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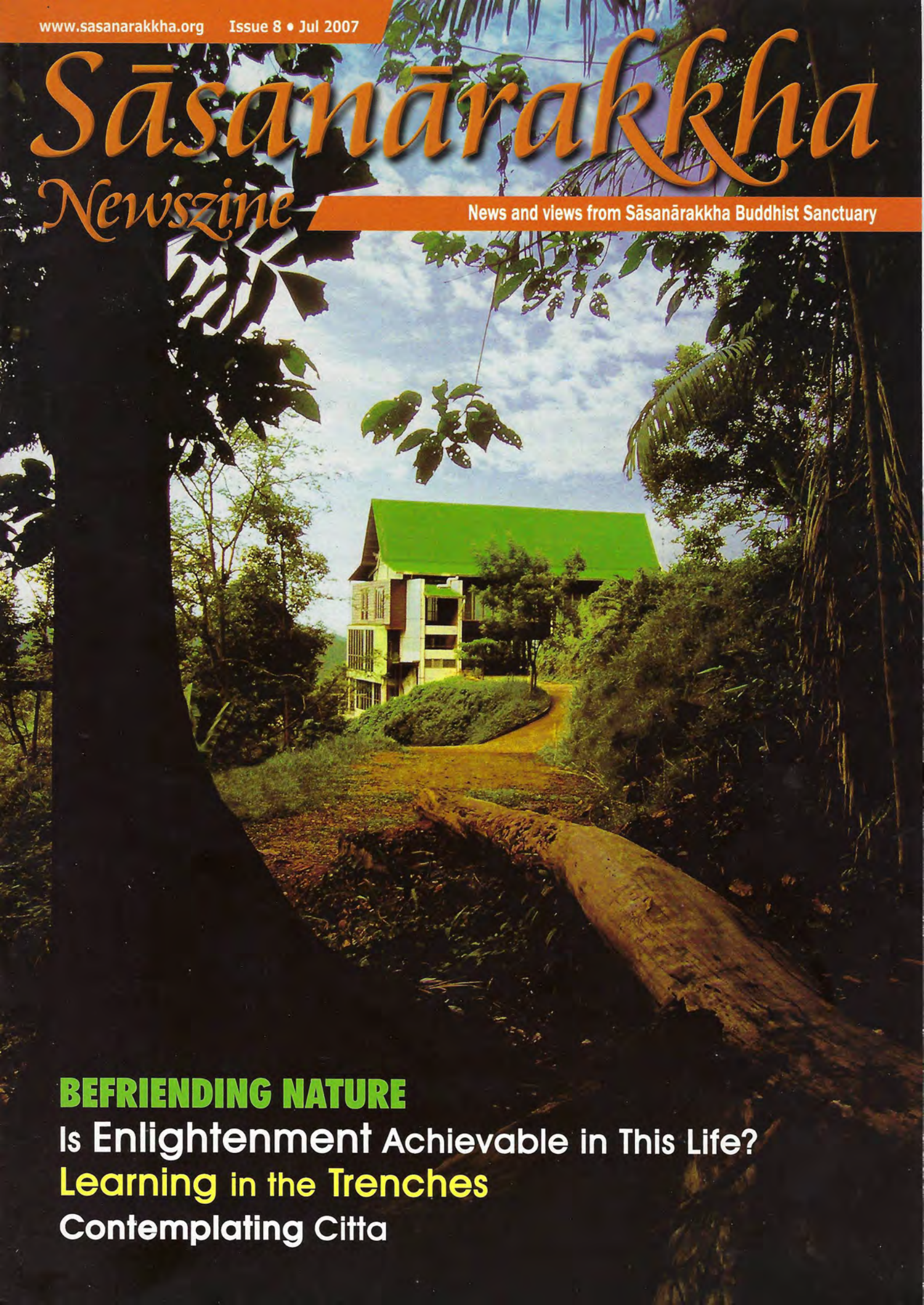
Sāsanārakkha Newszine

News and views from Sāsanārakkha Buddhist Sanctuary



BEFRIENDING NATURE

Is Enlightenment Achievable in This Life?

Learning in the Trenches

Contemplating Citta

EDITIOR'S THOUGHTS

Enlightenment—any takers?

Sāsanārakkha Buddhist Sanctuary is stepping up its efforts to reach out to its supporters, friends and all others who welcome the wisdom of the Dhamma.

Compared to the places that Ven Aggacitta visited on his tour last year, this year's itinerary has been a marathon, albeit run in different stages extending from January to June. Put on your jogging shoes and 'follow' Bhante in this 'replay' of his tour in "Dhamma Tour 2007". There is only so much that he can do and so far he can go. What about those whom he is unable to reach personally? He doesn't give up, so SBS had to find the answer to this. The answer? "Eager Beavers" and "A Fledgling Team" will enlighten you.

Whoops—that magic word again. For more of the same, the Abbot has "Is Enlightenment Achievable in this Life?" to offer. Those who do not have the time to go for intensive retreats will be happy to learn that there are other roads to enlightenment. Whichever road one takes, Mind is always there as your companion. You will be in good company if you get to know him better, so do not forget to read "Contemplating *Citta*", "Ethics and Understanding" and "Learning in the Trenches". These are from meditators who have gone far along the road. So what are you waiting for?

Get enlightened!

we've got mail

✉ Dear Ven Kumāra,

I would like to clarify whether a layperson like me, married with kids, can observe Uposatha Day at home. I was told it is better to observe it when we are alone, and then all the eight precepts can be fully observed. This is because relatives or family members might have wrong views on our practice. If so, that would create bad *kamma* for them.

Before I hear Bhante's view, I just want to let Bhante know that observing it makes me happy and I feel joy mainly because I can have the chance to control my senses, my craving for food and my desire to look beautiful (a secretary without lipstick to work on Uposatha Day) as well as forgo sleeping on a luxurious bed.

With the desire to renounce and yet unable to do so due to worldly responsibilities—observing five or eight precepts, doing 30 minutes of meditation and listening to Dhamma talks daily are the only comforts to me. It also helps me to overcome stress.

I cannot depend only on retreat time to observe eight precepts. What if I cannot go for a retreat due to unforeseen circumstances? Every time when we chant the five precepts at the close of a retreat it makes me feel very sad—back to worldly life again.

I have no doubts in practising the Dhamma as I believe I will be protected and supported by the Dhamma. I also believe that if my family supports me in my practice, they also will somehow get some blessing in return, rather than creating bad kamma for themselves.

Bhante, please enlighten me.

LIEW CHOONFEI

Ven Kumāra's response:

Of course Uposatha can be observed at home. It is spiritually more challenging compared to observing it in a more supportive environment. I would not worry too much about creating bad kamma for others. Imagine Siddhattha Gotama hesitating to renounce out of worry that his relatives might create bad kamma. Likewise, my parents were against my wish to renounce.

Have trust that you are doing the right thing *and* do it right, i.e. just do what you are supposed to do and leave it at that. While wishing others well, give them the freedom to act the way they wish to. Dwell in the *brahmavihāras*[1] and believe that things will turn out fine. Works for me. ☺

✉ I just got hold of last year's edition and the latest edition of *Sāsanārakkha*. Wow! It is certainly of good quality! Ven Aggacitta is certainly a learned man. This will be good to attract more professionals. You all must be and should be proud of the quality and standard of the magazine.

LAU ENG CHUN

✉ Dear SBS,

After I read your last issue concerning copyright infringement I was quite worried. The confidence of Ven Varado was frighteningly strong. To me his logic or justifications (Nissaggiya Pācittiya[2] 30 and tax-evasion from Pārājika[3] 2) seemed inappropriate and out of context.

I was worried because it appeared as though the act of copyright infringement was belittled; made out to be something that was at best a *dukkaṭa*[4] and a matter of being not 'polite' when committing an act of copyright piracy on a large scale for profit. Although the article recommended following copyright laws on a personal level, a reader might get a wrong message that it is not really such a bad thing to do if their "greed gets the better of them." The same thoughts can be speculated for a *bhikkhu*.

The topic is at best controversial and will probably never be agreed upon. I

TURN TO PAGE 21

1 sublime or divine abodes (that are attained through the development of boundless *mettā* (goodwill), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (empathetic joy), and *upekkhā* (equanimity).

2 'entailing confession and forfeiture'; category of offences whereby the offender has to forfeit the article which is prohibited or improperly obtained and then confess the offence to another bhikkhu.

3 'defeat'; category of four heaviest, irremediable offences that automatically and irrevocably end the bhikkhu-life.

4 wrong-doing; one of the lightest classes of *vinaya* offences.

abbot's address

Different Teachers Single Message

Some weeks ago a visiting eight-precept nun asked, "Why don't you personally teach just one method of meditation instead of allowing different teachers to teach different methods here?" This seems to me a typical question posed by a yogi faithful to a particular meditation method that works well for her.

We invited Jeff Oliver to conduct the year-end retreat as well as Dhamma camps for kids and teens in SBS for the last two years. In August 2006, I personally conducted our inaugural mid-year retreat, but this year we got Patrick Kearney to do so. Sayalay Ariyañāṇī will be conducting the year-end retreat this December. I also conducted an Easter meditation workshop for Firefly Mission in April and have been guiding IMPians (Introduction to Monkhood Programme participants) in their optional meditation retreat after IMPs. This mix of teachers must have prompted her query. Unknown to her, we also had a plan to host a three-month Pa Auk meditation retreat during the *vassa*; but this has since been shelved.

My answer to her question is in two parts. Firstly, I don't normally teach meditation to the laity because I have to give priority to training monastics. (Incidentally there will be five *bhikkhus* and possibly four postulants for this vassa.) The exceptions to this norm are Saturday evening meditation sessions for the public and occasional guidance for some supporters. Though I may have to personally handle the Hokkien-speaking yogis, I certainly appreciate the assistance of other English-speaking teachers to lighten my load. Moreover, as each teacher has his/her own style of teaching, exposure to them will enrich and deepen the yogis' practice.

Secondly, I pointed out that the Buddha did not just teach one method but many, in different permutations, in order to benefit sentient beings with varied talents, inclinations and temperaments. If a yogi cannot make much progress by practising a particular method, it is natural for her to look for another suitable method. If it is not available here she will look for it elsewhere. Then like-minded yogis will start their own centres, which will require human and material resources, which are already stretched. When resources are split and channelled into separate centres, this will definitely affect our strength and unity. However, if we can all share the same resources while fulfilling various needs, wouldn't this be better?

She nodded in agreement, and I hope that you will too.

Ideal as it may appear, this policy to be open to the teaching of different meditation techniques, if not properly defined, may also create its own set of problems. In the process of implementing this policy, we are learning to refine it. A first step towards this direction is the requirement that all personal retreatants familiarise themselves with the structure of the 'gradual training' (*anupubba-sikkhā*). To assist them in this task, they listen to one of my talks on the subject and study three relevant extracts from the *suttas* (see next page).

The 'gradual training' is a sort of default template that the Buddha used to train his monastic disciples. It is very archaic, found occurring very often not only in the Pāli Nikāyas but also in other recensions of the Buddha's teachings, and therefore highly reliable in authenticity. In SBS, all resident monastics and yogis are continually urged to follow this holistic approach to practice. One of the most prominent features of this approach is the emphasis on mindfulness and full awareness (*sati sampajāna*) as a prerequisite for *jhāna* attainment. Hopefully, this will help to retune the mind-set of *samathayānika*[1] yogis who tend to neglect this important step but just focus on long sittings in order to develop the jhānas.

As a "guardian of the Sāsana" it behoves SBS to be cautious and selective in approving the different Buddhist meditation techniques to be taught here. Although the yardstick, the bottom line, is the Pāli scriptures, the rule of thumb is—the methods may be different, but the message must be the same: guard the sense doors, overcome the hindrances, experience impermanence, suffering and not-self at the six sense doors, and purify the mind.

1 A Commentarial term denoting one who uses serenity (*samatha*) as a vehicle (*yāna*), i.e. one who first develops and attains the jhānas before embarking on the practice of *vipassanā*.

The Gradual Training

Just as the great ocean slopes away gradually, falls gradually, inclines gradually, not in an abrupt way like a precipice; even so, *bhikkhus*, is this Dhamma and Discipline: there is a gradual training, gradual practice, and gradual progress; there is no penetration to final knowledge in an abrupt way. This is the first wonderful and marvellous quality in this Dhamma and Discipline, which the bhikkhus perceive by reason of which they take delight in it.

From Uposatha Sutta (AN 8:20), based on the translation by Nyanaponika Thera & Bhikkhu Bodhi

It is possible, brahmin, to describe gradual training, gradual practice, and gradual progress in this Dhamma and Discipline. Just as, brahmin, when a clever horse-trainer obtains a fine thoroughbred colt, he first makes him get used to wearing the bit, and afterwards trains him further, so

1 Undertake the training precepts

when the Tathāgata obtains a person to be tamed he first disciplines him thus: 'Come, bhikkhu, be virtuous, restrained with the restraint of the Pātimokkha, be perfect in conduct and resort and seeing fear in the slightest fault, train by undertaking the training precepts.'

2 Guard the doors of your sense faculties

When, brahmin, the bhikkhu is virtuous... and seeing fear in the slightest fault, trains by undertaking the training precepts, then the Tathāgata disciplines him further: 'Come, bhikkhu, guard the doors of your sense faculties. On seeing a form with the eye, do not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if you were to leave the eye faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade you, practise the way of its restraint, guard the eye faculty, undertake the restraint of the eye faculty. On hearing a sound with the ear... On smelling an odour with the nose... On tasting a flavour with the tongue... On touching a tangible with the body... On cognising a mind-object with the mind, do not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if you were to leave the mind faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states might invade you, practise the way of its restraint, guard the mind faculty, undertake the restraint of the mind faculty.'

3 Be moderate in eating

When, brahmin, the bhikkhu guards the doors of his sense faculties, then the Tathāgata disciplines him further: 'Come, bhikkhu, be moderate in eating. Reflecting wisely, you should take food neither for amusement nor for intoxication nor for the sake of physical beauty and attractiveness, but only for the endurance and continuance of this body, for ending discomfort, and for assisting the holy life, considering: "Thus I shall terminate old feelings without arousing new feelings and I shall be healthy and blameless and shall live in comfort."'

4 Be devoted to wakefulness

When, brahmin, the bhikkhu is moderate in eating, then the Tathāgata disciplines him further: 'Come, bhikkhu, be devoted to wakefulness. During the day, while walking back and forth and sitting, purify your mind of obstructive states. In the first watch of the night, while walking back and forth and sitting, purify your mind of obstructive states. In the middle watch of the night you should lie down on the right side in the lion's pose with one foot overlapping the other, mindful and fully aware, after noting in your mind the time for rising. After rising, in the third watch of the night, while walking back and forth and sitting, purify your mind of obstructive states.'

5 Be mindful and act in full awareness

When, brahmin, the bhikkhu is devoted to wakefulness, then the Tathāgata disciplines him further:

'Come, bhikkhu, be possessed of mindfulness and full awareness. Act in full awareness when going forward and returning; act in full awareness when looking ahead and looking away; act in full awareness when flexing and extending your limbs; act in full awareness when wearing your robes and carrying your outer robe and bowl; act in full awareness when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting; act in full awareness when defecating and urinating; act in full awareness when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent.'

6 Resort to seclusion

When, brahmin, the bhikkhu possesses mindfulness and full awareness, then the Tathāgata disciplines him further: 'Come, bhikkhu, resort to a secluded resting place: the forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a ravine, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, an open space, a heap of straw.'

7 Abandon the five hindrances

He resorts to a secluded resting place: the forest ... a heap of straw. On returning from his almsround, after his meal he sits down, folding his legs crosswise, setting his body erect, and establishing mindfulness before him. Abandoning covetousness for the world, he abides with a mind free from covetousness; he purifies his mind from covetousness. Abandoning ill will and hatred, he abides with a mind free from ill will, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings; he purifies his mind from ill will and hatred. Abandoning sloth and torpor, he abides free from sloth and torpor, percipient of light, mindful and fully aware; he purifies his mind from sloth and torpor. Abandoning restlessness and remorse, he abides unagitated with a mind inwardly peaceful; he purifies his mind from restlessness and remorse. Abandoning doubt, he abides having gone beyond doubt, unperplexed about wholesome states; he purifies his mind from doubt.

8 Attain the jhānas

Having thus abandoned these five hindrances, imperfections of the mind that weaken wisdom, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, he abides having attained the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, he abides having attained the second jhāna, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration. With the fading away as well of rapture, he abides in equanimity. He is mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body. He abides having attained the third jhāna, on account of which noble ones announce: 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.' With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he abides having attained the fourth jhāna, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

This is my instruction, brahmin, to those bhikkhus who are in the higher training, whose minds have not yet attained the goal, who abide aspiring to the supreme security from bondage. But these things conduce both to a pleasant abiding here and now and to mindfulness and full awareness for those bhikkhus who are *arahants* with taints destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, destroyed the fetters of being, and are completely liberated through final knowledge.

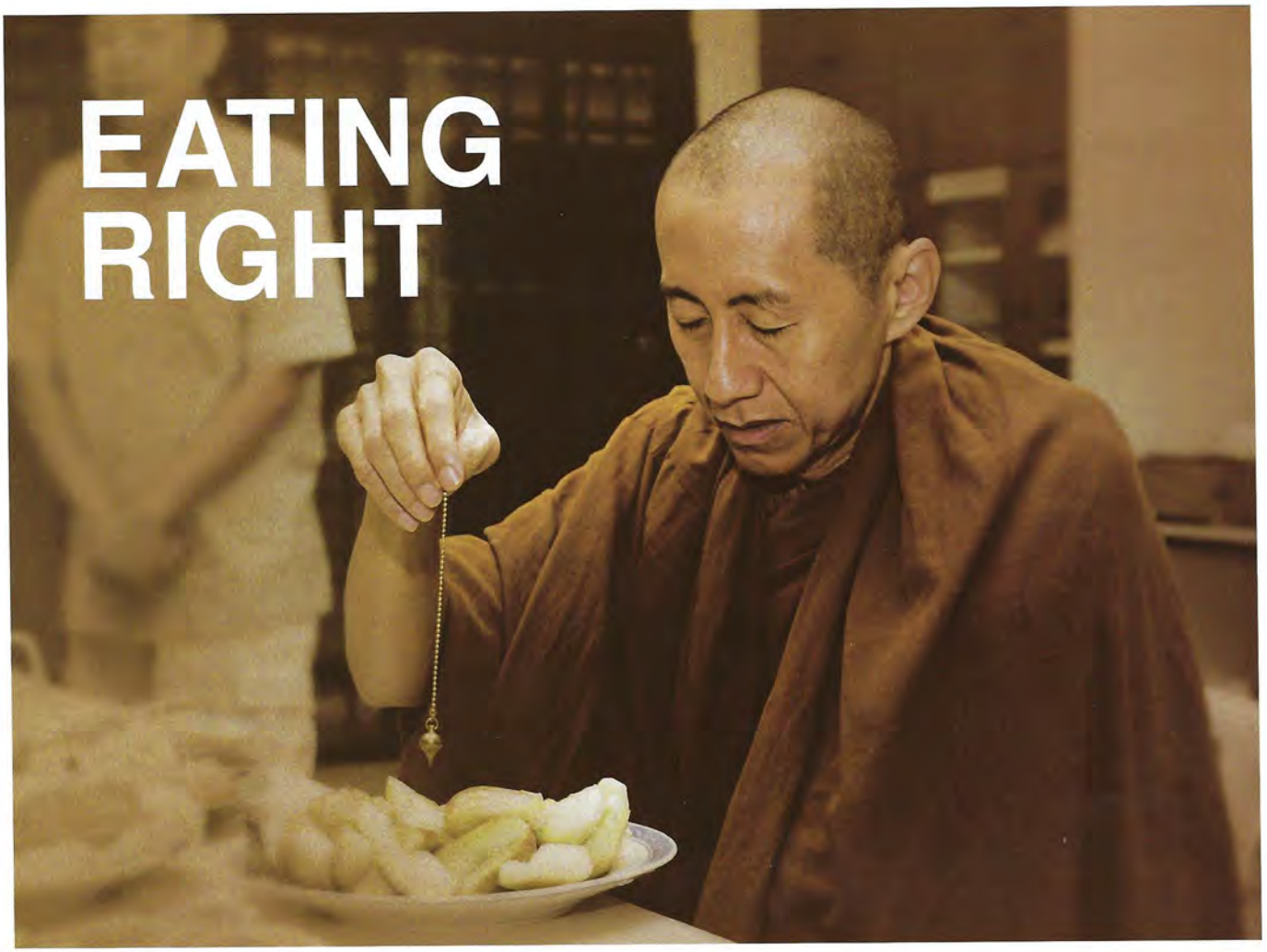
From GaṇakaMoggallāna Sutta (MN 107), adapted from Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation

9 Attain the unshakeable liberation of mind

So this spiritual life, bhikkhus, does not have gain, honour, and renown for its benefit, or the attainment of moral discipline for its benefit, or the attainment of concentration for its benefit, or knowledge and vision for its benefit. But it is this unshakeable liberation of mind that is the goal of this spiritual life, its heartwood and its end.

From Mahāsāropama Sutta (MN 29), translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

EATING RIGHT



It is commonly understood that monks are not supposed to be choosy about their food and should eat whatever is given to them. Is that in accordance with the Buddha's instructions? Let's see what VEN KUMĀRA BHIKKHU has to say.

I found an interesting quote on a health website. It is supposed to have come from a hieroglyph found in an ancient Egyptian tomb. It says: "One-quarter of what you eat keeps you alive. The other three-quarters keeps your doctor alive."

While I cannot be sure how true that was then, it seems to hold some truth now considering the eating habits of the many in modern society. Perhaps only one quarter of what people eat now is really good and necessary for them. The question is "Which quarter?" Ven Aggacitta believes he has found his answer to this.

If you have been with Ven Aggacitta some time in the past one year or so, you might have seen him dangling a pendulum over offered food. If you, like most people, were not familiar with the use of pendulums, you might have asked, "What's Bhante doing with that thing?"

If you were curious enough, you might have approached him and asked what in the world he was doing, or eagerly joined in if someone else had asked. Then you would have probably heard his explanation that he was using it to determine whether a particular food was suitable for him. If it goes clockwise, it means *yes*. If it goes the opposite way, it means *no*. Plain and simple.

Now, if you were sophisticated enough to ask further about how it works, he might tell you that it is based on a natural law of bioresonance[1] explainable by quantum mechanics. Ahah... So, now you can understand. (If not, please see text box.)

Under normal circumstances, he would eat the 'yes' food and set aside the 'no' food, untouched. If this

1 "Congruence between two bio-systems or a bio-system and a bio-frequency" (S.Decker & M Wilson, 2004).

He should accept whatever the Buddha allowed the faithful to offer to him. After having accepted what has been offered, he should select and partake of what is suitable for health and the practice of the holy life.

pendulum-dangling business is done privately, then no issues would arise. However, if it is done in public, when the donors are around to see if the venerable eats *their* food, that is where some 'feelings' may arise.

After one of Ven Aggacitta's recent Dhamma tours, someone *very* politely questioned him through email about his 'eating ritual', whereby "some food would inevitably end up being accepted whilst others may end up being rejected."

Looking at how the questions were phrased, I speculate that there might have been at least a bit of stress during or after a *dāna* session that the writer participated in. After some gentle lead-in to the issue, he asked

> Are monks not supposed to accept the foods that are offered with good intentions by lay devotees?
>
> Is being so meticulously concerned with food suitability contrary to the Dhamma?
>
> Isn't our life also affected by other factors like *kamma*, etc. apart from food?
>
> Wouldn't such meticulous testing give an impression to the laity of extreme practice compared to the middle path as propounded by Lord Buddha?

Such questions must have arisen many times and it's only now that someone is willing to voice it, so that we may explain with a reply. For that, we are grateful.

In his reply Ven Aggacitta, after thanking the devotee, said

> A monk should be easy to support, i.e. he should not be choosy about what is offered to him. In other words, he should accept whatever the Buddha allowed the faithful to offer to him. After having accepted what has been offered, he should select and partake of what is suitable for health and the practice of the holy life.

It can be found repeated in the *suttas* that the Buddha instructed his disciple thus

> Reflecting wisely, you should take food neither for amusement nor for intoxication nor for the sake of physical beauty and attractiveness, but only for the endurance and continuance of this body, for ending discomfort, and for assisting the holy life, considering: "Thus I shall terminate

The use of pendulums to check on food compatibility is just one small, though significant, part in the amazing world of divining or dowsing. While it is at odds with current orthodox science, people who use them are not deterred by that. As some would say, "If it works for me, it works for me." Can't argue with that, can we?

Here are some quotable quotes on divining or dowsing:

> Dowsing, also known as rhabdomancy, witching, divination, doodlebugging, radiesthesia—an art and a science that allows you to expand your abilities beyond three-dimensional limitations. In the past used mostly to find water—it is greatly expanded and now encompasses almost every aspect of human life.
>
> [Extracted from "DOWSING - Tools for the Pros and the Beginners" http://www.diviningmind.com/]

> The underlying basic principle of dowsing is that of energy. Every substance is 'alive' or, technically speaking, has a 'molecular structure'. It becomes clear that there is radiation emanating from, towards and between objects, including thoughts. It is therefore comprehensible that the basic law of attraction and repulsion determines the process of dowsing. We are in resonance with everything, and although not apparent to the eye, one can envision the reactions.
>
> With the assistance of the pendulum, we can establish what is most beneficial, appropriate and right for us as individuals. It is only within ourselves that we can find the answers to all that will lead us to a balanced life.
>
> The need for restoring balance is vital by any means—this can be anything that improves life and helps to regenerate, rejuvenate, harmonise and balance. The body needs to be provided with the right conditions, for example, appropriate nutrients to function healthily. The right approach for you may be a walk in nature, a theatre visit, a hot bath or relaxing in the hands of a reflexologist... there are many pathways to name but a few. And rather than experimenting with techniques or methods, dowsing can pinpoint the most appropriate approach thus saving money and time; and perhaps spare unpleasant experiences through trial and error.
>
> Edited extract from an article in <http://www.schoolofholisticdowsing.co.uk>

See here for more:

- For easy reading
  - International Society of Dowsers http://www.dowsingworks.com/ (Albert Einstein quoted here.)
  - Dowsing & Geomancy Explained http://www.geomantica.com/aboutgeo.htm
- For the technical minded
  - DOWSING: A Review of Experimental Research by George P. Hansen (Originally published in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, Vol. 51, No. 792, October 1982, pp. 343-367.) http://www.tricksterbook.com/ArticlesOnline/Dowsing.htm
  - Biological Resonance – Resonance in Biology http://www.quantum-life.com/documents/Gaborresearch/Biological%20resonance.doc

old feelings without arousing new feelings and I shall be healthy and blameless and shall live in comfort."

From GaṇakaMoggallāna Sutta (MN 107), trans. by Bhikkhu Bodhi

"Old feelings" probably means hunger, and maybe some other possible feelings too, but what does "new feelings" mean? It does not say. However, by common experience, we can understand that it could include a wide range of feelings including that of overeating, indigestion, stomach ache, heat, cold, headache, and any other form of pain or discomfort.

So, following the Buddha's instruction, we are to eat to quell our hunger, and perhaps other feelings due to ill health (considering that the right kind of food can be medicine), while being careful not to create "new feelings" of any kind, which can arise due to eating food that is plainly unhealthy, or unsuitable to the individual, be it chillies, coffee, brinjal, cheese cake, guava, pork, glass, or whatever else.

In his reply, Ven Aggacitta also said:

> There are many systems of determining what is suitable for healthy consumption: Ayurveda[2], macrobiotics, blood type, Chinese traditional medicine, 'modern' mainstream nutrition, etc. Being rather lazy to figure out which is the best for me (as there are so many variables to consider), I just use the pendulum based on the principle of bioresonance which intuitively takes into consideration all variables at the point of time that it is used. This really demands a high degree of discipline because the mind must be maintained in neutral mode, otherwise the pendulum will be influenced by one's likes and dislikes.

Should not we be more concerned with health rather than likes and dislikes, be that of the eater or the giver?

Furthermore, while in the past one probably only needed to be concerned with suitability and amount, these days healthy eating has become much more complicated due to the many so-called 'modern' farming, processing and cooking methods that can be detrimental to the body. So, among the many kinds of food kindly offered, would not it be better for monks to choose those that may be conducive to their health, regardless of whether he uses a pendulum?

By being heedful of the Buddha's instruction to eat properly, we will be in better health to learn, practise, realise and teach the Dhamma. I'm sure our kind devotees, wishing for our well-being, would agree.

To our devotees—we are grateful to you who have been so kind to us. We accept whatever the Buddha allowed us to accept, and hope that you will rejoice regardless of the food choices that we make.

2 (Sanskrit) ancient medical treatise of the Indian art of healing and prolonging life.

Sāsanārakkha Buddhist Sanctuary

Closer-to-Reality DhammaVinaya Seminar

23 (FRI) – 26 (MON) NOVEMBER 2007

Is the **Pāli Canon** our original scriptures? • Is there an **intermediate state** between lives? • Is making offerings to **devas** and to **departed ones** against the **Buddha's** teachings? • Was the Buddha a **prince**? • Does the orthodox Theravādin understanding of the **jhānas** agree with the suttas? • Are the **path** (magga) and **fruition** (phala) two adjacent **thought moments**? • Did he say in **Kālāma Sutta** that we should accept things based on our **reasoning**? • Did he say, "He who **serves the sick** serves me"? • Are the **Dhammapada** and **Jātaka** stories the word of the Buddha?

In the spirit of the Four Great Standards and the Kālāma Sutta, the participants of this seminar shall explore these questions and more.

Together we shall identify, discuss and help rectify some of the popular misconceptions and misinterpretations of the Dhamma-Vinaya that have crept into Buddhism and are commonly believed by Buddhists themselves—Theravādin Buddhists in particular.

Application forms can be obtained from:

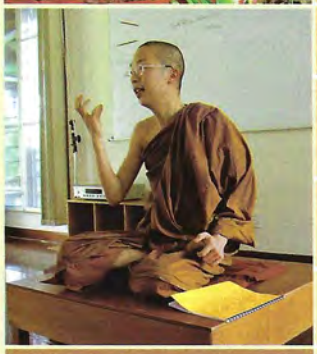
SBS Website www.sasanarakkha.org/crds/crds.zip
SBS Main Office t: 05-808 4429 f: 05-8411198
e: office@sasanarakkha.org

Closing date: 23 October 2007

Dhamma speakers and others involved in Dhamma propagation are highly welcome and shall be given priority in the processing of applications.

Participants are assumed to have prior basic knowledge of Theravāda Buddhism.

DHAMMA TALKS from SBS January to June 2007 —delivered in and around Taiping, Perak



Topic/Speaker/Date	Synopsis
Vedanā (Feelings) Ven Balacitta, 6 Jan	It is gratification of our feelings that leads to attachment and greed, and subsequently suffering. *Vipassanā* meditation is a good way to eradicate such defilements.
Dāna and Redistribution of Wealth Ven Aggacitta, 7 Jan	One's wealth should be wisely utilised for one's welfare and that of others.
Anger Ven Kumāra, 13 Jan	How anger arises and various approaches to deal with the problem, one of which is to understand the person whom one is angry with.
What is Love? Ven Kumāra, 27 Jan	Love that brings pain, jealousy and clinging as opposed to love that brings peace and happiness, expecting nothing in return.
Let Us Meditate Ven Kumāra, 10 Feb	Ven Kumāra clarifies myths about meditation, expounds its benefits and conducts a practical session on it.
Advice to Ven Rāhula Ven Balacitta 17 Feb	The Buddha advises Ven Rāhula to reflect on the deeds of body, speech and mind before, during and after their occurrence.
Laudable Customs of Chinese New Year Celebrations (SN 7:14) Ven Aggacitta, 18 Feb	Ven Aggacitta extols the virtues of filial piety; love and care within the family.
A Bucket Measure of Food (SN 7:15, Dhp #325) Ven Kumāra, 19 Feb	Practise moderation in eating—not as a greedy pig but for health and longevity.
Vaḍḍhakī Sūkara Jātaka (#283) Ven Balacitta, 20 Feb	Boars unite to defeat a ferocious tiger and an evil hermit.
Why Do Beings Live in Hate? (DN 21) Ven Aggacitta, 24 Feb	Hate has its roots in envy and stinginess. They arise from desires which in turn are caused by thinking based on the elaborations of our perception and notions.
Transference of Merits Ven Aggacitta, 17 Mar	Procedure and mechanism of dedicating meritorious deeds to others based on the *suttas*, compared with that of the Commentaries and contemporary life experiences.
Relaxation Ven Kumāra, 24 Mar	Be calm in order to lead a meaningful life. Meditation is a good way to learn how to relax.
Causes of Sickness Ven Balacitta, 31 Mar	Causes of sickness and the benefits of water therapy.
What is Good for Now and Hereafter? (SN 3:17) Ven Aggacitta, 21 Apr	Importance of *appamāda* (heedfulness or non-negligence), the one thing that brings blessings in this and future lives.
DhammaCetiya (MN 89) Ven Balacitta, 28 Apr	The story of why King Pasenadi showed reverence to Lord Buddha. He further clarifies that objects of worship remind us of the Buddha's teachings.
Wesak Talk Ven Aggacitta, 1 May	The Buddha's first words when he was born; his thoughts and words after attaining enlightenment; his last words before *parinibbāna*.
Right Livelihood Ven Kumāra, 5 May	Right livelihood should entail upholding the five precepts and being righteous, peaceful and honest.
Mother's Day Ven Balacitta, 12 May	Why the Buddha teaches us to respect our parents and how we can repay them by bringing them close to the Dhamma.
The Experience of Meditation Ven Balacitta, 19 May	Ven Balacitta talks about his meditation experiences.
Anattā (Non-self) Ven Kumāra, 26 May	What is meant by non-self; how the view of self causes unnecessary suffering; what can be done to understand and free oneself from it.
Dealing with Death Ven Aggacitta, 16 June	Right attitude and action when faced with the death of a loved one.
Overcoming Addictions Ven Kumāra, 23 June	Six steps to take when one wishes to overcome addictions.
Development of Faculties (MN 152) Ven Balacitta, 30 June	How is the supreme development of faculties in the noble one's discipline?

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Mettārāma, Kota Bharu

Dhamma Tour 2007

19 January – 10 June 2007

Santavana, Tuaran

Maṅgala Vihāra, Singapo

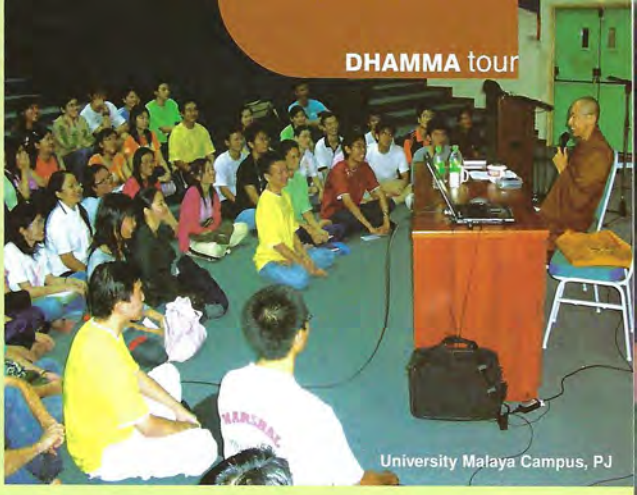
DATE	PLACE
19 – 25 January	**Klang Valley:** Petaling Jaya (PJ), Bandar Utama, Puchong, Kajang, Melaka
26 Jan – 1 February	**South:** Johor Bahru, Singapore
2 – 11 February	**East Malaysia:** Kota Kinabalu, Tuaran, Lahad Datu, Miri, Kuching
22 – 28 March	**East Coast:** Kota Bharu, Kuala Terengganu, Kuantan
26 May – 1 June	**North:** Sungai Petani, Alor Setar, Kangar, Penang
9 – 10 June	Singapore

TOPIC	DATE	PLACE
Bedside Support Q&A	29 Jan	Buddhist Fellowship, Singapore
Bereavement and Memorial Services Workshop	10 Feb	Kuching Bhagavan Buddhist Society
Bringing Home the Dhamma to Bring it Home	22 Jan 31 Jan 23 Mar 28 Mar	Buddhist Missionary Society, Kajang Buddhist Fellowship, Singapore Mettārāma, Kota Bharu Kuantan Buddhist Association
Buddhist Approach to Meditation	10 Feb	Kuching Bhagavan Buddhist Society
Comparison of Lowest-End Ariyas in the Suttas and Commentaries	26 Mar 01 Jun	Suttārāma, Kuala Terengganu Mettānanda Vihāra, Penang
Developing Mindfulness for Better Living	03 Feb 04 Feb 30 May	Kota Kinabalu Tzer Ying Lahad Datu Buddhist Mission Society Perlis Buddhist Society, Kangar
Dying to Live: The Role of Kamma in Dying and Rebirth	27 Jan	Maṅgala Vihāra, Singapore
Going by the Suttas, Maybe You are Already an Ariya	30 Jan	Satipaṭṭhāna Meditation Centre, Singapore
Guided Meditation with Sharing	09 Feb	Kuching Bhagavan Buddhist Society
Honouring the Departed	28 Jan	Maṅgala Vihāra, Singapore
How to Strive on Heedfully as a Lay Person	23 Jan 23 Mar 24 Mar	Kinrara Mettā Buddhist Society, Puchong Universiti Sains Malaysia Campus, Kota Bharu Suttārāma, Kuala Terengganu
How to Study the Pāli Suttas	20 Jan	Kota Kemuning Buddhist Centre
Is Enlightenment Achievable in This Life?	06 Feb 27 May	Inner Peace Club, Miri Central Kedah Buddhist Association, Sungai Petani
Is Rebirth Immediate?	26 Jan	Mettā Lodge, Johor Bahru
Kālāma Sutta—Is Faith Necessary?	09 Jun	Buddhist Union, Singapore
Meaning of Life	21 Jan	Persatuan Budhis Universiti Malaya
Samatha and Vipassanā Meditations—The Right Balance	10 Jun	Buddhist Union, Singapore
Significance of Various Meditation Techniques	28 May	Wat Chaideevarram, Alor Setar
Stepping Stones and Pitfalls in Meditation	24 Jan 01 Feb 05 Feb 25 Mar 31 May	Buddhist Wisdom Centre, PJ Satipaṭṭhāna Meditation Centre, Singapore Inner Peace Club, Miri Suttārāma, Kuala Terengganu Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre, Penang
Sutta and Visuddhimagga Interpretations of Magga, Phala, Jhāna, etc.: a discussion with Ven Kai Yin	03 Feb	Santavana Forest Hermitage, Tuaran
Taking Refuge Facing Crises	19 Jan 21 Jan 02 Feb 07 Feb 22 Mar	Selangor Buddhist Vipassanā Meditation Society Bandar Utama Buddhist Society Kota Kinabalu Tzer Ying Kuching Buddhist Society Mettārāma, Kota Bharu
Vision of Sāsanārakkha	25 Jan	Buddhist Gem Fellowship, PJ
Vision of Sāsanārakkha and discussion on other topics	27 Mar	Kuantan Buddhist Association
Theravāda Buddhism	26 May	16th National Convention of Malaysian Buddhist Associations, Sungai Petani
Thought Moments in Daily Life	08 Feb 29 May	Buddha Dhamma Fellowship Association, Kuching Kedah Buddhist Association, Alor Setar

BMS, Kajang

Mettānanda Vihāra

Buddhist Union, Singapore



University Malaya Campus, PJ

Compared to his Dhamma tour in 2006, the different stages of the tour undertaken by Ven Aggacitta this year added up to a marathon, beginning in mid-January through to mid-June, with breaks in between. We bring you the impressions of the devotees from the different places he visited to elucidate the Dhamma.

Cheong Thoong Leong (Klang Valley)

In a *sutta* study session at Kota Kemuning Buddhist Centre, we compared translations of Saṅkha Sutta (AN 42:8) by three different translators and noticed that the different styles sometimes led to different interpretations. However if we knew Pāli, then we would be in a better position to appraise the translations.

Bhante's brief visit was very fruitful with many of us here in Klang Valley getting the nectar of Dhamma. One devotee who had listened to Bhante's talks in the past commented that this time around Bhante used less technical terms in his talk, which suited the general audience. Well done, Bhante! Shall we request for another tour from Bhante?

Añjali Chiu (Maṅgala Vihāra, Singapore)

Many had come to listen to Ven Aggacitta with a feeling of anticipation, curious about his approach to the daunting topic of "*Kamma* and Rebirth", based on his book, *Dying to Live*.

One of my Pāli College friends, relatively new to Buddhism but enthusiastic to learn, expressed great joy in hearing Bhante's talk. So inspired, he wanted to sign up for the Introduction to Monkhood Programme at SBS in December. He particularly liked Bhante's approach to Dhamma, illustrated with lots of real life experiences, and gained a better understanding of kamma, death and rebirth.

Dhamma students with a basic foundation of Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha had little difficulty understanding Bhante's talk. However, some of the audience more inclined towards social and devotional practices found the talk too technical, dry and too *chim*—the Singapore colloquial slang to mean "profound". They were impressed with Bhante's wealth of knowledge, but were rather disappointed when their general expectation of a practical approach to the topic interspersed with humour was not met.

In his talk, "Honouring the Departed", given the next day, Bhante shared various contemporary real life encounters of his devotees, interspersed with snippets in Hokkien. The resounding laughter from the devotees throughout the talk clearly suggested Bhante had struck a chord in the minds of many and his stories might have evoked similar encounters they had experienced or heard from others. This talk seemed to have effected a sense of relief for many when Bhante affirmed that Chinese traditions and customary practices can be buddhistic.

One student interestingly remarked that listening to Bhante was like hearing from a good friend. It subsequently dawned on me that many others might have felt this close affinity with Bhante. Is it possible that we knew Bhante in previous *saṁsāric* existences? After all, nothing happens without a cause.

Jimmy Voon (Singapore)

All Bhante's talks were very well-attended. One in particular stood out from the rest. "Honouring the Departed" was so interesting that the Q&A session lasted for nearly two hours. Many of us were fascinated by the ghost stories and personal experiences shared by Bhante.

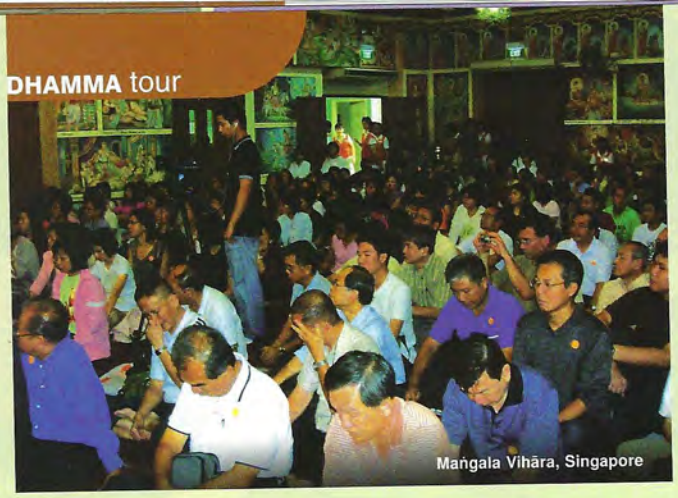
There was also a sharing session conducted by Buddhist Fellowship Bedside Support Group on helping the sick and terminally ill, in which he gave very good advice and suggestions on ways to help patients cope with their suffering.

Ooi Siok Thong (Sabah)

Ven Aggacitta captivated the audience at the Tzer Ying Temple with his simple and clear but thought-provoking and analytical approach in his talks. Bhante enthralled the crowd with frequent references to specific suttas, lending authenticity to his exposition of the Buddha's teachings. He also skilfully related the suttas to contemporary society. This was indeed a refreshing experience for the Dhamma-starved crowd in Kota Kinabalu where there is a dearth of English-speaking Dhamma teachers.

He also found time to visit Santavana Forest Hermitage at Tuaran, about 50km to the north of Kota Kinabalu, where he was briefed by Abbot Ven Kai Yin on the objective, activities and facilities of the centre. They exchanged views on *vinaya* rules and the comparative teachings from the Pāli Nikāyas and the Chinese Āgamas[1]. The few Buddhist devotees were truly inspired and convinced that the Buddha Dhamma is very much alive as exemplified by the learned

1 collections of Sanskrit sutras of the early Buddhist schools, which are the equivalent of the *Pāli Nikāyas*..


Maṅgala Vihāra, Singapore

MBMC, Penang

bhikkhus of great wisdom. It is beneficial to have frequent interaction between learned Buddhist monks, nuns and lay disciples from different traditions, to enrich our understanding of Buddhism for a better future.

Christine Ong (Inner Peace Club, Miri)

It is very comforting and encouraging to hear that enlightenment is achievable within a lifetime by Dhamma-followers and faith-followers (see p14), as virtuous lay Buddhists could fall into either one of these categories. It is good to be reminded that our ultimate aim is to get out from saṁsāra.

I really appreciate hearing the precious Dhamma from Bhante, and asking him questions, as it is not everyday in Miri that we have the opportunity to meet a very knowledgeable English-speaking monk. I was very fortunate indeed to meet Bhante and listen to him impart the Dhamma. It must have been my good kamma.

Tee Geok Kwan (Mettārāma, Kota Bharu)

Many who came to Mettārāma and to the Kubang Kerian USM Campus to attend the talks were impressed with Bhante's wide knowledge in the suttas and interesting true stories spiced with light humour which appealed to them. One of the most memorable things that I learnt from one of his talks was the importance of the five great gifts (this phrase was new to most of us): to observe the five precepts. By so doing we give to myriad beings the gift of freedom from fear, hostility and oppression and are blessed with the same.

Lim Geok Cheng (Suttārāma, Kuala Terengganu)

Many of us who were fortunate enough to attend Ven Aggacitta's talks came away humbled by the simplicity of the BuddhaDhamma. The mindfulness Bhante sowed in us is something we will strive to nurture every wakeful moment. Through careful diligence, we will nurture this mindfulness to fruition.

His call to strive for our own spiritual welfare first and foremost has touched a chord in our understanding and practice of the Dhamma. For no one, who is himself weak, is able to help another. We are mindful of his advice to practise the Dhamma while we are still young.

Bhante's clarification on the do's and don'ts of attending retreats was an eye-opener. How many of us have undertaken the trek to retreats with high expectations? How many more have come away frustrated and disillusioned? With his words in mind, those of us who will embark on yet another journey to self realisation, will be happy to note, nothing is to be expected that is not expected.

The Dhamma discussion on the last night was thought-provoking. We left with a clearer understanding of the Dhamma and our doubts clarified.

Bhante's down-to-earth approach to the Dhamma has lessened the fears of those who believed that the practice of Buddhism was only for educated intellectuals who can read and understand the voluminous texts on Buddhist scriptures. His humour has shown that the Dhamma, when practised diligently, gives rise to happiness.

Ho Phea Keat (Kuantan Buddhist Association)

It was Ven Aggacitta's first visit to Kuantan and, to the surprise of the lay Buddhist devotees here, Bhante did not know that Kuantan Buddhist Association existed! Perhaps we did not do our marketing well, huh! Now that Kuantan is already registered in Bhante's 'radar screen', we hope that he will be here more often.

On the first night, the inquisitive devotees got Bhante to recount his experiences over the years as a monk; from his years in Myanmar and subsequently to the time spent in solitude in the 'head-hunter forests' of Sarawak. His stories made our hair stand on end for the rest of the night. Bhante impressed upon us the efficacy of Khandha Paritta[2] and Mettā Sutta. There was an endless stream of questions that stretched the session beyond the scheduled time.

At the very least, we realised that it is not easy to be a monk, more so a forest monk. We were left wondering as to how many of us would ever really pick up the courage to become one.

Bhante's brief visit has left an impression upon us of the immense knowledge that he has, particularly with

2 Protective verses against fatal bites by poisonous creatures.

Kota Kemuning Buddhist Centre

Satipaṭṭhāna Meditation Centre, Singapore

respect to the DhammaVinaya, from which many of us could benefit. We would certainly welcome Bhante again to Kuantan so as to learn even more from him.

Teoh Thean Yong (North Malaysia)

On 26 May 2007, Bhante was invited to talk on "Theravāda Buddhism" at the 16th National Convention of Malaysian Buddhist Associations held in Cinta Sayang Golf Club, Sungai Petani. Much to my surprise, Bhante did not compare Theravāda with other traditions but pointed out we should read the Nikāyas bearing in mind what the Buddha taught in Kālāma Sutta. I felt that Bhante's explanation cannot be denied by anyone regardless of what tradition one follows. When Bhante talked about the doctrines and practices that are not in accordance with early suttas, I realised that I had many misconceptions about Theravāda teachings. Many participants commented that Bhante's talk was very objective and not biased towards Theravāda, and that they had learnt a lot from it.

I feel very fortunate to have had this opportunity to listen to Bhante's talks as they really gave me a new perspective on Buddhism and guided me to be more open-minded in my spiritual search. I hope in the future I will have more opportunities to listen to Bhante's teachings.

Dr Oo Khaik Cheang (Mettānanda Vihāra, Penang)

The Dhamma discussion, "Comparison of Lowest-end Ariyas in the Suttas and Commentaries", was attended by over 20 devotees.

Ven Aggacitta expounded the concept of path (*magga*) presented in the suttas as a gradual path leading to fruition (*phala*) at each of the four stages of enlightenment.

In the course of discussion Bhante gave some simple pointers on Pāli grammar, from which we learnt that Pāli words should be translated within the context of the passage in which they appear.

Bhante was very open in his presentation. He did not treat a passage as if it was truth not to be questioned, but instead asked participants what they understood from the passage.

In this manner Bhante was strictly observing the teachings given in Caṅkī Sutta (MN 95) for the preservation and discovery of truth, which is to be directly experienced and known for oneself. Everything else remains as ideas and concepts (and therefore not to be tenaciously grasped at) until the breakthrough occurs.

Tay Gim Ean (MBMC)

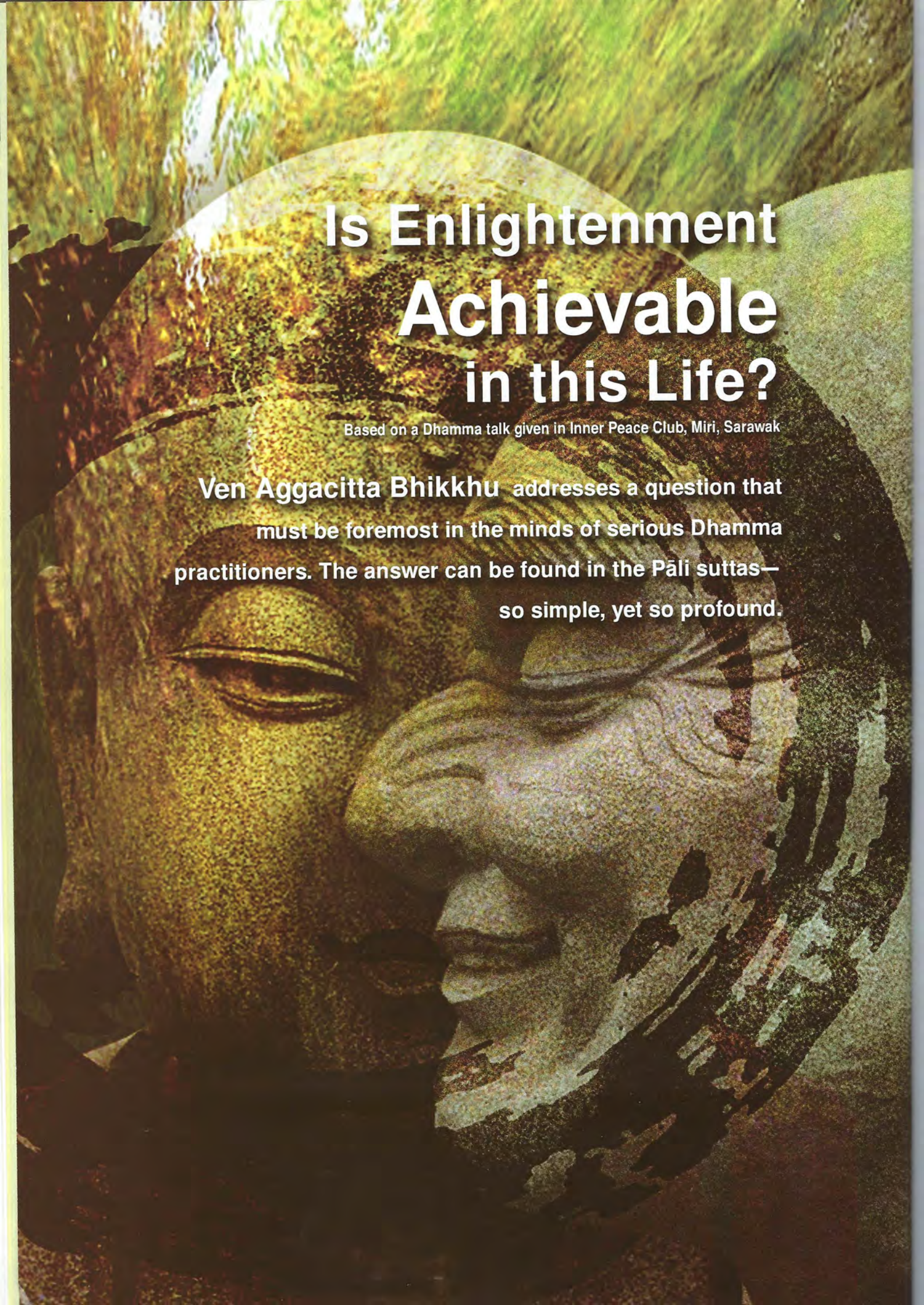
In his talk, Bhante referred to the gradual training (see p4) found in many suttas, thus making meditators aware that practice has to proceed step by step. Most meditators are not aware of this gradual training that provides a very good foundation.

I realise that some of the pitfalls that Bhante told us to avoid during a retreat, such as expectation, comparison, overestimation, clinging to past insights, preconceived views about practice, intensive retreat syndrome, disparaging others and attachment to psychic powers, are hindrances in my personal practice during retreats.

Cheng Geok Seow (Buddhist Union, Singapore)

In conjunction with Wesak celebration in Singapore, Ven Aggacitta delivered two talks, quoting extensively from the suttas to illustrate and support his point. His presentation is clear, systematic and easy to understand. What I appreciate most is that Bhante sticks very closely to the suttas, giving exact references when he quotes. This is commendable in three aspects: (a) it gives me confidence in what Bhante teaches; (b) it enhances my understanding of what the Buddha actually taught; and (c), with the precise references, I can always look up the relevant suttas afterwards to deepen my own understanding of the subject.

We need more good teachers who are able to teach the Dhamma so that more people will have the opportunity to learn and gain the immense benefits and happiness of being a true practising Buddhist. We have, in Bhante, a well-read and compassionate teacher whom we can easily relate to. Hence, it is important that we continue to support Bhante in his practice and Dhamma propagation work.



Is Enlightenment Achievable in this Life?

Based on a Dhamma talk given in Inner Peace Club, Miri, Sarawak

Ven Aggacitta Bhikkhu addresses a question that must be foremost in the minds of serious Dhamma practitioners. The answer can be found in the Pāli suttas—so simple, yet so profound.

WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

When you are freed from suffering by eradicating the three evil roots, you become fully enlightened—a *buddha*. A buddha is one who is awakened. That is the literal meaning of the word "buddha" although in the Theravāda context when we use the word "Buddha", we usually mean the Sammāsambuddha (Fully Self-Enlightened One), the founder of Buddhism.

There are various stages of enlightenment. These days, people don't immediately attain full enlightenment, although in the Buddha's time, there were some special people who could do so upon listening to a Dhamma talk. As we know, the Buddha achieved supreme enlightenment under the Bodhi (enlightenment) tree. The Pāli *suttas* seem to indicate that he attained *arahant*ship[1] without having to go through the stages of becoming a *sotāpanna*[2], *sakadāgāmī*[3] and *anāgāmī*[4]. This is contrary to the commonly held Theravāda doctrine that to attain full enlightenment one must go through the various levels gradually.

In the suttas, there are cases of lay people who became anāgāmīs without going through the other two stages. For example, there is the story (DutiyaUgga Sutta, AN 8:22) of Ugga, a lay person whose drunkenness dissipated when he met the Buddha. Subsequently, while listening to the Buddha's discourse, he attained the Dhamma Eye. Presumably he became an anāgāmī because he immediately observed celibacy and later announced his decision to his four young wives, giving away the eldest to a man of her choice. One thousand early disciples of the Buddha—the fire-worshippers headed by UruvelaKassapa, NadīKassapa and GayāKassapa—all became arahants upon listening to the Fire Sermon (Ādittapariyāya Sutta, Vin Mv) without going through the successive stages of enlightenment.

We have also been made to understand that the moment of enlightenment comprises path (*magga*) and fruition (*phala*) occurring in immediate succession: which means that after attaining the path, fruition follows immediately. This is based on the *cittavīthi* (thought process) model in AbhidhammatthaSaṅgaha, which is similar to the model used by Buddhaghosa in Visuddhimagga[5], and by subsequent scholars in other Theravāda Commentaries.

However, there is sufficient evidence in the suttas themselves to show that entering the path does not necessarily bear fruit immediately. Now let's go through some of these references showing that a person who has entered the path need not be a sotāpanna but can be assured of becoming one before he dies.

EIGHT WORTHY PERSONS

In PaṭhamaPuggala Sutta (AN 8:59) the Buddha talked about the eight types of persons who are worthy of gifts, hospitality, offerings, etc.

> Monks, these eight persons are worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutations, the unsurpassed field of merit for the world.
>
> What eight? The stream-enterer [*sotāpanna*], the one practising for the realisation of the fruit of stream-entry; the once-returner [*anāgāmī*], the one practising for the realisation of the fruit of once-returning; the non-returner [*sakadāgāmī*], the one practising for the realisation of the fruit of non-returning; the arahant, the one practising for arahantship. *(trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi. IBW p 385)*

These eight individuals are grouped into four pairs; one of each has already attained the fruit and the other one is still practising to attain it. This other one could take many years within his lifetime to realise the fruit, not just in the next thought moment, as we shall see later.

Paṭipanna Sutta (SN 48:18) also refers to these eight individuals but from another perspective.

> Monks, there are these five faculties. What five? The faculty of faith, the faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom. These are the five faculties. One who has completed and fulfilled these five faculties is an arahant. If they are weaker than that, one is practising for the realisation of the fruit of arahantship; if still weaker, one is a non-returner; if still weaker, one is practising for the realisation of the fruit of non-returning; if still weaker, one is a once-returner; if still weaker, one is practising for the realisation of the fruit of once-returning; if still weaker, one is a stream-enterer; if still weaker, one is practising for the realisation of the fruit of stream-entry.
>
> But monks, I say that one in whom these five faculties are completely and totally absent is 'an outsider, one standing amid the worldlings.' *(Ibid.)*

So these eight types of individuals possess the five spiritual faculties in varying degrees depending on which stage of the path one is on. It is this that differentiates them from worldlings (*puthujjanā*) who are considered 'outsiders', not on the path.

DESTINED FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

Alagaddūpama Sutta (MN 22) tells us more about a stream-enterer; introduces two types of persons who are not stream-enterers, yet have enlightenment as their destination; and declares another type who is destined for heaven.

> In the Dhamma well expounded by me thus, which is clear, open, evident and free of patchwork, those monks who have abandoned three fetters are all stream-enterers, no longer bound to the lower world, fixed in destiny, with enlightenment as their destination.
>
> In the Dhamma well expounded by me thus, which is clear, open, evident and free of patchwork, those monks who are

1 state of an *arahant* (or, in proper Pāli, *arahanta*), a person who has eradicated all mental defilements and thus liberated from further rebirths.

2 *stream-enterer*, one who has attained the first stage of enlightenment and is destined to attain Nibbāna within seven lifetimes.

3 *once-returner*, one who has attained the second stage of enlightenment and is destined to be reborn in this world of humans and deities at most once more.

4 *non-returner*, one who has attained the third stage of enlightenment and who after death will never again return to this world of humans and deities, but either reappear among the *brahmas* (inhabitants of non-sensual heavens) or attain Nibbāna.

5 *Path of Purification*; a manual of Buddhist meditation based on both the Pāli Tipiṭaka and the ancient Sinhala commentaries.

The insights which you got for a few seconds in a two-week meditation retreat may not be strong enough to inspire you to perfectly observe the five precepts for the rest of your life.

Dhamma-followers or faith-followers all have enlightenment as their destination.

In the Dhamma well expounded by me thus, which is clear, open, evident and free of patchwork, those monks who have sufficient faith in me, sufficient love for me, all have heaven as their destination. *(trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi. IBW p 386)*

The first paragraph tells us a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) has abandoned the three fetters. The first fetter is the view that there is a permanent unchanging self (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) in the five aggregates. The second fetter is grasping at rites and rituals, thinking that merely by following rites and rituals one can become enlightened. A sotāpanna can perform rites and rituals as part of the culture that she belongs to but is aware that this is not the way to gain further stages of enlightenment. The third fetter is doubt in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha: doubt that the Buddha discovered the Dhamma and revealed the path to its realisation; doubt in the truth of the Dhamma and that it can be realised by oneself; and doubt that there are fellow practitioners (members of the *ariya* Saṅgha) who have entered the path as revealed by the Buddha or have also realised the Dhamma. A sotāpanna is free from all such doubts because she herself has realised the Dhamma through that very path.

She will no longer take rebirth in the lower realms because whatever evil *kamma* she had done prior to her attainment, that has the potential to cause rebirth in lower realms, becomes defunct and she will not create any new evil kamma of such nature. Her destiny is fixed because she will henceforth take rebirth only in the human or higher realms. Other suttas (e.g. DutiyaSikkhā Sutta, AN 3:88; Sa-upādisesa Sutta, AN 9:12) state that she will have a maximum of seven more lifetimes to live in this sensual realm before she attains final enlightenment as an arahant.

The second paragraph tells us about Dhamma-followers (*dhammānusārī*) and faith-followers (*saddhānusārī*) who have not abandoned any fetters but also have enlightenment as their destination. But when? It is not stated in this sutta but we shall see later in other suttas.

DESTINED FOR HEAVEN

In the third paragraph, the Buddha talked about another lower class of people who have sufficient love for and faith in the Buddha. What is meant by sufficient faith, by sufficient love? The Commentary to MN 22 says:

> ...This refers to *vipassanā* practitioners who do not have any ariya quality other than sufficient faith in and love for the Tathāgata. For faith in and love for the Buddha arise in monks who are seated doing vipassanā meditation. They are as if taken by the hands and placed in heaven by that faith, by that love. It seems they are of fixed destinies. Moreover, the ancient *theras* (elders) call such a monk a minor stream-enterer (*cūḷasotāpanna*).

Visuddhimagga (Ch. 19, para 691) also uses the same term *cūḷasotāpanna*, but in a more specific sense.

> A vipassanā practitioner who possesses this knowledge [that grasps the conditionality of mind and matter] is called a minor stream-enterer, one who has gained relief and a foothold in the BuddhaSāsana (Buddha's teachings or dispensation), one with a fixed destiny.

So it seems people in this third class are also of fixed destiny, i.e. in the next life they will go to heaven. This is rather questionable, isn't it? Firstly, this person has not yet attained stream-entry and so his past evil kamma has not become defunct. Secondly, it doesn't mean that just by virtue of his vipassanā insight he will be perfect in observing, for example, the five precepts. Some of you have gone for retreats before and might have got insights higher than this. But after the retreat do you still kill insects, tell lies, or break the other precepts? If you do, it means that you still create bad kamma that has the potential to give rebirth in the lower realms. The insights which you got for a few seconds in a two-week meditation retreat may not be strong enough to inspire you to perfectly observe the five precepts for the rest of your life. When you are back in the world again, you forget all about the retreat, mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*) and how they are conditioned, and you are back to your old ways. So I think it is really not very plausible that you can definitely go to heaven if you have done a lot of *akusala* (unskilful, unwholesome) kamma.

But the Buddha *did* declare, "... those monks who have sufficient faith in me, sufficient love for me, all have heaven as their destination", didn't he? So how could the Buddha be wrong? Perhaps this quotation could be used to counter the popular Christian evangelical tool: "Accept Christ and you will definitely go to heaven." It may be tempting for Buddhist missionaries, but I prefer to interpret the Buddha's declaration as referring specifically to the the monks he was addressing then, or to those who have such sentiments just prior to death.

Still on this subject, there is another interesting occasion when the Buddha mentioned those who will not be reborn in the lower realms. PaṭhamaSaraṇāniSakka Sutta (SN 55:24) tells the story of a Sakyan[6] by the name of Saraṇāni, who was an alcoholic. When he died, the Buddha declared that he had become a sotāpanna, no longer bound for the lower worlds, fixed in his destiny and bound for enlightenment. When other Sakyans heard this they derided it, saying, "How could he be a sotāpanna when he could not even fulfil his training?" Mahānāma, the Buddha's cousin reported this to him. The Buddha answered by enumerating a whole list of persons who will not go to the nether worlds in the next life as well as those who are forever freed from such destinations, and concluded by revealing that Saraṇāni fulfilled his training (which includes abstaining from drinking) when he died. Right before the list is the Buddha's interesting remark on the lay follower.

> Mahānāma, when a lay follower has gone for refuge over a long time to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, how could he go to the nether world? *(trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi. CDB p 1811)*

This could also be an inspiration for lay Buddhists, although I feel that other considerations, such as the ethical conduct of one's lifestyle and the state of one's mind when facing death, should also be taken into account.

6 a native of the Sakyan territory, in which the Buddha was born.

HOW TO BECOME DESTINED FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

Let us now get back to the suttas to find out more details of what it takes to be destined for enlightenment. In the process we will make out the differences between the faith-follower, Dhamma-follower and sotāpanna. Cakkhu Sutta (SN 25:1) and the next nine suttas give the most graphic descriptions available.

> Monks, the eye is impermanent, changing, undergoing alteration. The ear ... The nose ... The tongue ... The body ... The mind is impermanent, changing, undergoing alteration. One who places faith in these teachings and resolves on them thus is called a faith-follower, one who has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, transcended the plane of worldlings.
>
> He is incapable of doing any deed by reason of which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal realm, or in the domain of afflicted spirits; he is incapable of passing away without having realised the fruit of stream-entry. *(trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi. IBW p 393)*

Now this means that the faith-follower is one who accepts what the Buddha says about the impermanence of the six sense-bases. She accepts these teachings out of faith—not necessarily having seen or experienced them—but just out of faith, "Because the Buddha says so, it must be true." That faith itself puts her on "the fixed course of rightness (*sammattaniyāma*)". *Sammatta* (rightness) is a synonym for the Noble Eightfold Path as defined in Micchatta Sutta (SN 45:21; AN 10:103), Saṅgīti Sutta (DN 33), and Ekādasama Sutta (AN 10:133). It is therefore a synonym for *magga* or 'path'. No wonder she has "transcended the plane of worldlings", i.e. no longer a puthujjana and therefore an ariya (noble one). That faith itself is able to prevent her from doing any deed that will cause her to be reborn in the lower realm. That faith itself will make her incapable of passing away without realising the fruit of stream-entry. That is why people say, "Faith can move mountains." If you really have such great faith, it can inspire you to become enlightened in this life.

So enlightenment *is* achievable in this life.

Let us now look at the next type of person called the Dhamma-follower.

> One for whom these teachings are accepted thus after being pondered to a sufficient degree with wisdom is called a Dhamma-follower, one who has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, transcended the plane of the worldlings. *(Ibid.)*

The rest of his attributes are similar to that of a faith-follower.

We can see that the difference between a faith-follower and a Dhamma-follower is in their faculties of faith and wisdom: one has a lot of faith and the other a lot of wisdom. But like the former's faith, the latter's wisdom is not based

You only qualify to attain stream-entry before you die if your faith or your intellectual wisdom is so extraordinary that it is able to prevent you from doing any bad deeds that can cause rebirth in the lower realms.

on experience or insight. Rather, it comes about through the sharpness of his intellect—being able to understand the Buddha's teachings, accept and internalise them so that he becomes incapable of doing any deeds that will cause him to be reborn in the lower worlds. The strength of his intellectual wisdom is so great that before he dies, he must also become a sotāpanna.

What is the definition of a sotāpanna in comparison with the faith-follower and Dhamma-follower?

> One who knows and sees these teachings thus is called a stream-enterer, no longer bound to the lower world, fixed in destiny, with enlightenment as his destination. *(Ibid.)*

A sotāpanna is one who knows and sees that the eye, ear, nose, etc. are impermanent, changing, undergoing alteration, but the faith-follower and the Dhamma-follower do not have this experiential knowledge. They accept the same teachings based on faith and intellectual wisdom respectively. That is the difference; but it is interesting to see that both the faith-follower and the Dhamma-follower have "entered the fixed course of rightness", i.e. the path that leads to Nibbāna. They are no longer puthujjanas because they have transcended the plane of the worldlings, i.e. they are ariyas. They have not realised stream-entry yet but are destined to realise the fruit of stream-entry before they die. In other words, they can be considered to be practising for the fruit of stream-entry. Therefore, together with the sotāpanna, they make up the first two of the eight worthy persons.

This Cakkhu Sutta refers to the eye and the rest of the senses. The next nine suttas (SN 25:2 – 10) repeat the definitions of these low-end ariyas with reference to objects, consciousness, contact, feelings, perception, volition and craving pertaining to the six senses; the six elements and the five aggregates. So they cover all aspects of sentient experience through the sense doors.

However, it is important to understand that if you have mere faith in the Buddha but your faith is not strong enough to make you refrain from committing any deeds that can cause rebirth in the lower world, then you do not qualify to be a faith-follower and you are not destined to attain stream-entry before you die. You only qualify to attain stream-entry before you die if your faith or your intellectual wisdom is so extraordinary that it is able to prevent you from doing any bad deeds that can cause rebirth in the lower realms.

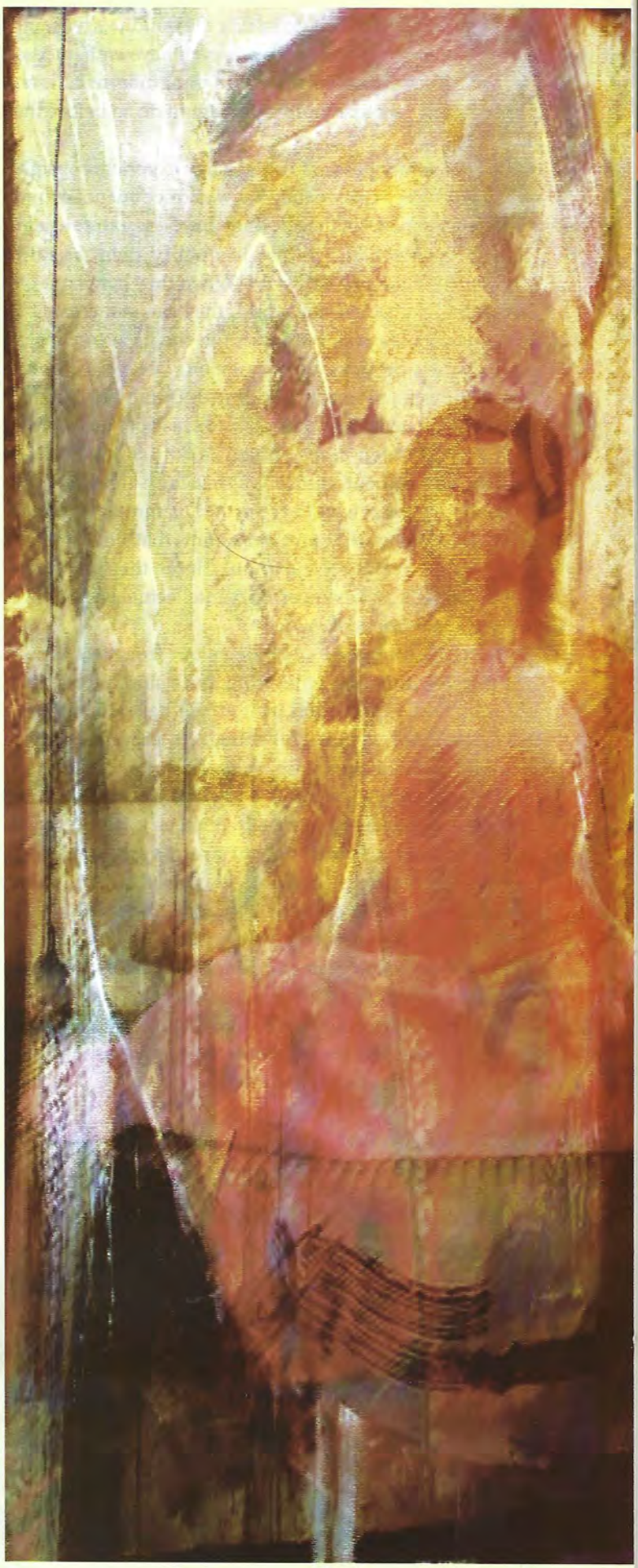
What are these bad deeds? They are not just the five precepts. They refer to a wider range of activities that are referred to frequently in the suttas. They are the ten types of bad conduct (*duccarita*) of body, speech and mind.

Killing, stealing and sexual misconduct are borne of the body. Bad conduct in speech encompasses lying, divisive speech that disrupts harmony among people, coarse or harsh speech, and frivolous chatter that do not conduce to spiritual or material benefit. There are three types of bad conduct borne of the mind. The first is covetousness, or the desire to possess someone or something belonging to somebody else. You do not really steal these animate or inanimate objects, but just toying with the idea in itself—without it being manifested in speech or in action—is bad conduct of the mind that can lead one to be reborn in the lower realms. Next is ill will, i.e. wishing harm towards another being. The last one is wrong view—that there is no such thing as the law of kamma, life after death, spiritual practitioners who can perceive other realms of existence, etc. I think most Buddhists already believe in the law of kamma and rebirth. It is unlikely that you will have wrong view.

MORE ABOUT DHAMMA-FOLLOWERS AND FAITH-FOLLOWERS

Kīṭāgiri Sutta (MN 70) establishes the teachings that the Dhamma-followers and faith-followers are on the path, practising to destroy the three fetters, from which the sotāpanna is already freed.

> What kind of person is a Dhamma-follower?
>
> Here some person does not contact with the body and dwell in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and his taints are not yet destroyed by his seeing with wisdom, but those teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata are accepted after being pondered to a sufficient degree with wisdom.
>
> Furthermore, he has these qualities: the faith faculty, the energy faculty, the mindfulness faculty, the concentration faculty, and the wisdom faculty. This kind of person is called a Dhamma-follower.
>
> I say of such a monk that he still has work to do with heedfulness (*appamāda*). Why is that? Because when that venerable one makes use of suitable lodgings and associates with good friends and nurtures his spiritual faculties, he may, by realising for himself with direct knowledge in this present life and enter upon and dwell in that supreme goal



> of the spiritual life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness. Seeing this fruit of diligence (*appamāda*) for such a monk, I say that he still has work to do with diligence. *(trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi. IBW p 391-2)*

Earlier on, we established that the Buddha said that those who have fully developed the five faculties is an arahant who is at the highest level of achievement along the path. The development of these five faculties is progressively weaker for those further down the path until the lowest level, i.e. one practising for the realisation of the fruit of stream-entry. So even if you are not yet a sotāpanna but only practising to become one, you must have these five faculties. Anyone who does not have these five faculties is considered "an outsider, one standing amid the worldlings (*puthujjanā*)".

According to the definition above, a Dhamma-follower has not cut off any taints whereas a sotāpanna has eradicated three fetters. However, the Buddha goes on to say that he has the five faculties. So we can infer that he is on the path, still working towards the realisation of the fruit of stream-entry.

In the third part of the quotation, the Buddha expounded the list of activities the Dhamma-follower can do in order to make further progress. It is impossible for these activities to be carried out within a thought moment. Clearly, a person on the path cannot be one thought moment away from fruition.

Now let's look at the faith-follower, who is defined in exactly the same words, except for the first two paragraphs.

> What kind of person is a faith-follower?
>
> Here some person does not contact with the body and dwell in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and his taints are not yet destroyed by his seeing with wisdom, yet he has sufficient faith in and love for the Tathāgata. *(Ibid.)*

Like the Dhamma-follower, he is also an ariya, on the path to the realisation of the fruit of stream-entry.

ENLIGHTENMENT IN THIS LIFE

So is enlightenment achievable in this life? Do you have the faith or wisdom to fully accept the teachings of the Buddha on impermanence? That leads us to a very pertinent point. We are talking about people with overwhelming faith and

extraordinary wisdom in accepting the Buddha's teachings on impermanence. They may not even have embarked on the practice of vipassanā, although their intense faith and wisdom will eventually prompt them to do so before they die.

What about vipassanā yogis? They experience insights in meditation retreats; so they know and see but not enough to be sotāpannas. Neither do they have the extraordinary faith or intellectual wisdom to qualify them as faith-followers or Dhamma-followers. When they come out of a retreat and go back to the world, they can still create bad kamma that may result in rebirth in the lower realms. So under which category do they belong? None. Although Visuddhimagga says that a yogi with certain insights is a cūḷasotāpanna whose destiny is fixed, this does not conform with what is stated in the suttas. Cakkhu Sutta (SN 25:1) and the subsequent suttas say that faith-followers and Dhamma-followers have not seen the Dhamma, yet they are incapable of committing any bad kamma that will land them in the lower realms. We can only infer that their overwhelming faith and extraordinary intellectual wisdom will prevent them from doing so.

The vipassanā yogi who comes out from retreat may not possess this overwhelming faith and intellectual wisdom. The experiential insight she has gained in the retreat may not be powerful enough to prevent her from committing such unwholesome deeds.

So if you are not a vipassanā yogi but you really want to achieve enlightenment in this lifetime, be a faith-follower, or a Dhamma-follower. If you are a vipassanā yogi, complement the experiential insights gained in retreats with deep faith in and intellectual acceptance of the Buddha's teachings on the impermanence of sensory experience; better still, try to integrate and adapt the skills of vipassanā meditation developed during retreats to your daily life—by continually observing, with the body as an anchor or reference point, how mental states constantly arise and pass away due to causes and conditions.

The main thesis of this article is based on Ven Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation of *sammattaniyāma* as "the fixed course of rightness", which accords with the Commentarial interpretation. This interpretation takes *sammattaniyāma* to be equivalent to *magga*, which is supposed to be immediately followed by *phala*. As I have pointed out, this is self-contradictory in the suttas.

Upon further pondering however, it occurred to me that *sammattaniyāma* can also be rendered as "the fixed course (*leading*) *to* rightness", which will give a radically different perspective. This will suggest that the faith-followers and Dhamma-followers, although classified as ariyas, do not yet possess *all* the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path (*sammatta* = *magga*), but are on the fixed course (*niyāma*) that will eventually lead to its consummation and the consequent realisation of the fruit (*phala*) of stream-entry before they pass away. Although this interpretation does not necessarily preclude the contiguity of magga and phala, I find it more tenable because of the following considerations:

- Both the faith-follower and Dhamma-follower do not yet know or see the impermanence of the eye, etc.; therefore they would be lacking in right view, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.
- Because the sotāpanna knows and sees the impermanence of the eye, etc. he must possess the Noble Eightfold Path. This is confirmed in DutiyaSāriputta Sutta (SN 55:2), where the Buddha endorsed Ven Sāriputta's answer that *sota* (stream) is defined as the Noble Eightfold Path and sotāpanna as one who possesses this Noble Eightfold Path.

IBW: *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon* edited and introduced by Bhikkhu Bodhi

CDB: *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṁyutta Nikāya* translated from the Pāli; original translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Sāsanārakkha Newszine **NewsTeam for this issue**

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wonder if this article might encourage people to walk on the controversial software *pārājika* line. While I am not ready to point the pārājika finger on copyright or software issues, there are bhikkhus who will and it is stated that one should be very careful with software in the Pārājika section of the *Buddhist Monastic Code*[5]. Likewise, people's views surely change and the acceptance of and respect for copyright laws appears to be growing. Laypeople and bhikkhus, in particular, should stay clear of violation of these laws, by considering it as if it were an offence of stealing. In this way, if at a later date a bhikkhu were to change his opinion about copyright infringement being a pārājika, he will be free from doubt.

While it would be nice to have a firm answer on this issue, it is pointless and it has the potential to be a catalyst for a modern day schism if one tradition officially accepts one view while others do not. While it is an issue that cannot be covered with grass, it is best to be put out far away in left-field with a sign that says, "Best not to walk near here."

I wish SBS well, peace and growth.

BKS

Ven Kumāra's response:

Thank you for writing in on the matter. We were hoping that someone would. ☺

We share your concern that it is a controversial subject and it is precisely because of that that we wanted to publish a well-thought out and researched article on the matter. We also think that it is not good to hurt the livelihood of anyone, be it by copying his work or by any other means.

However, the Buddha encouraged us to be clear about what a vinaya offence is and what is not; what a heavy offence is and what a light one is. For a monk to avoid the matter and remain in doubt is certainly not what the Buddha instructed.

In our modern world, the subject of copyright infringement is one that badly needs some clear and convincing answers, and few monks are willing to look into it seriously enough to offer any. Therefore, we are glad that Ven Varado contributed an article that tries to provide logical answers by drawing inferences from the vinaya.

It is by no means a closed issue. We welcome anyone who has views, with scriptural support, on the subject to send them to us so that we can deepen our understanding of the matter.

✉ I wish to thank Bhante for his advice on many things during my visit to SBS in Feb 07. Actually, upon meeting him, I stumbled and couldn't think of those things that had been bothering me—it seemed that by just looking at his calm face all my problems and questions were solved and answered. For a person with such deep knowledge of Dhamma, he is very humble: a real teacher and disciple of the Buddha. I am happy that I met him. Hopefully I have gained merits too.

His advice on radiating *mettā* and playing the mettā CD really works. Even the otherwise barren plants at my house are flowering and fruiting after so long. Imagine: I thought that they were actually dying! This really shows the great benefits of mettā on our environment and mental health. Thank you so much. *Sādhu!*

CHRISTINA NG

5 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu. *The Buddhist Monastic Code, Volume I: The Pātimokkha Training Rules Translated and Explained.* 1994.

We look forward to hearing from you, be they comments, questions, views, etc. and enjoy reading them. Even if they are not meant for the editor, we can convey them to the right person.

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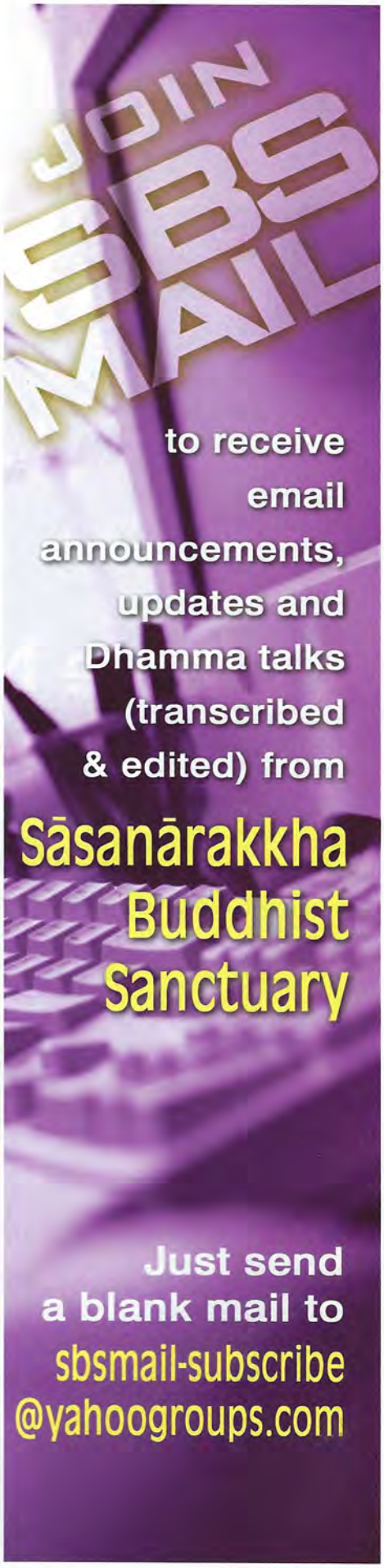
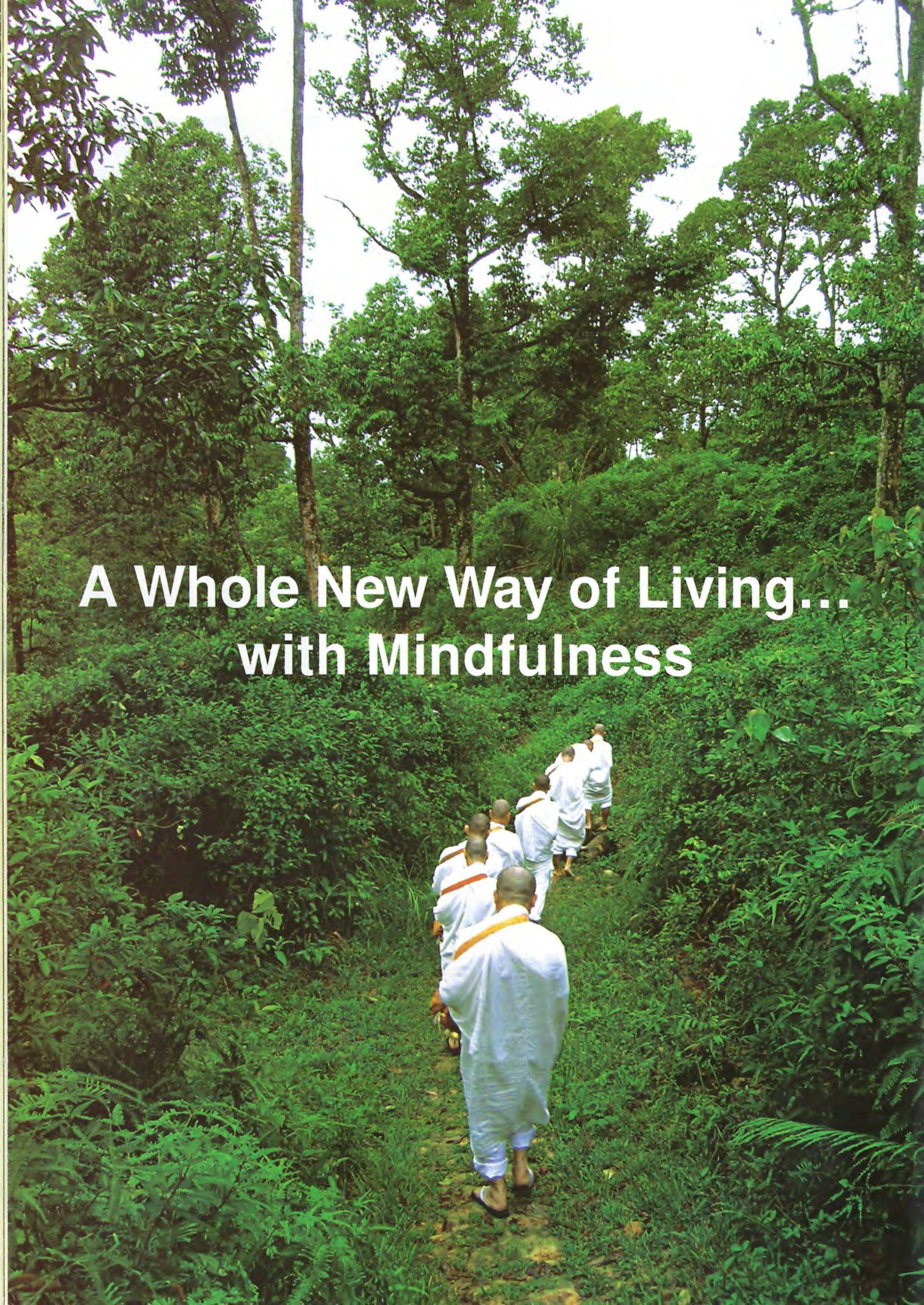



A Whole New Way of Living...
with Mindfulness

Dhammaruci Leong Kam Sun made the journey to Taiping for IMP8 with trepidation, entertaining thoughts that maybe he would leave midway through the programme. However, not only did he follow the programme to its end, but finished it with a new beginning.

FIRST STEP

It was February 2007. I got a copy of *Sāsanārakkha* and immediately flipped through the pages looking for any announcement of the upcoming Introduction to Monkhood Programme (IMP) date. Almost giving up, I flipped through the last few pages and saw a full page advertisement on IMP for 2007. With joy filling my heart, I followed the instructions to download the application form from the SBS website but could only find the application form for IMP 2006. Being a shy person, I did not contact the SBS office to pursue the matter. One day in late March, realising that the closing date was near, a sudden sense of urgency arose in me making me abandon my usual shyness and I contacted SBS office via email. That was the first step towards my life-changing journey of mindfulness.

COMMITMENT

The outcome of the applications was known and all applicants were to confirm their participation by 20 April. Faced with the real 'threat' of venturing alone into the 'unknown' world of *dhutaṅga* (ascetic observance) and Taiping, I was filled with joy and fear. Innumerable reasons to back out arose in the mind: working responsibilities, home responsibilities, another time and so on. Came 20 April, a sudden sense of commitment surfaced in the mind, displacing all other thoughts, and the mental commitment was made.

SENSE OF URGENCY

As Wesak approached, I was busy helping out and the thought of the unknown world of the Taiping forest was pushed to the very back of my mind. It was only after Wesak that I started to get all restless and worried. Excuses for why I should not join IMP surfaced: thoughts of various important duties and responsibilities of worldly life waiting to be fulfilled between 5 – 19 May occupied the mind. However, a sense of urgency arose and I continued to make the appropriate preparations and, on 5 May, the actual journey.

PLEASANTLY SURPRISED

Setting foot for the first time ever in Taiping, I met with friendly faces from SBS who arranged for transport to bring devotees and participants of IMP up to The Sanctuary. Up on the hill, I was pleasantly surprised with what I saw. Replacing my perceptions of sleeping on grass with mosquitoes and ants and making do with dug up holes for toilets were sights of well-planned and well-built structures complementing the surroundings. However, the thought of being so far away from 'civilisation' killed budding thoughts of leaving the programme abruptly. Bhante Kumāra handed each of us a plastic bag into which we relinquished all our worldly wealth (cash and credit card), identity cards and driving licences. With that, the journey of my lifetime began.

CALL TO SHAPE UP

Thirteen names, twelve physical bodies (one participant was to join us at the tail end of the programme but with the commitment to stay on when all other participants had gone). We sat down on the wooden lacquered floor as Ven Aggacitta gave his welcoming speech to prepare us for what was ahead, making sure all of us knew the difference between a shower head and a 'bidet spray' and reminding us to turn off the water heater switch. Bhante then mentioned that due to the inability of the past IMPs to produce new monks, a new approach had been planned for this intake. At that moment, it sounded like, "We have tried to be nice but it doesn't seem to work. So, no more Mr Nice Guy."

IN FULL SWING

Our first course in 'suffering' began with the 'manhandling' of a large piece of cloth called the *robe*. One could have mistaken it for the 'rope' for its ability to suffocate its victim as he executed circus tricks flipping and flapping it to cover whatever part of his body he managed to. Who needed qigong or yoga when you had the robe, Bhante Kumāra quipped. After what seemed like many hours with sweat and tears and still unable to master the robe, we were allowed, out of compassion, to rest and clean up for chanting before trying on the robe again. By the end of the first day,

we were all exhausted and fell asleep in the middle of the forest with the companionship of our fellow brothers, whose names we were not to use during that two-week period as new Pāli names were given.

Atthesaka (Chan Kam Seon)
Guttasīla (Lee Tung Keong)
Dhammaruci (Leong Kam Sun)
Sutesī (Low Dyoi-E)
Damarata (Ng Ken Liang)
Aggisikha (Ng Yee Kong)
Isidatta (Ooi Eng Bin)
Varesaka (Seevekumar)
Kimbhāvī (Tang Seng Chau)
Kantāragū (Teh Chin Hong)
Phāsuvihārī (Lai Yew Loi)

MORNING ROUTINE

Our daily life revolved around a basic routine. Waking up at 5.00am in the morning, we struggled to keep the eyes open until 5.30am after which we struggled to keep them closed for the one-hour meditation session. Bhante was kind to us, allowing us the option of standing or sitting during the session as we cultivated the four guardian methods. No incident of someone falling flat on the face while sleeping standing up must be proof of its effectiveness.

After the morning meditation and chanting, in our robes, we had to get ready with our bowls before marching downhill across the sea of leeches and wild dogs to get our daily almsfood, come rain or shine. Led by three *bhantes* and accompanied by 'King of the Wild Dogs' a.k.a. Ah Boy and his girlfriend, these mindful trips were peaceful except for some incidents of leech attacks and slips.

Describing the downhill walk as well coordinated and organised, one cannot say the same for the uphill walk. 'Freestyle' is a good word to describe it. Options for breakfast venues available were a cooling waterfall, convenient Saṅgha Central Facility, the clean SBS eating hall or refreshing open deck of the outdoor Buddha shrine with a view overlooking Taiping. After breakfast, we had some time to clean up and wash up before Dhamma class. The bhantes' approach was one of open-mindedness in which we discussed and shared our experiences and learnt a lot.

EATING AND MEDITATION

With the approach of noon, we prepared the seats and got ready for our last meal of the day before the sun reached its peak (which we were told was around 1.13pm at that time). Taught to do everything with mindfulness, eating was no different. We closed our eyes, tasting and savouring the full flavours of the food while mindfully chewing with our teeth and pushing with our tongue. The experience can be described as an awakening of the senses. For the one who was fortunate enough to be on duty (on a rotation basis) for the day, it fell upon him to prepare Bhante's bowl and seat, and after the meal, to wash and dry it. Then it was time for some mindful chatting and 'unofficial' Dhamma talks before we took short naps.

Thonggg! Thonggg! Thonggg! The sound of the bell chimes woke us for another hour of mindful sitting, followed by walking meditation.

PĀLI CLASSES

The tongue-twisting Pāli pronunciation classes helped us better control our tongue movement with accompanying breath release. When we had successfully completed the Pāli pronunciation classes, we graduated to discussions on various issues touching on our life, its meaning and purpose. These classes opened up one's mind and view of life. We were challenged to see things differently and to review how we lived life and how to improve it.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

'Freestyle' qigong is what it should be called. Simple yet complicated. We were told to do what we felt like doing as

the body knows best. The problem was that some bodies did not know what was best. And so for some, it was just about trying to connect to the body, standing around for an hour or so.

EVENING CHANTING

Led by the harmonious voices of the bhantes, the chanting sessions were soothing as we tried to decipher the long and short pronunciation of the Pāli language, inviting and invoking the blessing and protection of the Triple Gem, radiating loving kindness to all.

GOODBYES

Enjoying and suffering bodily and mentally, we soon got familiar with the routine. However, like all conditioned phenomena, IMP is subject to change, and soon two weeks had passed. By this time, most of us were missing the crowded and dusty outside world and, after getting final instructions from Bhante and seeking forgiveness for any trespasses, we left quietly and mindfully.

A NEW BEGINNING

The end of IMP brings about the beginning of a whole new way of living, with mindfulness. Being more appreciative and grateful, we become more sensitive to our surroundings. Being more patient and calm, we become less stressed out with life and more able to live life. Being more mindful, we are able to look at our bad habits and unlearn them. Having experienced a life of renunciation, we learn that there is another way of life, besides the one that we are used to—which is running around to make a living.

For all these, we express our sincere gratitude to our teachers, especially Ven Aggacitta, Ven Kumāra and Ven Balacitta, and all helpers and supporters of SBS who contributed in various ways to IMP.

Lastly, I wish to leave you with a question by Bhante Kumāra to contemplate: "What would you do now if you knew you could not fail?"[1]

May all taste the bliss of Nibbāna at the soonest possible time.

1 This is a question made famous by Anthony Robbins in *Awaken the Giant Within*.

What we think of IMP8

Compiled and edited by Ven Kumāra Bhikkhu

Atthesaka It has reinforced my right thinking and corrected my wrong view about the meaning of life. I am now able to see more clearly what I want to do.

Damarata I have got to know a lot more things about monks' rules, monastic life and Dhamma. I think SBS is a good place for monks to practise in terms of location, facilities and the teacher.

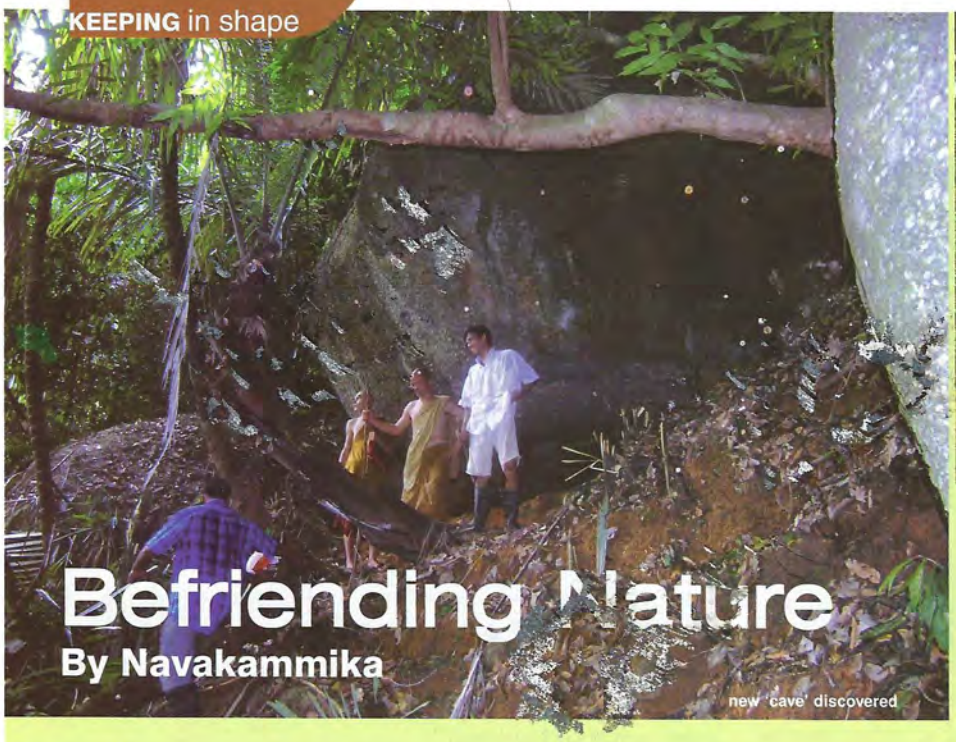
Sutesī I can feel the serenity and calmness here, in comparison with city life. The greatest benefit IMP has given me is to help me determine the purpose of my life.

Guttasīla My purpose of joining IMP was to learn Buddhism and meditation. It has been largely achieved. The greatest benefit I have gained is learning that meditation can be practised in daily life.

Aggisikha I am glad to have tried living like a monk for two weeks. I had very good guidance in meditation and have better mindfulness. My purpose of joining IMP was to plant a good seed for the future and to fulfil a vow. Has it been achieved? Exceedingly so.

Kimbhāvī I joined because my parents asked me to and I wanted to learn more about Dhamma. I found the programme very boring.

Dhammaruci It has been three life-changing weeks of my life. I can't think of any three weeks in my life that have been more fulfilling. I found out about myself, things that I wanted to know and those that I did not want to know, especially about what I want to do with my life, and how to practise living.



new 'cave' discovered

Befriending Nature

By Navakammika

kathina stalls

Our development and maintenance team works together with Nature to maintain a friendly relationship.

"Up in the hills work never ends. After one job is done another will soon follow," said one rugged contractor when development in SBS began more than six years ago.

It seems Nature and human creativity collaborate to ensure that this prediction shall come to pass. Not that we doubted its credibility in any way... but there's always a little hope that we'll stop building... errhhmm... one fine day, right?

Wrong.

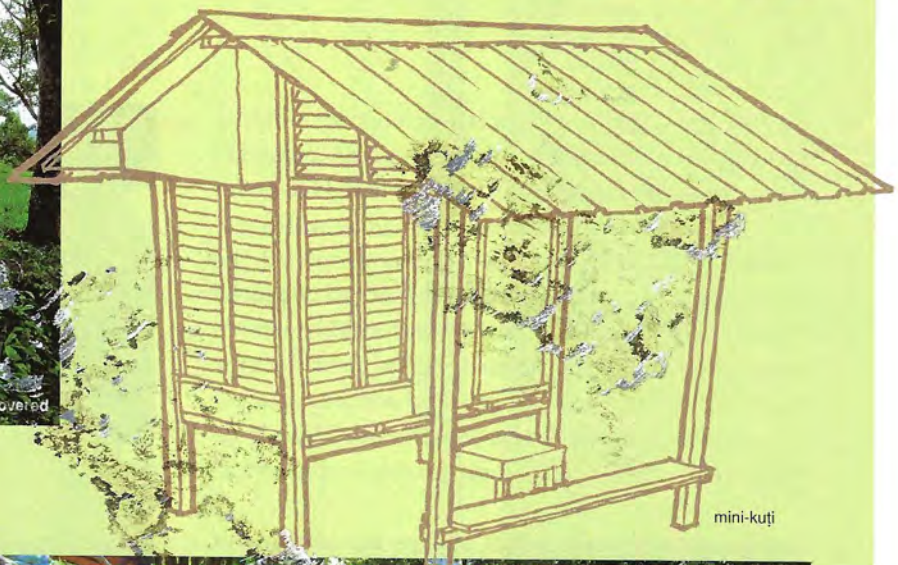
Months ago a huge boulder fell across the brook just after Titi Saṅgha, blocking the flow of the torrential currents during heavy rain. This has caused erosion along the banks, threatening to undermine the foundations of the bridge. Earlier, earthworks in preparation for Kathina 2006 had also interfered with the natural course of the brook and destabilised some huge boulders upstream. In early January, an excavator straightened the course of the brook and prepared the sites for the construction of two overflow dams to retard the velocity of the torrents during heavy rain. The gravity dams were constructed out of the boulders uncovered during the excavation. What is left to be done is a proper floodgate to regulate the water flow and clean the pond at the lower dam. So now, as a bonus, in addition to Sīmā Pond we have Saṅgha Pond, in which the monastics can have some healthy exercise on a hot day.

Despite all our erosion prevention measures, heavy rainfall in December 2006 caused a landslide beside Jalan Sīmā below Main Office Building (MOB). Our consultant geotechnical engineer, Dr Soo surveyed the eroded slope and prescribed soil-nailing as the most feasible solution. This involved heavy machinery and specialised skills beyond the capability of our site staff. Fortunately, Dr Soo managed to enlist the assistance of his brother-in-law, Ir Alex Thong, a contractor who not only has the expertise and resources for the project, but who also got his company, Pembinaan Melima Sdn Bhd, to sponsor most of it. Rectification works started but could not be completed before the Chinese New Year holidays, as scheduled. This proved to be a blessing in disguise, for we then got the workers to carry out some other needful piecemeal projects while their Chinese foreman was on leave. So by

site for new vegetable plot and mini-kutis

Saṅgha Pond

new 'cave' discovered


mini-kuṭi

the time the rectification works were finally completed on 2 March, we had also managed to

- construct additional erosion-control drains stretching from Abbot's Office to the Buddha shrine Saṅgha steps and around Ekagga Kuṭi
- tap a new spring just below Chempaka Corner at Spring Valley
- construct retaining walls for the new earth bridge across Sungai Saṅgha to Burmese Park.

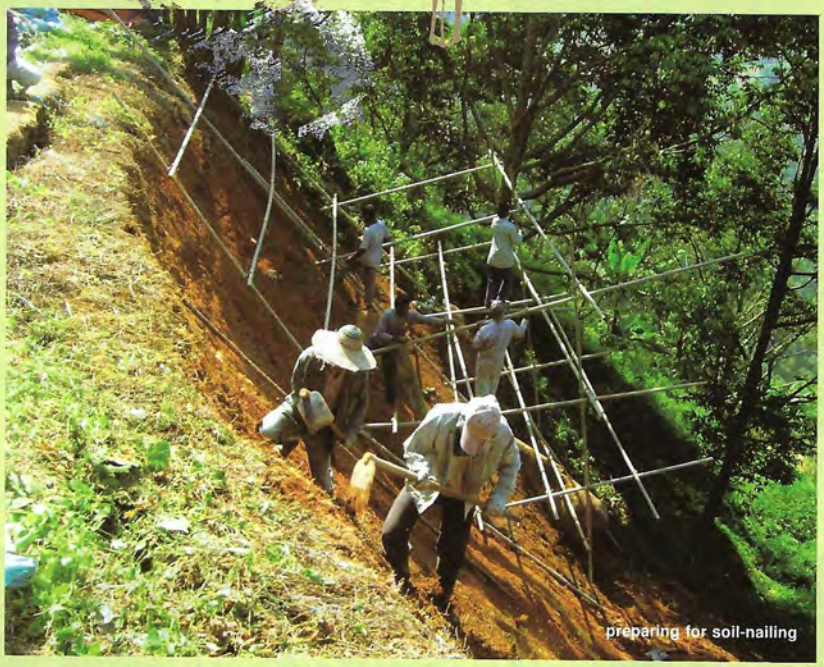
The new spring feeds two 600-gallon polytanks lower down in the same valley. This extra water source will certainly be welcome for watering the plants during long dry spells, and for general usage in the Monastic Zone on special occasions. *Sādhu* to everyone who made all this possible.

All these developments seem to suggest an ongoing tussle between Nature and Man: Nature presents obstacles and restrictions to Man's progress; human creativity turns this into fertile soil, takes root and blossoms, sometimes into forms that provoke Nature to retaliate... and so the cycle continues.

Developments around Burmese Park can be seen as the human response in this interaction. While trying to address the harm we had earlier done to Nature, we got the excavator (very difficult to hire for such forbidding terrain) to clear the surrounding area and divert the flow of two underground spring sources to Sungai Saṅgha, reclaiming a relatively large tract of marshy land. We now have more land for another organic vegetable farm, more public toilets, mini-*kuṭis* and *atap*[1]-roof stalls for Kathina.

As the tender documents for Female Guest Lodge (FGL) are being finalised, we are

1 (Malay) thatch made of palm fronds.


preparing for soil-nailing

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR 2007

		Receipts RM	Payments RM
1)	General Fund (Note #1)	64,575.16	72,813.16
2)	Building & Maintenance Fund (Note #2)	65,977.51	32,733.55
	Female Guest Lodge	324,929.02	
3)	Food & Dana Fund	12,837.00	9,202.00
4)	Publication Fund	1,937.00	12,770.00
5)	Organic Farm (nett)	1,000.00	
6)	Retreat Centre Fund	33,945.50	7,179.64
	Total	**505,201.19**	**134,698.35**
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE PERIOD		**370,502.84**	

Note #1	**General fund (Payments)**	**Amounts**
1.1	Salary, EPF & Socso	42,905.35
1.2	Upkeep of Motor Vehicle	8,447.99
1.3	Others	21,459.82
	Total	**72,813.16**

Note #2	**Building & Maintenance Fund (Payments)**	**Amounts**
2.1	Upkeep of Land & Building	32,359.55
2.2	Others	374.00
	Total	**32,733.55**

somewhat shaken by the escalating costs of building materials. For this reason, our initial plans to include Monastic Guest Lodge (MGL) together with FGL under the upcoming Phase 5 development has been shelved. Instead of MGL, Ven Aggacitta has proposed the construction of portable mini-kuṭis that can be placed in small clearings among the trees within SBS premises or in the forest. They are to be designed such that they can be dismantled and relocated whenever required. This design is still on the drawing board. Meanwhile we are sourcing for interested, reliable carpenters to undertake the project.

Of course, Nature is not always the initiator of change. While clearing the undergrowth and saplings in the forested hillside behind Storehouse, our explorers have discovered three 'caves', which are actually sheltered spaces under rock overhangs of various sizes. We befriended Nature, working within the limits set by her, to turn the area into a place quite ideal for meditation. Our friendship has also extended to the forest north-east of SBS, where the clearings under the virgin equatorial forests show great potential for secluded meditation. Originally intending to just open a shaded short-cut pedestrian path from MOB

new spring water source

to Dhamma Grove for use on Kathina Day, we have since taken the friendship a step further and created more usable space.

Things should take shape by SBS Kathina 2007. Hopefully, by then you will be able to relish some of the fruits of your continuous support for our cause. Do they include the *durians*, *duku-langsat*, *petai*[2] and other produce from our chemical-free farm as well? Come see (taste?) for yourself!

2 (Malay) types of Malaysian fruits.

At Sukhi Hotu, we understand the importance of spirituality in our daily life.

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KATHINA

Sunday, 11 November 2007

Experience 2,500 years of Buddhist tradition at the edge of the forest.
Let us come together once again in a united show of support for our Saṅgha.

AM	6.45	Breakfast for monks
	7.10	Offering *kathina* cloth to Saṅgha
	7.20	Speech by kathina sponsor
	7.30	Awarding kathina cloth to qualified *bhikkhu*
	7.40	Speech by guest of honour
	7.50	Sewing kathina robe (monks only)
		Breakfast for devotees
	8.30	Performance by Kalyāṇa Mitras of BUBS
	9.30	Collecting *piṇḍapāta*
	10.30	Offering kathina accessories*
	11.00	Dhamma talk
	11.50	Lunch
PM	1.00	Break
	2.00	Continue sewing kathina robe (monks only)
	4.00	Refreshment break for monks
	4.30	Continue sewing kathina robe (monks only)
	7.00	Spreading kathina

NOTE: This schedule is tentative and is subject to change

*Kathina accessories refer to allowable requisites, other than the kathina cloth, offered to the monks on Kathina Day, including potential requisites obtainable from monetary donations entrusted to their stewards.

Contributions are most welcome. Please note that your contributions will be used to defray expenses during the *vassa* and on Kathina Day. Any excess collected will be used for supporting the SBS monastics and for the general maintenance of The Sanctuary.

The Kathina Ceremony Organising Committee will be most happy to
- provide breakfast and lunch
- facilitate hotel bookings (please confirm by 15 September 2007).

Schedule for 4WD transport:
4.30am – 9.30am & 1.00pm – 3.30pm

For more details please contact
Sis Lim Lay Hoon, 013 523 0288.

Organised by SBS Management Committee and sponsored by Kalyāṇa Mitras of Bandar Utama Buddhist Society.

Patrick Kearney is an Australian full time lay meditation teacher who has 30 years' experience in Buddhist meditation, in both Zen and Theravāda traditions. He conducts retreats, workshops and classes around Australia. He teaches both the techniques of meditation and the theory that underlies them, stressing the importance of theoretical understanding to complement meditation practice.

He was in SBS in June to conduct a retreat. Although he taught the techniques of the Mahāsī tradition, he emphasised that there are also other techniques for yogis to contemplate the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. We bring you two of the Dhamma talks (revised and edited) which he delivered to the yogis in this retreat: "Contemplating Citta" and "Ethics and Understanding."

CONTEMPLATING CITTA

One of the central terms in the Buddha's teaching is *citta*, usually translated as "mind". Citta is of fundamental importance to the practitioner, for when the Buddha speaks of bondage it is the citta that is bound, and when he speaks of liberation it is the citta that is liberated. In our practice we study the four domains or foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), one of which is citta. It is clear that citta is central to our practice. But what is citta, and how is it contemplated?

WHAT IS CITTA?

While citta is traditionally translated as "mind," this can easily give the wrong idea. For us, mind is what is found in our head, and it thinks. But if we were asked about the seat of emotion, we might indicate our heart. Often we feel that thought and emotion are at war with each other, constituting separate and conflicting domains of existence. But for the Buddha, they are not separate. Citta includes what we call "head" and "heart".

Citta is the aware centre of a person; the subjectivity that experiences. It could be translated "mind," for thoughts are certainly part of citta. It could be translated "heart," for emotion is inseparable from citta. It could even be translated "soul," in the original sense of the alive essence of a person. Perhaps the best compromise translation is the compound "heart/mind".

Citta refers to our inner centre of subjectivity, the awareness at the centre of ourselves. We could see it as our sense of inner space, the inner domain within which we experience ourselves and our world. Some of our experiences clearly belong to the outer world. Seeing and hearing, for example, are in some way public. But other aspects of our experience, our thoughts and feelings, for example, seem to belong more to our inner world. This experienced inner world is citta.

But we must remember that citta is ***not*** radically separate from the body. One term the Buddha uses to describe us is *saviññāṇakāya*, a "body (*kāya*) endowed with (*sa*) consciousness (*viññāṇa*)," or "sentient body". We are bodies, but bodies that experience, and are, in turn, experienced—by other sentient bodies. What does the experiencing? Citta. We are defined by this two-fold nature, both physical and non-physical, and our humanity necessarily includes both.

In Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10), citta is not given an exact definition. It is used in a broad sense to indicate our general state: how we are, at this time. This is close to what we might call "mood". Consider the routine greeting, "How are you?" Usually we respond automatically—"Good!" But what if the next time we were asked this question we stopped, looked within, felt our inner state, and then presented this in our answer. We would be presenting our citta. Of course, if we were asked this same question ten minutes later and went through the same process we might give a very different answer, for the citta is impermanent, process rather than substance, continually moving and re-forming.

CITTA AND VEDANĀ

Citta is closely linked to *vedanā*, usually translated "feeling". Vedanā is the affective or hedonic aspect of experience. The noun "vedanā" is derived from the verb *vedeti*, which means both "to feel" and "to experience". The double meaning is important—feeling is inseparably bound up with experience. Feeling indicates both an aspect of experience and a way of experiencing.

We could say vedanā is the 'flavour' of experience. When we eat, we experience the physical sensations of food, its hardness, softness, texture, moisture, and so on. We also experience the flavour of food. The flavour is not the material sensations. It is intimately connected with them, but it remains distinct from them. And it is the flavour that ***moves*** us, that stimulates our response to food. We are moved to take more if the flavour is pleasant, to take less if it is unpleasant, and to indifference if we can't find any flavour. In the same way, vedanā is the flavour of experience, and experience always has an affective tone or flavour.

What do we mean by "affect?" It is that which has the capacity to move us, as when we say "That was very moving," or "I was moved by that." Pleasant feeling (*sukhā vedanā*) moves us to hold, painful feeling (*dukkhā vedanā*) moves us to resist or reject, and when we don't know what we are feeling (*adukkha(m)asukhā vedanā*) we are moved to dullness, doubt and confusion. But we ***are*** moved, because experience comes to us already affect-laden.

It is possible to have feeling—to be moved by experience—without craving, and our liberation is to be found within this possibility. So in our practice we study the interplay between feeling and craving.

In brief, in contemplating feeling and heart/mind we cultivate a sensitivity to what moves us and how we are moved.

Experience ***always*** contains feeling, for to experience (*vedeti*) is to feel (*vedeti*). In the teaching of dependent arising the Buddha says that "contact conditions feeling". "Contact" (*phassa*) is the immediacy of experience, and within this immediacy we find feeling. This does not mean that first we experience and then later we feel; it means that in experiencing, we are already feeling.

The Buddha goes on to say that "feeling conditions craving". Craving is the usual translation of *taṇhā*, which literally means "thirst". Craving refers to the deep sense of absence at the core of our being, our sense of ourselves and our world being not right, missing something. This sense of lack and inadequacy drives us to reach out to possess something, anything, that might satisfy our thirst and complete us. We are thirsty, but regardless of how much we drink we are still thirsty, so we keep drinking.

Our thirst is stimulated and guided by feeling. But the relationship between feeling and craving, unlike that between contact and feeling, is not necessary. It is possible to have feeling—to be moved by experience—without craving, and our liberation is to be found within this possibility. So in our practice we study the interplay between feeling and craving.

This interplay concerns the way we respond to experience, understanding that we are moved and how we are moved. Things happen. How do we respond? What do we do about it? How are we driven, and what drives us? How do we become lost in our obsessions? The answers to these questions are found in what moves us, what pushes us from behind or lures us from beyond. And all this is bound up with feeling, and our response to feeling.

Which brings us to the realm of ethics, for ethics is about our responses, the actions that we take, the choices we make in responding to what we think is going on. All of us are faced with the fundamental question of how we should live. And all of us come up with an answer to that question. It's not necessarily something that we have thought through, but all of us are living our answer to that question, and that answer is our ethics. The question itself comes to us as and through feeling.

So in contemplating feeling we cultivate an ethical sensitivity, a sensitivity to what we are doing with our lives. While meditation methods usually begin with contemplating body, we do not find this ethical sensitivity here. It begins with feeling. Further, since contemplating feeling shows us how we are moved or driven, it is intimately linked to the contemplation of citta.

CONTEMPLATING CITTA

Contemplating citta involves developing a sensitivity to our heart, our inner state, knowing how we are moved to respond, to act. And when we speak of what moves us to action, we are speaking of the ethical quality or colouring of our heart, that which directly conditions the nature of our actions.

How do we find citta? Citta is most easily accessible through vedanā, the feel of experience. Hence the centrality of vedanā in *satipaṭṭhāna*. Vedanā is the hinge, that which connects body with heart/mind. The practice begins with contemplating body, and body is accessible through feeling; we feel our way into the body. The practice matures with contemplating heart/mind, and our heart/mind is accessible through feeling; we feel our way into heart/mind.

In brief, in contemplating feeling and heart/mind we cultivate a sensitivity to what moves us and how we are moved. We become aware of that which is *kusala (wholesome; skilful)* or *akusala (unwholesome; unskilful)* within the heart, which implies both the heart's inherent quality and the skilfulness or appropriateness of this quality. Contemplating citta opens up to cultivating an ethical sensitivity that guides our life. What colours the heart? And how are we moved to act? In other words, how do we live? And what is moving us to live in this way?

> How does a *bhikkhu* live contemplating citta as citta?
>
> Here a bhikkhu knows citta accompanied by passion (*sarāga*) as citta accompanied by passion, and citta free from passion (*vītarāga*) as citta free from passion. He knows citta accompanied by aversion (*sadosa*) as citta accompanied by aversion, and citta free from aversion (*vītadosa*) as citta free from aversion. He knows citta accompanied by delusion (*samoha*) as citta accompanied by delusion, and citta free from delusion (*vītamoha*) as citta free from delusion. (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta MN 10)

Often we stumble into the contemplation of citta through becoming aware of disturbing emotions: fear, anger,

anxiety, irritation, desire, or whatever. These are examples of citta accompanied by passion, aversion and delusion, and they are an important part of our practice.

The essence of this practice is *sati*, mindfulness or presence. Fundamentally, it doesn't matter what is present; what matters is presence, and the quality of presence. If emotion is present, and strong, then emotion becomes our meditation object. And remember that in contemplating emotion we are concerned only with seeing and understanding the emptiness of emotion. We are not trying to solve our emotional problems. We are trying to understand that our emotional problems are empty. They are not me, and they don't belong to me. They're just natural process (*dhammatā*), coming and going according to conditions. But to discover this, we must be truly intimate with them, holding nothing back.

However, when we are precise with our awareness we can see that emotion is complex. Emotion can usually be found in the body. We cannot have the emotion of anxiety, for example, without some tightening in the body. And all body sensations have physical location, so we can speak of finding our emotions in the heart or in the gut. All emotions have an affective feel to them, a quality of pleasantness or painfulness, or vedanā. And emotion usually includes a narrative going on in the mind, which provides the intentionality of emotion. If I am angry, I am angry at someone or something; if I am anxious, I am anxious about something. This intentionality appears in and as the narrative of the thought-stream, which feeds and is fed by the emotion.

And finally, emotion has a felt essence to it, which is not body sensation, not the quality of pleasantness/painfulness, not the thoughts around it, but something deeper, beneath all these and giving rise to all these. The essence of citta is the sentient sensitivity at the core of our subjectivity. This is what we are aiming at in contemplating citta.

In this contemplation we cultivate intimacy with the state of our heart, by cultivating an intimate awareness. This requires a soft touch. To go in too rough and hard smothers the experience. The hardness of our approach is an expression of our agenda, our determination to manipulate circumstances so they suit our self, the one who thinks she knows how the universe should be.

This is the softness of pure witnessing, which reminds us of the link between mindfulness or presence (*sati*) and equanimity or balance (*upekkhā*). *Upekkhā* comes from the prefix *upa*, which denotes "nearness" or "close touch," and the root *ikkh*, "see". Equanimity is a close looking on, or intimate witnessing. Witnessing, so not getting involved; but witnessing intimately, from very close by. We know we have this soft touch when the witnessing is like cutting through soft butter, in contrast to the hardness we experience when caught in the solidity of craving and attachment—and of resistance.

The citta is both subtle and compelling. It is not easy to work with it. But if we are talking about what can change the way we live, we are talking about contemplating citta, not contemplating body. We may gain great depth of awareness of the body, but not any understanding of the heart and mind. If we want transformation, we find it in our relationship to citta. This is where we find both bondage and freedom.

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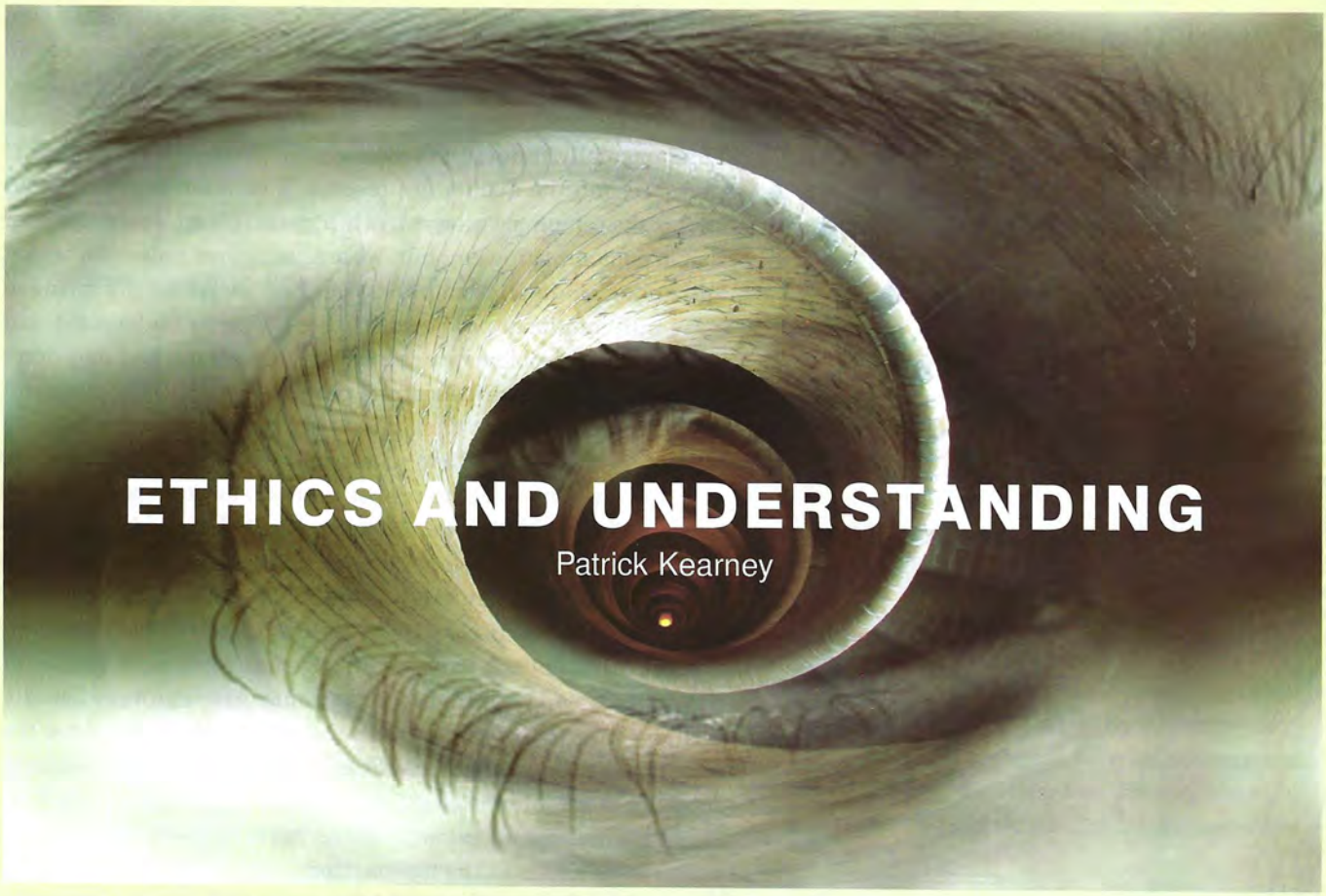

ETHICS AND UNDERSTANDING

Patrick Kearney

UNDERSTANDING

Satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā is designed to develop understanding (*paññā*) in partnership with ethical action (*sīla*). It gives us the clarity of mind to understand the relationship between our choices and the quality of our lives. Eventually we come to realise that the source of our suffering is delusion. Wanting to gain happiness and avoid pain, we habitually act in ways that generate more pain. Out of delusion arise *saṅkhārā*, "formations", our inner drives, impulses, urgings and yearnings that form ourselves and our world.

We can see formations in action when we find ourselves again and again returning to a particular fantasy or emotion which we can't shake. Why is the mind stuck in this emotion? We feel it is being done to us, that we are victims of circumstances beyond our control, but when we look closely we see that moment by moment we are creating those thoughts and the emotions they sustain. We are busily constructing a personal reality that prevents us from seeing and understanding "realistically" (*yathābhūta*). Uncovering this process, bringing it into the clear light of day, is the work of insight.

We have been formed by the choices emerging from our habitual delusion, and if we are to transform we must learn to use our new understanding to make new choices. Understanding must be linked to action, and this movement from understanding to action cannot be taken for granted. It's something we need to work on.

We have all had the experience, for example, of doing something which we knew was stupid, which we knew was going to have bad consequences, and which we went ahead and did anyway. In other words, we have all behaved in a way contrary to our understanding. So it would seem that understanding does not necessarily translate into action.

Why not? Satipaṭṭhāna practice involves training the mind to see things in a new way, but the fixed patterns of body, speech and mind arising from the depths of our habitual delusion continue to condition behaviour. Indeed, the normal state of the satipaṭṭhāna practitioner is that her insight is way ahead of her behaviour. This can create the kind of chronic frustration that an artist suffers when she looks at a creation and sees only how it differs from her idealised image of it. But this work of creation never ends, for while transformation of mind occurs in an instant, transformation of action occurs over a lifetime, because it requires the transformation of our habitual choices.

EMPATHY

For the Buddha, ethical behaviour (*sīla*) is the foundation for meditation (*samādhi*), which in turn is the foundation

for understanding (*paññā*). Where does the ethical impulse come from? It comes from empathy. The Buddha says:

> Covering every direction with the mind,
> One finds no-one one loves more than oneself.
> In the same way, others love their own self.
> Therefore one who loves herself does not harm another.
>
> (Ud 5:1)

We are all defined by our self-referentiality; we all are chiefly concerned with the fate of 'number one.' This is just nature: we love ourselves, and are always thinking of ourselves. Once we understand this, having seen it for ourselves in ourselves, what naturally follows is empathy. We realise that this is the same for everyone. Wanting to avoid pain, I do not inflict pain on others—because I know how they feel. Wanting to enjoy happiness, I do what I can to increase the happiness of others—because I know how they feel.

We all have a natural empathy for others, however much we try to ignore or suppress it. When we act in accordance with this natural empathy we discover more happiness and less suffering for ourselves and others. This is bound up with the cultivation of right view (*sammā diṭṭhi*), the ability to distinguish between *kusala* (wholesome; skilful) and *akusala* (unwholesome; unskilful).

CHOICE AND VIEW

The wholesome conditions the wholesome; the unwholesome conditions the unwholesome. At the centre of this relationship is *cetanā*, intention or choice. The wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of an action varies according to the power of the choice behind it. The more powerful the intentional force behind an action, the more effect it has on the mind stream.

The capacity of an action to bring about a good result is *puñña*, usually translated "merit." Puñña refers to the power of an action, its fruitfulness, its capacity to shape the future. Some actions are particularly powerful in bringing about good results, for example, *dāna* (giving), *sīla* (ethical training) and *bhāvanā* (meditative training), so much of our practice is bound up with cultivating puñña. But equally, some actions have the power to bring about very bad results.

The quality of view that motivates an action affects this power to change the mind-stream, its puñña or *apuñña* (demerit). Unwholesome actions that emerge from just delusion may have a minimal affect on the mind-stream, because when we react to events in a kind of fog, without planning or a cultivated motivation, we are not necessarily conditioning ourselves to continue this kind of action in the future. We stand ready to be reclaimed by our natural empathy. But when we act out of a clear understanding of what we are doing, convinced this is right and committed to repeating it in the future, we make a strong impression on the mind-stream. Our wrong view works to negate our natural empathy. Similarly with wholesome actions motivated by right view, which are particularly powerful for good. Our view either cultivates our natural empathy, making it more likely that we will spontaneously act in a wholesome manner in the future, or negates our natural empathy, conditioning us to act in an unwholesome manner in the future.

SHAME AND DREAD

Arising from our natural empathy is what the Buddha called the two pillars which sustain the world: shame (*hiri*) and dread (*ottappa*). Shame and dread are based on respect.

If we have a strong sense of self-respect and feel the respect of others we will experience a deep sense of inner satisfaction and feel supported by our social relationships.

Shame is the emotion which arises when we know we have done something which damages the respect other people have for us. Guilt is closely related to shame; for it is the emotion that arises when we know we have done something which damages the respect we have for ourselves.

Shame has a public quality to it, for it rests on our sense of how we are seen by others. Guilt is more private, for it rests on how we see ourselves, which may be something we succeed in hiding from others. This may explain why today we tend to be more preoccupied by guilt than shame, as we live in an extremely individualist society. In the Buddha's time, when society was more community oriented, people were more concerned with shame than with guilt. In our culture, shame has less hold upon us and there is less and less difference between fame and infamy. Or, as we like to say, "Any publicity is good publicity."

Dread is the emotion we feel when we consider the effect of what we have done in the past, or are doing now, or plan to do in the future. We recognise the dangers of an action, that if we do this the consequences will be negative, and real. Our own mind-stream will become coarsened, we or others will suffer, and if others we respect discover what we have done, they will lose respect for us.

The basis of both shame and dread is our natural empathy, which functions here as the importance to us of

respect. As human beings we need a sense of respect if we are to find peace. Without self respect our hearts will be disturbed and we will find the practice, and ordinary life, difficult. Without the respect of others our social relationships will be disturbed and we will find the practice, and ordinary life, difficult. If we have a strong sense of self-respect and feel the respect of others we will experience a deep sense of inner satisfaction and feel supported by our social relationships.

This reminds us that the practice is essentially communal, because we are essentially communal. One of the advantages of ethical behaviour, according to the Buddha, is that when we know we have acted appropriately we never feel uneasy in the presence of those we respect, the wise (*viññū*). When we enter an "assembly of the wise" we find there are no barriers between us, and communication can flow freely.

In contrast, when we carry some dark secret, it acts as a barrier between us and those we respect. There is something hidden, something we cannot afford to allow to become public. This uneasiness, this sense of a barrier between us and our spiritual community, is shame, and shame can be a strong hindrance to our practice.

The opposite of shame is transparency, the absence of secrets, the absence of anything to hide. Here we are comfortable with the company of those we respect, have no hesitation in seeking them out, and experience no barriers in communicating with them.

ETHICS AS EXPRESSION

The Buddha expresses the relationship between ethics and understanding in this way:

> Ethics (*sīla*) are washed all around with understanding (*paññā*), and understanding is washed all around with ethics. Where there are ethics there is understanding, and where there is understanding there are ethics. The ethical person has understanding, and the understanding person has ethics, and this combination is called the highest thing in the world.
>
> It is just like we wash one hand with the other or one foot with the other; exactly so are ethics washed around with understanding and understanding washed around with ethics, and this combination is called the highest thing in the world.
>
> Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta DN 4

Ethics are both the foundation and the expression of practice. They are how we practice in terms of body and speech, what we do and what we say. And they are how we express our awakening. It is important to realise that awakening is awakened action. An insight gained on a meditation cushion is just a state of mind. The only way it can be expressed is through speech and body, and this means ethics.

One of the misleading aspects of the word "enlightenment" is that it implies a state, a static entity. If enlightenment is a static state then I can somehow fall into it and all my problems will be over. I can even act unethically while convincing myself this does not affect my enlightenment, which remains separate from what I do. But awakening is not a state. Like everything else it is process, dynamic and ever-changing, expressed in and as the choices we make from moment to moment. Awakening, like practice, is something we choose to do, or choose to not do.

Awakening is more than having an insight while sitting on a cushion. Awakening is awakened action.

Ethics is the natural expression of an awakened mind. Awakening is more than having an insight while sitting on a cushion. Awakening is awakened action. When we are awake to our intimacy with all beings we naturally express that awakening by actions based on love (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). This involves choice. At any time we can choose to ignore our insight and act selfishly, as if we still see ourselves as fundamentally separate from others. When we do so we feel the gap between action and insight, and the pain of it. We learn there is no gap between ethics and awakening.

It is often said that awakening transcends the distinction between good and evil. This teaching is sometimes misinterpreted as meaning that an awakened one can act unethically and this somehow does not affect her awakening. But there is no such thing as awakening separate from action.

We can express this in terms of the difference between kusala and puñña. Kusala is "wholesome," good within itself, and "skilful," leading to the good. Puñña is the power of an action, its ability to bring about good. Much of our training is bound up with cultivating puñña. But in awakening there is no further need for puñña, because there is no need for a future result. The path has reached its destination. There is no journey, because awakening is the arrival at the end of the journey.

But this end of the journey is not static. Like any other aspect of human life it moves, and its movement is expressed in wholesome actions giving rise to wholesome results. And this movement is of one piece with our practice, now, as we cultivate the ethical sensitivity that transforms the choices that form our lives.

Learning in the Trenches

"There are so many opportunities in life to make use of defilement to gain some sort of insight if only there was a disassociation from it and an awareness of it. There should be no separation between Dhamma and life; between retreat and outside life", says **Laura Zan**. Follow her as she takes you through her stream of thought and awareness of mind.

I am sitting across from my director on a warm Thursday afternoon, discussing a possible solution to a work issue. In the time we spend talking, there is an inside movie that has already started rolling. A very big *I* play the starring role. The thoughts are weak at first, but the feelings and emotions flicker closely behind, threatening to become a deluge if not for the awareness that's along for the ride. More than a duality is at work here; the mind that filters the information it hears and one that is crafting the replies. Then there is also the mind that's just watching it like a silent movie played out on stage. They all seem to be happening at once. The mind evaluates the answers before they come out but it somehow knows the inappropriateness of some from the resultant feelings. Something negative is already at work. Embarrassment arises and the first impulse to repress these feelings comes as quickly as it goes.

Individually, when we figure out how to bridge that separation between our 'retreat life' and 'outside life' the momentum of practice becomes that much stronger. That bridging happens when we figure out how to apply the skills we learn to our everyday life.

Our conversation in the office soon ends but the mental drama continues. I figure I haven't taken a coffee break yet and decide to take a short walk outside. The feelings appear and disappear and thoughts associated with them continue like connected dominoes. It's all very interesting, now that I no longer care whether the feelings stay or go. There are intentions to laugh out loud. Then there is giddiness when I start to see the craziness in all its glory. Was any of it necessary? No. Useful? Absolutely. Sayadaw U Jotika once said in a Dhamma discourse, "The School of Life" that the same lessons will come again and again until we have learnt them well. Seeing things as Dhamma seems to take some sting out of life.

Contemplating this series of events later, I wonder: how did negativity arise in that split second or lean towards resentment instead of joy? Previously, when I saw the mental process as just a jumbled association of thoughts, it seemed like unrelated thoughts relating to each other through snippets of story here and there. Lately though, there seems to be a more of a direct cause and effect between these feelings, perceptions, intentions and thoughts; conditions make it ripe for one mind to come up and not another. Agony or elation, praise or blame, everything is just flowing. Concepts aside, isn't the mind just taking us for a ride in this 'mind-made world'?

While having breakfast this morning, I felt a need to use the toilet. This was only a passing sensation, but the mind took that and immediately an image of the toilet arose. Then it remembered that there wasn't any toilet tissue in the bathroom and intentions to get more toilet tissue arose. There was an awareness, and awareness of the awareness. It all happened over a few seconds but there was this realisation that there was no one "doing" or "remembering" anything. The process was just happening with a life of its own through conditions, cause and effect.

When momentum develops and things get interesting, can we really separate Dhamma from life or life from Dhamma? This moment is just a happening and seeing. Insights cannot just be the privy of the few who manage to go on longer meditation retreats. Individually, when we figure out how to bridge that separation between our 'retreat life' and 'outside life' the momentum of practice becomes that much stronger. That bridging happens when we figure out how to apply the skills we learn to our everyday life. One might counter that 'outside life' seems to be so much more complicated, with an array of responsibilities. Another might say that there is so much more stimuli out here, and 'it's oh so peaceful' in a meditation centre or retreat. Agreed. Yet what are we searching for, after all, in *vipassanā* meditation? Is it for the temporary reprieve or insight into the nature of mind and matter? Sayadaw U Tejaniya from Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Meditation Centre in Myanmar usually likes to tell yogis, "You only have the six sense doors and no more."

After some bouts of yo-yo meditation of getting all enthusiastic in retreats and all but forgetting the "practice" outside, I've concluded that mind-blowing insights in a retreat are meaningless unless they really change our attitudes, perceptions, actions and speech for the better. This new quality of the mind must be available anywhere and any time, beyond peaceful, accommodating situations. I accept this more this time, coming back to the big city after a longer meditation retreat in Myanmar. Walking along a big thoroughfare recently, I realised that the only difference between the sounds of birds and the sounds of car horns is in the mind's judgement and reaction.

A couple of weeks ago at a dinner reception, I overheard a student tell a college counsellor the myriad of reasons why she could not start school that semester. The counsellor answered gently, "Dear, why are you putting obstacles in your way?" That struck me as such an incisive question, one we sorely need in our attitude towards meditation beyond the centre walls. Why do we say time and time again that we just cannot do it out here? Why is it that if we can find the time to go to college, get a job, raise children, go to movies, or cook dinner, that we cannot find the time to practise? Could it be that we feel the practice is some 'other process' that we must set aside time for and cannot spare enough hours?

The practice is life, and life is practice. Why can't we just be?

EAGER BEAVERS

By
Yew Lye Hin

Participants of the first audio editing workshop learnt new skills, sharpened their auditory senses and learnt a new language—that of sound waves.

Eleven participants registered for the SBS Audio Editing Workshop, but from the amount of luggage pooled at Hor Eeah on the evening of Friday, 9 March 2007, one could easily be forgiven for thinking a bus load of school kids were going up to SBS. Nevertheless, everyone was driven up the hill in one trip and no one was provided the opportunity to practise a bit of patience.

The workshop was held at Saṅgha Classroom where participants helped set up the tables, chairs, projector and screen. Later that night Maxine Cheong, our trainer, briefed us on the programme for the two days. She informed us that a test would be given on the second day of the workshop and immediately tried to reassure every one that we need not fear taking this test. I believe it was a bit late for that for she had used the "Arrhhh" word—*test*!

The first day of the workshop started with some slight hiccups but we soon got to work setting things straight. We set up laptops, distributed earphones, connected the projector to the trainer's laptop and set up the microphone. Ven Aggacitta observed that all these preparations should have been taken care of the night before.

Maxine taught the participants how to install the audio editor, Audacity, in their laptops. Some participants experienced difficulty so she had to do this very slowly to ensure that all the participants knew how to install the programme properly when they returned home.

Finally in the afternoon, Maxine was able to start on the actual process of audio editing. She first showed how Audacity displayed waveforms of audio files. We then learnt the use of various tools in Audacity: to cut, copy and paste parts of the waveform, fade in, fade out, amplify, zoom in and out, save and restore a selection. These tools performed specific functions in the editing process to transform a live talk peppered with *aahs*, *ahems*, *you knows*, *clicks* and other such inelegant sounds and words into a more polished and formal-sounding talk.

Maxine focused on getting everyone to pick up such 'noises' and by the end of the workshop it seemed every one had fine-tuned their hearing to catch even the softest *eh* or *aah*. For the life of me though, I could not quite do that and I tended to miss out 50% of the sounds. I believe this was due to my tendency to mentally edit the unwanted noises and most of the speech sounded perfect to me unless the offending sound was too obvious to be ignored.

However, I was good at picking out the softest click. This was not because my ears had suddenly become sensitive to them, but because I could read them in the waveform itself. I had studied physics in school and am familiar with the forms and structures of audio waves. Audacity displays sound in waveforms and I know that any spike in the waveform represents a sharp sound like a *click*. Since my

eyesight was much better than my hearing, spotting clicks in waveforms was not a problem!

I have to admire Maxine however, for her great patience and perseverance in teaching us. We were such a mixed and trying bunch that I would have started tearing my hair or banging my head on the wall if I had been in her shoes. Instead, at the most trying of moments, she mentioned that there might have been some miscommunication and went on to clarify herself again. *Sādhu* to you, Maxine.

The workshop ended well after 11.00pm that first day and I believe this could be counted as a rare occurrence in SBS. The next day the workshop went into test mode and after two solid hours, I found I had edited only one minute of a four-minute track of audio file. In spite of my slow and 'careful' editing, I still missed a good many *ehs* and *aahs*. Meticulous probably; efficient I definitely am not!

Maxine suggested that more specifically defined criteria should have been set initially to select a homogeneous group of participants for this workshop so as to get the most out of what she had planned. While not disagreeing with her on this, I expressed my doubt that doing so might not have got us such a large group of promising and enthusiastic potential audio editors. Both our opinions were, of course, debatable and it is left to the organisers to review this in their post-mortem of the workshop.

It was a mentally tiring two-day stint, but we were quite excited about the new skills we had learnt and could not wait to put our grasp of them to the test.

A FLEDGLING TEAM

In this follow-up to the first audio editing workshop, the eager beavers brushed up their skills to become fully-fledged SBS audio editors.

By Choong See Yoong

The second SBS Audio Editing Workshop (AEW2) was held on 14 and 15 April, one month after AEW1, to help participants of the first workshop fine-tune their audio editing skills.

Short audio tracks had been assigned to participants for them to edit before they came for the workshop. These edited tracks were to be the focus of the workshop, where the trainer, Maxine Cheong, together with Ven Aggacitta, would analyse in detail the strengths and weaknesses of each participant based on the edits they had done.

In contrast to the hiccups faced during AEW1, AEW2 seemed better organised and focused with all those who arrived on Friday evening settling down quickly to the evening's preparations.

Early the next day the workshop proper began. Bhante and Maxine took turns to go through each edited track, projecting it onto a screen and identifying the areas and skills that needed to be improved upon. Everyone else looked on to learn from the feedback. In this way, one by one, each participant's work was evaluated. By the time the eighth and last piece had been given the 'spotlight treatment' on the second day, we were all saturated with visions of waveforms and words like "fade in, fade out, amplify, cut, splice", and so on.

As a result of these two workshops, a team of audio editors have been trained to edit SBS Dhamma talks. A big *sādhu* to Maxine who gave her all to the two workshops that enabled us to learn the necessary skills of audio editing. I can say that it is because of her that I am now able to use the audio editing software, Audacity, reasonably well. As for us, the fledgling team, we may not be very good yet, but we will do our best. The first test for the team is the editing of one of Bhante's talks for distribution during Kathina 2007.

Workshop aside, I would like to touch on the qualities that make a good audio editor. A working knowledge of an audio editing software combined with a good ear for identifying the areas that require editing are important factors. While an individual may have the aptitude, and skills can be acquired through training, the participants agreed that one must also be willing to commit time to audio editing work because such work, compared to editing of printed matter, is much more tedious and time consuming. To edit a five-minute track of talk may involve hours of concentration in front of a computer screen.

However, audio editing work can be fulfilling. First, as a reward for all the hard work put in, the immediate joy and satisfaction of listening to a smooth and uncluttered playback is immense. Second, in this fast moving world, people seem inclined towards audio and video stimulation as compared to the printed word. For instance, I may not find time to read Dhamma books but I can still listen to Dhamma talks in the car as I drive to work. Lastly, envision this—a person lying on a bed, so sick he can neither move his limbs nor open his eyes or is comatose. The Dhamma talk that you helped to edit could mean so much to him.

Desk of SBS Retreat Centre

by Akiñcana

SBS Retreat Centre is on its feet, has taken its first tottering steps and welcomes more helping hands.

The inaugural meeting of SBS Retreat Subcommittee (RSc) was held on 28 October 2006. RSc was formed to facilitate the smooth running of retreats, camps, seminars, and other such activities for lay people. Its function is not to organise any of these events, but to complement the programme of activities held in SBS Retreat Centre. Facilities are provided without charge but donations are welcome from participants to offset the cost of food, electricity and laundry services.

Closer-to-Reality DhammaVinaya Seminar (CRDS), held on 24 – 27 November 2006, was its maiden project. Still at its infancy, RSc has facilitated the running of a few retreats, children and teenager camps and workshops. Its members are now overcoming teething problems and getting to be more professional in meeting the needs of the programme organisers. There is still much for us to learn.

From our perspective, breakfast time is the most challenging. Volunteers have to be at the dining area early to get breakfast ready on schedule. They tend to come up late due to logistics. Furthermore, this is the time that we get the least volunteers. After lunch the volunteers have to stay on until quite late to clean up the dining hall and prepare the participants' afternoon drink. The volunteers feel the strain after a short retreat of a week.

We definitely need more people to serve in RSc. Outstation helpers are welcome too. Any takers? Call up the RSc coordinator and register yourself!

Participants' Feedback

- Thank you very much for setting up the right conditions for the meditation retreat. The arrangements and hospitality have surpassed our expectations. You have really put Dhamma into practice and have given us inspiration.

YEE KONG

- On transport: A bit packed at times but punctuality is a plus factor. Fast, efficient and courteous.

A RETREAT PARTICIPANT

- Organising this retreat was a breeze: not having to plan and organise the food nor worry about the facilities. I find the 'one contact' concept adopted by SBS for retreat bookings, information and enquiries very helpful.

JUDY CHUA

- I'm grateful to all RSc members for taking care of our lodging and stomachs. We were well-fed indeed, both spiritually and physically!

AMY

- Love my five-star mountain chalet. Grand view of hills, sound of waterfall and birds through full length windows.

A RETREAT PARTICIPANT

- SBS is still trying to find the best way to service yogis and RSc is open to feedback and suggestions. As a yogi, I truly appreciate the effort of the administration to try to service yogis with such respect and dedication.

However, there is a drawback for yogis on personal retreat in SBS. The current rules and regulations require yogis to leave when an organised event is held in SBS. It can be an inconvenience for yogis who wish to stay on longer to pursue their practice. It is my sincere hope and wish that the SBS administration can find a solution to this problem faced by yogis and hopefully, accommodate those who wish to stay for extended periods.

While practising there, one has to accept what SBS is. It can be a quiet day today but abuzz with activity the next few days; a hot day today but cool the next. Basically, SBS is alive with its own smells, sights, noise, taste and *rules*. Try to respect them all and the spirit of the BuddhaSāsana will continue to thrive in SBS.

TAMMY

Mahāsādhu to all participants for sharing their views and comments so openly. This will definitely help us to make improvements and provide better service to all of you so that your stay in SBS will be one joyful memory that will stay with you for a long, long while.

SBS RETREAT CENTRE

While SBS is primarily a Theravāda monk training centre, it has a secondary objective: to provide a retreat centre for the promotion of the spiritual, mental and physical health of its supporting community. Now that this retreat centre has been set up, we welcome suitable groups to make use of it for conducting activities in line with its objectives.

Sitting at the edge of a forest, set amidst lush green hills and fully equipped with modern facilities, SBS is a picturesque and peaceful haven for healthful activities in the form of retreats, workshops, forums, camps, seminars, etc. We provide the following facilities and services:

- a multi-purpose hall
- accommodation
- 4WD transport
- meals
- other utilities.

For further information and reservations, please contact the SBS office:
t. 05-8084429 f. 05-8411198
e. sbsmail@pd.jaring.my

SBS Events Calendar 2007 (Jul – Dec)

Kathina 2007	11 Nov
Closer-to-Reality DhammaVinaya Seminar 2007	23 – 26 Nov
Introduction to Monkhood Programme 9 (optional meditation retreat)	8 – 22 Dec 22 – 29 Dec
Meditation Retreat conducted by Daw Ariyañāṇi	15 – 29 Dec

For the retreat, contact SBS's programme head:
t. 012-5222101 e. apheang@gmail.com
For other activities, contact SBS Main Office:
t. 05 8084429 f. 05 8411198 e. office@sasanarakkha.org

We would like to share with you the beautiful process of our inspired, collective efforts.

2 Jan Uposatha Day. Ven Aggacitta gives a Dhamma talk based on Mahāsaḷāyatanika Sutta (MN 149) in Sīmā Hall.

3 Jan Ven Balacitta goes to Kamunting Detention Camp to share the Dhamma with the inmates. This is the first of regular weekly visits for 2007.

7 Jan The monastics go to Sepetang Buddhist Society for alms. Ven Aggacitta is touched by the tremendous amount of offerings given by the devotees and explains that any excess will be given to SBS staff and the needy.

10 Jan Ven Aggacitta goes to Petaling Jaya (PJ) to oversee the production of Sāsanārakkha Newszine #7, after which he will begin his Dhamma tour of the Klang Valley, Johor Bahru, Singapore and East Malaysia.

14 Jan Silūpama Quah Jit Hu, an IMPian7, comes to stay as an eight precept-holder for a month.

Ven Aggacitta is in Seck Kia Eenh, Melaka for lunch *dāna*. He gives a talk on how principles of the Buddha Dhamma are being used in mindfulness-based psychotherapies in the West, particularly in Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT).

16 Jan In PJ, Ven Aggacitta takes time off from the newszine production to be at Clove&Clive for an evening session of guided meditation and Q&A.

19 Jan Ven Aggacitta starts his Dhamma tour with visits to major Buddhist centres in the Klang Valley. (see p10)

26 Jan Ven Aggacitta travels to Johor Bahru and Singapore on the second leg of his Dhamma tour with Barry Ong as his *kappiya*.

2 Feb Ven Aggacitta begins the next leg of his Dhamma tour in East Malaysia.

3 Feb Ven Kumāra conducts the weekly Saturday night meditation session in Ven Aggacitta's absence.

6 Feb Sāsanārakkha Newszine #7 arrives in Taiping from PJ.

9 Feb In Sarawak, Ven Aggacitta visits Madam Sim's farm situated on undulating land (off Jalan Matang, 13 miles from Kuching) where she has developed the highest corner as a retreat centre.

11 Feb Ven Aggacitta attends the groundbreaking ceremony of Dhamma Vijaya Buddhist Centre, about 4½ miles from Kuching.

Later in the afternoon, he leaves for Penang. Before leaving for Taiping later in the evening, he visits Ven Suvaṇṇo in Lam Wah Ee Hospital.

Ven Kumāra goes to Taiping Buddhist Society for a Q&A Dhamma session with the devotees there.

15 Feb Uposatha Day. Ven Aggacitta gives a Dhamma talk based on Antevāsika Sutta (SN 35:151).

18 Feb For the first three days of the Chinese lunar new year, which begins today, the monastics are invited for house dāna to the homes of devotees.

20 Feb Ven Sūriya Sāmaṇera, a Czech ordained in Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Meditation Centre (SOM), Myanmar, arrives with the intention of staying for at least three months.

22 Feb Seevekumar checks in as an eight precept-holder to get a taste of monastic life, for which he has an inclination.

23 Feb Uposatha Day. A Dhamma discussion is held on the topic, "Comparison of the process of enlightenment according to the suttas and the Commentaries". Particular reference is made to Dhamma-followers (*dhammānusārī*) and faith-followers (*saddhānusārī*) who have entered the "fixed course of rightness" and are destined to realise the fruit of stream-entry before they die.

25 Feb Sayadaw U Nandasiddhi comes with our Myanmar worker, Hla Kyaw. The latter has just spent a week in Nirodhārāma, Ayer Tawar, as a temporary *sāmaṇera*.

1 Mar Lim Ewe Seng, a regular volunteer, joins the SBS workforce as a maintenance technician.

2 Mar Ajahn Mahāñāṇo of Balik Pulau Buddhist Hermitage, Penang, brings Ajahn Pasanno and another Thai monk for a visit. Ajahn Pasanno, a Canadian with 36 *vassas*, is co-abbot of Abhayagiri Monastery, California, with Ajahn Amaro. Ajahn Pasanno was the abbot of Wat Pah Nanachat of North-east Thailand in the 80s. Ven Aggacitta has an interesting discussion with them, among other matters, on Theravāda-Mahāyāna monastic relations in Abhayagiri Monastery. Ajahn Mahāñāṇo also brings up the topics he intends to discuss during SaṅghaSannipāta (Saṅgha Meeting) 2007.

Ven Aggacitta gives an Uposatha Dhamma talk based on CūlaDukkhakkhandha Sutta (MN 14) and PaṭhamaMahānāma Sutta (SN 55:21).

3 Mar The Saturday evening meditation session resumes after the Chinese New Year break.

5 Mar A Korean sāmaṇera, Ven Devinda, arrives from SOM, Myanmar, and plans to stay for a few weeks in SBS before returning home.

Ajahn Vajiro (27 vassas) from Amaravati Monastery in UK arrives to conduct a weekend retreat from 9 – 10 March. Ajahn is English but stayed with his expatriate parents in Malaya in his younger days.

6 Mar Wong Kim Choi (Nekkhammacitta, IMPian6) arrives, with blessings from his family to renounce in SBS.

Ven U Candimā (28 vassas), from Yangon pays us a visit.

The electric fence around the organic vegetable plots put up to deter wild boars, was bitten into pieces by them.

9 Mar Lim Ewe Seng discovers a rock-overhang cave while clearing the undergrowth in the forest behind Storehouse.

10 Mar A two-day audio editing workshop to train volunteers to edit SBS Dhamma talks starts today. (see p39)

13 Mar SBS monastics go to Lunas Buddhist Hermitage to attend the late Ven Suvaṇṇo's funeral. They are accompanied by a bus-load of devotees.

14 Mar Ven Balacitta goes to Kamunting Detention Camp for his weekly sharing of Dhamma with the detainees. An officer requests him to give talks to the prisoners there as well. Ven Balacitta suggests that both groups can sit together to attend the same talk.

Ven Kumāra starts teaching Pāli to Nekkhammacitta.

Hla Kyaw discovers a bigger cave which can seat 25 people, higher and deeper in the jungle.

17 Mar The monastics attend a memorial service for Fong Oi Peng's late mother.

19 Mar A *vinaya* discussion on *nissaya* (dependence) is held in the evening based on Chapter 2 of Ven Ṭhānissaro's *Buddhist Monastic Code*.

20 Mar The vinaya discussion continues today.

The perennial popularity of his Dhamma talks is undoubtedly due to his oratory skills and charismatic personality for he preached with passion and conviction, thus inspiring many to change for the better.

EULOGY **FROM BACK COVER**

and charismatic personality for he preached with passion and conviction, thus inspiring many to change for the better—to move from darkness to light, from light to light; as the Buddha said. His Dhamma talks endeared him to his audience because of his ability to connect with them, which was second nature to him because he had led a layman's life with all its trials and tribulations for 60 years before becoming a monk. But his missionary career did not start only after his renunciation. Even while working as a hospital assistant he was already a very popular Dhamma speaker.

The late Ven Suvaṇṇo taught not only through his animated Dhamma talks but also by example, the most valuable of which, to me, is his determination to become a monk and his momentous decision to do so at the age of 60! A *sutta* (MN 124) tells the story of Ven Bakkula who renounced at 80 and lived as a monk for another 80 years. Ven Suvaṇṇo is a modern day example of "it's never too late to renounce!" I hope his shining example will inspire many men aspiring to become monks to be patient and persistent until the right conditions converge.

We must remember that he did not start to learn the Dhamma only after he became a monk, but way back, as a layman. So, any man who aspires to become a monk should start learning the Dhamma now! Uncle Eng Kim did not only learn the Dhamma. He was already practising meditation in Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre under the guidance of its founder, Phra Khru Dhammabarnchanvud.

Soon after he became a monk, he did more intensive practice in Mahāsī Meditation Centre, Yangon, Myanmar and later on his own. Meditation then became part of his life, which he unselfishly and compassionately shared with everybody whom he met: by founding meditation centres such as Bukit Mertajam Buddhist Meditation Centre, Mi Tor See and Lunas Buddhist Hermitage. He also helped to set up other centres in the country.

I am sure many people will miss his compassionate presence and lively, inspiring Dhamma talks. However, his demise should not bring sadness or sorrow. Instead we should express our sympathetic joy for his release from the manifold suffering of this, his human life—from the cruelties and neglect of his youth to the helplessness of old age and sickness of his final days.

The highest honour we can bestow on him is not just to pay tribute to him, but rather to emulate his life of a compassionate *kalyāṇamitta* (good companion) in learning and practising the Dhamma.

May the merits accrued by all of us today be for the late Ven Suvaṇṇo's well-being and happiness. May our merits assist us to follow the late Ven Suvaṇṇo's example as a compassionate kalyāṇamitta and thus enable us to honour him with high-end *pūjā* (honour).

21 Mar SBS Chanting Group records Bojjhaṅga Sutta (chant for freedom from illness) under the guidance of Ven Aggacitta.

22 Mar Ven Aggacitta embarks on his East Coast Dhamma Tour with Michael Tan and Seevekumar as *kappiya-kārakas*. He arrives in Mettārāma, Kota Bharu at 4pm.

23 Mar Ven Varadhammo comes for a visit.

25 Mar SBSMC Chairman leads a group of Myanmar and local volunteers to plant trees, place tyres as steps and dig up sand from the stream.

Ven Kumāra goes to Taiping Buddhist Society to give a Mandarin Dhamma talk, "A Buddhist of Right Beliefs".

28 Mar Ven Kumāra goes to Penang for homeopathic treatment and stays with Ven Santagavesaka for a few days to discuss how to improve our Introduction to Monkhood Programme.

29 Mar Ven Aggacitta returns after his fruitful Dhamma tour in the East Coast.

30 Mar Ven Aggacitta has a talk with Ven Devinda and impresses upon him that fulfilling his responsibility to support his aged mother is his priority and that he can wait for a more favourable time to renounce. He advises him to practise regular formal sitting meditation and daily mindfulness by continually watching his mind.

2 Apr Ven Devinda disrobes and leaves SBS for Bangkok en route to Seoul, Korea.

Ven Balacitta extends his Dhamma propagation work to Taiping Prison. He goes there on alternate Mondays to share Dhamma with the prisoners.

The Uposatha Dhamma talk is replaced with a vinaya discussion on the factors for independence (*nissaya-muccana-kaṅga*).

5 Apr *Piṇḍacāra* is in the house of Ooi Teow Keat, SBS's dāna head. The shift from the usual venue in the Hokkien Cemetery Pavilion is to avoid the congestion anticipated there, today being Qing Ming Day.

Firefly Mission takes advantage of the long Easter break in Singapore to hold a four-day retreat in SBS for 50 Singaporean yogis. They bring with them some 80 sets of Ven Aggacitta's Dhamma talks in audio CD format (Closer-to-Reality Series 1 – 9) that have been reprinted, sponsored by Maṅgala Vihāra Buddhist Temple, Singapore.

8 Apr Ven Kumāra gives a talk on "Filial Piety in Buddhism" at Taiping Buddhist Society.

10 Apr Ven U Indaka (14 vassas, a PhD holder from Bombay University, India), the resident monk of Wat Sambodhi, Kepong, comes for a visit. Ven Aggacitta has an interesting discussion with him regarding the monastic educational system in Myanmar. They feel that it should keep up with the times and encourage critical and independent thinking.

11 Apr Ven Balacitta stops his weekly Dhamma visits to share Dhamma in Kamunting Detention Camp as there are only two detainees left.

14 Apr Another two-day audio editing workshop, a follow-up to the first one held in March, begins today. (see p40)

Ven Kumāra helps to conduct the meditation class for beginners in the evening.

15 Apr SBSMC Chairman leads a group of Myanmar and local volunteers to lay used tyres as steps for a new short cut down to the *sīmā* area and to make preparations for Wesak Day celebrations.

16 Apr A few students (four Theravādin monks: three Bangladeshi, a Thai and two Chinese lay persons) from International Buddhist College, Hatyai, Thailand, pay us a visit. One of the Bangladeshi monks wants to stay on in SBS for a meditation retreat but does not meet the prerequisites for doing so. Ven Aggacitta requests him to inform other foreign monks intending to stay in SBS to check with the office before coming.

Sayalay Jhānanandī comes for a visit. She and Sayalay Aggañāṇī, now in Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre (MBMC), are invited to stay and meditate in SBS.

Ven Balacitta goes to Taiping Prison for his fortnightly Dhamma propagation work. He preaches in Cantonese, by majority request. The response from the inmates is overwhelming—so much so that an Indian warder in Taiping Prison requests him to come twice a week!

19 Apr Law Thim Fook comes to SBS to give a talk on Reiki healing followed by a practical demonstration. About 15 people sign up for the course on the spot. (see next page)

20 Apr Sayalay Jhānanandī and Sayalay Aggañāṇī are here. The latter is here on a recce trip.

The monks have a vinaya discussion on Uposatha matters.

23 Apr There is a vinaya class for the monks today on Uposatha *kamma* (formal, legal act) and the special circumstances that require different responses and courses of action.

24 Apr The vinaya class on four types of Uposatha kamma for monks continues today.

28 Apr Ven Kumāra, together with our Main Office staff and SBS publication team, attends a website management workshop conducted by our webmaster, John Lee.

29 Apr The monastics go to the house of Chua Chong Hock, our internal auditor, whose mother has just passed away. Ven Aggacitta delivers a short Dhamma talk in Hokkien on appropriate acceptance and action when faced with the death of a relative.

Ven Paññasāmi, together with a Mahāyāna monk and nun, come from Penang for a visit.

Tuned to the Dhamma

SBS organised courses on Reiki, a form of healing by tapping into the universal qi. **Lim Lay Hoon** attended one such course and brings you her views.

The history of Reiki healing in SBS goes back to 12 June 2005—when Ven Aggacitta's health suddenly became a cause for major concern. Reiki Master Law Thim Fook was one of those who did distant healing for Bhante.

Fast forward to 30 January 2007. After reading the announcement about Bhante's marathon Dhamma Tour 2007 to South and East Malaysia posted in sbsmail, Master Law responded with concern. In his mail he said, "I hope Bhante is OK. If there is any need for Reiki distant healing just let me know."

Being curious to know more about distant healing and how it works, I was prompted to ask for more information. One thing then led to another. On 12 March 2007 the subject of promoting SBS Retreat Centre as a venue for meditation retreats, Dhamma camps, seminars, workshops as well as health activities were discussed. The SBSMC programme section decided to start the ball rolling.

Master Law was invited to give a talk and hands-on demo on 19 April 2007. Convinced that Reiki healing is a simple, handy and beneficial practice of alternative healing that can be carried out for the well-being of self and others, many of us signed up for Reiki courses by Master Law. We also arranged for another Reiki master, Master Lim Siang Gee, to give a course.

The beauty of Reiki healing is not merely that it helps to treat a wide range of sicknesses and dis-ease but also in its principles of encouraging practitioners to cultivate values of diligence, gratitude, humility, compassion and kindness. These are values that are very in tune with the Dhamma! Reiki can also enhance one's meditation practice. This is evident to participants who all felt calm and relaxed after a course.

We count our blessings that we have had the opportunity to learn a simple yet beneficial method of maintaining the well-being of self, loved ones and others.

When Ven Aggacitta was unwell during his recent personal retreat in Thailand, SBS healers were requested to do distant energy healing for him. Eventually Bhante recovered fully without taking any medication. (see p52)

The small group of SBS Reikians have started a weekly Reiki clinic with the aim of doing service for the community.

1 May It is Wesak morning and devotees crowd the Hokkien Cemetery Pavilion for dāna. After piṇḍacāra, Ven Aggacitta delivers a Dhamma talk after which he leads devotees in mass recitation of "Arahaṁ Sammāsambuddho" as a form of Buddhānussati.

In the afternoon, Ven Aggacitta gives a short Dhamma talk in Myanmar to a group of Myanmar workers who come up to SBS for the Wesak Day celebration. Surprisingly, most of them do not know the significance of Wesak as it is not widely celebrated in their country.

The Wesak Day celebrations continue into the evening. (see p48)

5 May IMP8 starts today with Ven Aggacitta giving an opening talk to 11 participants, providing them with an outline of the programme. Ven Kumāra then briefs them on the details and the eight precepts. (see p22)

6 May IMPians share their personal thoughts on the meaning and purpose of life.

Beginning today, Ven Aggacitta gives meditation guidance to IMPians while Ven Kumāra teaches them Pāli pronunciation and qigong.

7 May Ven Kumāra gives a Dhamma talk to IMPians based on Lokadhamma Sutta (AN 8:6) and three suttas from Anamatagga Saṁyutta (SN 15). This is followed by a discussion.

Ven Aggacitta discusses with David Chang and Administrative Manager 1 the possibility of building small, prefab timber huts that are portable, rather than the proposed three-storey Monastic Guest Lodge, in view of the escalating cost of building materials. (see p26)

8 May Ven Aggacitta gives a Dhamma talk to IMPians based on Upādāparitassanā Sutta (SN 22:7) and part of Salla Sutta (SN 36:6).

WESAK BOUQUETS

Adapted from a posting in theravada-my@yahoogroups.com

Each Buddhist organisation has its own way of celebrating Wesak Day. Here's how we did it in SBS this year—with bouquets of remembrance, light and fresh flowers.

MORNING

At 8.00am on Wesak morning, devotees gathered at Hokkien Cemetery Pavilion to wait for the SBS monastics to hike down the hill on their alms round. Upon their arrival, the devotees took refuge, observed five precepts and offered alms to them.

After collecting the alms food, the Saṅgha members explained the significance of Wesak, according to the Theravāda tradition. This was accompanied by group recitation in Pāli of

- the first words of the newly born Siddhattha Gotama
- the first words of the newly enlightened Sammāsambuddha[1] (recited mentally immediately after enlightenment and verbally seven days later)
- the last words of the Blessed One just before his *parinibbāna*[2].

A translation and explanation were given after each passage.

Then everyone participated in mass recitation of "Araham Sammāsambuddho" as a form of Buddhānussati to honour our Blessed One. Before the recitation, Ven Aggacitta explained the significance of the chant in its three perspectives. The chant was repeated 108 times, completing one round of the Buddhist rosary. After that the Saṅgha led everyone to share merits with all beings.

EVENING

In the week or so prior to Wesak eve, it had rained consistently every evening here in Taiping. As the time drew near to start the evening programme, strong winds blew to disperse the gloom of the overcast sky. Thunder rumbled and a soft, feathery drizzle turned into heavier drops while the setting sun shone from the west. Some committee members were rather alarmed. "Bhante, did you all do enough chanting?" someone asked reproachfully. Suddenly a rainbow was spotted beaming from Sīmā Hall where Venerable Balacitta was meditating, trying to invoke the *devas* to stop the rain. The rain cleared, and the clouds dissipated, refreshing the previously hazy and stuffy atmosphere.

Devotees in the hundreds were transported uphill to SBS. Hundreds of flowers of light lit up the sky in a dazzling display of fireworks, followed by the lighting of 4,000 candles set amidst bouquets of fresh flowers: all offered to honour the Buddha. It was a festive atmosphere where some 600 devotees (many of whom are 'Wesak Day Buddhists') gathered in a sanctuary surrounded by secluded hills and valleys. Yet the crowd was not rowdy, probably tranquillised by the serene scenery and the sanctity of the occasion. From the urban areas below it must have been quite a spectacle to see the otherwise dark hills sparkling with lights and fireworks.

After the devotees had lighted up the candles that lined major roads, footpaths and the open shrines, they were then offered three options:

- guided meditation on "Araham Sammāsambuddho", a form of Buddhānussati (108 x 3 times), *mettā* and *satipaṭṭhāna* to honour the Buddha, in SaddhammaSabhā Multi-purpose Hall
- *Life of the Buddha*, a documentary screened near the open deck of the outdoor Buddha shrine
- free food at the stalls below Abbot's Office.

The programme ended with the recitation of blessings by the Saṅgha and sharing of merits with all beings.

1 fully self-enlightened one; usually referred to as "Buddha".

2 final passing away of a liberated person, one who has eradicated all mental defilements.

9 May Ven Aggacitta delivers a Dhamma talk to IMPians based on MahāDukkhakkhanda Sutta (MN 13).

We begin the process of making a new short-cut trail through the forest down to Dhamma Grove in time for Kathina (see p26).

10 May After piṇḍacāra, the monastics visit a regular SBS supporter, David Teow, who has just been discharged from hospital. The monks chant Bojjhaṅga Sutta for him.

Ven Kumāra gives a Dhamma talk to the IMPians based on Raṭṭhapāla Sutta (MN 82).

IMPians do their evening *pūjā* on the open deck of the Buddha shrine followed by meditation till 10pm.

11 May Ven Aggacitta gives a Dhamma talk to IMPians based on Mahā-Assapura Sutta (MN 39).

Ven Kumāra gives a Dhamma talk to the IMPians based on Sotāpattiyaṅga Sutta (SN 55:5) and other cross-references from Ajahn Ṭhānissaro's compilation, *Stream Entry*.

13 May Some volunteers come to help clear trees that fell near Agga Kuṭi and the area across the washrooms beyond Abbot's Office car park during a phenomenal hailstorm yesterday.

Ven Kumāra leads IMPians in identifying their ultimate aim in life.

Ven Balacitta and Ven Sūriya share with IMPians on matters related to their monkhood experience.

Some visitors come unannounced in the heavy rain and release 800 small *koi* (carp) in the sīmā pond.

14 May Ven Aggacitta shares his monkhood experience with IMPians. Later, Ven Kumāra shares his journey into and through monkhood.

15 May In the morning, Ven Aggacitta talks on "Theravāda Buddhism and Our Original Scriptures" to IMPians. Its Q&A session follows in the evening.

At night, all the monks, IMPians and a few lay persons go to Hokkien Cemetery to meditate, each sitting at a tomb.

16 May Ven Aggacitta gives a talk on "Introduction to Vinaya Rules and Duties" to IMPians, and Ven Kumāra shares with them on "Monkhood and Health".

Hla Kyaw leads Ven Balacitta and a few IMPians to meditate in the rock-overhang cave (some distance north of Storehouse) at 8pm.

17 May Ven Kumāra has a discussion with IMPians on "Buddhism Today", in which issues raised include those of 'bogus' monks and wasteful practices. Later in the day, Ven Aggacitta discusses "Role of the Saṅgha" with them.

18 May Ven Kumāra talks to interested IMPians on "Going Forth". Later in the afternoon he facilitates the third and last session on "Meaning of Life". This session is on taking simple, natural steps to achieve one's aims in life.

Pesala (Philip Lam) and Siddhartha (Calvin Ooi) come for IMPian reunion and retreat. They are the only old IMPians to do so.

There is a showing of films on spiritual themes in the evening for IMP: *The Danish Poet*, *The Great Zambini* and *Hobart Shakespeareans*.

19 May IMP8 ends with a photography session. Seven IMPians stay on for a meditation retreat.

It is heartening to see 17 new yogis come for the Saturday night meditation class.

23 May Several hundred large koi are behaving slugglishy and four are found dead. They could have been infected by the batch of of 800 small koi recently released there on 13 May.

A local surveyor, Chua Chong Beng, pledge to update the site map of SBS using GPS with the help of Ooi Ean San. Ven Balacitta goes to Kamunting Detention Camp to see the remaining two detainees as the others have been released. An Indian officer arranges for him to talk on alternate Wednesdays to the prisoners instead of the detainees.

24 May A large group of volunteers come up after 5.30pm to clean the sīmā pond in a concerted effort to save the fish. However, a mistaken assumption that the drainage outlet is capped by protective netting, as well as a lack of oxygen in the water muddied by the sludge, cause some 700 to perish in the process, leaving less than 400 behind. This is a good lesson for those eager to 'save lives' by releasing fish and animals. You may upset the ecological balance of the habitat and cause more harm than good.

26 May IMP yogis end their retreat today. IMPian Atthesaka volunteers to stay on to help in SBS until he can find a job.

Ven Aggacitta leaves for his Dhamma tour in the North, with Teh Yik Meng as his kappiya.

27 May Ven Kumāra goes to Taiping Buddhist Society to give a Dhamma talk in Mandarin on "The Happy Wise Person".

28 May A three-day Chinese Dhamma Camp begins today with 36 teenagers. The camp is organised by Taiping Insight Meditation Society (TIMS) Youth under the guidance of Ven Kumāra. (see p50)

30 May Members of the Penang Free School Buddhist Society, who are here for the day, have a Q&A session with Ven Kumāra.

31 May While in Penang, Ven Aggacitta visits a couple of wheelchair-bound stroke patients who were strong supporters of the Saṅgha and recites Bojjhaṅga Sutta for them.

1 June Ven Kumāra and Ven Balacitta go to Penang to attend the two-day SaṅghaSannipāta starting tomorrow at Balik Pulau Buddhist Hermitage (BPBH).

A two-week mid-year meditation retreat for 37 yogis begins under the guidance of Patrick Kearney. (see p51)

A Special Camp

Bouquets and brickbats from the participants of the Teenage Chinese Dhamma Camp held in Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary from 28 – 30 May.

Translated and compiled by Ātāpī Cheng.

- The food was yummy and nutritious.
- I have a very inquisitive mind and asked a lot of questions which must have been very vexing for people, but I learnt a lot of special things. I would like to say "sorry" and "thank you" to Bhante Kumāra.
- I have attended many Buddhist camps but this is special because we got to play in the river.
- Some areas need to be improved on, especially the participants' discipline and adherence to the schedule.
- I find some of the committee members a bit strict.
- Some of the boys needed more discipline so as not to disturb others who wanted to sleep.
- I felt a lot of discomfort in meditation, but with Bhante Kumāra's guidance, I improved a lot.
- It has increased my self-confidence.
- I feel more relaxed after doing yoga.
- The games in this camp are very meaningful and challenging.
- I learnt a lot—precepts, meditation and yoga. I also learnt the importance of teamwork and that different people have different characteristics. There are a lot of things I have yet to learn from Bhante Kumāra. Someday... someday, I will be here to learn more.

2 June In SaṅghaSannipāta, issues discussed include matters on various recent incidents involving local monks, BPBH's proposed change of constitution, intermediate life and accepting money on behalf of a temple or monastery or another.

3 June During the meeting Ven Hye Dhammavuddho proposes to hold next year's SaṅghaSannipāta at Vihāra Buddha Gotama, Temoh on 31 August to coincide with its Saṅghikadāna held during its anniversary celebrations.

5 June Ven Aggacitta gives a short Dhamma talk to a few devotees from Klang on how to manage emotions and cut down on craving and ego.

Sayalay Medhānandī from MBMC is here on a recce trip.

8 June Ven Aggacitta leaves SBS at 2.30pm for Penang International Airport en route to Singapore to give two Dhamma talks in conjuction with Wesak.

10 June Sayadaw U Kevala, an old friend of Ven Aggacitta, and his kappiya come for a few weeks' stay.

Ven U Dhammananda arrives from Subang Jaya.

11 June Before leaving Singapore, Ven Aggacitta visits an old friend, Ven Kwang Sheng, the incumbent abbot of Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery.

Ven Kumāra and Ven Balacitta go to Taiping Hospital to visit a committed devotee, Sis Fong Oi Peng, who met with an accident.

14 June Before leaving SBS for Penang, Sayadaw U Kevala comments on the faith and generosity of the Chinese devotees. He is also impressed with the quality of public services and the general cleanliness in Malaysia.

AT EASE and AT PEACE

Patrick Kearney, a lay meditation teacher who regularly conducts meditation retreats in Australia, was in SBS from 1 – 14 Jun to conduct his first ever retreat in Malaysia. **Lü Xiufei** brings you her thoughts.

One would have been forgiven for thinking that Patrick Kearney was a teacher of callisthenics, yet all 37 of us were here to learn meditation. An hour of stretches and bends kick-started each day, led by the teacher who executed each movement with the flexibility that was the envy of many a yogi present. We were reminded repeatedly to check our posture, in his words, the "grip, drift and lift", to help us anchor ourselves firmly to the ground with trunk upright, body in proper alignment and most importantly, relaxed.

"If the body is agitated, the mind cannot settle down," to quote the teacher. Poor posture and stiff muscles whether sitting, walking or standing, give rise to such a body state. In meditation, we pay attention to the mind state, but oftentimes forget the body state. Only with the body at ease can the mind be at peace—a prerequisite for meditation. Thus we settled down to two weeks of ease and peace.

Although trained in the Mahāsī method of *yoniso manasikāra* (paying attention to the cause of phenomena), Patrick Kearney was open to other experiences and practices of the yogis which are in keeping with *satipaṭṭhāna* as taught by the Buddha. His emphasis on correct posture helped not a few yogis to discriminate between pain that is inherent in the body and pain that is the 'don't do this to me' silent plea by the body. The former is a potential object of attention, while the latter is an abject state of self-inflicted punishment.

We had practice talks during the first week, which incorporated guided practical exercises on how to apply the four satipaṭṭhānas—in very simple but structured steps. Many of us go for a retreat armed with perceptions of how and what to pay attention to, as well as somewhat fixed expectations of experiences. For these exercises, the teacher required all yogis to put aside all such notions, be a 'beginner' yogi, and just follow the exercises. Many would have got some wrong perceptions righted after going through these exercises.

Besides these practice talks, there were Dhamma talks in the evening. The topics of these evening talks elaborated on those of the practice talks. Stories drawn from the teacher's vast experience as a yogi, a teacher, and his discussions with fellow meditators were liberally used to drive home some points. Some were humorous while others were moving. I'm sure many of us could identify ourselves with some of the situations and experiences he talked about. The talks were part of the training, designed to complement our meditation practice.

So in the words of the teacher, "with ease and at peace", two weeks passed very quickly. Soon, we were back in the outside world, having armed ourselves with yet more tools to face the dis-ease and dis-please of everyday life.

Today is Uposatha Day and Ven Aggacitta gives a Dhamma talk based on Sallekha Sutta (MN 8).

16 June The monastics chant KaraṇīyaMettā Sutta and Tirokuṭṭa Sutta at a dāna in the house of a devotee, Tay Peng Hua, whose son passed away about two months ago. Ven Aggacitta talks in great length on Tirokuṭṭa Sutta. He also advises the family on how to help the boy have a better existence.

Ven Kumāra takes over the meditation class in the evening.

17 June Ven Aggacitta leaves for Penang after the SBSMC meeting on his way to Thailand for a three-week personal retreat. He is accompanied by Yap Sew Hong and IMPians Paññobhāsa, Ātāpī and Kantāragū.

23 June Ven Balacitta goes to Kamunting Detention Camp to give a Dhamma talk to the prisoners. Originally scheduled for Wednesdays, he now goes on alternate Saturdays.

Ven Kumāra conducts the Saturday evening meditation class.

24 June In the evening, Ven Kumāra has his monthly Chinese Dhamma talk in Taiping Buddhist Society. He speaks on "Self Management".

25 June Ven U Dhammananda leaves for Subang Jaya Buddhist Association to see Ven Santacitta who is suffering from 4th stage cancer.

Ven Balacitta goes to Taiping Prison for his Dhamma propagation work among the prisoners.

27 June Ven Sīlavanta, a Cambodian, and his mother come from Lunas for a visit.

29 June Lim Poh Eng brings koi experts here to inspect the fish at the sīmā pond. Besides providing expert advice, they also donate an air pump and medicine to resolve the parasite problem.

30 June IMPian8 Atthesaka ends his volunteer service in SBS to begin his new job next month.

An Eventful Retreat in Thailand

By Ātāpī Cheng and Yap Sew Hong

Ven Aggacitta and four of us were in Thailand for a three weeks' personal retreat in one of Ajahn Som Chak's Dhamma practice centres in Pak Chong (almost 300 km North East of Bangkok). Located on a low hill, the centre is set in scenic surroundings and commands beautiful views of the surrounding countryside. It houses 200 *kuṭis*, a huge meditation hall, sleeping quarters that can accommodate more than 3,000 people and a dining hall with a capacity of over 1,000 people.

When we met Ajahn Som Chak the next day, he recommended Bhante to go to his other forest monastery in Ubon (about 7 hours' drive away), which is more conducive to meditation. This is because large groups of people in the hundreds will be checking in and out for short Dhamma practice courses here.

In the Ubon forest monastery, Bhante joined the monks on their morning *piṇḍacāra* accompanied by at least one male yogi from our group. The respect the lay people had for the monks were evident in the way they spontaneously stepped aside and readily knelt on the dusty ground. It made us feel very humble.

Our daily routine included two group sittings in the morning and a Dhamma discussion on alternate days, usually under Bhante's kuṭi. One day Bhante got us to do 'meditation in action'. As the lower ground floor of his kuṭi was flooded because of the rain, we had to clear the clogged gutter and dig drains on the ground.

Ten days into the retreat, an interesting incident made us ponder over the Buddha's statement that when one keeps the precepts pure, one's wishes can be fulfilled.

The evening before Uposatha Day, Bhante mentioned that he would have to do Uposatha in the nearby river as the monastery does not have a *sīmā*. It would be ideal if there was a boat available; otherwise he would have to swim to the middle of the river.

The next day we went to the river and as the banks were very steep, we got a long bamboo ladder as a makeshift pier for Bhante to descend into the water—a very dangerous acrobatic act—balancing on a wobbling ladder over deep water! Suddenly a boat approached us. Phew! What a relief! Was it a coincidence? Or was it the power of Bhante's *sīla*?

Another interesting but mysterious incident happened. One night, Bhante woke up to the sound of a woman's voice humming a lullaby. During a discussion session, we learnt that all three of us had heard the lullaby, but the local monks there had not. Was it all a collective dream or something supernatural?

At the end of the second week, Bhante's fragile lungs played up. Unknown to us, over a couple of days, Bhante coughed up blood-stained sputum. It was only when the symptom persisted that the men knew and made arrangements for Bhante to fly back to Penang four days earlier than planned. At the airport, he was immediately given energy treatment by SBS healers, Teh Yik Ming and Mokkhesī. The latter accompanied him to Mettānānda Vihāra, where he rested and continued to receive treatment thrice daily. Four days later, Bhante went back to SBS, fully recovered. Back in SBS, we learnt that he had had a bacterial infection.

It was a truly eventful retreat.

We are most grateful for the loving care extended to us during our stay in Thailand, and to Ven Jutipañño of Dhamma Light Monastery, Api-Api, Johor, who made arrangements for our trip.

Glossary of Non-English Words

Terms below are in Pāli unless otherwise stated.
Italicised words in the explanations below (e.g. *Theravāda*) are separately explained.

AbhidhammatthaSaṅgaha Compendium of Higher Dhamma; attributed to a monk named Anuruddha in the 10th century, it builds upon the books of Abhidhamma Piṭaka (Basket of Higher Dhamma) that deals with the analysis of mind, matter and their interrelated processes.

Ajahn (Thai) teacher.

Anattā no-, non-, not-self.

Arahant liberated person who has eradicated all mental defilements.

Ariya noble; noble one, one who has at least entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, transcended the plane of worldlings. He has the five faculties, i.e. of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

Bhante venerable sir (often used when addressing a *bhikkhu*).

Bhikkhu *Theravāda* Buddhist monk.

Buddha Enlightened One (usually referring to a **sammāsambuddha**, a fully self-enlightened one, one who has discovered the Dhamma for himself, taught the way for its realisation and established the *Saṅgha*).

Buddhānussati repeated recollection of the Buddha's virtues.

Dāna act of giving, offering.

Deva deity.

Dhamma [or **Dharma** in Sanskrit] Universal Truth, teaching, phenomena.

DhammaVinaya Doctrine and Discipline (term used by the Buddha to denote the 'religion' he founded).

Hokkien a Chinese dialect widely spoken in Malaysia and Singapore.

Jātaka (belonging to, connected with what has happened). 1. a story about animals, humans or spirits—with a moral. 2. a book in the *Pāli* Canon containing 547 such stories.

Jhāna meditative concentration.

Kamma [**Karma** in Sanskrit] intentional, moral action.

Kappiya-kāraka a steward who makes things allowable for *bhikkhus* (usually abbreviated to just **kappiya**).

Kathina (lit. firmness, stability, durability) special ceremony held after *vassa* where lay Buddhists offer robes and other requisites to monks and where monks traditionally cooperate to make a special robe called **kathina** robe.

Kuṭi hut or small house.

Mahā great.

Mahāthera great elder—a *bhikkhu* who has more than 20 *vassas*.

Mahāyāna Great Vehicle—one of the two main traditions of Buddhism (the other being *Theravāda*).

Mettabhāvanā development of loving-kindness.

Nibbāna state of perfect peace, bliss and freedom from all suffering; the ultimate aim in Buddhism.

Nikāyas collections; usually referring to the collections of *Theravāda Pāli suttas*.

Pātimokkha monastic code comprising summary of major rules and etiquette.

Pāli ancient language in which *Theravāda* scriptures are preserved.

Piṇḍacāra Buddhist monks' practice of going on alms round.

Piṇḍapāta alms food.

Pūjā honour; respect; devotional offering.

Sādhu well done, excellent.

Sāmaṇera novice Buddhist monk preparing to become a *bhikkhu*.

Saṅgha community of Buddhist monks or nuns.

Saṅghikadāna *dāna* meant for the *Saṅgha*.

Sīla morality;virtue.

Sīmā monastic boundary, territory.

Satipaṭṭhāna establishment of mindfulness.

Sayadaw (Myanmar) venerable teacher.

Sayalay (Myanmar) little teacher (often used to address a Buddhist nun of Myanmar tradition).

Saṁsāra wandering through births and deaths.

Sutta [or **Sutra** in Sanskrit] discourse by the Buddha or his contemporary disciples.

Tathāgata Thus-gone, or Thus-come—an epithet used by the Buddha especially when referring to himself.

Theravāda Doctrine of the Elders—one of the two main traditions of Buddhism (the other being *Mahāyāna*). It claims to be the earliest, most authentic extant record of Gotama Buddha's teachings and emphasises more on striving for personal liberation.

Theravādin advocate or follower of *Theravāda*.

Tipiṭaka Three Baskets—the full set of canonical *Theravāda* scriptures preserved in *Pāli*.

Uposatha Buddhist Sabbath; day of ritual and religious observance for the *Saṅgha* and the laity respectively.

Vassa 1. abbreviation for **vassāvāsa** (rainy season residence). 2. year standing (i.e. monk age).

Vinaya monastic law and regulation.

Vipassanā clear intuitive insight arising from observing physical and mental phenomena as they really are.

Wesak [corrupted form of the *Pāli* word **Vesākha**] name of a month usually overlapping with the Gregorian May. Now popularly referred to as the full moon day of that month, on which Buddhists celebrate Gotama Buddha's birthday.

Abbr.	Text	Reference according to
AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya	book number: sutta number
DN	Dīgha Nikaya	sutta number
MN	Majjhima Nikāya	sutta number

Abbr.	Text	Reference according to
SN	Saṁyutta Nikāya	saṁyutta number: sutta number
Ud	Udāna	vagga number: sutta number
Vin Mv	Vinaya Mahāvagga	

All references are based on Vipassanā Research Institute's Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana CD-ROM (V. 3.0).

Get a feel of monastic life at the edge of the forest...

Sāsanārakkha Buddhist Sanctuary

Introduction to Monkhood Programme

IMP9

Date (2 weeks)	Optional 1-week Meditation Retreat*	Closing Date for Application
8 – 22 Dec 2007	22 – 29 Dec 2007	8 Nov 2007

*This meditation retreat is for old and new IMP participants only.

Basic Programme Components

- Life of a monk and things he should know
- Useful info for those contemplating monkhood
- Current issues on Buddhism and Spirituality

• *meditation* • *discipline*
• *sutta study* • *Pali chanting*
• *talks & discussions on the DhammaVinaya & relevant issues* • *qigong* • *yoga*
• *alms gathering* • *nature walk*

Requirements:

- Possess general physical and mental health
- Agree to stay for the whole two weeks of the programme
- Willing to observe all stipulated regulations
- Able to communicate well in English
- Male, aged 17 and above
- Malaysian (Singaporeans can also be considered)

Medium of instruction: English

Fully sponsored by SBS & supporters

Details and application forms can be obtained from:

- SBS Main Office c/o 15, Lrg Tasik Permai 6, Tmn Tasik Permai, 34000 Taiping, Perak
  t. 05-8084429 f. 05-8411198 e. office@sasanarakkha.org
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Note: As SBS does not offer short-term monkhood, IMP participants are not ordained as monks.

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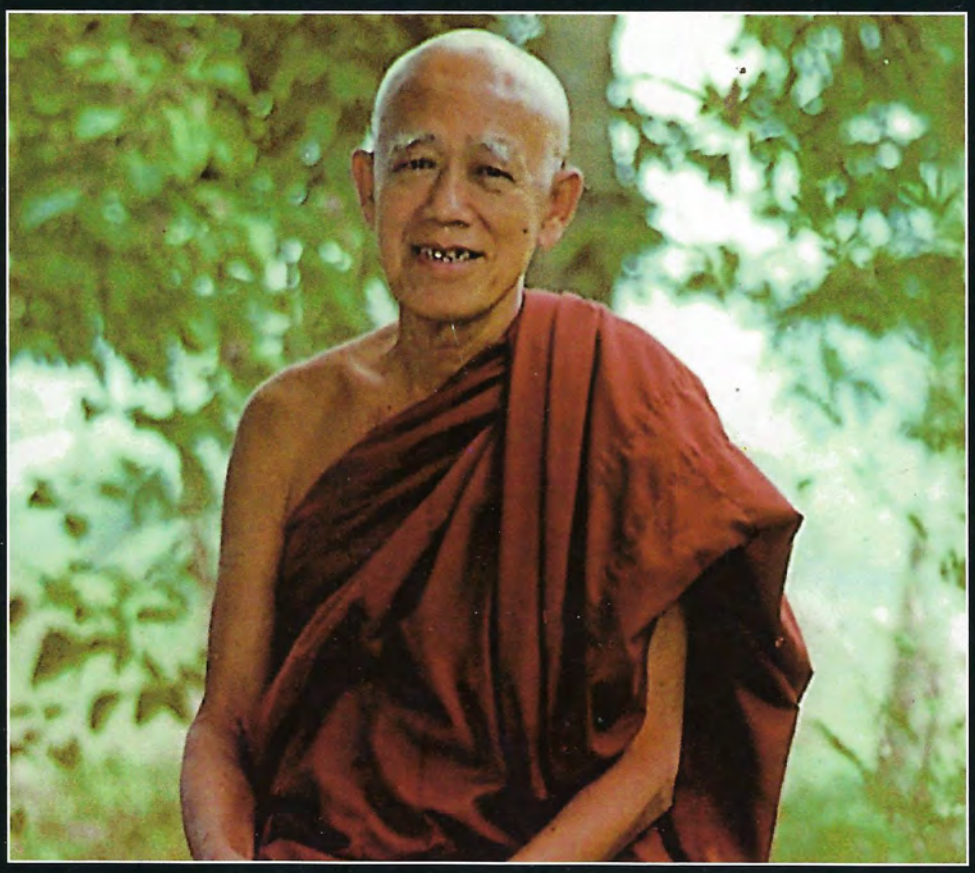

EULOGY

Venerable Suvaṇṇo Mahāthera

6 July 1920 – 11 March 2007

By Ven Aggacitta Bhikkhu

STRIVING TO BE A NOBODY

Everybody wants to be a somebody
Nobody knows how to be a nobody
If ever there is a somebody
Who knows how to be a nobody
Then that nobody is a real somebody!

If you ever want to be a nobody
Then follow that somebody
Who really is a "nobody"
(Later) let go of everybody,
Even that somebody who
already is a nobody.
Eventually you will be
a real nobody!

Ven Suvaṇṇo (1981)

Today we honour a nobody who became a somebody. If we regard the late Chief Rev Dr K Sri Dhammananda as the Father of Theravāda Buddhism for the English speaking community in Malaysia and Singapore, we can also say that the late Ven Suvaṇṇo is the Father of Theravāda Buddhism for the Hokkien speaking Chinese community in Malaysia.

His very animated Hokkien Dhamma talks that run into hundreds are still very popular to this day, thanks to modern technology that has provided us with cassette tapes, audio CDs, MP3 CDs, VCDs and DVDs. The perennial popularity of his Dhamma talks is undoubtedly due to his oratory skills

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