



Taste of the Dhamma

Monthly Newsletter of the Bhavana Society

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January 11, 2012

Let us take the First Step or One More Step

Let us Take the
First Step or One
More Step



The Very Word of
the Buddha



Be Dependent to
be Independent



Meditation How?



News
@
Bhāvanā



We are on a journey. We carry with us baggage large and small. We don't know how it began, but it is our responsibility to travel well no matter where our path takes us. This is the journey through Samsāra. We have set out many times. We have been born as animals and deities, hungry ghosts and angels, as all manner of beings. We don't know the lives that have come before because of the limits of our awareness and the nature of our ignorance.

Yet the Buddha and all enlightened ones knew the truth of Samsāra. They knew how beings are born and depart to arise somewhere else, in other forms and other realms. This happens to all beings, regardless of stature or kind. Followers of the Buddha's teachings accept the reality of samsāra. This leads to an important insight about our journey. We must pay heed to this world for our actions lead us to other worlds.

Someone who thinks only of this world only is like the one-eyed



person. Yet the person who thinks only of the next world and next life is also like a one-eyed person. As persons with two eyes, we give mindful attention to the journey we're on through this world and where we're headed in the next. We pay attention to what is going on in all aspects of our existence.

The old year has ended. A new one is well underway. We embrace the New Year with many hopes. Yet if our journey takes us down unwholesome paths it will be a hopeless one. If your spiritual journey has not yet begun in earnest, do not waste time. Take the first step. If you are leading a spiritual life, do not waste time either. Take one more step ahead today.

These quotations are from the discourses of the Buddha

Giver

"A giver of food is a giver of strength.

A giver of clothes, is a giver of beauty.

A giver of vehicles, is a giver of ease.

A giver of lamp, is a giver of vision.

And the one who gives a residence, is the one who is a giver of everything.

But the one who teaches the Dhamma is a giver of the Deathless."

(S.N. 1. 42)

Do not let the moment pass you by!

"Just as a fortified city
is guarded inside and out,
So guard yourself
Don' t let a moment pass you by.
Those who let the moment pass
Grieve when they're consigned to hell." [Dh.315]

The Buddha

"Rightly speaking, were it to be said of anyone: 'A being not subject to delusion has appeared in the world for the welfare and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare and happiness of gods and humans,' it is of me indeed that rightly speaking this should be said." (M.N. 12 Sutta)

Know him/her

"Whosoever strikes and annoys by (harsh) speech, mother, father, brother, sister or mother-in-law or father-in-law — know him/her as an outcast."

(Sutta Nipata Vasala Sutta)

Happiness!

Happiness is having friends when need arises.
Happiness is contentment with whatever there is.
Happiness is merit at the end of one's life.
Happiness is the abandoning of all suffering.
In the world, respect for one's mother is happiness,
As is respect for one's father.
In the world, respect for renunciants is happiness,
As is respect for Brahmins.
Happiness is virtue lasting through old age.
Happiness is steadfast faith.
Happiness is the attainment of wisdom.
Not doing evil is happiness.

(Dhammapada 331-333)

Be Dependent to be Independent

Some Dhamma Activities at Bhavana

Daily: Morning
5:00-6:30 a.m.:
Meditation and Pooja

Daily: Evening
5:00-6:00 p.m.:
Meditation
6:30-8:00 p.m.:
Pooja and Meditation

Saturday is cleaning day.

Morning:
8:30-10:30 am:
All residents and visiting practitioners are asked to help in cleaning up around the monastery.
Evening:
3-4 p.m.: Pali Class
4-5 p.m.: Sutta Discussion class

Sunday

Morning
9:00-9:45: Meditation
10:00-10:45:
Dhamma talk

Pre-Full Moon and New Moon days

(A special program will be followed)
5:00 am- 11:00 pm
Meditation / Dhamma Talks, Dhamma discussions / Uposatha recitals for monks.

If you need our Schedule to join with us to practice, e-mail us:
<Seela22bhavana@gmail.com>

Ordinarily, when we lean against something we think we are secure. We are supported by something. All living beings live depending on food and oxygen. We feel safe. However, when we don't have anything to support us we can feel very insecure. Children depend on their parents. Otherwise they will die. Spouses depend on their partners. Countries depend on other countries. The entire experience of existence depends on things so heavily that even a minor mishap can have serious consequences. Dependent Origination teaches us that not only this life, but also our *Samsāric* journey through countless lives continues because of this dependency. Nothing can exist by itself. Just as in life, when one is affected by some natural disaster or mechanical mishap, everything is affected.

Practicing the Factors of Enlightenment:

As a *bhikkhu*, one develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness, the enlightenment factor of investigation, the enlightenment factor of energy, the enlightenment factor of joy, the enlightenment factor of tranquility, the enlightenment factor of concentration, and the enlightenment factor of equanimity, all of which are based

upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. One depends on seclusion, dispassion, and cessation for helping the practice of the enlightenment factors increase their power.

Everything exists dependently:

A newly ordained novice monk or nun should be reminded of the fact that he/she, from the moment of ordination, depends on others for their food, robes, lodgings and medicine. They reflect on this fact by reciting, "My life depends on others." One who has gone forth should reflect it upon always. Again, "I must now behave in a different manner," should be reflected upon. Such reflections make them humble and mindful of their responsibility as monastics.

In the *Vinaya*, there is a special rule of etiquette between a student and a teacher called '*Nissaya*', which means dependency. At the beginning of higher ordination (*upasampadā*), in front of this preceptor, the novice should say:

"I request the dependency. Venerable Sir, Please become my preceptor." [Three times]

Then that teacher or the preceptor would say: "Make an effort with friendliness."

Mind

" Neither mother nor father, nor any other relative can do one as much good as one's own well-directed mind."

(Dhammapada 43.)



The novice then says to the preceptor, "From this day onward Venerable sir, I depend on you and you depend on me."

Dependency promotes independence:

Why does the *sāmanera* [novice] depend on a teacher? As he is new to the monastic life he does not know how to conduct himself to be free from suffering. He needs guidance. He should trust his teacher who instructs him in religious life. The purpose of this dependency is not to turn the novice into the teacher's slave. Rather, the teacher out of compassion for the novice provides him with the necessary instruction on meditation and shows him the way to liberate himself from suffering.

At the moment of his ordination he says: "Please, Venerable Sir, taking these robes out of compassion, grant me the Going Forth (*pabbajjā*) to cross over all Dukkha and to realize Nibbāna". He should depend on the teacher and learn from him how to achieve this goal and be independent. Once a meditator attains the Stream Entry Fruition state he is called one who is living without depending on anything (*aparappaccayo*). So long as we have doubt and perplexity

depend on someone who can clarify our doubt and instill confidence in us. We are dependent on our parents until we pass our teenage years. We depend on our spiritual teachers to receive necessary instruction for our spiritual practice.

Live without depending on anything:

At the same time we hear from the Buddha, "There is wavering in one who is dependent, there is no wavering in one who is independent; when there is no wavering there is tranquility; when there is tranquility, there is no bias; when there is no bias, there is no coming and going; when there is no coming and going, there is no passing away and reappearing; when there is no passing away and reappearing, there is no here nor beyond nor in between. This is the end of suffering."

In fact, as long as we lean against anything we are not secure; we are insecure. If the support falls we fall along with it. If the support is withdrawn we are stranded. We become hopeless. We definitely feel insecure. When one attains the Stream Entry state then only he is described as one who is independent. He then feels secure. He does not depend on anybody any more for directions. He knows how to proceed with

Not just today

" It is not just
of today:
They find fault in one
sitting silently,
They find fault in one
speaking much,
They find fault in one
speaking
moderately,
No one in this world
is not
found at fault."

(Dh. 22 7)

Companion

If you find an
intelligent
companion,
A fellow traveler,
A sage of good
conduct,
You should travel
together,
Delighted and
mindful,
Overcoming all
dangers. "

(Dhammapada. 328)

his practice. His directions are perfectly clear. He has nothing to fear. He is on his own. "How can we live without depending on something?" is a natural question that arises in our mind. Even the spiritual life depends on excellent friends (*kalyāna mitta*). The Buddha even corrected Venerable Ānanda who said one half of the spiritual life depends on excellent friends, saying, "Do not say so Ānanda! Do not say so Ānanda! The entire spiritual life depends on excellent friends." At the same time, we hear the Buddha say, "There is wavering in one who is dependent ..." How should we understand these two apparently contradictory statements?

Our bodies and minds are unreliable:

In spite of the fact that spiritual friends are one hundred percent helpful for the attainment of full enlightenment, we still remain attached to the five aggregates. We are advised to return to our bodies and minds and pay total mindful attention to our bodies, feelings, perceptions, thoughts and consciousness and mindfully become aware of what is going on in these aggregates to develop our insight. The development of our insight depends on mindful attention we pay to these aggregates.

There must be something to understand impermanence because there must be something to be impermanent. Impermanence does not exist in a vacuum without an object to be impermanent.

In the above statement the Buddha advised us not to cling to anything in this world. Here the world is our own world, as mentioned in the *Rohitassa Sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*. This world is afflicted by heat, cold, mosquitoes, reptiles, by all sorts of incurable sickness, by cold, heat, hunger, thirst, and a body prone to illness and decay. Anytime we can fall sick. Anytime we may fall dead.

Just recently, a friend of ours was watching TV, talking with his wife. Suddenly, he stopped talking to her. She asked him, "What is the matter? Why won't you talk to me any more? Why have you stopped talking to me? What have I done? Did I say something offensive to you?" Still he did not speak to her. She called 911. The ambulance came and pronounced him dead, just like that. These five aggregates always betray us. We can never trust them. **[To be cont. in next issue]**



Meditation How?

By Bhikkhu T. Seelananda

What Entices the Heart?

" On seeing an old person;
&
a person in pain,
diseased;
&
a person dead,
gone to life's end,
I left
for the life gone forth,
abandoning the
sensuality that entices
the heart."

(Theragatha 1.73)

Meditation, in the Buddhist context is mental development. Unlike all other beings, we humans are exceptionally blessed to have a mind, which is developed and can be further developed. When developed, the mind has a great potential to achieve a state of calmness and insight. This is why we need to practice and develop the mind. This exercise is called '*bhāvanā*' (meditation).

When we practice *bhāvanā*, what should we do? There are volumes of books written about how to practice *bhāvanā* and there are many talks available in different forms and by different teachers, easily found on the Internet. Many varied instructions and practices are described and advocated.

By the same token, we see that there are different methods of *bhāvanā*. People practice these different methods and may get the benefits. Yet these different methods are, as we see, touching upon only limited aspects of *bhāvanā*. In other words, these are still insufficient because all these teachers are unenlightened ones compared to the teacher that was

the Buddha. That is why we always trust the Buddha and follow his original teachings.

The Buddha has taught us a method to practice *bhāvanā*. That is the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. This is a method to observe our existence objectively. Observe what? Observe the nature of the body-mind, the five aggregates, the twelve bases, and the eighteen kinds of elements. This is the way to the development of the 37 Factors of Enlightenment.

This is the way to the experience of bliss.

Whoever wants to practice *bhāvanā* or meditation should read the Four Establishments of Mindfulness and practice accordingly. This is the way to be developed and cultivated by the wise to gain both serenity and insight. The Buddha has given the necessary instructions clearly many times, in many of his teachings, such as The Great Discourse on the Establishments of Mindfulness, the Great Discourse to *Rāhula*

(His son); 'Two Kinds of Thought' and the 'Removal of Distracting Thoughts.'

However, the quintessence of all his instructions can be seen in one striking stanza in the chapter called "The Mind" in *The Dhammapada*. The Buddha says, "Knowing this body like a fragile clay pot, and establishing this mind like a fortress, conquer Māra with the sword of wisdom. Then protect what has been won, but cling to nothing."

This is how *bhāvanā* (meditation) is to be practiced.

Here the instruction of the Buddha is very clear. When we practice, we first choose a suitable, congenial place and then sit. Cross-legged is the best, if you can sit in that fashion. Otherwise, you may find the posture that works best or you can sit in a chair. What is more important is that the upper part of the body should be erect. You can keep your eyes gently closed, resting your tongue against the upper teeth so that you do not need to swallow saliva all the time.

Now you are ready to practice. The Buddha's instruction is to consider the body as if it were a fragile clay pot. Imagine such a pot. It is impermanent. You have to handle it carefully. You cannot shake it or move it here and there all the time.

Once it is kept somewhere, it remains there, in place, safe and sound. When it is kept in such a way, it remains calm and steady. The second admonition is to keep the mind as a fortress and do not let enemies such as sensual desire, ill-will, restlessness, sleepiness or doubt pop up. Then what is next? That is to fight Māra with the weapon of wisdom.

Wisdom arises only in a quiet mind. So for this purpose you need a calm and settled mind. Be more and more mindful; be in the present. Return time after time to this moment-to-moment observation. Give your full attention to your breath; observe this natural and peaceful breath.

I wish you good luck!

"There are these two bright qualities that safeguard the world. Which two? Conscience & concern (for the results of unskillful actions). If these two bright qualities did not guard the world, there would be no recognition of 'mother' here, no recognition of 'mother's sister,' 'uncle's wife,' 'teacher's wife,' or 'wife of those who deserve respect.' The world would be immersed in promiscuity, like rams with goats, roosters with pigs, or dogs with jackals. But because these two bright qualities guard the world, there is recognition of 'mother,' 'mother's sister,' 'uncle's wife,' 'teacher's wife,' & 'wife of those who deserve respect.'" (Itivuttaka .42.)

NEWS @ BHAVANA

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We're on the
Web at

www.Bhavasociety.org

See our
schedule
and
consider
one
of the
meditation
retreats
offered
throughout
the year.



The Monastics and Residents of Bhavana wish you all
a Happy and Prosperous 2012

From January 1st to March 1st all monastics and the
residents of Bhavana Society are in personal
seclusion. During this time, there are no other retreats.



Bhante G will be in Brazil during the whole month of February.
He will be back to Bhavana on March 13, 2012.

Our next public meditation retreat will be from March 9-16.
This is an intermediate level mindfulness retreat.
Bhante Seelananda will lead this Retreat.

May you be well!