calm. When a meditator dwells in the second *jhana*, he remains silent; stilling both applied and sustained thought. Contentment and happiness arise in the mind when it becomes utterly quiet. Silence clears the mind of defilements. The texts show that when a disciple of the Buddha attains "no-thinking", he/she becomes endowed with noble silence (*Avitakkaii samāpanno sammāsambuddhasāvako, Ariyena tuōhābhāvena upeto hoti tāvade*).

When we examine suttas from the *Samyutta Nikaya*, we see that the Buddhist philosophy on silence is pointing to another important feature. Observation of silence is the proper range or domain of silent contemplative. Proper range is central to the Buddha in discovering truth, securing safety, and attaining liberation from suffering. The *Sakunaggahi Sutta* teaches us that suffering and unwanted problems arise when people go out of their own proper range or domain, which means going after temporary pleasure and indulging in worldly things (as pointed out in the *Sandaka Sutta*). A talkative mind triggers problems, and hence suffering comes into existence. For the ultimate liberation from suffering, noble silence is a necessary condition in Buddhist practice.

Moreover, "eureka" moments and great thoughts pop up in silence. Wisdom arises in silence. Silence cannot be expressed but experienced. Truth equals silence. *Truth is and silence is*. The Buddha began his journey to awakening, and the discovery of truth, from time immemorial, in silence. It was through that in this silent inner observation that he realized truth. Furthermore, this realized truth led him to the experience of awakening: an uncreated, unformed, and unconditioned state of bliss dependent on nothing but silence.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to a general aspect of society. When silent sages spend days and nights in silence and solitude, a society full of noise finds fault with them. Even if the sages speak the truth aloud, the society still finds fault. That is why the Buddha spoke to Atula in the following way in the *Dhammapada*:

This has come down from old, Atula, and not just from today: they find fault with one who sits silent, they find fault with one who speaks a great deal, they find fault with one who measures his words. There's no one unfaulted in the world. There never was, will be, nor at present is found, anyone entirely faulted or entirely praised.

Therefore, the Buddha, having gained realization, came back to society as an Awakened Silent Sage in order to awaken society in silence. Those who had ears to hear his voice in silence gained liberation, and those who had not are still remaining in this cycle of life, talking aloud, finding faults in those who are silent.



An excerpt from 'Kathina Ritual Season'

by Ven. Kurunegoda Piyatissa Nayake Thero:

It is stated that the meritoriousness of kathina kamma cannot be interfered with or surpassed by any other kamma. Neither counteractive nor destructive kamma can be impediment to the smooth operation of boon kamma that is derived from kathina rituals and performances. There is no more wholesome kamma capable of affording birth in favorable planes associated with the kamma generated by the kathina pooja offerings which precludes suffering in woeful states. The fact that one born by virtue of kathina -merit-generated rebirth [pathisandhi] kamma can not be trammeled by one born of any other kamma. It is stated that the kamma that triggers kathina merit based rebirth is so powerful that it is likened to a

The Power of the Sacred Forest

Thich Nhat Hanh



A Sangha is a community of people – monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen – who are walking together on a spiritual path. A Sangha has a great deal of strength; its members are able to protest each other, to help each other in every aspect of the practice, and to build the strength of the Sangha. We can take refuge in the Sangha in order to succeed in our practice. There are many things that are very difficult for us to do on our own, but when we live together as a Sangha, they become easy and natural. We do them without growing tired or making a strenuous effort. The Sangha has a collective energy. Without this energy, the practice of individual transformation is not easy.

We can also use the expression “Sangha body”. **When we live together in the Sangha is becomes a body, and each one of us is a cell in that body. If we are not part of the Sangha body, we will be isolated, hungry, and needy, and we will not have a suitable environment for practice. We can visualize the Sangha body as a forest. Each member of the Sangha is a tree standing beautifully alongside the others. Each tree has its own shape, height, and unique qualities, but all are contributing to the harmonious growth of the forest. Looking at the trees standing readily alongside each other like that, you can sense the beauty, solidity, and power of a sacred forest.**

Our Sangha body is going forward on the path of practice and its eyes are able to direct us. The eyes of the Sangha are able to see the strong points as well as the weak points of every member of the Sangha.

By Sangha Eyes, we mean the insight and vision of the collective body of the Sangha, which include the vision and insight of all of its members from the youngest to the eldest. Although the contribution of everyone's insight is necessary for the Sangha insight to be clear, it is not just a simple adding up of individual insights. The collective insight has a strength, a wisdom, and a vitality of its own, which surpasses any individual insight. We learn how to use the eyes of the Sangha, considering them to be our own. If you know how to use the eyes of the Sangha, you will make your Sangha body stronger and healthier every day. Whenever the Sangha body praises or instructs you, please kneel down with joined palms and listen deeply to everything that is said. It is the Sangha that helps us make progress on the path of practice. If we respond with pride and egotism, we will never make progress. We need to hear the truth about ourselves as others see it.

The energy of the Sangha body has the capacity to protect and transform us. As a member of the Sangha, all we have to do is to make our contribution to that energy. This is called Sangha building. It is the most precious work a monk, nun, or layperson can do. Each one of us needs to build the Sangha, because the Sangha is our place of refuge. The best way of building the Sangha is to turn ourselves into an apposite element of the Sangha body by the way we walk, stand, sit or lie down in mindfulness. When others in the Sangha can see our stability in this way, they also will become solid.

We build the Sangha by coming back to ourselves through mindful breathing, and not by finding fault with others when things do not go well. Criticizing and blaming others instead of concentrating on our own practice takes away the peace and joy of the Sangha and makes the Sangha more unsteady and unhappy. Although a Sangha may have weak points and shortcomings, it is still one of the three precious jewels – Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha – and it is a place of refuge for us. Our success or failure as practitioners and our happiness in life depend on our capacity to contribute in the practice of Sangha building.

The strength of the Sangha does not arise automatically. It is the product of the work of many individuals. The collective energy is made up of the combination of many individual energies. If you want the Sangha to be strong, solid and full of energy, you, as an individual, have to contribute your own energy to the Sangha. When you are present with the Sangha in mindfulness, you automatically contribute more energy to the Sangha.

and the Sangha becomes stronger. When you are absent from Sangha activities, you are not able to contribute your living energy to the Sangha, and the Sangha does not profit from your energy.

For example, when the bell of mindfulness is invited – even if you are out in the garden or working in the kitchen – if you come back to yourself by means of mindful breathing, you are contributing to the Sangha energy and making it stronger. This is your contribution to building Sangha. You can also have confidence that your brothers and sisters in the practice, wherever they are, are also breathing mindfully and producing energy for the Sangha when they hear the sound of the bell. We support each other with our practice of mindfulness wherever we are and whatever we are doing. In this way, we feel there is no separation between us.

When the bell is invited to announce the meal, do not feel that if you linger where you are for another three or four minutes, it will not make any difference. Do not delay, thinking: The line is still very long. If I go and stand in the line, I will be wasting my time. When you hear the bell inviting you to the meal, you should put down the work you are doing in order to contribute your presence to the Sangha. Standing in line with the rest of the Sangha, you can practice breathing in mindfulness. Your presence is then a very valuable contribution to the Sangha. Thanks to your standing there, your friends will feel more solid in the practice when they step into the dining hall. Standing in line, dwelling in mindfulness, aware of your Sangha around you, you are already practicing to live together peacefully and joyfully.

Maybe you have had the experience of practicing walking meditation with a Sangha. When you practice walking meditation, with each step you take your mindfulness is able to help and support the people around you. Your presence is essential to your friends in the practice. Do not deprive them of this opportunity to profit from your energy of mindfulness. The Sangha needs your energy, and you also need the energy of the Sangha. If you do not practice together with the Sangha, you are not able to enjoy the collective energy of the Sangha and you will go hungry. Your mind of love will waste away a little bit more every day if you do not nourish it with the energy of the Sangha. Without a strong mind of love, you will not be successful in your life of practice, and you will not be able to contribute your share to building the Sangha.

The Capacity to Build Sangha

While I was growing up as a novice monk and young bhikshu, I looked around me and saw that many of the respected elders in the congregation were excellent scholars, gave very good teachings, and had the ability to build temples and form congregations, but few had the capacity to build Sangha.

However, I remember two high monks as true Sangha builders. They were Upadhyaya Tri Thu at the Parmita Temple in the village of Vi Da and Upadhyaya Thien Hoa at the An Quang Temple in Saigon. These two monks were like mother hens. They spread out their wings to shelter and rear countless baby chicks, including them all in their warmth.

The Buddha Shakyamuni also knew the art of Sangha building. Even after only a few years of teaching the Dharma, he had built a Sangha of more than 1,200 monks and nuns. Only because he had a strong Sangha could the Buddha be so successful in offering the Dharma. In the discourses and the teachings on monastic discipline given by the Buddha we learn how his Sangha practiced mindfulness, compassion, and understanding. Many monks and nuns were able to realize the fruits of the path. We also learn that jealousy and attachment sometimes arose in the lives of the monks and nuns. But the presence of these profane elements in the Sangha did not diminish the value and the effectiveness of the Sangha as a whole. King Prasenajit recognized this when he said to the Buddha: “World Honored One, every time I look at the Sangha, my confidence in the Buddha becomes stronger.” Today we still belong to the Sangha body of the Buddha.

To build a Sangha, we need to have the skill and know the art of sangha building. Wanting to build a Sangha is not enough. We have to live and practice in a Sangha. We have to experience life in the Sangha, which means interacting with members of the Sangha whether that interaction is pleasant or unpleasant. This will give us enough understanding about how members of the Sangha can live together in harmony. In the Sangha body we live with people who can be very kind, peaceful and joyful. At the same time we might also live with people who have difficulties that make them harsh and inclined to discriminate and judge. We should recognize that it is not only others who have this kind of unwholesome habit energy. We too have these seeds. Without mindfulness, we cannot transform ourselves to help build a happy Sangha. When we make our brothers and sisters happy, we nourish our own capacity to build the Sangha.

Those of us who live in a Sangha must emphasize practices that build the Sangha. They are even more important than studying the sutras, practicing sitting meditation, listening

to Dharma talks or attending dharma discussions. We should know what it means to be a good elder brother or sister, to create happiness in our Sangha. We must have the capacity to love our younger brothers and sisters even though they have shortcomings, even though they may speak in a rough way to us, misunderstand us, or dislike us. We practice to forgive, embrace, understand, and love them as we do everyone else. If we reprimand and blame, we will not be successful in building Sangha. Here is a small example from our monastic life. Suppose you see a younger monk or nun wearing colored socks and you say to them: "You're not supposed to wear colored socks. Why don't you do as your teacher has told you?" That younger brother or sister might become resentful and wear colored socks more frequently as a form of protest. The result is that something very small makes the atmosphere suffocating for the whole Sangha because you do not know how to use gentle and skillful speech.

How can we love someone who is difficult to love? The best way is to look deeply in order to see her situation clearly and the difficulties in which she is caught. When we can understand that, we automatically accept that person and feel love for her. Through understanding someone's difficulties, we are able to love happily and harmoniously, creating peace and joy for our Sangha at the same time. This is a practice that needs perseverance. In the example, we can only help our younger sister when we know how to love her. Maybe the younger sister does not have many clean socks left, and today it's much colder than normal so she had to wear a pair of colored socks. If we do not try to understand her but just correct her, our instructions will be unsuccessful from the very start because they are based on a wrong perception about our younger sister.

If we are an elder sister or brother, we must act in such that our capacity to communicate remains solid, and the bridge of understanding is maintained between us and other Sangha members. When this bridge collapses, there is no help for us – an elder brother cannot speak to his younger brother, or a group of younger brothers cannot speak to their elder brothers. If no one among these brothers calls on the help of the whole Sangha body to restore the communication between them, they all fail in their way of dealing with each other. But it is not only the responsibility of elder brothers and sisters to practice. The younger brothers and sisters also need to practice to establish communication. If we are not able to establish communication with our elder brothers and sisters, then our practice of transformation will not be successful. All we need is to practice mindfulness diligently every day to recognize what is happening in our own mind. Then we will be able to communicate with our brothers and sisters.

Skillful Means

Our spiritual ancestors have created skillful means for us to help each other. When sweet medicine is needed, we can give sweet medicine. When bitter medicine is needed, we can give bitter medicine.

When flexibility is needed, we can be flexible; when firmness is needed, we can be firm. Whatever method we use, it should always be practiced with compassion. Compassion does not mean that we just allow someone to continue to behave in an unwholesome way. If we are not able to help our brother or sister, it is because we do not yet know how to apply skillful means. When we commit ourselves to Sangha building, we have to learn when to be gentle and when to be firm. Sometimes we have to act swiftly and not allow the situation to continue, because it is the only way to express our love.

When we visit a temple in Asia, we generally see two statues in the corner of the entryway. One is the gentle man and one is the fierce man. The gentle man has a very kind face and is holding a lotus in his hand. The fierce man has a cruel face and is holding a weapon in his hand. We need both the gentle man and the fierce man to build the Sangha. When we study deeply the teachings of the Buddha, we know that the gentle man and the fierce man are both manifestation bodies of the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokitesvara. The gentle man is always smiling, praising us for doing well, saying: "It's okay, don't be afraid." The fierce man is warning us: "Do not act in that confused way; if you do you will be reprimanded!" Nevertheless, the fierce man is also a manifestation of the gentle man. His heart is full of compassion, even though we may be afraid of his presence. We should not think that Avalokitesvara always appears gentle and loving – that whatever we do or say is okay or that he will accept everything. Avalokitesvara has much greater compassion and much greater wisdom. If we are a teacher or an elder brother or sister, we have to learn these qualities of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara in order to help our younger siblings. We have to love without allowing our love to be misused. We have to be brave when it is time to cut and prune. This pruning may cause some pain, but that pain is only relative, just like the pain of a surgery that will eventually lead to the good health of the patient.

Loving with Equanimity

The capacity to be inclusive and embrace everyone in the Sangha body is the basic quality of a Sangha builder. There are members of the Sangha who are fresh, open, and full of goodwill. They are able to understand and receive constructive criticism. We do not need to practice much to love people who are easy to like. When we are near such

people, we can just be happy in their presence. With them, the work of Sangha building is not difficult.

There will also be people who are difficult to enjoy and love. They may have prejudices, unwholesome habit energies, lack of understanding, and only a little capacity to receive criticism. We all have the tendency to want to drive out of our life the people who are difficult for us. When a member of the Sangha is very difficult, we generally say to ourselves: "We should send that person away, because he makes the whole Sangha suffer." But we need to have patience with such brothers and sisters and include them in our embrace as well. The practice of loving kindness means developing patience and an open mind. When we open our mind, we will also have room in our heart and in our home to accept those who are difficult to like, and we will not feel the need to drive them out of our life. Inclusiveness is something we learn gradually. Inclusiveness means opening our hearts and accepting everybody, which is not always easy to do. There are some people who can open their hearts very easily to embrace all their brothers and sisters in the Sangha. There are those who have not been able to do this. They think: "Oh, there is no more room left for you in my heart." This may be a natural tendency.

To practice means to go in the opposite direction of this tendency. We practice to make our hearts grow more spacious every day, making it possible for us to include people we do not feel close to or do not like very much. We are the disciples of the Buddha. We cannot always do what the Buddha does, but we have taken the vow to go in that direction. This means we must practice opening our hearts so that all have a place inside.

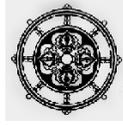
Although this may be difficult at first, we can do it little by little. Whether we are successful or not on our path of practice depends on whether or not we are able to do this. If we just sit there picking and choosing which person to allow into our heart, then we will never be successful as a practitioner of the spiritual path. We must learn to practice equanimity, the mind that does not take sides and treats everyone equally. It is just like a mother who loves all of her children equally, whether they are easy to love or less easy to love. Some of her children have never made her suffer, but others have made her feel sad and been bitter towards her. As a real mother, she loves all of her children. The heart of the Buddha is like that. The Buddha does not love just a few children; the Buddha loves everyone: the human species, the animal species, the plant species, and the mineral species. Each species has a place to be freely within the heart of the Buddha. The Buddha has taught us to love each other with the spirit of equanimity, giving every

one equal space in our hearts. It is not because that person is of the same religion or has the same color skin as we do that we love them. We love our brothers and sisters because they are suffering and need our love. It is simple as that.

To practice is to learn how to love without discrimination or attachment. Maybe when a certain brother or sister is sitting next to us we feel very at ease, peaceful, and happy, so we only want to sit near that person. This may deprive us of the opportunity to be close to other brothers and sisters in the Sangha who may also need our support and our presence. If we are intelligent in our practice, although we know that sitting next to the person we love brings us happiness, we train ourselves to sit next to other people in order to understand and love them as well. In this way we will be able to go in the direction of loving without boundaries, without discrimination, and we will make progress on the path of practice.

In Plum Village, the practice of Sangha building is seen as the most important practice in our program of training. If we want to be successful in practicing and teaching the Dharma in the future, we have to learn fully how to build a Sangha right now. Someone who does not have the capacity to build the Sangha will not be able to help the world, because if we do not have the Sangha to support us, we cannot do much. A bhikshu may be very talented, but he cannot do much if he doesn't have the Sangha. It is most important that while you are receiving the teachings in the monastery or practice center, you learn concrete methods of Sangha building and are successful in putting them into practice.

The responsibility of any monk, nun or layperson living in the Sangha is to stand beautifully alongside the other trees. When we stand beautifully we begin to contribute to the Sangha body, and so we are doing the work of Sangha building. We walk, stand, sit, and lie down in mindfulness. We practice mindful manners and mindfulness trainings in the actions of body, speech and mind. We put all our heart into our studies and practice. We do not go looking for little comforts, expecting this person to love us or that person to be attentive to us, growing angry when we are not treated "equally" or given our fair share. These things are not important to those on the spiritual path. The truly important thing is that we learn to stand beautifully and joyfully together with the rest of the Sangha. If we do, then quite naturally we will grow quickly, making a positive contribution to the Sangha body. This contribution will, sooner or later, bring about a great deal of happiness in the world.



The Dhamma Makes Mental Hindrances Vanish

Sent by Ven. Rahula Thero, Chief Incumbent, Letchworth Buddhist Vihara, U.K.

The Blessed Buddha once said:

When, Bhikkhus, a Noble Disciple listens carefully to the Dhamma, alert with keen ears, attending to it as a matter of crucial concern, as something of vital importance, directing his entire mind to it, in that moment, the Five Mental Hindrances are absent in him. On that occasion the Seven Links to Awakening develop towards complete fulfillment...

And what are the Five Mental Hindrances, that are absent on that occasion?

The mental hindrance of Sense-Desire is all absent on that very occasion.

The mental hindrance of Evil-Will is all absent in these exact moments.

The mental hindrance of Lethargy & Laziness is all absent during that period.

The mental hindrance of Restlessness & Regret is all absent on that event.

The mental hindrance of Doubt & Uncertainty is all absent in that interval.

These are the Five Mental Hindrances that all are completely absent on that occasion.

And what are the Seven Links to Awakening that approaches fulfillment right then?

The Awareness Link to Awakening develops towards fulfillment on that very occasion!

The Investigation Link to Awakening arises & approaches fulfillment on that occasion!

The Energy Link to Awakening also pushes forward towards fulfillment on that occasion!

The Joy Link to Awakening moves towards complete fulfillment on that unique occasion!

The Tranquillity Link to Awakening comes close to a stilled fulfillment on that occasion!

The Concentration Link to Awakening reaches unification fulfillment on that occasion!

The Equanimity Link to Awakening also gains fulfillment on that occasion!

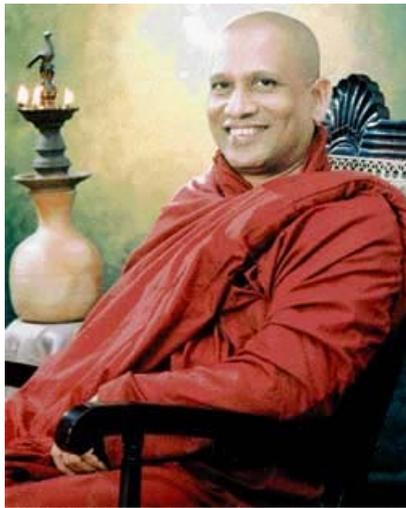
These are the 7 Links to Awakening that are fulfilled by development on that occasion.

When, Bhikkhus, a Noble Disciple listens carefully to the Dhamma, alert with keen ears, attending to it as a matter of crucial concern, as something of vital importance, directing his entire mind to it, in that very moment the Five Mental Hindrances are absent in him. On that occasion the Seven Links to Awakening develop towards complete fulfillment.

Message from Australia
Venerable Sitinamaluwe Sugatasara
President, Queensland Buddhist Vihara

Dear Friends,

In 1998, a handful of Buddhists living in Brisbane recognized the need for a Buddhist Temple to cater to all Buddhists and others interested in learning Buddha's teaching. Under the supervision of late Ven. Gangodawila Soma Thero, (pictured below, with the new Brisbane temple). This temple was inaugurated in a rented house on Pannard Street, Darra, under leadership of Ven. Sitinamaluwe Sugathasara Thero.



The dayakas and well wishers worked tirelessly towards the progress of the temple which served the greater Brisbane, Toowoomba, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast communities. There are many Australians who support the temple to listen to Buddha's teachings and

use the library. The temple is an incorporated and not-for profit organization run by a Management Committee consisting of President, two Vice Presidents, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer and three Committee Members. The incumbent monk is the President and leader according to the Constitution of the incorporation.

To cover the cost of running and maintaining the temple a fund has been set up with membership fees. Saturday evening of every week is dedicated for religious observances. A food stall is run every weekend for fund raising. A Dhamma School for children is conducted on Saturdays to help them in understanding Buddhist way of life and its values. Dedicated volunteer teachers help the monks in this task.

Annual Kathina pinkama, special offering to past 28 Buddhas, Vesak and Poson celebrations, Sil Days, meditation programs and Dhamma talks by respected visiting monks have been some typical activities of the temple. There are special services performed at funerals according to Buddhist rites. Counseling services are also available to the community during difficult times of their lives.

In the year 2001, an opportunity arose to purchase a house in Wacol with a long history of Buddhist activities, led by Mr Claas de Jong. This house was known as “Dhammadinna House” with a Bodhi tree (*Ficus Religiosa*) originating from Bodh Gaya, India, where the Buddha attained enlightenment. This house was purchased from Mr De Jong at a very reasonable price. As member numbers grew over the years, the temple was found to be inadequate during major religious events. By 2005, the house was owned by the incorporation with no outstanding debt. As the activities of the temple expanded to an increasing community of Buddhists, the service of another monk was needed and Ven. Wilagama Anandasiri Thero joined the temple in 2006.

The purchase of a spacious house on a 2.5 acre land in nearby Goodna in September 2006 was a milestone in the history of the temple. The place was surrounded by tall gum trees with abundant wild life, a truly serene setting for a temple to pursue and practice Buddha’s teachings. The temple at Wacol was sold to reduce the debt in the new temple. The 25-year old Bodhi tree was transplanted to the Goodna temple.

Some of the services provided to the members and Australian community at large follow:

 Evening prayer and offering every day, attended by a few families and monks

- ✿ Saturday program in the evening includes prayer and offering for all ages
- ✿ Saturday program includes a discourse on Buddha's teaching for adults, attended by about 30-50 on average
- ✿ Saturday Dhamma School for children, conducted in English, attended by Australian children of all ages: three classes at three levels. Total number of children attending the classes is around 30
- ✿ The temple has a good library of Buddhist teachings including complete Sinhalese and Pali Canon, and many books written in Sinhalese and English. Books written in English represent all main traditions of Buddhism, including Sri Lanka, Thai, Burmese, Tibetan, Zen and Mahayana traditions. Borrowing facility is available to any Australian wishing to learn the teaching, presenting valid proof of identity. A number of keen mainstream Australians use the library.
- ✿ There are 2-3 major festivals/religious occasions held at the temple. They are rains retreat festival, Buddha's Birthday (Vesak) festival and Commemoration festivals. The Vesak Festival is a public event held in the Brisbane City with major sponsors Brisbane City Council and Brisbane Multicultural Arts Centre. These festivals are typically attended by Buddhists and monks of mainstream traditions, numbering about 400 devotees.
- ✿ Cleanup Australia Day participation
- ✿ Dhamma School children performing service for elders at aged care facilities
- ✿ Tsunami relief work by the temple:
The Asian tsunami in 2004 devastated 80% of the coastal regions of Sri Lanka. The Buddhist Vihara (Temple) of Queensland Inc. was in the forefront in raising funds for rehabilitation work. The community collected \$35 000 that helped build 28 new houses in collaboration with its sister temple in Melbourne. Many people in Brisbane donated materials and the temple sent them to needy families. Australian Manufacturing Workers's Union donated \$55 000 to rebuild a computer laboratory of a destroyed school in Southern Sri Lanka.

Financial Arrangements

In the Theravada Tradition of Buddhism, a monk cannot accept a salary for the services provided. Therefore, the Buddhist Vihara (Temple) of Queensland Inc. and its Executive Committee is responsible for the provision of accommodation, all meals, private medical

insurance cover, international and domestic travel costs, incidental expenses and all relevant requisites of a Buddhist monk.

Meditation Teachers

All Buddhist monks are not teachers of meditation or mind development as explained by the Buddha. Two monks currently resident at the temple are highly skilled and qualified monks to teach the teachings of the Buddha. They conduct observances and rites according to Buddhist tradition. They practice meditation on their own for mind development and guide others to a certain degree. A meditation teacher is a Buddhist monk who has devoted his entire life in a forest monastery under the guidance of his teacher. He has much experience on his own to guide others and there are no formal qualification needed to achieve that. Such a teacher can help many Buddhists in Brisbane and other cities in Australia. May all beings be well and happy.



Pictured above: The new Dhamma Hall of the Sakyamuni Buddha Vihara of Melbourne,

Australia was declared open by Bhante Dhammasiri on 29th of March 2008 at the invitation of Venerable Pandit D. Wimalananda, Chief Incumbent.

Support the Vihara by Becoming a Member!

**Buddhist Vihara Society, Inc.
5017 16th Street N.W
Washington, D.C 20011
(202) 723-0773**

Membership Application

Dear Sir,

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

Address _____

City _____ State _____

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 Buddhsim (circle one)

Date: _____ Signature _____



Washington Buddhist Vihara
5017 16 th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20011
Tel.(202) 723-0773

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)

**Buddhist Vihara Society, Inc.
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