



Kalyāna mettācitta

Stories of a Bhikkhu on the Block

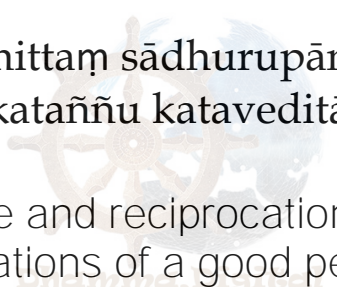
by Ven. S. M. Sujano

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by
Ven. S. M. Sujano
Varapunya Meditation Centre
Aberdeen, Scotland



Nimittaṃ sādthurupānaṃ
kataññu kataveditā

Gratitude and reciprocation are the
indications of a good person

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Preface

The Wat Mahathat UK is celebrating its 10th Anniversary on the 13th of August 2017. This coincides with the celebratory ceremony for Ajahn Dr. Laow's new title: Phra Rajwithetpanyakhun, which was granted by the King of Thailand. It is my great pleasure to publish this booklet on this auspicious occasion to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Wat Mahathat temple, Kings Bromley and Ajahn Chaokhun.

I was not born a Buddhist in spite of being born in Nepal. Nepal is the country where the Prince Siddhatta, the founder of Buddhism, was born. When I encountered Buddhism, I was fascinated and astonished to find an ocean full of knowledge; simplicity and practicality. It was like having found a long sought after a path to find perils or having found a pool of fresh water after crossing a long dry desert. That path or light of dhamma dragged me into this Buddhist world. I was fortunate to study basic Buddhism at the local temple and later became a novice monk under the guidance of the late most Venerable Sudarsana Mahasthavira in Nepal a neighbouring village. After a year of practice under his guidance, I learned about Buddhist culture, tradition, and language.

A year later, late venerable Sudarsana Mahasthavira sent me to Wat Paknam, Bangkok, Thailand for further Buddhist studies and practice. This temple became my home monastery. I stayed and studied at Wat Paknam under the support and guidance of the most venerable Luangpor Somdet Phramaharajmangalacariya. I was also honoured to receive higher ordination under his preceptor-ship (upajjhaya). I am indebted to his kindness and compassion. When I was invited to visit the UK to work at the Punjab Buddhist society, Luangpor Somdet was very concerned about the difficulties which I may have to face. He also said that I should return to

the temple if there were any difficulties and I be unable to stay. Similarly, many senior monks and friends at the Wat Paknam temple have shown their affection and love that nurtured my spiritual path.

In 2012, when I was planning to establish the centre in Aberdeen along with pious devotees, I wanted to offer it to Luangpor Somdet. So, I requested Luangpor's permission to use his name 'Varapunya' as our centre's name in Scotland. Luangpor rejoiced and happily granted his permission and blessing. It is my great pleasure to offer my work to Luangpor Varapunya Somdet as a token of appreciation. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the other monks and friends at the temple.

I also would like to bring attention to the Mahachulalongkorn University (MCU) in Thailand where I gained my Bachelor and Masters degrees to acquire sufficient knowledge on different areas, particularly on World Religions and Buddhism. I would have struggled to work effectively in the western world if I had not had an opportunity to study both theory and practice at the MCU. Therefore, all the success that I have achieved working in the West has been a direct and indirect consequence of my studies at MCU and the quality of Buddhist studies which I received from there. I would also like to express my appreciation to the MCU and all the lectures and support which I received from there.

It is hard to predict where and which form our life will take. In April 2005, I had a chance to visit the UK for the first time as a visitor at the Punjab Buddhist Society in Wolverhampton, an Ambedkarit's Buddhists organisation, which was established by Ven. Chandrabodhi. The following year, Venerable Phra Rajwithetpanyakhun (Dr. Chaokhun Laow) invited me to work at his temple in Kings Bromley, which was recently moved from Aston, Birmingham. I was honoured to be invited. Over this period of time, I learnt a lot from him; particularly engaging with Westerners who had

shown their interest in Buddhism and discussion sessions on meditation classes. Ajahn Chaokhun was always there to guide and advise whenever I needed. He never looked down on me but always trusted me and my intention to work for the Sasana.

Why Aberdeen?

Aberdeen is one of the cities in Scotland, where there was a pre-existent community of Thai people, and where there were many pre-existent Thai owned businesses. Buddhist temple and Thai people have very close relationships. Buddhist temples and monastic play an essential role in Thai society. Steve Bruce said in his work 'Secularisation' that people become more religious when they are abroad, than when they are in their home country. Religious places remind people of home and create a feeling of belonging. That was the reason Thai people living in Aberdeen intended to establish a center for themselves.

In 2011, Ajahn Chaokhun responded to the request from the local Thai Buddhist to establish a temple in Aberdeen. Ajahn Chaokhun assigned Venerable Phramaha Pranom and myself to Aberdeen to assist establishment of the centre. Unfortunately, Phramaha Pranom died in a road accident the following year. I worked tirelessly on behalf of Ajahn Pranom for almost a year, mostly alone. Initially we did not have much contact with the local community but there was a sense of belonging and warmth in the community despite the cold and damp weather. I felt more connected to the community.

Initially, it was a temporary assignment to assist Ajahn Pranom in establishing a temple. However, due to certain circumstances, I ended up staying in Aberdeen and have been here ever since. As the saying goes: "the journey was not laid on roses", the Scottish weather itself, could contain all four

seasons in a day. After facing different forms of struggles and challenges, I lost many friends but few stood beside me. On the journey Phrakhru Siddhyanvidesh (Luangpor Somboon) and Ajahn Chaokhun were two of them. A Ajahn Chaokhun suggested that since I have a intension to work for the Sangha and had been involved with the Thai community, why should not I start a centre for people who are interested in learning about the Dhamma. In addition, this could fulfill my intention to work with the local community.

'Doing peacefully in a simple way but with long term views and vision', along with pious devotees I successfully established the Varapunya Meditation Centre. Meanwhile, I began my Post Graduate studies at the University of Aberdeen on "Religion and Society", which has been a long dream of mine since 2005. I managed to complete the course with great difficulty, due to the loss of my both parents. I was fortunate, however, that I had the Buddhist teachings and practice of meditation which helped me immensely during those difficult times. If I had not known the Buddha's dhamma and meditation practice I believe that I would have gone out of my mind. The Buddha's Dhamma and the practice of meditation helped me to overcome many of those obstacles mindfully. It would not have been possible without the support and help of many people. Many friends dropped away handful remained and stood beside me. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to everyone and particular to all members and supporters of the Varapunya Meditation Centre for their contributions and dedication throughout that period. Without them, the Varapunya Meditation Centre would not have flourish in the way it has.

New spiritual Journey

I was born in Nepal, however I often feel and experience myself, as if I was from Thailand. The people and culture of Thailand have significantly effected, influenced, and shaped me during my time as a Buddhist Monk. I ordained and lived my early Buddhist life in Thailand. I practice within the Thai Theravada Buddhist tradition. I have spent most of my Buddhist life relating to Thai people and culture. I mostly speak in Thai, second to English. I speak Nepalese very occasionally. I even think in Thai. There are number of Thai people who have been very kind to me, who have always stood beside me and who I am particularly indebted to. One such Thai supporter is Yommae Rudee who I want to highlight. Yommae Rudee acted as my Dhamma mother. She has always given me undivided support and guidance. She always has encouraged and sponsored me to work for the Buddha's Sasana. Along with her support other pious devotees Paul and other members of the Varapunya Meditation Centre, who have been practicing meditation confidently, helped me to establish the Varapunya Meditation Centre and successfully register it as a Scottish Charitable Buddhist centre in Aberdeen.

Initially, we rented a flat in Aberdeen to begin our humble activities. We were able to employ the flat and make use of it as a small Buddhist meditation centre. Through these humble beginnings we were successful in working to promote Buddhism and Buddhist values in Aberdeen through meditation and teachings.

The Buddha taught that 'If we have good intentions, the results always will be good.' In 2016, with the help of well-wishers the 'meditation centre' was able to take out a private loan of £360,000 and able to purchase the Easter Mains Cottage, Kinmundy, Aberdeen. The Centre officially moved to its current location.

This book (collection of vignettes) is very similar to Ajahn Chaokhun's famous book published in the Thai language, which is also a collection of a number of different articles narrating his experience of being a Buddhist monk in the UK and chronicling his work here. Ajahn Chaokhun's book has been re-published more than once. It has a beautiful stories concerning the lives of monks and their experiences of performing their different roles in the Western society. I could not predict that my own occasional writings, stories and anecdotes on facebook concerning my own personal experiences would also take the form of book in a similar way.

Some of the stories in this book may be relevant to many people who are facing difficulties in similar circumstances other stories are merely a Buddhist Monks experience and reflections of walking in different Western cities, hosting 'the flag of Dhamma'. Buddhist monks have faced different forms of harassment and unwelcoming looks in different cities. These are no different to some of our experiences in Aberdeen. Some of the stories that I have shared are related to those incidences. Nevertheless, the intention is always to share the Buddha's message of peace, understanding, and compassion. It is through these Buddhist values that we have succeeded in merging into a multicultural society. As a Buddhist monk, therefore, one has to remember Buddha's message: "...go forth monks for the benefit and happiness of gods and humans..." In consequence, a quality of Buddhist teachings and practices should be spread across the globe. Teachings and practices which can excel the chaotic and troubled world. It does not matter how small the city is. If we can provide support and kindness to help to establish a centre or many centers then we have helped to further fulfill the Buddha's teachings. In this way we can make a contribution towards: sharing the value of living a moral life; sharing skills which enable people to control and calm their minds; helping people to live peacefully; and contributing to people's

development of loving and kind thoughts which help to bring about a harmonious and peaceful world.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone for every piece little help and support, which has nurtured me on this spiritual path. I would also thank Andrew for helping to edit and proof read, which has helped me to complete this book. The Buddha's quotations are mostly from 'A dhammapada for contemplation by Ajahn Munido. Similarly, I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to all members of the Varapunya Meditation Centre for all the contributions and continued support which they have so generously made.

May the power of generosity in making an offering of this book on this occasion bring Ajahn Chaokhun a long life, good health, happiness and wisdom. May all good wishes of yours come true. May you enjoy harmony, and abundance until the attainment of the ultimate happiness of Nibbana. Similarly, may this be true for every being who shares sickness, old age and death. Whatever merits that I have accumulated may I share these merits with you all until the attainment of Nibbana.

Nibbana Paccayo Hotu.

Phra S. M. Sujano
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1. Five principles of Buddhism

Introduction

Buddhism is a teaching of awakening. It is not a religion but a way to live a moral life with good conduct brought about by mental development and training which leads to perfect peace. It is a path (set of teachings) which encourages people to use of reason and analysis to gain liberation and freedom. In this way it enables all people to lead a noble life. Buddhism consists of three refuges: the Buddha; the Dhamma; and the Sangha. These three refuges are referred to by the Buddha as the Triple Gem. The honorific title: “the Buddha” is the title reserved for Prince Siddhattha in his awakened state. Prince Siddhatta became “the Buddha” or “the awakened one” at the age of 35 and lived for 80 years. Prince Siddhattha was originally born in Lumbini, Nepal. The Buddha shared his findings in the form of teachings. These teachings are called: the Dhamma. The Sangha is the community, who live in accordance with the guidance of Lord Buddha and the set of rules which the Buddha instated (Vinaya). Lord Buddha’s teachings include:

- i. The law of cause and effect: kamma and vipakka.
- ii. The 4 noble truths.
- iii. The 3 characteristics of existence.
- iv. Dependent Origination: Paticcasamuppada.
- v. Conditional relations: the Patthana.

I was invited to speak to senior pupils in Albyn School. I have been in the school a couple of times to introduce and educate about Buddhism. On this visit, the class was divided into two groups with an hour for each one. First of all, the session was started with preliminary chanting and paying homage to the triple gem. The talk was divided into five main headings:

- I. Teacher
- II. Teaching

III. Followers

IV. Place of worship and celebration

V. Meditation

I. The Teacher

The Buddha is a great teacher of all Buddhists, who is respected and symbol of veneration. The Buddha was born as the Prince Siddhattha and raised in Nepal until the age of 29 years. He left the palace and became a 'seeker of truth'. Later, he became enlightened and was known as 'the Buddha'. The Buddha is considered as a supreme teacher for both human's and gods. Buddhists respect and revere him in the sense of '*The Great teacher*'. They do not see him as any form of god or relation to any higher being.

The life of the Buddha can be divided into two sections: Firstly, life as a prince and secondly, life after the enlightenment. A life as a prince, he was named as a Prince Siddhattha Gotama, lived a life in his father's palace, Kapilavatthu, present day Nepal. This was a life of material abundance. However the the prince began to feel dissatisfaction with such materialistic life in the palace, and went on to live a life in search of the truth, questioning the purpose of life. His search lasted for six years. At the age of 35, the ascetic prince realised an enlightenment and became a Buddha (enlightened one). Ever since, he was known as the Buddha, one who knows what should be known, which was his second stage of life history. The Buddha went on to teach for 45 years and establish the Sangha (the community of Monks and Nuns). His teachings today became known as Buddhism. He is regarded as a great spiritual master and venerated by all Buddhists throughout the centuries.

II. Teaching

The Buddha taught for 45 years in different forms to different people from poor to kings, farmers to businessmen etc. Fortyfive years of his teachings is compiled into a Scripture, *Tipitaka* (skt.tripitaka), which preserves his teachings. The scripture tells of his teachings in different forms, however, his main teachings can be summarised into *'the Four Noble Truths'*; *unsatisfactoriness; its cause; possibility of ending, and the path leading to the end of that unsatisfactoriness*. In a similar way, some would say, his teaching can be further summarised into: "avoid committing any bad, but cultivate good and purify the mind". In a short and practical way, the Buddha taught that in order to live a happy life: "do not ask the question *'why'* with regards to any problem, but question *'how'* to solve the problem"

The basic teachings is to train own self to fulfil in accordance with five precepts; not harming any beings, not taking which is not given, not committing sexual misconduct, not speaking false and not taking intoxications but cultivating kind heart, sharing mind, respectful one other, speaking truth in a skilfully and being mindful of things that one takes.

The Buddha's teaching is not about dogmas or philosophy but a way of life to find inner peace and happiness that would radiates to out. Thus, Buddhism emphasis on practice of meditation as the main principle of Buddhist teaching, which assist one to realise the things as they truly are. There are two kinds of meditation; serenity and insight. These two works individually or jointly but correlate to achieve higher knowledge to open our eyes to see the true nature.

C. Followers

There are two types of followers: monastic and lay people. Each has to live a harmonious life but the codes of living are different. Lay people are supposed to practice five precepts to the best of their ability to be a true Buddhist. However, these are not like commandments but a training rules to live a moral life. Monastic disciples, on the other hand, have the responsibility and opportunity to observe the precepts a little more seriously. There are 227 precepts for the monastic community to follow (officially), although different monastic communities vary in the amount they follow depending on tradition.

There is no force nor punishment involves, however, for not following the precepts strictly. These are training principles and everyone is encouraged to apply in their life but also open for question the teachings and its practicality. The Buddha emphasised that his students should not merely believe what was said; written; tradition; or heard but that they should reflect wisely on what was said. Everyone should be encouraged to question and investigate skilfully before believing or having faith on anything. Always use wisdom to decide rather than feeling or emotion of grasping and clinging.

III. Place of worship

The place of worship is known as a 'Vihara' (*temple*); or Monastery. The appearance of Temples or monasteries may differ from one nation to the other, or from one ethnic group to the other. In general, Buddhist temples are not empty house or space but a number of monks would reside to take care of the place and provide services. Buddhist Centres are a place of residence for Buddhist monks, where monks performs rites and rituals as well as teachings and other services. Therefore, in a truly it is a monastery. The most importantly: the Buddha statue; the Bodhi tree; and relics are essential in a centre.

According to Buddhist scripture, there are four important holy places, where a Buddhist and encouraged to visit once in their lifetime. The four holy Buddhist sites are: Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha; Buddhagaya, the place of Lord Buddha's enlightenment; Saranath, the place of first sermon; and Kusinagara, the place where Lord Buddha passed away.

IV. Celebration

There are these main celebrations in a Buddhist calendar: a. The Vesak day, the teacher (Lord Buddha's day);

The Vesak Day has a unique place in Buddhism. Buddhists believe that three major incidences in relation with Buddha's life; birth, enlightenment and passing; had happened on the same day of different year. The day also signifies a day of celebration a great teacher of human and gods. Normally, it is a full moon day of the month of May. The United Nations has announced the day as a day of universal peace.

b. The Maghapuja day, a teachings day ('Dhamma day');

Magha puja day is regarded as a teaching day, which is generally on full moon day of February. It is believed that on this full moon day, the Buddha gave a summary of his teachings to his initial monastic disciples. Meanwhile, teachings of how one should live a life for a harmonious living.

c. The Asalha Puja day, a community ('Sangha day').

This day has special place in monastic practice and also for the other followers. On this day, all monastic should observe a three months rains retreat; vassa, which means they should remain at one place for three months and support lay people to learn and provide an opportunity to make merits. Nevertheless, if necessary they can travel and stay other place

up to seven days. The day normally starts on full moon day of July.

d. The Kathina Robe Offering Ceremony

This ceremony follows after the completion of vassa. This ceremony is a timely offering a robe, which also accompanied with other necessary items to the community and the centre out of gratitude for monastic's teaching and guidance and also to maintain the centre. The event can only be organised once a year to the community of monks during month of November.

Each day has its special significant in Buddhist celebrations. These celebrations are not like celebrations in Christianity, in which Christians would attend for an hour or so. Buddhist celebrations normally last for a considerable time: a day or days. The celebrations; a, b and c, requires more dedication to practice of self cultivation. People would go to monasteries; observe precepts, doing offering, learning mental cultivation and chanting.

V. Meditation

Meditation is the essential part of Buddhism. It is divided into two; serenity and insight. The purpose of practice of meditation is to achieve calmness and peaceful mind. Developing focus and understanding things in its true senses, which helps to let go of things. Meditation is similar to discarding the waste in the body when we go to the toilet. In toilet, we let of things that we do not need any longer. Should it stay longer, generates more unhappy feelings and discomforts. It is a 'purificatory practice'. We purify the mind through 'right effort'; 'right mindfulness'; and 'right concentration'. We do this by abandoning 'bad mental qualities' (Akusala Mano Khamma) and 'cultivating good mental qualities' (Kusala Mano Khamma).

A toilet is a place to clear wastes of the body. Meditation is like this toilet to clear 'wastes' in the mind. The mental 'waste' is known as '*akusala mano khamma*' or immoral mental habit patterns. We try to replace this with '*kusala mano khamma*' or moral mental habit patterns. Meditation is a practical practice rather than a theoretical one. One has to practice meditation in order to realise its purificatory nature. This is similar to the practical manner in which we eliminate physical waste when we go to the toilet.

There were a lot of very good questions from pupils in the class. These consisted of such questions as: why does it seem that Buddhism fits so well into modern society, as compared with other religions which seem to struggle more? Should Buddhists be vegetarians? What is it like being monk in the West? What is the difference between 'lay life' and 'monastic life'?

At the end, ten minutes meditation was thoroughly enjoyed by both classes.

Be kind to one another.

*Come, view this world.
see it as an ornate, festive carriage.
see how fools are entranced
by their visions,
yet, for the wise there is no attachment.*

(171)

2. A Dying wish: Scottish Soil

Alisha a member of the Varapunya Meditation Centre from England wished to visit Scotland on her holiday this year, 2014, however, she could not make it anymore because of her illness and was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

After the treatment, later she found that she did not have long to live. A member of the centre went to visit and asked her:

"That's fine! You cannot come to Scotland, so Scotland will come to you. What would you like from Scotland?"

Her answer was so humble: "Soil! Send a bag of SOIL to me, so I can smell and feel it."

After a few weeks of planning, today on Monday the 21st of July 2014, myself, in my capacity as the Ajahn or spiritual teacher at the centre; Rudee, and Ja, went to climb up on top of the Mither Tap (518m), Bennachie. We began our journey at 1 pm from Rowantree, and followed the a trail. This trail, legend tells, was built by the devil in order to win a maiden's hand.

After an hour and half of mindful walking with a beautiful blue, open sky and the gorgeous great landscape of Aberdeenshire, we arrived on top of the Mither Tap at 14:26.

On arrival, at the Mither Tap, we enshrined a little Buddha enshrined, facing east. We sat down in front of the Buddha. I, Ajahn Sujana, chanted the 'recollection of the triple gem and Loving Kindness discourse'. I then began to meditate to establish my mind and radiating our good thoughts and intension to her.

While I was meditating, Ja collected a stone from the middle of the Mither Tap, and soil from four directions. She then placed them in the little tin box. The casket was placed next to where I was meditating with a golden Buddha on top of the casket to wait until I ended my meditation.

Returning back from meditation, I used my tiny Swiss knife to collect soil from beneath the surface of the earth, where the Buddha was enshrined. Before collecting the earth, I chanted the loving-kindness discourse. I then gently cut(s) a circle of soil with grass on top of it, and put(s) it into a prepared bag.

Later, all the soil and stone collected from the four directions, were mixed into one bag as a gift, to send to Alisha in England.

Later, on returning to Mither Tap, we managed to build a stone pagoda, and offered it to Lord Buddha. We then wished Alisha good luck and sent Alisha our blessings:

"With this wholesome intention, we wish and hope that Alisha will get better. May the triple gem: the Buddha; the Dhamma; and the Sangha, bless her.

I invite you all to pray for her good health and get better.

May all beings be well and happy and free from suffering."

That pagoda was the second pagoda which I had built in Scotland, in veneration to the Buddha. The first stone pagoda was built on my camping trip to Karrera, a small Island next to Oban, west coast of Scotland.

A few months later, we were informed that Alisha was so glad to smell the soil from Scotland, along with a story of how the soil was gathered. A few days later, Alisha died peacefully.

Every little gesture we make can help to that make a big difference to someone's life. No one knows, how long a person is going to live. Therefore, try to spend undivided attention with the person who is living next to you. It can be the last meeting they have with you. So, the most important person is the person who is sitting right next to you at this very moment. Leave the modern technology and connect with

(the) human present-ness (other human beings who are present in this very moment).

*'Those who are contentious have forgotten that we all die;
for the wise, who reflect on this fact
there are no quarrels.*

(6)

*A well-trained horse gives no cause for restraint.
Rare are those beings who, through modesty and discipline,
give no cause for rebuke.*

(143)



3. Hard to be a monk

Spirituality is growing. Modernity has allowed an increasing tendency towards secularisation and religious pluralism. The history of Christianity and religious propagation in the West, included centuries of oppression and suppression of alternative beliefs. Now, such prohibition and religious oppression has been dispelled and this has opened the sky wide open to allow people who are interested, to explore alternate beliefs. According to a study by Steve Bruce: 'Secularisation' (2011), it has been found that only a handful of people are finding spirituality for spiritual security, the majority or almost all are still have some relationship with Christianity. Spirituality is just another way to find happiness in this materialist life.

Religion, on the other hand, has now become a 'choice' rather than a 'must'. It is found now that people accept religious belief as it suits their needs. There are many groups and organisations, who are running various courses and activities in almost every city. Some argue that it has become a sort of cult that people are turning to these activities and gatherings. It could be a matter of genuine interest and we cannot deny many are just anxious to know what lies behind the veil.

Among the different activities and events that are taking place around Western culture, are fairs and festivals. I had a chance to attend, observe and be a part of some of those events. One of the fairs that promote spirituality and related activities takes place in Aberdeen. On behalf of the centre I have attended this fair several times. At one of those events, I, with a few other members exhibited Buddhist artefacts and promoted Buddhist ideas.

I offered a talk and guided meditation to the audience and also chanted a group blessing. On that first day of the fair, a man, who had previously visited the Buddhist centre to

practice meditation and has accompanied Buddhist monks on several occasions, approached me and greeted with respect.

“Good morning Ajahn. How are you today?”

“Good morning, I am fine. How do you do?”

We had exchanged friendly greetings and conversation. One of the conversations we had was really amusing and encouraging.

“Ajahn, if I am going to be a monk I won't be a good monk”.

I was very puzzled by what he said. I did not have any answer to what he said.

I was curious and wanted to know why. What was his intension?

So I asked him: “Why?”

“Because” he replied full of respect, “I feel like monks have to work hard. They have to work for themselves to achieve a higher state of mind. You call it meditation. They also have to work for others for free. Look at you Ajahn, I cannot be like you. You are working hard: teaching; caring; and doing public service. I would not be able to practice like you and work like you do.”

I just did not have any words to say and could not give any comments. Meanwhile, it gave me plenty of food for thought. I simply laughed and thanked him for such a beautiful compliment. I further told him that many people have got a misperception of Buddhist monks in the west.

I am glad that you have got it right. Since living in a place where everything is foreign to Buddhist practice and living almost alone most of the years, there is no choice for me to take up solitude and disconnect from the society. Being a Monk requires constant inter-action with people and going out and about to expose yourselves with the intention of introducing your existence into an alien society. Nevertheless, it appears that there is a need for Buddhism and its practices

in these communities. They are ready to take steps but are still unsure of taking it forward.

I believe that the appearance of Buddhist monks within the community, and allowing people to feel their presence within their community surely helps people to take the first few steps. Every journey begins with the first step. The rest of the steps will take care of themselves.

There is a need for spreading the word of meditation and Buddhist practice on the one hand and a constant need to look after the meditation centre and continue serving the community to find the way to peace of heart and mind, on the other. Therefore, it is a big responsibility for a Buddhist monk, who is living in a place where Buddhist culture is completely new. Since the establishment of the centre, we have been involved in different social activities; providing food to the needy, visiting schools and hospitals and providing services at the centre for different benefits.

Along this difficult road, I never felt tired, or felt like the energy was in danger of fading. I enjoyed my work with a intention to help others. The Buddha instructed his disciples: “go monks for the benefit and happiness of humans and gods.” He further instructed that:

“a monk should not teach expecting anything in return but should teach with a good intention to help them to understand the truth.”

I believe that this is one of the main reasons that I think Buddhism and its practices are gradually breaking the barriers of the West and is able to share the light of the Buddha within a foreign community.

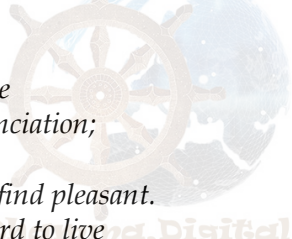
Meanwhile it is also a great time to find a balance between these two objectives: self development and community services. According to the teachings of the Buddha self development is more important than community services. There is a famous saying “do not try to change society but change yourselves.” Therefore, one requires diligent practice

in accordance with the 'dhammavinaya' (Monastic rules), and the meditation practice in order to understand and realise ones true nature.

A Community is a group of many people. If people change their attitudes, views and practices, this effects the community. I felt humbled and rejoiced at this man's comments. I will continue to the best of my ability to carry out this job and dedicate myself to study and practice for the enhancement of my understanding and wisdom. I will then share the knowledge, understanding and wisdom I have gained to the best of my ability.

I hope that in near future Buddhism will be a fully integrated part of society and I also hope that it will help to create a harmonious and cohesive society.

May you all be happy and peace.



*It is hard to live
the life of renunciation;
its challenges
are difficult to find pleasant.
yet it is also hard to live
the householder's life;
there is pain
when associating with those
among who one feels no companionship.
to wander uncommitted
is always going to be difficult;
why not renounce
the deluded pursuit of pain?*

(302)

4. Friend from other world

The world is mysterious. There are many things that are still difficult to discover and many things that are still in darkness. The universe is a visible object and yet there is plenty to be discovered. There is so much beyond our naked eyes that we do not see around us. The world has always been mysterious. Sometimes we talk about spirits or ghosts or unwanted beings. Sometimes we may speculate about aliens, whom the whole human earth expects to see and communicate with.

There are plenty of stories of people who claim to have seen these beings and plenty of articles where these sightings are refuted. Nevertheless, whatever you may think of these beliefs, there is no doubt to say that much of religion is based on stories concerning the spirit world. Similarly, such stories have inspired Hollywood to create movies about Ghosts. These included stories about 'Ghost busters', and direct communication and connection with spirits or ghosts. I have also read and heard many stories related to such beliefs both for and against their existence. However, there is persisting doubt, uncertainty, and confusion still remaining today.

I have come across some of those visions and experiences myself, in the past. However, I never felt certain about them. I have experienced people walking, or passing by, on different occasions, in different places. I have heard sounds, walking steps on floors, climbing, and even talking. I never felt scared or experienced any fear. Instead, I just doubted their reality. Since I moved into this present address at 'Easter Mains Cottage', I have experienced walking steps and various other unusual sounds. Often I would convince myself that it was just the wind. Similarly, on the other hand, there were moments where it seemed very convincing that there was a spirit world in this house.

There were few occasions that I have even asked members about those 'invisible people' whom I have seen coming with them. I always fail to get confirmation. My questions often were often made as a joke.

Tonight, once again I experienced a similar vision. It was a usual Friday night class on Buddhist studies and practice. The class begins at 7pm. The session normally begins with: evening chanting; the observation of five precepts; and guided meditation. This is followed by the study of Buddhist principles. Tonight, as a part of the chanting session, I was attentively chanting and focusing on the meaning of the words. (This is the best way to chant.)

While we were chanting other members gradually came in and joined the room. Later, an expected two members entered the shrine room and joined in the chanting. I thought that was the final number of people attending for the night. As I was concentrating on chanting my eyes were half open and I was able to see anyone who entered the Shrine room. A short while later I noticed a lady with a cream cloth enter the shrine room. She walked to the back as if she had visited before. I could not figure out who she was. I did not look at her but continued chanting until the end. Meanwhile, my mind kept asking who could she be? At the end of the chanting, I sat down and faced the audience. I could not see her. Both my eyes were searching and could not find her. My mind said that she must be at the back behind the wall.

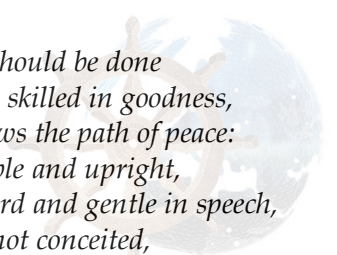
We continued our regular practice for about 40 minutes and I felt a need to ask: "who was she?" So I said to audience that I noticed that one lady came in while we were chanting. Where is she?

I got a negative answer. I began to wonder if she was someone who was from another world, someone whom it was difficult to see, and hard to convince one's own self or others of her existence. The thought occurred to me that it must be because at the end of every session we share our merit with all

other beings (visible and invisible). I thought maybe she was there to receive our good intentions. At the end of the session, I therefore spread my metta (loving kindness) and my best wishes to her. Meanwhile, I felt great that someone from another world would also come and be part of our chanting and meditation. There is a chant in Buddhism where we actually invite the devas (Spirits) to come and here the teachings of Lord Buddha. Let's, maintain our self practice and diligent pursue the happiness of Nibbana for all sentient beings (*Seen or unseen!!!*).

May all beings be happy and at peace.
Be kind to one another.

Metta Sutta:



*This is what should be done
By one who is skilled in goodness,
And who knows the path of peace:
Let them be able and upright,
Straightforward and gentle in speech,
Humble and not conceited,
Contented and easily satisfied,
Unburdened with duties & frugal in their ways.
Peaceful and calm and wise and skillful,
Not proud or demanding in nature.
Let them not do the slightest thing
That the wise would later reprove.
Wishing: In gladness and in safety,
May all beings be at ease.
Whatever living beings there may be;
Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,
The great or the mighty, medium, short or small,
The seen and the unseen,
Those living near and far away,
Those born and to-be-born
May all beings be at ease!*

*Let none deceive another,
Or despise any being in any state.
Let none through anger or ill-will Wish harm upon another.
Even as a mother protects with her life Her child, her only
child,
So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living beings;
Radiating kindness over the entire world:
Spreading upwards to the skies,
And downwards to the depths;
Outwards and unbounded,
Freed from hatred and ill-will.
Whether standing or walking,
seated or lying down
Free from drowsiness,
One should sustain this recollection.
his is said to be the sublime abiding.
By not holding to fixed views,
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,
Being freed from all sense desires,
Is not born again into this world.*

Dhamma.Digital

5. Panic attack and anxiety

“Dear Phra Ajahn,

I was very glad to be back at the centre, and to enjoy such a peaceful meditation session with everyone. The reason I came to the centre in the first place was because I had been left suffering from panic attacks and anxiety after a traumatic incident few years ago, and I was wondering, what do the teachings say about moving on from a trauma? I just feel like all the memories associated with it haunt me like ghosts. Sometimes the ghosts are far away in the back of my mind and then other times they are right at the forefront. So sometimes my anxiety is quite low and at other times it's very high. When it's very high, I find I get stuck in feeling like that and I can't let go of the ball of stress and fear in the bottom of my stomach, so it lasts a long time. I am a control freak you see, so I find it almost impossible to let go. Plus I have really low self-esteem, so I don't really believe that I can let go, even though I want to. The other part of the problem is, it was my mistake that led to my trauma, so I blame myself for it and I don't know how to forgive myself for it. And I find it impossible to show myself any compassion.

Thank you so much,

L.C.”

Reply:

“Dear L.C.

Thank you for your email and questions.

I am glad that you have realised how you are going through (experiencing) such great difficulties (suffering) and are willing to work to be free from them. I feel privileged that you shared your feelings and problems with me.

Firstly, from my limited knowledge of what I understand, panic attacks are due to a lack of confidence in what one is doing. As a result, one experiences feelings of breathlessness and anxiety as the panic attack over takes.

Trauma is just the result of these actions and it will pass away once one deals with the panic attack and anxiety. Therefore, in my understanding you have to deal with two things: the panic attack; and the anxiety. The Cause of the panic attack is a lack of confidence or uncertainty or a fear of others. It is a reaction to comments of what one is doing. Therefore, first thing you can do to free yourself is to be confident in yourself and to fully trust in what you are doing.

Always remember that you are the 'Lion King'. Everything that you are doing is right. One thing that you should remember is that no one is free from comments, even the Buddha. If one speaks for a long time, people will be complaining that your speech is too long. If you speak less, people will still complain that you speak very little. Whether one speaks loud or gently, there is always someone who comments on it. In those situation, firstly, the Buddha advised us to listen others but do not take them (literally). If comments are true, change our behaviour for better. However, if comments are wrong and untrue just put them in the bin and close it. It does not matter what others say about but it does matter what your heart says. As long as all actions are ethical, moral, and non-harming to your own self and others, you do not have to give much attention to the comments of others. Just pull yourself together and do it.

Secondly, in order to deal with the talking inside our head, almost everyone has got it. Some have less and others have a lot. In these situation, firstly, it is necessary to recognise it. Secondly, it is important and deal with it.

So, you have passed first stage of realisation: 'recognising the inner chatter'. Now you need to think about 'dealing with it'. Having one object of concentration: 'the breath' would be the first choice to begin with. The breath would be best for you, however if you feel more comfortable with the abdomen, that is fine too. Paying mindful attention to the breath: 'the in breath'; and 'the out breath' at the tip of

Nose. Alternatively you can breathe in sensing the whole body. This will help you to disconnect from the 'chatting head'.

In general, we are distracting ourselves deliberately rather than being on an 'auto-pilot' of thought'. Distracting ourselves is a good remedy to initially relieve the 'chatting head'. It is however, may help for short while during distracted moments. As you are trying to pay attention to the breath, mind won't remain there for you. It will go off the breath. Whenever you find that you are distracted from the breath, don't worry. The very moment when you realise that you are having a 'thought process', just observe the moment of distracted mind and bring the attention back to the breath.

This method can also be practical in your daily life. Whenever you are feeling discomfort and unease bring the mind back to the breath. Try to notice 'the in breath' and 'the out breath'. Try to connect to the bodily sensation, take a few good breaths, and relax.

Anxiety on the other hand is a continuous thought process in our head, which is sometimes referred to as a 'talking head', 'chatting mind', 'mill of thoughts' etc. One of the main reasons for this thought process is re-thinking about past incidents and exaggerating and worrying about future out-comes. It is often the fear of future expectations that continues to amplify worries and create anxiety.

So, the first thing we have to remember is that 'past is history.' We have studied the lesson. We cannot change it at all. There is no magic spell that can undo it. We have to accept and respect it but not keep it as a burden. Rather than punishing own self, learn a lesson and move on. Past has been a cause for present living of ourselves.

Secondly, the 'future is a mystery'. No one knows what will happen in the future. No matter how good the plan was, there is a significant possibility of failure. Nevertheless, there is a high probability of future success too depending on the

basis of the present actions and conditions. Many people fear of future thus live in darkness. One has to learn to accept the probability of uncertainty of future.

Therefore, we have to realised that 'this moment defines future'. Without this moment, the future does not exist. It is not a plan that is essential for the future but working on the plan now to get there. Every destiny begins here at the first step. Every future begins here.

Lastly, the 'present moment is a mastery'. There are many things to learn and train to be a master of it. Those masteries are just for worldly gain and material comfort. They can be very minimally or empty of mental and spiritual gain. People can try to be masters of almost anything, should there a motivation to do so, however there are only few who gain masters of their own body and mind. According to Buddhist practice, one who conquers own mind is the conqueror of the world not other way around. The body and mind is always (available for inspection) in this moment. We have to learn to be master of this very moment.

To be master of the 'here and now' is to connect with the body and the mind. When we initially look at our minds and bodies, we often spend our time on the desire to let go of things or 'mental habits' that we '*do not want*'. We often spend less time thinking of the 'positive' feelings, (mental habits) and successes in our life. As a result, we spend too much time on focussing on past negative experiences. This focus on the negative creates even greater anxiety and contributes to more negative experiences and mental habits.

Thus, try to learn to appreciate even the small things/successes in daily life and every now and then try to remember the breath. In this way you can re-connect the body and the mind. Feeling the ground, feeling the air, feeling the temperature. Learn to appreciate that you have cleaned dishes, walked to work, helped to offer a cup of water to a friend, given a genuine smile to a friend or family member

etc. Forget the rest of the bad things in a day. Remember to pay attention to the breath every moment when you feel free, and relax the body by connecting with it.

Lastly, fear is one of the hard things to overcome. From my experience, fear is just another feeling that cages us. So, whenever I have felt fear, I watch that fear: the heartbeat; the body temperature rise and fall. I pay attention to those physical changes and gradually bring that attention to the breath. Once there is a space for myself to speak or I forced myself to act, it does not matter whether what I say is right or wrong. What matters is that I said it to overcome my fear. While speaking my voice may tremble and become shaky, but I know it will become normal soon. When I forced myself to do something, my body may feel different, it may tremble or feel shaky but later it will become normal. Therefore, just be yourself and express what you wanted to say with no hesitation.

Sometimes you may not be able to say anything, but you may like to try to begin with just one word. This allows others to see your presence in the group. Furthermore, never blame yourself or regret what you have done or have not managed to do. Anything that we have done in the past is just a lesson that we have learnt in *'the classroom of this earth'*. I have made many mistakes in my life, from very minor mistakes, to very Big ones. I used to blame myself for my mistakes, but later I realised that that were a lesson to let me grow. My mistakes were not my mistakes alone. I was conditioned to be in that state. I later thank those mistakes for allowing me to grow and teaching me to guide and share with others not to follow that path.

Meanwhile, I reflect on the Buddha's teaching that no one is free from 'praise and blame'. It is a part of being human. I do not need to think it is only for me to deal with, but not for others. Similarly, I always think that there is 'no failure' but it is just that we are not ready yet. We are the winner before we

open our eyes on this earth. We have defeated millions to be born into the mother's grace. The Buddha suggests that proper way to approach both 'praise and blame' is with equanimity.

To conclude , I would suggest that you: firstly try to develop a sense of an appreciation of even your little successes. Secondly try to spend a few moments paying attention to 'the in breath' and 'the out breath' every day. Finally try to remember nothing is the same as it was. Everything is always changing and we need to evolve and adapt to live life every day. One way to do this is to come back to the present moment. I hope that this helps you and makes you feel better. If you need any further discussion please do not hesitate to contact me, or if you want to have private chat with me, just let me know. My blessing and support are always with you. Remember you are the boss no one else.

May you be happy and peace.

With metta (loving kindness)

*Gradually, gradually, a moment at a time,
the wise remove their own impurities
as a goldsmith removes the dross.*

(239)

6. Letting Go

There is a lot of talk going on about letting go. Many people understand it at once. Similarly there are many who do not understand at all. Meanwhile, many would seek a way to let go of things and people. Some people can let go of the big things and there are other people who cannot do it even for very small things. Meditation, similarly, is one of the main recommendations as a way of letting go.

There are many stories where people pretend to have let go. However, in reality they continue to hold strongly onto the person or thing, both emotionally and physically. Some people even think that having those experiences of holding onto a person or thing allows them to carry on with their current life. Conversely, deep down in their heart, they know that there is a voice creeping in again and again, a desire to let go. They then complain that they are unable to do so. There is a desire to change, but the desire ends up in creating more stress, anxiety, and further clinging on top of that which already existed. Therefore, it is not what we cling on to that is important but understanding the clinging mind. Once we realise it, and have understood the clinging mind, then healing of our heart can begin.

Once there was a business lady who has had a small retail business in a village. On one occasion, having faith in Buddhism, she decided to observe eight precepts and stay at the temple, giving her business of selling goods to her daughter for that period of time. It was midday. She was content and had been living at the temple practising meditation and listening to Dharma talks. A short while later, her daughter came to see her at the temple and asked her the price of a papaya.

“Mom! How much is a papaya?”

“Don't you know that I am practising meditation at the centre?”

Her Mum was not happy and was annoyed at her daughter and said to her daughter further that:

“once one has observed the precepts, one should give up everything while staying in Temple. Why are you asking these questions? Anyway, that is £5 . Please make sure keep all the account clear.”

Her daughter annoyingly replied: “Mom! Why are you worried about the money then? You should let go.” And off she went.

The concept of clinging is not about ‘letting go’ from a physical perspective. ‘Letting go’ from a mental perspective is more essential and is required. Letting go begins in the mind, whether we are at home or at work. It is the result of practice not practice itself. We do not practice seeking the fruit, instead, we practice genuinely for the sake of practice. It is similar to receiving a salary at the end of the month. We know that at the end of the month the salary will be ready for us, however, we have to work genuinely each day. Letting go is not a replacement of other items or objects with something new either but a complete unconditional state of mind from those items and objects. It is a cultivating the unconditional state of mind for letting go (*Nekkhamma*).

It could be argued that the whole of Eight Fold path helps to cultivate the mind of letting go. The cultivation of the eight fold path is a training ground for cultivating the mind of letting go. Therefore, just like the salary, we do not need to focus on letting go itself, but we can focus on cultivating the Eight Fold Path.

The Eight Fold path also helps to cultivate equanimity. Equanimity is also a very good basis for letting go. Equanimity is concerned with a balanced mind in relation to: gain/ loss; pleasure /pain; success/failure; fame/anonymity.

Learning to be generous and compassionate helps to cultivate the mind into the process of letting go. It is this learning of the process of letting go, letting go of our negative

emotions and defilements, which leads to the complete liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

May you be happy and peace.

23/7/16

Even those who live wholesome lives can experience suffering so long as their acts have not yet borne direct fruits. however, when the fruits of their actions ripen the joyful consequences cannot be avoided.

(120)



7. The act of generous giving

*People are inspired to be generous
according to their faith and trust.
If we become discontented
with what we have been given
our meditation will be filled
with endless mental affliction;
but if we are free from this discontent,
our meditation is full of peace.*

(249-250)

It was a sunny warm day in Aberdeen. As usual in a good day I go to visit the city in a proper Buddhist costume, neatly wearing a Buddhist monk robe. I have been practising like this whenever there is a nice sunny weather. It is also a way of promoting my existence in the city. My simple act of walking in this way, I have realised that people in City increasingly becoming familiar with a Buddhist monks and acceptance. Occasionally, I got the interaction with people. Sometimes none and another times someone who has been to the centre or known to me personally. Similarly, today as I was simply walking back to the centre along the Union Street I heard a voice from my back, saying;

'Excuse me sir!' Excuse me sir!

I stopped walking and turn myself towards the voice. A man with some bruises in his face and untidy outfits stood in front of me and he further said;

'I am very hungry can I have 3 pounds, so I can go and buy burger for my lunch.'

I feel so sorry and reminded me of hunger. So I asked him to follow me and I will buy a big burger in the KFC, which is just few yards away at the union Street. To my surprise, he didn't want to follow to the KFC. Instead he requested me to hand over just the 3 pounds. His denial

immediately gave me an impression that he is not genuinely asking for money. It stimulated my thought that he will be going to use it to buy either alcohol or spend on drugs. So, having rejected of my offer to buy a big meal but requested for a money caused me to think and went through a process in my mind. After fraction of a moment of thinking whether should I give it to him or not, I came to conclusion that I should not give him. So I replied that I would not give him money but happy to buy him a burger. He wasn't surprised with my reply but he insisted again saying 'can't you give me a money?'

I felt sorry for him but I had to leave him with disappointment. In the past, there have been rumours going on that I should not give to homeless people. They choose to be homeless and despite the fact good healthy body they are lazy to work. Meantime, they spend their money on the drugs and alcohol. Therefore, it is difficult to find who is in real trouble. Nevertheless, I along with the members of the centre continue collecting food banks as well as other helps to the homeless people through other organisations. I never thought that where they will spend after they have got money from other people. Let's just complete from our site showing our generosity and kindness towards someone who is asking for help. Meanwhile it is a way of learning helping each other in a difficult time.

Our life is significantly depends on others and their generosity too. Everyone of us is receiving generous support and kindness from other people one way or another. As we are a social being, we are interrelated with one another. So there is a man because there is another man. We are interrelated each other and also have a mutual responsibility of sharing and caring to fulfil this relationship.

Therefore, giving is one of the basic fundamental part of the teachings of the Buddha. It is a sharing and caring nature of one another to show our mutual responsibility for a harmonious society that the Buddha emphasised it its

importance highly. The concept of giving is not just giving a material things for the happiness of oneself or other's happiness but also it is a ladder to learn how to let go of our emotional attachments and clinging to negative or positive experiences, which are being cause of our unsatisfactoriness and living in a unhappy state of mind and heart. It is a giving, which helps to heal our hearts. One can learn to do by giving to a people, whom they respect; such as monks, teachers and grannies, and giving a person who needs desperately. We can begin our giving not just by giving material things; giving our time and our wisdom to lead a good life of ourselves and of others for the well-being of all the family in a society. Each small giving transforms our attitude and the way we behave which will transform ourselves and the way we look at other people in the society.

Meanwhile, we give only what we have. Material things, particularly unwanted, is easy to give and let go but hard for like and wanted things. Similarly, we spend lots of energy and time to unwanted and emotionally hurtful feeling rather than let go of it and develop positive and carry on for the better life. Material giving is a seed that assist us to give these unwanted emotions and hurtful experiences. Learn to give such things rather than holding on to it but expecting its disappearance. So, never forget to give unconditionally. In this respect there is a saying that if someone ask never turn him back empty hands. That was the same philosophy I was holding and practising in my daily life. Nevertheless, on that day I did differently. The rejection of my offer to buy a big meal but request for money stopped me giving to that person. However, my giving will not-stop in the future. I will try my best in my ability to support and help which may not cause me any harms. We should not stop doing good things because someone has done bad. Our every intention counts in this journey of life and death until the liberation. Having wise reflecting on things that we are doing always brings peace and

happiness in our life. Caring and sharing is the path to build the bridge between us for the harmonious society and happy life free from any conflict between us and them but only we are.

Be kind to one another.

15/7/16

"These are the five rewards of generosity: One is dear and appealing to people at large, one is admired by good people, one's good name is spread about, one does not stray from the rightful duties of the householder, and with the break-up of the body at death, one reappears in a good destination, in the heavenly worlds."

(AN 5.35)



8. The Conditioned Perversion of Perception (*Vipallasa*)

As usual on Tuesday night, we had our normal evening chanting and guided meditation. This was followed by a discussion on different subjects. Topics could be from questions which practitioners asked on the night, or it could be concerned with a pre-meditated subject. Tonight's discussion, after meditation, was no different from that of other nights. The discussion went so well and helpful to everyone of us. I felt that the subject would be of benefit to all our members and any other people interested in Buddhism or meditation. I have therefore decided to write a few words which will both elaborate and summarize the discussion.

Our life is constantly conditioned by the people and environment which surrounds us. We all born as a human but there was not any labels on us. There was not any definition of race, colour, nation etc. We were born with pure heart to work on this crazy world. The world we are living is divided into various forms and groups. As a result, we are continuously bombarded with adverts, words, behaviours and views. It is effecting our life, and our way of everyday living immensely. The way we think, the way we act, and the way we talk are heavily influenced by them, which later transforms into this race, that religion and that nation etc.

Meanwhile, it transforms into new perceptions, views and attitudes. It is so difficult to separate from this invasion, in this modern world. In fact, very few would realise that such an invasion is happening in their daily life. Only a handful of people, who are spending time to pay attention to their bodily and mental activities are able to realise that such invasion is happening and its effect in their minds and hearts. It is not just a realisation that this invasion is occurring, it is also realising it's true nature which is essential.

It is interesting to reflect how much Rafal was effected by his colleagues and their behaviour. Words that he was hearing, and behaviours that he was facing, on a daily basis at work, significantly effected him mentally, emotionally, and physically. In spite of being aware of these conditions, a considerable amount of those incidents effected his state of mind and physical wellbeing. This created continued stress. Over time, Rafal's perception of his needs began to change. He realised that he needed a more positive environment and that he needed to associate with people who could make a positive contribution to a more peaceful and harmonious way of living.

Mindfulness, 'sati', is to pay attention to what is happening objectively without being judgemental. Therefore, the practice of mindfulness helps us to realise the true nature of things. Instead of being bombarded by things and engaging with things from the basis of habitually reacting to things, we learn to see things for what they are, and let them be. Let them float away like a drop of water floats on a lotus leaf. The drop of water does not effect the leaf, nor does the leaf effects the water which the leaf is floating on. Simply put, it is best not to disturb the environment, nor the people in it, but instead to maintain the individual in a perfect state of equilibrium of mind and heart.

There are certain dangers associated with having a mind in a state of disequilibrium. These dangers are known as '*vipallasa*' or 'perversion' (Perversion of 'right view'/'right understanding' of the phenomenon). Vipallasa, a pali Buddhist terminology, is generally reacting to things, in accordance with how our desire wishes us, or orders us to react to things. As such, it perceives phenomena in accordance with our blinkered desires. We are what we: 'see', 'hear', 'smell', 'taste', 'touch' and 'think'. We go through significant number of experiences but normally, we choose to collect data as we please. Therefore, one sees only what is

'wanted', knows only what our prejudice perceives, and so on. Our 'perception' and 'thinking process', our 'holding onto fixed ideas or views', is depends heavily on what we 'hear', 'smell', 'taste', 'touch' and 'think'.

These perception of world, unfortunately, misleads us. This is why *'vipallasa'* are called the 'perversions'. They distort our view, attitude the world and people. These distorted wrong perception leads one to see: 'the impermanent as permanent'; 'the painful as pleasurable'; and 'not self as a individual, separate, permanent self'.

The perception of the *'impermanent as permanent'* leads us to wish to posses the impermanent object in the false belief that it will satisfy our desire. The perception of the *'painful as pleasurable'* leads us to wanting to possess the painful object, thinking that it is pleasurable, pure, beneficial, or good for oneself. This desire for the object may blindfold us so that we neglect experiences of pain or discomfort. The holding onto *'fixed views concerning 'not self' as a permanent individual and separate 'self'* also leads us into misunderstanding the nature of pain and suffering. Thus any grasping or attachment based on Vipallasa cannot provide us with contentment, or permanent satisfaction. It can be argued that the existence of these Vipallasa is one of the main causes of disharmony in society.

Politicians may never be satisfied, nor contented with the power and status they receive. The hunger for wealth, or satisfaction through sex is also never fully satisfied. Sometimes, such people do not feel ashamed, or hesitant to commit unwholesome actions which may further fulfil their desire for power, wealth or sex. Such thoughts are dangerous and are not beneficial for the individual, family, society or the wider nation. Therefore *the Vipallasa: 'perversion of perception'; 'thinking and holding onto fixed views,* are to be purified and understood clearly in order to find a harmonious life and society.

In order to achieve this process of purification of the perversions and clear comprehension, one needs to find a '*Kalyāna mitta*', or '*good friend*', who can guide us onto the right path, a path to liberation. Meanwhile, one needs to listen his guidance and wisely reflect on those teachings. Once carefully contemplated and wisely reflected upon, one needs to apply them into daily life in order to attain a peaceful and harmonious life.

May you be peace and happy.

Be kind to one another.

5July16

N.B.1 *Cultivating right view or right understanding helps to purify vipallasa and helps to develop a mind state of equilibrium or equanimity.*

N.B. *(These four factors: A kalayana mitta, wise attention to the teachings, wise reflection and application, lead to the first stage of Nibanna: Sottapanna or stream enterer.)*

Dhamma.Digital

9. The origin of Conflict

The world today is facing conflict after conflict. There is conflict between nations; conflict between religious sects; conflict between ethnic groups and citizens; conflict between political parties and politicians; conflict between business men; conflict between families; and conflict between brothers and sisters. There is hardly a place which is free from conflict.

Among the conflicts, one of the top conflicts nationwide in 2016 was whether to leave the EU or to remain. This has caused significant conflict within the nation and also in the hearts of the British people and the world. In 2017, majority of Americans voted for Donald Trump as a president. After his inauguration as the president of American has caused massive conflict around the world, gender issues, boarder control, nationality etc. Similarly, zooming into our own hearts and mind, we are constantly in conflict whether to choose one way or another, one view or the another. So, where are all these conflict generated from?

In general, we, as human beings, are very good at pointing fingers at other people, to blame for any conflict or problems. Meanwhile, we will never hesitate to rejoice at any success, no matter who had worked for it. This pointing at others, and leaving others to solve the problems, has increased confusion and misery and never to cease conflicts.

If we were to ask, where this conflict starts, rather than pointing at someone, we should look deep into ourselves. The main source of conflict begins within us in our hearts and minds. It begins from our attachment to sensual pleasure; our adherence to it; our fixation on sensual pleasures. It extends to addiction to sensual pleasure; and being obsessed about it. Finally, we hold/possess this object of sensual pleasure firmly. This possession creates resistance and rejection of anything that is against of your possession, which is the source of conflict.

Therefore, much of conflict originates from grasping or rejection on sensual pleasure. The same is true for Religious conflict. One holds onto the individual religious believe as a truth and rest is wrong generates difference between me and them. However, Religious conflict has a different cause for the conflict. This view is different from most understandings.

The cessation of the conflict, many search through marches and protest, so called 'peaceful protest' to create awareness. Generating full of negativities in our hearts, harbouring conflict after conflict in the mind would further apart to achieve a peace. It also begins from ourselves not from anywhere out there. Our actions and the way we think leads to the conflict or is connected. One of the simple ways to facilitate the cessation of conflict is to live a life mindfully, acting mindfully, and being conscious of what is around us. Once we are living mindfully and reminding our self that we are part of the system/society, we can strive within ourselves, to be that part which brings an end to conflict.

Having such an attitude to conflict and taking responsibility individually for the causes of conflict will help conflict to change significantly. When someone asked to the Buddha, 'who can untangled this inner conflict and outer conflict', he said that one who establishes on moral living, having a controlled mind and live life skilfully with full of wisdom and wisely, which is not harmful to one another.

With this in conscious mind, production would become more environmental and human friendly. Businessmen would consider their fellow human beings as human beings and treat them kindly for their well being, rather than just as consumers who support the market place and increase the sale of products. Government officials are thinking of their own benefit and corruption of state project. They should not forget that they are a part of upcoming problems and conflict that would cause them in difficult. Their next generation have to face the conflict in due course. If

everyone thinks for the best of entire humanity rather than selfish act, the world would become kind to one another and treat everyone the same as to oneself. As everyone fears harm and any kind of discomfort, one should put one's own self in that position before committing any harm to others. Therefore, we should reject the acts of producing goods which harm others and the environment through pollution for more profit with less healthy values. So, to solve any conflict it is good to think of other human beings as the same as yourself.

Always remember to place yourself in the position of others and ask the question/sense the effect of: "how would I feel about it?", before you harm, a cause a conflict between one another, anybody else. Having such view and attitude would always keeps one's mind in upright and free from any violation, which is the source of ending conflict inside and outside. If you want to changed the world first of all changing yourself. One cannot change others but own self, which is greater easier, safer and effective. The Buddha says, one who conquers own self conquers all. conflict never ceases by another conflict. No peace demonstration can generate peace but achieving peace within radiates out.

In conclusion, conflict is everywhere and will never ceases, unless, the root cause has been realised and fully understood. The root cause of conflict can often be found in our attachment, obsession and fixation with sense pleasures, due to ignorance and greed. Knowing this in a true sense is very difficult. Conflict ends with being aware of it mindfully in the 'here and now', and dealing with it through looking or having right understanding of the root of conflict: the attachment, fixation, and obsession with sense pleasure, being compassionate.

May you all be happy and at peace.

*'Those who are envious,
stingy and manipulative,
remain unappealing despite good looks
and eloquent speech.
but those who have freed themselves
from their faults
and arrived at wisdom are attractive indeed.*

(262-263)



10. Spiritual care in a foreign land

Everyone of us has to go through different layers of life experience in search for perfection. We make countless dreams and plans. As life throws to us different conditions, our dreams and plans change one after another. There are countless examples of working in different profession than one pursued from the beginning. Some people are frightened to see change and achieve nothing but failure. Conversely some would take change as an opportunity to begin a new journey toward a successful life. Often people never have enough and cannot be satisfied with what they have achieved and long for the perfect dream job. Eventually they settle down with a job that is sufficient for living and feeds the family in a comfortable life style, in spite of whether or not they like their job.

One of the main reasons for people travelling from one country to another is financial stability in their life. Such people are known as 'economic migrants'. Along with their migration, economic migrants bring their culture, faith and way to life. Initially, economic migrants face cultural shock in foreign land with an unusual society, environment and the way of life. As a result, any group or condition that exhibits a similar background migrants tend to join the group feeling a sense of 'sameness' or belonging. There are many examples where easterners feel comfortable with people from the East regardless of ethnicities or indigenous countries. However, as members increase of the same nationality or ethnicity, they tend to exhibit their own culture, language and faith. As this tendency becomes more visible and dominant, separation increases.

Religion or faith plays an essential role to comfort migrants in a foreign land. It also provides a sense of togetherness, warmth and security. Migrants feels ease the move between homeland and new world. As a result, faith

groups are a centre for bringing people of similar groups or nationalities together (Bruce: Secularization,2011/49). Meanwhile, migrants are tend to centre more around religion when they are in a foreign land rather than around their individual nation. This is a story of a lady from Thailand, who left Thailand for three decades but found comfort in Buddhism only a few years ago.

She was born in the centre of Thailand and got married with an Austrian man when she was in her early twenties. In her younger days, she visited a hospital in Thailand, and had wanted to become a nurse in the future. Unfortunately, her family broke down and her dream never came true. There were no further finances to support her education. She was unable to continue with her studies to make her dream come true. She went to work in a factory hoping that that would help her to fulfil with her future dream.

Life continues as it comes in spite of dreams. One day she met an Austrian man and it started to appear to be a life changing opportunity. He appeared to be kind and gave her new hope. Her dream became more real and she jumped on the ship to Austria. She was not aware of challenges that she would have to face in that dream land but she had a dream of perfection.

Austria is dissimilar to Thailand in almost every aspect. She went through first of all into cultural shock and she later experienced language difficulties. That caused her to become home sick. Nevertheless, she was not going to give up easily. She strived hard and established in a dignified way. Her courage and determination changed her perception and way of life. She learnt to embrace the difference. Her success, however, turned against her. Her husband did not welcome the change. He believed that traditionally woman should be a housewife. He began to bully her, physically and mentally. She had to run away from home and go through a divorce with empty hand.

She went on to have three other marriages at different times but she was still unable to settle. Her life changed from a simple modest life to a stressful life. She began to drink alcohol, and went on going against all that regarded as unethical in Buddhism. Life was unfair to her and she thought that it would never get any better. She could not find anyone, who could help her or guide her. Her vision of her future became so narrow and bleak that it looked as if all doors were closed for her. She would not want to go back to Thailand due fear of shame.

The weather never remains the same but constantly changes. On one night she dreamt of seeing a Buddhist monk. She woke up with great amusement. She just took the dream as traditional believe of having seen a Buddhist monk in the dream is a sign of good luck. However, she never investigated further but dream remained in her consciousness for a few days and provided great spiritual comfort.

While I was talking to her, she said that 'those few days were the best of her life'. That vision provided much relief and blessings. She began to study Buddhism and search for Buddhist centre. Later, she found a newly established small Buddhist centre in the middle of town where she now regularly attends sessions, providing hospitality to Buddhist monks, and any help to the centre which is necessary. The centre is relatively small in the flat but it provides services and is a centre for Thai and Buddhists in the town.

She said that "that dream saved my life." "I have learnt the importance of the five precepts and value for life. Venerable monks have given me much love, care and guidance, which is priceless for me."

She transformed herself and left all unethical way of living and now has a decent job with the minimum wage. She has not got enough income and financial stability and is at the verge of every day work, however the temple and meeting with monks have provided her great spiritual care. Sense of

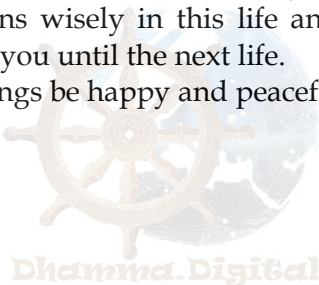
belonging and find comfort in foreign land. She said that “it is her good karma that she found religion again”, otherwise, she spoke very emphatically: “my life is like living in a hell.”

We discussed different aspects of Buddhist meditation and the practical aspects of meditation in daily life. I requested her to be aware of every thought as neutral and not to make any judgement. Being mindful of every moment as it is happening in every walk of life and to understand its true nature, free from any clinging or grasping. This is the path to liberation and freedom from suffering.

Although it was a short visit and meeting with her, I felt so privileged to listen to someone sharing such a wonderful story. Material possessions that one accumulates through hard work provides comfort only in this life but using material possessions wisely in this life and finding spiritual comfort will assist you until the next life.

May all beings be happy and peaceful

6/11/16



11. Altruistic Charity: From Beggar to Emperor

Often I used to go to a Pavilion Cafe for tea and relaxation. The cafe is just at the front of the Aberdeen Beach with a beautiful view looking at the North sea. I was close to the owner and staffs. On the one occasion, a Malaysian lady, Angie, told this such a beautiful story of nature of giving. The story goes like this.

Once upon a time, there was a very poor man living on other peoples generosity. He lived in an abandoned monastery near to a small village. Every day, he went to beg for his food. One day, there was a heavy rain. He noticed that the roof that covers the Buddha was damaged. Rain water was pouring onto the Buddha's head and on to his body. Having seen the rainwater running through the Buddha statue, he generously thought of how to repair the roof. He went collecting as many materials as he could find and repaired the roof, protecting the Buddha statue from rain.

He continued his life until he died. After he died, it is said that he was reborn as a human being again; as the son of an emperor. When the emperor, his father died, the previous beggar became the emperor and governed the country.

One day, he wanted to visit the city to see how his people were and the way that they were living. Thus, he dressed up as a normal citizen and wandered into the city. On his journey, he met a fortune teller on the street. The fortune teller saw the disguised emperor, and paid him respect. The Emperor was so amazed and asked 'how could he know?'

The fortune teller said:

“you were a beggar in your past live, however, due to your charitable work, you have now become the emperor.”

The emperor was very surprised and asked further:

“What did I do in my past?”

“You repaired the roof to protect the Buddha” said the fortune teller.

“Right! If that is so, I will repair everyone's roof. So I will reborn as a emperor again” said the emperor.

“Pardon me Lord, it does not work like that. Charity does not work in this way” said the fortune teller.

The Emperor was so upset but he could do nothing.

On the Emperor's request, the fortune teller explained that: “one who does charitable work should perform it with good intentions but expect nothing in return. Altruistic giving brings good

fruit in future.’

There are many people, who give to gain fame and name or in return good fortune. From the story, suggests that with those intension one would not receive any but disappointment. On the contrary, when someone give with altruistic mind the outcome of such generous giving always amazed, prosperity and successful life as the beggar who repaired roof with nothing return. Once the Buddha said that one who gives gain friendship and also people praise people who gives. Giving is also regarded as a wise act, will be loved and become a good friends. Similarly, one who gives happiness, in return, will be happy too. Therefore, giving what is worthy of giving without expecting return gains more than one would expect.

When someone gives wholeheartedly with unconditionally that person feel happy and rejoice on his giving. There are two kinds of giving; materials; and guide & giving. Giving materials is important that generates fortune and prosperities but the Buddha praise on guide and forgiveness. One who gives happier than receiver and giver always keeps friendship. Giving is a form of sharing for harmonious living and it is believed that it also merit that supports after life. Giving reduces greed and selfishness that leads to non- attachment that leads to the way of liberation.

12. Religious prejudice

Religion plays an important role in every society. Religion can be seen as one of the special threads that binds people together. Different nations; ethnic groups; or races are brought together under one concept and one way of living. It also influences people's life at every level. Religion incorporates a set of socially created invisible rules which hold people together in a group identity. It also works to achieve the proposed goal of the spiritual leaders.

On the positive side, religion enhances social harmony and mutual understanding within the across boundaries of culture, custom and language etc. Nevertheless, the dark side of Religion, should also be mentioned here. Holding on to one view as the right or correct view, and that wrong often creates divisions within the family, society and nation. Such perception will reject all other views and hold their view as completeness. Religious adherents, will strongly hold their view and deny any further explanation or interpretation. Meanwhile, they do not just reject the idea which is different from their, but can deny any of other human existence, by people who hold different views. These attitudes and views can even create class or caste divisions and prejudices between humans.

Religion is supposed to promote peaceful human co-existence and be free from divisions. It should be universal and anyone should be able to raise a question or make a request for a clearer interpretation. This helps to generate unbreakable confidence for people in their own practice. It also helps to create a sense of devotion or faith. Religion should not create a fear of something or guilt. It should facilitate to bring peace and harmony of human world.

This clear understanding removes the differences between human beings and instead brings every human being into the notion that we are all being similar in terms of the

human condition. Once we are born are all subject to decay, ill-ness and death.

Today on the train to Wimbledon temple, while I was reading a Lumbini Magazine, one gentleman came to sit next to me. He was taking his two children on a bank holiday tour of London. After passing a few stations, he turned to me and said:

“Buddha was a real man but other spiritual teachers are not that real. Many are from myths or legends and tales which are far from the truth.”

There was nothing that I could say. I simply closed my magazine and listened to what he wanted to say. It was interesting to listen to what he was saying. Great passion and devotion were emanating from his words.

He went on to talk about the Jewish and Christian Religion. He believed that these religions were not good or right. The stories of Moses, Jesus, the Bible; the Old; and new Testament were, in his view, just an intellectual production. They never existed. He was insisting passionately on his views and knowledge. In fact, I did not ask about his beliefs. He was very protective and appeared very faithful to Islam. The conversation suggested that he had to work hard to be a good human on the basis of word of 'Allah.

I kept listening to his nonstop talking. He did not even gave me any chance to open my mouth before he left the train. He, nevertheless, was gentle to me and said sorry for talking so directly and off he went.

It does not matter what belief one holds, in my opinion if it divides one human being from another, in my understanding, it is not a true belief. Conversely, any concept or belief that unites human beings from different nations should be considered as a true religion spreading harmony and peace to the family and society. If Religion divides human beings, then, then there is a big question mark as to what would bring peace and harmony.

According to the Buddha's teaching, holding on to any 'ism' is 'wrong view': '*sakkaya ditthi*'. In The Buddha's teaching, the beginning of real freedom comes when we cultivate 'right view': '*samma ditthi*'. Cultivating 'Samma ditthi' or 'right view'/'understanding' comes first in both the Buddha's teaching on the middle way and also in the Buddha's teaching on the four stages of enlightenment. Samma ditthi consists of the relinquishment of holding on to any views or beliefs in a separate individual personality. *How can there be division if we realise that there is no separate individual personality.* For Buddha, when we are free from 'wrong view', 'wrong understanding' or beliefs concerning 'the self', and 'the causes of suffering' and cultivate 'right view', a truly harmonious life begins both within us, and extends to others. Such harmony can bring peace and harmony into the community and nation.

30 June 2016



Kalam Sutta

(adapted from translation from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu © 1994):

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One, on a wandering tour among the Kosalans with a large community of monks, arrived at Kesaputta, a town of the Kalamas. The Kalamas of Kesaputta heard it said, "Gotama the contemplative – the son of the Sakyans, having gone forth from the Sakyian clan – has arrived at Kesaputta. And of that Master Gotama this fine reputation has spread: 'He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy, & rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, a knower of the cosmos, an unexcelled trainer of those persons ready to be tamed, teacher of human & divine beings, awakened, blessed. He has made known – having realized it through direct knowledge – this world with its devas, maras, & brahmas, its generations with their contemplatives & brahmans, their rulers & common people; has explained the Dhamma admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end; has expounded the holy life both in its particulars & in its essence, entirely perfect, surpassingly pure. It is good to see such a worthy one.'"

So the Kalamas of Kesaputta went to the Blessed One. On arrival, some of them bowed down to him and sat to one side. Some of them exchanged courteous greetings with him and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, sat to one side. Some of them sat to one side having saluted him with their hands palm-to-palm over their hearts. Some of them sat to one side having announced their name & clan. Some of them sat to one side in silence.

As they sat there, the Kalamas of Kesaputta said to the Blessed One, "Lord, there are some brahmans &

contemplatives who come to Kesaputta. They expound & glorify their own doctrines, but as for the doctrines of others, they deprecate them, revile them, show contempt for them, & disparage them. And then other brahmans & contemplatives come to Kesaputta. They expound & glorify their own doctrines, but as for the doctrines of others, they deprecate them, revile them, show contempt for them, & disparage them. They leave us absolutely uncertain & in doubt: Which of these venerable brahmans & contemplatives are speaking the truth, and which ones are lying?"

"Of course you are uncertain, Kalamas. Of course you are in doubt. When there are reasons for doubt, uncertainty is born. So in this case, Kalamas, don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, 'This contemplative is our teacher.' When you know for yourselves that, 'These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to harm & to suffering' – then you should abandon them.

(Kalama Sutta: translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu © 1994 AN 3.65 PTS: A i 188 Thai 3.66: www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.065.tha.n.html)

13. Religion and Married life

Cross cultural marriage has been one of the major issues in this globalised World. Cross cultural marriage is increasingly popular everywhere, spite of ethnic and religious boundaries. In the past, these marriages were unacceptable on the basis of religious purity and superiority or ethnic protection and preservation. This has changed significantly in more recent years. Nevertheless, such beliefs still prevail in some religious and ethnic groups.

Among the different religions, Buddhists tend to be more flexible with cross cultural marriages. It has been found that Buddhists have tended to adapt well to their partners religious beliefs and followed their partner's faith with less trouble. There are many other faiths which strictly prohibit such cross cultural marriages. Such beliefs, divide people from getting married. It also creates division between human beings, making them behave in a discriminatory way towards others. As a result, the present world, appears more to be very chaotic rather than harmonious.

Today, we were invited to a ceremony to give blessings to a Buddhist woman who was getting married to a Christian man. Relatives and family members from both parties were present to congratulate and bless the couple. However, it was very interesting to observe the different attitudes and views concerning religious rituals. There was significant confusion and doubt from the groom and his family concerning the Buddhist rituals of: chanting; making offerings to the monks; and the giving of blessings by monks. These confusions arose partly due to a lack of knowledge concerning different religious beliefs and practices which had never been encountered or studied before; and partly due to individual religious prejudice. Nevertheless, it is appeared that such perceptions faded after an introduction into the rites and ritual in relation to the marriage.

The woman was born in Sri Lanka and had studied and practiced Buddhism in the temples. Her parents moved to the UK when she was young to improve their financial stability and children's future. She studied in a normal government school in London and completed her degree from a University in London. She met a man, whom she loved dearly but he follows Christian values. According to their story, he was not a devout follower, and only occasionally visited the Sunday service. It was very different for her. She visited the Buddhist centre almost every weekend. They both had very little problem or conflict in building their relationship or getting married. However, when they decided to get married religious views and attitudes began to play a role on their relationship.

The conclusion of this was that both the husband-to-be and wife-to-be decided to have religious ceremonies from both religions. She was more than happy to follow Christian customs and live with her husband according to Christian beliefs, however he insisted that she should have a Buddhist ceremony too. Although there was mutual agreement concerning the religious ceremonies, it is more than likely that in the future, she will bend towards Christianity in order to preserve a harmonious relationship. Similarly, next generation also will probably follow their father's step rather than mother.

Similarly, there was a Buddhist born young Woman married to a Muslim man. He was happy to let her practice as she wished even after the marriage. It was wonderful to hear the story. Meanwhile, it demonstrated the liberal view of Islam within the family. Unfortunately, such open and liberal view changed after she gave birth to a boy. She was psychologically forced to convert to Islam. If she refused to convert, her boy would have been taken away from her. There are other stories from Thailand where young women have to convert to Islam, when she intended to marry a Muslim man. It is very rare or negligible, that a man would convert from one religion to

another to marry a woman. In these circumstances, as a Buddhist monk one has to be very careful on giving talks in these ceremonies. Each religion has got its own way of dealing with such rites. Nevertheless, Buddhist rites are normally very simple and accessible to all faiths and religions with very little or almost conflict less, which may not be the case in other beliefs or religions. Buddhist practice tends to emphasise the teaching rather than the ritual.

This is an abstract from the talk:

Marriage is a three legged race. The Bride and groom have to work together for a successful marriage. There will be ups and downs along the way. It is one of life times essential events for lay people. Meanwhile, getting married is a lifelong contract between two people. There should be mutual trust and mutual respect and care between both parties, working together to create a happy and successful married life. It also transforms two hearts into one. Therefore, this needs to be nurtured with a lot of care, love, forgivingness, confidence, discipline, and wisdom, in relation to the issues which may occur during married life.

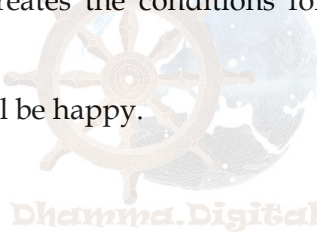
A happy life is where two hearts work together mutually for one goal. In this journey, it is best not to bring any negative fires in from the outside. Conversely, any negative fires which arise within the marriage, need to be thrown away to the outside. There should also be mutual discussion and letting go of those fires. Mutual respect; a sense of being dutiful to each other; forgiveness towards each other and being wise in life would bring about a happy home and family. One of the most important factors of marriage life is 'skilful communication'. Skilful communication is an essential tool that binds a relationship. It also exhibits caring and sharing, faith, moral living, and the exercise of a wise awareness within married life. Faith and confidence in each other makes a house into a home. Moral living is a foundation

one can build upon. Upon the foundation faith and confidence can grow. This demands lots of caring and sharing.

Therefore, it does not matter what religious view one is holding on to, but if both parties have faith, respect, and a mutually caring and sharing attitude, the relationship will last long and be harmonious. Every relationship requires forgiveness and forgetfulness concerning mistakes. They also require an understanding of one's own self in order to accept, respect and value the other person in one's life.

No one is perfect. Just be there for a person who is next to us. Do not create a gap and never speak to each other by making presumption after presumption. Instead always think wisely and use skilful communication. This is a key for successful married life. It is not a religion which ensures good marriages, but an individual's attitude and respect within their marriage which creates the conditions for a happy married life.

May you all be happy.



14. Birthday celebration: Known and Unknown

It would be very strange to hear of people not celebrating their birthdays in Western countries. It is one of the most important days of someone's yearly calendar. Forgetting someone's birthday, particularly in a married life, can be considered as a serious act of carelessness or offense, which can be one of the causes for separations. There are, on the other side of the world, some communities do not pay much attention to birthdays, i.e. 20 years ago in Nepal.

In Western Countries, amongst educated society, no one would forget to celebrate a birthday. People will have a party and celebrate with friends in various ways in different forms and can be very expensive. The celebration can be very big if someone is turning to the age of sixteen or eighteen. Birthdays are very important days, possibly (equal to) or sometimes more important than Christmas, for some people. This is particularly true for children. As a result, parents have a big responsibility to fulfil their children's wishes on their birthday or at least to provide a nice present.

In Nepal, when I was a child, my birthday was known to only my mother and she normally prepares for the celebration. The celebration consists of getting up early in the morning and do usual morning business. A mother or sister will prepare items to visit temples and we follow her temple after temple with a hope of receiving blessings. On return, mother would give a plate of dry rice mixed in milk and other fruits with few paisas, a penny to give away. Children would lined up to receive our giving, normally from a person who is celebration birthday. It is a day of giving rather than receiving.

Today, early in the morning around 10am, I was walking back to the centre from dropping a monk off at the Aberdeen train station. People were walking with morning coffee cups in their hands heading towards their duties. Street

was beginning to get busy. It was still cold and windy in the Union street. I noticed a man was sitting on the pavement with a small bucket to receive donations. I just about to walked passed him but there were words that was written on a piece of paper which stopped me. The words on the paper said:

“For my daughter's birthday present: This weekend”.

I went to chat and wanted to get to know him better. He told me that he was made homeless due to having his family breaking up. He had a daughter whose birthday was on that very weekend. His daughter wished to have a birthday present from Argos. She thought of her father as a kind of Father Christmas, who would give her the present which she really wanted to have on her birthday. He had no job nor place to stay, however, he did not want to disappoint her. I thought that he wanted to make her wish come true after the family break up.

There were few thoughts bubbling in my mind, questioning the story that he was telling me. I was wondering whether or not should I believe his story. There was a lot of hesitation in me whether or not to give the man some money towards buying the present for his daughter. Meanwhile, there was a thought that I should buy a voucher rather than giving a money, so he would not spend the money wrongly, if he was addicted to drugs or alcohol etc.

After a few minutes of double discussions: talking with this man; and discussing within myself, I made a decision that it did not matter where he was going to spend the money. I trusted his story and wanted to help. Having had that thought I wanted to give him a money. Once, he received the money and spent it on something other than the present for his daughter, then that is his decision. My job is to fulfil my part of caring and sharing to help him from that trouble.

Having such thought in mind, I grabbed my wallet and gave him a ten pound note. He refused to accept the money saying that it was too much from a single person and

pointed a bucket, which had only two pounds coins and few copper coins. I told him to please accept it. His face cheered up and he asked for my name. He wanted to write my name on the birthday card for his daughter. I felt happy and good to be part of celebrating this unknown gentle father's daughter's birthday on that day. Sometimes, we just need to give. Every little help counts a lot for someone. This gives a lot of joy and happiness to the giver. It acts as an antidote to our defilements. The wise praise giving.

Therefore, Buddhism begins with act of generosity or sharing with one another. Often, we forgot that how much we are receiving from others, human; parents, friends, society and nation and nature. As a result, we exploit and do not appreciate. Act of generosity bring a contentment and happiness on one another. Sometimes, poor people are more able to share than someone who have more wealth in their life (read story number 7 & 11 on giving).

Generosity, on the other hand, is a act of kindness towards all beings regardless of who they are. If we practice Kindness then the practice of generosity can be an extension or expression of our practice of loving kindness. Out of Loving kindness, Sympathetic joy (Joy in the joy of others); Compassion, and Equanimity may arise. Thus, when we practice giving we may also be practicing the Four Brahma Viharas or divine abiding. Therefore, the act of giving may actually transport us from a defiled state of mind into a state of mind where we abide 'divinely' close to Brahma. It is said that the practice of Kindness has others wellbeing as its object. The practice of Compassion has peoples suffering as its object. When we practice Generosity and Loving kindness, we learn how to respond to the suffering of others. When we give, we may also develop a sense of faith or Saddha.

We may find that we also need to balance Generosity (Dana) with Wisdom (Panna). This entails the sort of discussion in our head, which I had, where the two qualities

may seem to debate and be in conflict. However sometimes it is in the giving itself where the wisdom or knowledge arises. Thus, Generosity or giving may helps us to develop both Wisdom and Compassion.

Finally generosity is a Kind of Kamma or Kusala/Skillful Action. The fruit (Vipakka) of such a Kamma may be experienced as Punya or Merit. Thus, at some time in the future or in a future life, someone may be kind to us, although there should not be any expectation in return but results are unavoidable.

Thus giving has many benefits both for our own lives and practice and also to helps relieve the suffering of others. In conclusion I would like to refer to the noble sayings of the Buddha to express my feeling.

The Buddha says: "A wise man who gives happiness to others, will, in return, be happy".

25/5/16



15. Drunk man seeks meditation

The first day after the Scottish independent referendum, the streets in Aberdeen were different and everyone's feelings were contradictory. It was late afternoon, around 17:35. I was on my way back to the centre through Union Street via Castle Gate. I had been to an appointment earlier, at 2 pm, but the woman I was meeting did not make it to the appointment. There had been no calls, nor any cancellation call.

Later, after over an hour of waiting, I was informed that the lady had been in an emergency meeting. I think that she had forgotten that she had an appointment with me. I was disappointed, but was walking back mindfully and contemplating evening class at the centre. Occasionally, people approach to me and talk or ask questions. Sometimes, they approach me with a word 'hari krishana', thinking that I am a follower of Hari Krishna. Other times greet with a Thai word 'Sawatsdee', realising as a Buddhist monk.

On that day, I met this drunk man, who told his name was Mark. Mark requested me to have a picture taken with him. It was obviously because of the Monks attire that I was wearing. With no hesitation, I gave Mark permission to have his picture taken with me. As his friend tried to snap a picture, he wanted to put his hand on my shoulder. It is inappropriate to place hands on their shoulders and Buddhist can be offended, so I denied his request as inappropriate. This friend put his hands together in a lotus posture on his chest said 'thank you'.

Meanwhile Mark went proceeded by asking me questions about being a monk. "You are a Monk? right.

"Yes, I am a Monk; a Buddhist Monk".

"Oh! Are you! How many monks are there in Aberdeen? I saw a monk earlier on this afternoon. Why are you here?"

His question and voice were harsh and did not feel welcoming. I felt he sounded menacing seeing monks in the city. In the meantime, they both were drunk. However, I remained calm, and collected but fully aware of surrounding.

I did not want to have any trouble, especially on such a remarkable referendum day. So, I replied to him very carefully.

“I have been here for three years. I live in Aberdeen.”

In order to divert his question, I intentionally replied in that way.

Surprisingly this transformed his attitude towards me. He became more friendly and hospitable. I had begun to think of subtly extricating myself from the situation before getting into any trouble but found this idea was unsuitable. Firstly, because they were drunk and it can cause a different issue. Secondly, he wanted to have friendly conversation.

While I was standing in front of him, I tried to observe the people surrounding us. There were a few people. I felt that they have known to Mark. Everyone was looking/glancing at us attentively. One middle aged lady, also shouted at Mark to go over there. Mark pretended did not hear here and continued talking with me. The lady went into the nearby Public House and called few people to come and watch our conversation. They all stood next to the door and watched us. Nevertheless, I did not think that they could hear our conversation due to the distance.

Later, I realised that I did the right thing by staying there, talking and

listening to his problem. According to his story, he was having difficult problem, domestic problems, with his wife. He went to the pub for a drink hoping to forget his emotions and pain. The more he drunk, the more his pain and emotions increased and became unbearable. His wife had gone into police and he was in custody for the domestic abuse. His wife had taken both the children. According to Mark his

wife was always causing a problem. He was not allowed to see his children. Now, he is angry and that anger can be extended to anyone.

Whilst I was listening to his story I could feel the anger. At the time, I had several thoughts of getting away and leaving, but I stayed vigilant. I noticed that my body was ready to defend me. Both my hands were in front of me, ready to defend me, should there be a need. My eyes were fully concentrated on his every move and reaction. All those perceptions and thoughts turned out to be wrong. Nevertheless, I did not give any place for heedlessness.

He had a genuine intention to talk to me. Ultimately, despite being drunk, he wanted to have a peaceful mind and to regain control over his life and actions.

"I am a good lad and good man." he began his further discussion.

"I do not want to harm or be angry at anyone, but people out there are talking about me and my family, which is not right. This makes me angry. I am very fast and quick! man. I do not want to go to prison. I have children and a family, you see. I am a good father. Tell me how can I control myself."

After he told his story, I felt a little more comfortable, however, I was unsure about his story. Meanwhile, I was not judging him and his statements. I had to respond to his question, so I said: "Well! you have to look after yourself."

"My mother also said to me to look after myself." He responded.

"He broke my sentence and spoke with full of emotion: "Out there", he further said, "they don't want me to be happy, my mother said! So, I need to look after my children".

I realised that there was a form of trust and faith in him and that his mother was right. In the mean time I wanted to let him think, in order to find a solution. I reassured him that

what his mother had said was good, with a intention to let him think: "Your mother was right. Why don't you look after yourself".

"How should I look after myself?"

That was a very reassuring thought. He really wanted a solution. I wanted to tell him to decrease his drinking or stop drinking and to have a clear mind so that he would be able to think properly. However I felt that this was an inappropriate thing to say at the time. Therefore, I explained to him the nature of angry feelings and how they change. I instructed him to experience the breath and the sensations in his body.

While observing the sensations, do not think about anyone or any words that anyone has said. I asked him to feel the breath and sensations in his body. Surprisingly, he tried several times.

Looking straight into my eyes he said: "I have got to be calm and control myself." He added " I need it!"

I replied: "You have to try, and I am sure you will be fine."

When I realised that he had begun to try the breathing practice again, I felt a small relief. Having seen his emotional change in him, I asked him for permission to leave.

He was quite happy to let me go and said:

"Thank you for your advice".

I replied with a blessings: " May I wish you all the best with your life and may you be happy".

He left very happily and I walked down to the Meditation Centre full of joy and contentment.

19.09.2014

16. The Healthy man and the Sick man

A healthy person has many problems, but a sick person has only one.

I met a lady who was on her way to a medical conference in Amsterdam. She was keen to learn meditation and how Buddhism can be applied in her medical field. I briefly explained the Four Noble truths:

- (i) There is a problem.
- (ii) There is a cause for it.
- (iii) There can be a solution/end to it.
- (iv) There is a 'way' or 'path' to end it.

I further said that 'the way' is known as Buddhism. She understood it and said that in Pharmacology there is a saying: "a healthy person has many problem, but a sick person has only one". The pharmacist's job is to find a solution. When I asked what does the expression mean, she said that when a person is healthy, one desires too many things and creates a lot of problems for one's own self and also for other members of the family and community. However a sick person can only think of different ways to cure one's sickness.

I really like that saying. It is the world we are living in: driven by greed; hatred; and delusion. As a result, each one of us is fighting for material gain, trying to find different ways to acquire wealth or prosperity. This is also one of the main causes of present day stress and frustration. People are endlessly thinking about different ways of gaining material possessions and wealth: "why do I not have this?"; and "How can I have that". Conversely a sick person has only one wish: "How can I be free from this sickness that I am suffering from?" No matter how much it costs, a sick person is always willing to pay for it.

However, it is important to note, that medicine only cures physical sickness, it does not cure mental illness.

Modern medicine can 'cure' physical illness, however tablets for mental illness do not 'cure' mental illness. Instead they are designed to 'divert', 'numb', 'control', or manage the working of the brain, or a person's emotions.

The Buddha found that the real medicine or ultimate solution to cure mental '*dis ease*' was to 'break the cycle of birth and death', not to be reborn in this mass of body, made up of molecules, which moves from one place to the other. The complete cessation of suffering is known as 'Nibbana': the unconditional and ultimate happiness of enlightenment; the complete liberation from the endless cycle of birth, aging, illness, death, and rebirth.

The 'way' or 'path' to the complete cessation of suffering is the realisation of things as they truly are from the experiential level. This is also famously known as 'insight' or 'Vipassana Meditation'. Knowing things as they truly are, when they are happening, and while they are taking place is the path to the 'cure'. Meditation is a '*way of being*' rather than a way of suppressing or creating other things.

Meditation begins with embracing of the physical body and understanding it. This follows with understanding feeling and emotions. Feelings and emotions are the main root or cause of many mental sicknesses. We are the creator of these sicknesses.

In this process of curing illness: first it is necessary to realise the nature of the disease. The solution will follow. This is true not only for physical sicknesses, but also for mental sickness. Realise the nature or root cause of what keeps us in samsara: the endless cycle of re-birth and death. Find the way or 'path' to free yourself from it.

May you all achieve ultimate happiness in this life of near future.

16.03.2016

17. A Muslim Devotee takes Buddhist comfort

It was an early morning when I went to the bank. There was already a line of people waiting for the counter. Having seen the line I joined it. My mind was not aware of the people who were standing ahead of me. I was simply observing myself and standing with complete awareness of what was happening around me.

One of the members of staff was trying to convince her customer that the charges were fair with regards to withdrawing money abroad. It had already been stated in the 'terms and conditions'. The customer was unsuccessfully trying to express their sense of unfairness with regard to the charges. Other customers were just impatient to be at the counter and simply wanted to finish their business. Ahead of me, two gentlemen were standing waiting for their turn. I did not pay any attention to the line nor to the people who were in the line. I simply waited for my turn to be served.

One of the men, whom I later found out was from India, turned round, I presume, to look at the line. He saw me standing there. I smiled at him. He smiled me back. A simple gesture can make big difference. This was the case on that morning. I was not expecting the next thing that happened. He left the line and came and stood behind me. I looked at him with surprise and said: "are you sure?"

There was no hesitation nor second thought in him. He was happily letting me stand in front of him. He said: "Yes, no problem. You are very peaceful. I could feel it. You are special."

'Thank you' I answered in reply. This was the only thing I could express for his complement.

He asked: "Are you Thai?" "Where are you from?"

"No!" I replied. I am originally from Nepal, however, I was ordained as a Buddhist monk in Thailand."

He continued, pointing at a man who was standing in front of me.

He said that this man was his Imam, a religious leader in Islam. He was following his Imam's guidance to pray and was helping him with religious services.

I rejoiced in his noble support for the mosque. He further explained his problem and his issues in life. He lost his job, his wife was unwell, and his visa application for indefinite leave to remain in Britain

had been rejected and was on appeal. He said with a very sad look on his face that: "I cannot sleep, nor do I want to sleep. I pray in Mosque dutifully. Can you help me?"

I felt so sorry for him. I wanted to help. However I did not want to create any misunderstanding, or offend in terms of religious or cultural differences in beliefs and practices. The only conclusion I could come to was to say: "no problem; how would you like me to help?" The moment I said it, I could feel and see an emotional change in his face. He became visibly more relaxed. He seemed to feel comfortable to be in the presence of me.

"Can you pray for me?" he said.

"Sure!" I said. " I will dedicate tonight's chanting for you."

"Where do you stay?" He asked.

I replied that: "I stayed near Aberdeen Beach, next to the Matalan."

He said "Oh, I know." He then continued " What do you do?"

I replied: "I practice and teach meditation."

He then further repeated his question: "Can you help me...What can I do?"

I carefully began to answer his question. It was almost my turn at the counter. I told him that I can chant for him. I also suggested that it might be helpful for him to learn how to investigate his emotions. I said that it might be good for him

to learn how to stop allowing his feelings to transport him straight into thought. Instead he should learn to take notice of the feelings and understand them.

I asked him to feel his breath and relax with the breath. I could see that he had begun to pay attention to his breath. He became more relaxed.

I went on, explaining to him about 'pre-sleep' meditation techniques . I told him to feel his bodily presence before he went to sleep and to try to relax. One sentence in particular seemed to have a strong effect /convince him:

"When you try to sleep, you will not be able to sleep. Instead if you try not to sleep, this will take you to sleep."

It was my turn at the counter at last. So I told him to practice "*watching his breath every moment*"; and to practice "*not sleeping for sleeping*". I blessed him telling him: "it was very nice to meet you". I gave him my best wishes with the issues and concerns which he had expressed. I also wished him happiness in his life.

He said: "thank you." He also said that he hoped he would meet me again in the future.

In conclusion, it does not matter what religion you practice. A blessing from any religion is a blessing. One only needs faith (Sadha) and everything will come together. I have heard it said that The Dalai Lama suggests that 'it is not a question of religion, but a question of devotion and a sincere heart'.

29/3/16

*A traveller possessed of virtue,
disciplined and committed to right conduct,
will be received with honour;
such a one can be recognised and can travel with confidence.*
(303)

18. Two Drunk men on Meditation

*Only blessings can arise from
seeking the company of wise and discerning persons,
who skillfully offer
both admonition and advice
as if guiding one to hidden treasure.*

(76)

It was the Easter Saturday Holiday. People were out and about to celebrate. They were enjoying the festivities, feasting, refreshment, and relaxation. It was getting dark. There were two men standing at the side of the road. I walked along the path to the temple. I was very tired due having been to some intensive chaplaincy training. My only aim was to get back to the temple as soon as possible, and to have a rest to attend next full day training. It was a gloomy day and there were intermittent showers. The two gentlemen came towards me with some cans of beer in their hands. They greeted me: "Good evening bhante."

The word 'bhante' that the gentlemen used, suggested that they had some knowledge or experience of Buddhism and Buddhist monks. They sounded drunk due their shaky voices. I realised that they must have been drinking for some time. I gently responded to them. "Good evening".

I quickly wanted to get away from them and proceed to the temple, however, one of them said: "You are a Buddhist monk, a Peaceful man. Teach us how to meditate." I didn't feel comfortable or safe to be there. Nevertheless, I did not want situation to go wrong. So, I did not run away, but remained there for them. It was, however, difficult to teach meditation to them. Partly it was difficult because of the rain and the environment. However, the major problem was that they were drunk and holding cans of beer. Therefore, rather than going

into the theory and concept of meditation, I simply gave them a task to do. That task was the practice of walking meditation!

Walking meditation involves walking mindfully, focusing on the breath and the body at the same time. It is a very physical activity. Some may have never heard of walking meditation and probably have never been introduced to it. Meditation is in fact not just about sitting on a cushion, it should go beyond the cushion, into daily life.

Meanwhile, without further explaining 'what' 'walking meditation' was and 'how' it relates to sitting meditation and Buddhism in general, I decided to try to engage the two men fully and persuade them to get involved in the actual practice. I thought that this would be more appropriate. Surprisingly, it did work.

'The Drunken man's walk!'.

One can imagine the scene. Neither men were steady or stable. They began to wobble and their body was shaking as they walked. They were unable to walk normally and struggled to walk mindfully. It reminded me of the police, when they test a person's level of alcohol consumption for illegal driving. After a while the two men realised that it was very difficult or impossible to walk mindfully whilst drunk. They left apologetically.

The story reminds me of when people first come to meditation. They may not have a genuine motivation or desire to practice. They may have seen something on the television or in the media. They then approach Buddhism or meditation as a kind of fashion or trend. This approach to meditation and Buddhism can be seen as: *'the drunken stage'* of their meditation practice. This stage may change once they become more sober. Once they have become more sober, they may move to the next stage: *'The sobering up stage'*. Here they begin to become more serious and sincere about meditation and Buddhism. They may begin to cultivate some calm and peace. Alternatively they may become more aware of their mental

habit patterns and hindrance to meditation. Finally people may come to *'the Fully Sober Stage'*. Here they earnestly strive to develop insight or Vipassana into suffering and no self.

Let's keep practicing mindfully.

'Take meditation beyond the cushion'.

27/3/16

*All states of being are determined by mind.
it is mind that leads the way.
just as the wheel of the oxcart follows
the hoof print of the animal that draws it,
so suffering will surely follow
when we speak or act impulsively
from an impure state of mind.*

...

*As surely as our shadow never leaves us,
so well-being will follow
when we speak or act
with a pure state of mind.*

Dhamma.Digital

(1-2)

19. Praying to God verses kamma

The way to Heaven.

Question: "In Christianity it is believed that praying to the God will help one to go to heaven when one dies. In Buddhism it is believed that 'kamma' or good actions will take one to Heaven (Nibanna?) . Why is there this difference between the two religions?"

We were having tea around a table one evening, when a gentleman raised this question. I was neither prepared for the profundity of the question, nor expecting such a complex question which would require an explanation which could distinguish and make the necessary comparisons between the two religions.

The question itself seemed to come out of nowhere. However, I tried my best to compose myself and deliver a well thought out, rational, reasoned answer which could do justice to the complexity of the question. The comparison went directly to the heart of many questions concerning the two religions. I tried to be satisfied with my response.

The question itself was a little complicated, however I felt that I had to try to put the answer simple terms. In accordance with my limited knowledge, and understanding, I decided to respond to the question in two ways: firstly I decided to respond to the question in terms of my personal beliefs. Secondly I decided to respond to the question from the standpoint of the Buddhist conception of ultimate reality.

I. My Answer from the perspective of Personal Belief.

(I have since added to and adapted my oral answer in order to try to make my answer more comprehensive and intelligible to the reader, and also to do more justice to the complexity of the original question.)

(i) Conditioning:

In general, since the beginning of human society (since the time we are born), it can be argued that we are

("conditioned") . In other words we believe a lot of what we are told to believe by our family, environment or culture. We are raised with a "conditioned" perception of life. We hold that "conditioned" perception, and engage with and experience life through that same "conditioned" perception. We never question or doubt our "conditioning", neither do we question the perception it creates. We may also form strong beliefs around our 'conditioning' , and defend, what we were told.

This process may be no different with regards to the belief concerning the way to get to Heaven. We were told very often, from a very young age, that if we want to go to heaven, the best or only way to go to heaven, is through prayer. As a result, we have followed the advice which we have been given, without any further doubts. If anyone questions our belief in prayer, We may feel angry, challenged.

(ii) Bigotry and Dogma:

Bigotry can be defined as: "an intolerance towards those who hold different opinions from oneself". (Internet definition) Dogma can be defined as: "a principle or set of principles laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true". (Internet definition.) The Webster dictionary defines dogma as: "a belief or set of beliefs that is accepted by the members of a group without being questioned or doubted".

(iii) Freud.

According to Sigmund Freud children keep childhood experiences for life within their consciousness. Such experiences and beliefs are hard to destroy. Childhood beliefs, once believed in, may be held for life. These beliefs may even form the foundation for his or her attitude towards everything they experience in life. The belief that praying to God is the best way to go to heaven may fall into this category. I'd like to offer a provisional and tentative explanation for this.

(iv) Changing 'conditioned' perceptions'

I believe that it is useful here to employ a form of rationality, which makes available the logical explanations and reasoning, which make up beliefs and perceptions. Through such an approach, a person may gain insight and understanding into their belief structures. This process may allow a person's fixed perception, to begin to change. Such a process is possible only, because, such fixed perceptions are 'pre-conditioned'.

II. Answering the question from the perspective of the Buddha's teaching on ultimate reality.

(i) Kamma can be simply translated as: "what goes around comes around" (back to oneself). It can also be described just as simply as: "every action has a reaction". For Buddhists Kamma is a fact of life, not a myth. It is a timeless truth. It will not change. For Buddhists, it is the reality everyone has to face whether or not one believes in Kamma.

It is interesting to note that the Buddhist chant concerning the qualities of the teachings expounds similar characteristics to the qualities I have described concerning Kamma:

"The Dhamma (teaching) ... is to be seen here and now (Akâlîko); timeless (Ehi-passiko); inviting one to come and see (Opanâyiko); onward leading (to Nibbana); to be known by the wise, each for himself. (Paccattam veditabbo viññuhiti)."

(ii) The Kingdom of Heaven and the realisation of Nibanna.

For Buddhists, it does not matter whether you are Buddhist, Christian, Hindu or Muslim. Everyone has to receive the same result of their kamma. No one can change it. For Christians or Theistic religion, going to heaven is the main aim. In order to go to heaven it is necessary to pray in order to find Salvation for the soul. For Buddhists the attainment or realisation of Nibanna is the main aim. The attainment of Nibanna allows for the cessation of Suffering; the extinction of the defilements (Kilesas) : and the realisation of the 'Deathless'

or 'unconditioned'. Christianity teaches that prayer is the right means or path to find the kingdom of Heaven or secure salvation for the soul. The Buddha taught that the "eightfold path" is the right path to realise Nibbana. The eightfold path consists of: 'right view/aim or intention'; 'right thought'; 'right speech'; 'right action'; 'right livelihood'; 'right mindfulness' and 'right concentration'. For the Buddhists, the main focus is on an individual's actions or Kamma: "to do good, and to avoid doing evil, and to purify the mind."

(iii) The Five Precepts.

A Buddhist's practice is based on developing three things: 'Sila' (Morality); 'Samadhi' (Meditation); and 'Panna' (Wisdom). Sila, Samadhi and Panna encompass body; speech and mind. For lay people, Sila or Morality is based on 5 precepts. The first precept is concerned with avoiding harming any living being. Living beings includes all beings, whether they are big or small, seen or unseen. Non-harm comes from an understanding that every being cherishes life, and is afraid of death and suffering. The second precept is concerned with not taking others possessions without permission. In the same way, non stealing comes from an understanding that every person fears losing their possessions. The third precept is concerned with avoiding sexual misconduct. This precept relates to the more general Buddhist belief of respecting human values, without sexual discrimination, having equal respect for all the sexes. The fourth precept is concerned with: avoiding speaking falsely, negatively or gossiping about others. The fifth precept is concerned with avoiding alcohol or intoxicants which can cloud the mind. In general the five precepts can be summarised as living life mindfully and performing every action full of love and compassion for all beings.

Living mindfully and keeping the Buddhist precepts is considered to create good or "kusala" kamma. It also avoids or

restrains one from creating negative or 'akusala' kamma. Such good kamma is believed to lead to a good future for Buddhists, in this life, the next life too, and ultimately in the realisation of the goal of Nibanna. The five precepts also relate to the Buddhas Noble Eightfold Pat. The Eightfold Path of 'right view/aim', 'right thought', 'right speech' etc. lead to the cessation of suffering. For a Buddhist, whether or not an ultimate God exists, it is believed that by performing 'kusala' or good 'kamma'/actions will produce 'kusala' of good 'vipakka'/fruit, in the future. I believe that if there is a God, he too would also would rejoice in this practice.

In conclusion, as a Buddhist Monk, I have some doubts and am unsure about whether praying to God is effective or sufficient in getting one to heaven . However as a Buddhist Monk, I have confidence that if one practices the eightfold path, this will lead to a good Kamma/Vipakka, and possibly ultimately to Nibanna . I have mentioned jokingly after a meditation practice to the class: those of you who are not reborn in heaven, please come to see me and let me know!!!

It is said in the four stages of enlightenment that in order to attain the first stage of enlightenment: Sottapanna or stream enterer. one must not attach to rites and rituals with the thought that practicing rights and rituals will have a result without any effort. The eightfold path is an active path "to be cultivated". It is a path of action and mindfulness which helps an individual to create and cultivate 'Kusala' or good Kamma for themselves. Neither prayer nor meditation by themselves, will deliver one to heaven or Nibanna. I believe that whether one is Christian or Buddhist, one must make an active effort to practice 'Kusala' or good actions in the world in order to attain the Kingdom of heaven or Nibanna.

III. Further Questions:

(i) What do you do when there are thoughts?

The goal of Meditation is not to stop thinking. In meditation, thought is the object of awareness. Thought should not be seen as a distraction, or something to get rid of. We let our thoughts come and go. We can then investigate or realise the true nature of our thoughts. We can then recognise the nature of change; and the inability to accept that change. We recognise the thinking mind, its thought processes and its habitual patterns. Thought may be experienced as a problem when one wishes to have concentrated or peaceful mind. However, thought is actually a helpful tool to gain insight into the nature of the mind. This is known as 'Vipassana' or Insight practice meditation.

Vipassana or insight meditation is to know the thought as an 'object' and fully realise its nature as: 'Anicca' (impermanent), "Dukkha": (unsatisfactory), and 'Anattha'; (non self). Insight meditation observes the arising and ceasing of thoughts, feelings, and sensations, from their origin, to their end, without any emotional engagement or grasping tendencies. A practitioner of Vipassana meditation is just aware of thoughts, feelings and sensations, and lets them be in accordance with their nature.

Dhamma.Digital

(ii) What is a purpose of meditation?

We are normally 'lost' in our thoughts. We are constantly wondering and engaging, and dwelling in the past. We are also constantly anticipating and expecting the future. The practice of meditation brings us into the present moment. It is to 'offer' a kindness to our heart and mind. It generates compassion for the heart and mind for its ignorance. It kindly offers you undivided kindness and compassion. When seeing such wandering and realising the wildness of the heart and mind, smile to it. Give it a big warm hug and take a deep breath to release it. Feel the freedom and relax!

(iii) What are the advantages of studying the teachings of the Buddha?

The Buddha's teaching is called the 'Dhamma'. Firstly the advantages of studying the Dhamma are to guide one to follow the 'eightfold' path. The 'eightfold path' leads to freedom or the cessation of suffering. Secondly, the teachings of the Buddha lead one to understand the universal truth of : impermanence. Finally the teachings of the Buddha help us to keep away from unwholesome or evil actions or Kamma.

21/7/16



20. Precious found a Monk on Train

*To understand all dimensions
of past existence,
to see accurately into all realms,
to reach the end of rebirths,
to know with insight
that which must be known,
to free the heart from ignorance -
this is the essence of great being.*

(423)

Everyone has experienced good and bad days. No one is fortunate to have only good luck in their life forever. It does not matter whether one has experienced good or bad luck in their life, it is a question of how one responds to favourable or unfavourable conditions. A clever person responds wisely and productively with whatever conditions arise.

This is a story of a lady whom I met on the train. She had been through many ups and down in her life. She, was probably in her 30's. As we talked, I got the impression that she was born in an average middle class family, however her childhood back ground appeared troubled. In spite of her bad childhood up bringing she worked hard for the better future. However, she felt that she had never found any success and had hoped that there was a light at the end of tunnel.

According to her story, she worked hard to get a good education, which she thought was a gate way to the success and a better life. While in her a last year of secondary school, she said that she "unfortunately, met a guy and felt that he was the one" who could provide her with emotional support and help her to achieve her dream. He was supportive and always there for her. In his presence, the future was bright and colourful. "Unfortunately", a word she used to describe her disappointment, she had to discontinue her study, which she

thought was a gate way to higher heights, but she felt that he was a gift for her from heaven. Nevertheless, with ups and downs they finally completed their school life and decided to move to new city hoping for better future. Both got a good job and were happy with a life. Little did they know that the fortunate situation would not last long and that her dream would just fall apart. He lost his job and is has been looking for a job for long time. However he could find no new Sign or hope of finding a job. They had to rely on her single income. Alas, she also lost her job a month later. Life was hard and events hit them badly one after another. They found it hard to meet their daily needs to survive. She said that those moments reminded her of her past upbringing and her past began to haunt her. Life hit the couple harder and harder. Neither of them could see any kind of recovery.

There is always day after night, and sunshine after rain. While searching for a new job, one afternoon, she came across a stanza of Buddha's teaching:

“You are your own master.

Learn to live mindfully and enjoy every moment”.

She said that it was the Buddha's light which saved her and encouraged her to fight for the future. She did give up and instead began to make the most of her life. She began to read about Buddhism and Buddhist meditation. She looked on line and she found, and began to practice breathing meditation every time she felt tired and stressed. She found that this helped her. She practiced breathing meditation and this helped her to realise that every job interview was just another door with a possible key to open, if it did not open then it was always possible to persevere and pursue to find another door.

She took every unsuccessful interview, as just another fail, rather than taking it personally. Finally, she got a minimum wage job. She believes that the Buddha helped

her to find that job. Importantly, she told herself: "it's not a permanent job, too, but I will do my best."

When she saw a Buddhist monk for the first time, she was 'over the moon'. She would have never dreamt of seeing a real Buddhist monk in her life because she was not be able to travel to the East. She wanted to touch me, hug me, and kiss me, like she had found long lost precious thing in her life. "Where are you from?" she asked.

"I am from Nepal." She was even more excited to hear that I was from Nepal. She had read life of the Buddha and remembered that the Buddha was born in Nepal. "It is a blessed country" she said with great respect. "You are a lucky person to be born in that country and become a monk. One day I wish to go and pay a visit to that country."

It is indeed a place that one who is practicing according to Buddha's teaching, should visit, and reflect on the Buddha's teachings, and their application to their daily life. I mentioned that the Buddha himself had stated that a devotee should visit the holy sites for spiritual progress. The four holy sites in Buddhism include the Buddha's birth place in Lumbini, Nepal; the place of the Buddha's Nibanna or enlightenment in Bodhigaya, India, the place where he gave his first sermon in Saranth, and place of the Buddhas final resting place or Parinibanna in Kusinagara.

At the end of our conversation, I blessed her and guided her to continue her Meditation practice. I suggested that living life mindfully and enjoying every moment is the key to long lasting happiness. Wisely reflecting on things and situations, and using them wisely and in a suitable manner also helps one to attain happiness.

We had very limited time as she had to leave the train. It was wonderful to meet with her and to listen to her story and success. It was also a joy to listen to her enthusiasm to learn and practice. We departed from each other without any asking for names or addresses. I later reflected that it

is not a name or identity, but the quality of those moments, that I would say is the precious memory.

It was a long train trip from Zurich, Switzerland to Graz, Austria, nevertheless, I felt joyous after the trip. I felt that it was meant to be, me being on this journey and meeting with her. Every little act of a helping mind, I am sure, helps to Heal deep wounds, pains and suffering of many.

Let be kind to one another.
May all beings be happy

*'Pleasure arises from
the timely company of friends.
pleasure arises from
having few needs.
pleasure arises from
accumulated virtue at life's end.
pleasure arises from
seeing beyond suffering.*

(331)

Dhamma.Digital

21. "Bistarain hun"

In memory of My Father

It was 22 December 2013. I woke up with a message that my father had left this human flesh in a hospital in Nepal. It was a moment of great sadness and great loss in my life. It has now been a year and half since that day. However, I still remember my Father's last smile when I saw him a few days earlier, in the Intensive Care Unit on the 19th of December 2013.

I did not expect my father to be in hospital when I decided to come to Nepal this time. Secretly, I had a surprise plan for him: to take him on an aero plane. I carefully planned since he expressed his desire to fly on flights few years ago. It was so funny to hear his innocent of flying. During our trip back from Lumbini on that year, he explained about toilet in the flight.

'is there a toilet in the flight?' said my father.

'yes! there is a small toilet', I replied.

'Oh! so if you go to release in a toilet, it will fall on other people on earth and they may think its rain', said my father and everyone laugh out loud. Having heard of his ignorance I planned to give him a gift but it was sad that he did not have chance to experience it.

As many realised that I am not a born Buddhist and it was not easy to be ordained without my parents' permission. Nevertheless, after almost of ten years of being a Buddhist monk, finally my father accepted me as a Buddhist monk. He gradually express his believe in Buddhism by requesting a Buddha statue to enshrined in the house, requested me to perform blessing chanting for family and began to visit Buddhist temple in different occasions. Last year, he expressed his desire to organised a special ceremony inviting venerable monks. He wanted to know how does it work. Therefore, I

also organised that ceremony 'Mahaparitran', a special ceremony of blessing chanting.

I was hoping for, and anticipating, my Father's return safely from hospital, so I could fulfil his dreams. On my first visit to the hospital, in the early morning, when my Father saw me, he smiled with fulfilment. His smiley face lit up and he was obviously cheered by my presence. His first sentence was: "you have done everything for me. I have nothing to worry (about)."

Although, we only had ten to fifteen minutes every now and then, in the I.C.U., we had wonderful conversations about his life and my life. We also discussed and planned flying and inviting monks to give blessings. On the 19th of December 2013, after I was with him all day, giving him a massage and a nail cut, I requested him to return home and come to see my sick Mother.

"Good," he said, "your mother is also very sick. She also needs a lot of support. Look after her well."

Who would have thought that that would be my last conversation with my Father, requesting me to look after his lifelong wife, our Mother. I left the I.C.U. and his last words were: "bistarain hun "; "have a safe journey."

I shook my head and left the room. Little did I know that it was my last conversation. He looked fine and able to speak with us with no difficulties. As a result, I had a full of faith that he will be back and able to organise the ceremony for him.

The next time I saw him, he had left the (his) body behind, (just a body), with no soul!

It was the most saddest day of my life. My mother was at home lying sick and my father had died in the hospital. I had a fear that my father's departure might shock my sick mother. Nevertheless, I had to tell her and ask her permission for further death rituals.

'Ma' if father dies, what would you want me to do? I carefully asked her. She cried out loud.

'I haven't seen him, Ma!', so don't cry.'

'whatever you think appropriate and best for your ba', said with great sadness.

After seen my father's body, we brought him to village crematorium and did everything in accordance with traditional ritual with leaving nothing. His last two wishes were still in my head bothering day and night. As a result, I organised both by inviting months to do the ritual in his name and visited varanasi, India.

I should express that 'being a Buddhist monk and knowing how to do meditation had helped me to deal with the situation more mindfully in a effective way. I was able to be mindful of all my emotions and feelings. Each time there were inner cries I was able to observe and acknowledge those feelings. It was not easy to be aware of it in such circumstances but I was able to be mindful and remained calm and peace until the end of all traditional rituals.

One of the hardest moments was when we planned for special chanting to fulfill his last wish by inviting few dozens of monks and nuns on his 45 days of death after all preparation completed, my mother went unconscious and had to admit her in the hospital late midnight. There were a lot of pressure to cancelled the event but in the middle of over 300 participants I remained calm and peace with a single minded to transfer merit to my father and wishing good-will to my mother. Throughout the day, I was mindful and meditated thought out and able to be mindful and composed until the fulfillment of the event.

In memory of My Mother

My mother, 78, had been fighting with C.O.P.D. illness for a couple of years. Two days ago doctors announced that

she was in the last stage of her illness and requested that everyone should be informed. I got this sad news from home at 05:30 on the 25 February 2014 (One year and two months after my Father had passed away). I made a quick decision, to return home and visit her, hoping that at the very least, that I could say a last goodbye to my Mother.

When I first left Aberdeen, I had (very little) hope that I would be able to see my Mother. However, my 'Dhamma Mother', Rudee, *assured me and* suggested that I should make a vow to see her, which I did on journey to Nepal, and worked.

I arrived on the 26th of February, late in the evening. I went directly from the airport, to see my Mother in Hospital. She was in one of the I.C.U. rooms, which has time of visiting and time limit of visit. Unfortunately, it was not visiting time when I arrived. In my desperate to see her, I requested for a special visit as I have travelled for miles crossing lands and seas. I was lucky, my request was granted.

There were many thoughts in my mind of fear and worries but intension to see her once was greater. With a puzzled mind, I entered the room. She was lying on bed looking at the door. Having seen me at the door, she smiled and tried to raise both her powerless hands towards me, just like a (in the same way a) baby wishes to hug their mother. I held her hands. I hugged her and assured her not to worry. Her that smile always fresh like she is with me at all the time even today. That vision shakes my heart and feeling of her love arouses.

"Don't worry, Ma! everything will be find," I said with very low voice.

Happy tears dropped from her and '*Mother Nature*' was able to began to start working. My mother softly spoke to me saying: "I told you not to worry about me. I am fine. when did you arrived? have you eaten anything?" My eyes were full of tears, but I maintained myself and tried to be calm and collected.

I replied: "yes, ma!, I just arrived. I have eaten on the flight".

She held my hands tightly and cried saying, 'I don't want to be here. I am fine. Take me home.'

'yes! let the doctors examine properly and we will go home soon', further I asked her: "do you have any fear ma?"

"No, I don't have any fear." She replied. She added: "don't you worry. Go and do your job. I am fine."

That's my Mother. I believe that a Mother's love for her children is 'Mother Nature' . What could I say to my Mother? I did not have any words. My heart cried out loudly. My eyes were full of tears. However, I observe my emotions and feelings and remained strong and composed, collected. I replied to my Mother: "yes, Mother. I am here to do my job."

My Mother was on very strong medication. It was a surprise to everyone that she was able to recognise and consciously respond to us (me). However, the beneficial effect of the medication itself, was decreasing.

The doctors said that they had been trying to gradually reduce the medication intake bringing my Mother back to a more normal and stable state of consciousness. However, unfortunately their attempts to reduce the medication intake successfully, seemed to fail. The alternative option, was to have a lung transplant. However, the age of my Mother, with her physical weakness, made a transplant impossible. In addition to this, this facility is not available in Nepal.

No one knew how long our mother needed to be in ICU and will be with us. There is a saying that: "as long as there is a breath, there is a hope of life." Every single breath of our mother was her life for us. Despite, I am living such a far distance, I was very lucky to see my Mother at that time, and to be able to give her my support. Over the next two weeks, I stayed with my Mother almost every day. Unfortunately, we were not formally allowed to visit all the time, only, at specified times. However, I managed to spend most days with

my Mother, and was able to comfort my Mother, almost every day.

Those days were one of the precious moments for everyone of us. I gave her massages, and instructed her meditation, with the help of the breath. I told her stories, reminding her of her good deeds. I constantly reminded my Mother about death and I was glad to know that she never feared of it. There were ups and downs with my Mother's condition. However, after two weeks in I.C.U., it was enough for her, and she peacefully left the world at 3:15 am.

It was 3 am on that early mother I was called to the room. She was not responding and her eyes were looking above. We were there trying to speak with her and trying to wake her up, but very sadly everything we tried failed. I hold her head and called her, ma! ma! but there was no response. The doctors and nurses checked all and declared her death and there was nothing we could do. She left this human world leaving us to walk our path alone.

I brought my chanting book and began to chant for my Mother on her death bed until everything was made ready for her departure from the hospital, to the cremation ground in the Village.

My message to you all is that if you still have your parents, go and talk to them. When they are gone it is too late to regret anything.

I had the privilege to help, and to look after my parents in different ways before they passed away, comforting, caring for and nursing. Yet all my memories are still as fresh as if it were just yesterday when I lost them. In the space of one year and two months I had lost both my parents. It is completely different when one loses their parents. Suddenly, I felt orphans at this age.

Therefore, I suggest that you do not only go and pay respect to your parents and loved ones, on their birthday, holidays, or as part of a traditional observance day. Visit your

parents as often as you can and give them your warmth, appreciation, love, and kindness, whenever you can. Visit your parents to say: how are you Father? How are you Mother? If your parents are ill, every little caring words of yours will comfort, reassure and make them feel appreciated. Many would happy to provide financial security for them but failure to mental comfort and letting them feel a sense of caring. It is not a financial security, although it is necessary, but mental caring that makes them feel special. Pay gratitude for what they have done for us from our birth.

Parents are the worlds' rare person that one could have. As a result, it is our duty as children to fulfill their wishes while they are alive and after their departure.

I.C.U. or Ice?

I was walking with an elderly lady in her sixties. She was with her Grandson.

The doctor said to the elderly lady: "he needs to be in I.C.U. for few days.

The elderly lady turned to me and asked: "is this the I.C.U.?"

"Yes! This is the I.C.U." I replied.

"Oh! I am surprised," said the elderly lady, "I didn't see any ice and I did not feel (any?) cold!"

*'pleasure arises from
rightly serving one's parents.
pleasure arises from
supporting renunciates.
pleasure arises from
honouring awakened beings.*

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22. What would you do if you will die tomorrow?

Once born to exist, it is subject to die. Death is a very scary subject no one likes to face it. One night a discussion after meditation carried over on to the death experience. It was fascinating. Different people have different explanations for death but certainly no one has experience itself. However, I had a glimpse experience few years ago, which I tried to explain the experience on that night. It made me more scary then before. As I was telling the story, I was shivering and feeling cold. Furthermore, I felt drained of blood and my whole body was shaking. I was struggling to talk about my experience. Often I felt run out of breath. Pretty often I was breathing hard to control myself.

When I was about 26 years, I was happened to see a fortune teller. Among her predictions, concerning my end of life or death was noticeable for about seven months before my birthday. Her prediction says that I may have to face with the death on my 27th birthday. Although, I didn't believe it, at first, as being a Buddhist monk and academic student but I was unable to resist having thoughts about it until continually. Psychologically it was affecting my mind significantly. That prediction was bugging my head and bubbling into my mind constantly. The closer the birthday came, that prediction hit louder and louder. It vibrates my heart rapidly and sense of fear arose in me. I believe that I did try to ignore or forget the idea and kept generating a thought that fortune telling is just another science that help us to understand our way of life. Possibilities of such predictions are very slim. Nevertheless, the idea nurtured stronger and clearer more until seven days before my birthday. Therefore, whether it would come to reality or fake I made my mind to tried my best to use all remaining time skillfully.

Every morning for seven days was remarkable, a moment of reflection and feeling a grateful of being alive. There was only a thought of leaving soon despite of occasional refuse. I was waking up every early morning, attending daily chanting and meditation. Rest of the day generating positive mind and kindness heart. There were sense of forgiveness and forgiving.

It was my birthday, after having a tasteless shower in the early morning I attended daily chanting and meditation with a thought of my last day. I was ever mindful and aware of my all actions and thoughts. Every action that took out was as a last one. I paid respect the Buddha and there was a lot of sense of appreciation and guidance. I went to paid homage and asked for forgiveness from Luangpor Sod, a famous meditation teacher, who was a previous abbot of the temple. Although, I was surrounded by couple of few people for rest of the day but I was already feeling as if I am already in another world.

Ten minutes Meditation after chanting in the shrine room, where I took my higher ordination, was very emotional and memorable to me. Silently, I asked forgiveness from myself and from people. I also forgive myself and other. On my return to room and closed the door as if it was last door. The day was dry and tasteless but cultivating mindfulness and full awareness of every activities. At dark, meditation was the last thing that I thought would welcome to the lord of death.

It was not easy to contemplate after realising such a short time you have left at such a young age. I was trying my best to recollect my merit. Further, there was a sense of appreciation that I was also trying to accumulate good deeds, which hopefully generate good fortune for next life.

We human always seek comfort by being close to with someone we trust when we have less choices to make. Although Buddha says that 'be your boss', or be a lamp for yourself' or be an island for yourself', as being a social being,

we tend to seek some sort of comfort. If I got it right two of my supporters were aware of my that day as it could be my last day. So, they rang me and reminded to be aware and not to be afraid to welcome death. Those words were really inspiring and encouraging me to not to afraid or regret any of the life. That was like a feeling of security in the midst of last breath. I had thought of death in my every single breath and being aware of it. I was alert and mindful of any time that could end my life. There were thoughts of letting it be and also anxious to know what will happen, how will it be to take new journey, how does it end etc. There were series of thoughts what if... where would I be? how will I die? who will inform my family? etc until 12 midnight.

A my mother told that I was born in 2nd portion of night, that could be my fortunate or unfortunate. It was 12.15 and realised I am still alive. I didn't die. There was a sense of relief and joy but I didn't stop being mindful and aware, I kept meditating until early morning. Finally, I felt completely relief and accepted as alive when I heard the regular morning monastic bell rang, there was as if I am just woken up from one existence to another planet. So I went to daily chanting and paid respect to the Buddha and Luang por. That experience was years ago and I did tell it few times in different occasions but never felt scary or uncomfortable to share it to other until tonight. It felt how hard it was to retold again.

A year ago, one of my English friend introduced a book called 'No death No' fear written by Thich Nath Hahn, one of the famous and outstanding Buddhist figure of today. He explained very beautifully in a simple word but very profoundly to understand what is death and what is fear. What are the differences death and birth etc. He started the book with very simply example of a flower in his Palm village garden. The flowers were blossom earlier than usual due to warm weather and sufficient climate but didn't last for long. One day he asked to the flower whether the flower is the same

flower or different? 'No I am neither the same nor the different but only blossom in sufficient and depending on suitable condition we are exist again', replied the flower.

Therefore, our life and death is, he suggests, like a game hide and seek. So, there is only the matter of fact that we can be seen with suitable condition and will be unseen due to broken condition. He further explains that death is breaking a condition of being exist. There is a death if the condition would still exist. The condition itself again came in exist because of the combination of condition. Death is nowhere to be feared or to be worried since there is no going and there is no coming.

Every act has its own place and one day you have to pay it back. This is a natural fact, unless you realised that there is something wrong and stop the action happening again. So, reduce if you have known wrong act and remove it gradually. When you have removed wrong acts from your hearts and minds generate good thoughts, good acts and good mind. Let it generate more and more that makes you free and release. Therefore, firstly give all negative actions away and discard them. Secondly, free yourself from bonds of akusala kamma (unwholesome actions) thought kind thoughts, kind actions and a kind mind. In this way one can gain freedom and complete release, detachment. The Lord Buddha says that this is the only way to achieve ultimate peace of Nibbana.

*'Let go of that which is in front,
let go of that which has already gone,
and let go of in-between.
with a heart that takes hold nowhere
you arrive at the place beyond all suffering.*

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23. Some of Reflections

Every becoming comes with sickness, changes, getting old and finally back to nature leaving this body to the earth. Yet we humans are fighting with material possessions and also mental grasping. Materials can be as little as mustard seed or a worth millions that one attached to, which has been one of the major causes of conflict; inner and outer, inside the family and with the society. It could be very little incident that took place that can be effected significantly or a cause of major problems; partner's lost or divorce or loved one departed that can cause long term unstable mental state. In two days, I came across with a stories from people visiting the centre for spiritual guidance. Every stories have caused significantly effect in their lives and way of living.

The first story is about a mother and her children. Jack was given a task to run family business but his mother hands over a business partly and refuses to give full control. It has caused significant conflict in their relation and within family. Jack demands complete freedom so he can go forward. He found helpless and caused stress. His mother thinks that Jack has very bad background and still has many problem. He is going through difficult life thus she did not want to give him full control hoping that family business can continue. Her control has caused him hot tempered and frustration. He wanted to deal with those emotions and frustrations.

It was difficult situation and I was not sure how to deal with it. Therefore, first exercise that I asked him to do was to notice breath and any chemical changes that takes place while he is getting angry. Learning to notice the breath at the beginning was not easy for him. Nevertheless, after few moments of trying to notice it helped him noticing feelings and reactions. At the end of the meditation session he expressed his appreciated for meditation guidance and help to notice those emotions. Unfortunately, he did not come back to

meditation again. I hope that short meditation helped him to overcome his difficulties or found the way to deal with it.

The second story is about a brother wants to sale property to invest on other business. A brother was given a business but his sister has been looking after the business most of her life. Now, he wants to sale the business. She is really upset of being relocated. Her brother forgotten family ties for money and does not care his family nor his sister. His sister mentally suffers greatly. All alone for decades she looked after the business. She knows inside out and wishes to be the first choice of buyer but it has also declined. She felt trapped and not knowing where to turn. She was depressed and eager to deal with it and live a happy life. She heard of the centre and was recommended to see me. So, she wanted to try mindfulness meditation at the centre. Learning to notice and letting go begins its own time has changed her significantly after few sessions of meditation.

Third, a lady was upset of her mother for years and never able to love deeply. She was kept thinking of an incident that greatly damaged their relation until now. The incident took many years but hold on to that memory. It does not mean she does not look after her mother. She takes care of her and fulfils all duties since she is getting old and physically weak. However, she never felt of loving thought or sense of warmness in that role.

She has been to psychiatrist for support and been to counselling sessions but never felt any help until she came to the centre and practiced loving kindness meditation. She was not that enthusiastic on Meditation but I noticed she was crying during practice of loving kindness. Later she expressed her relief. She said 'years of that mountain has been lifted. Thank you for your help.'

A man lost his mother in his early age and suffered depression for years. He was unable to sleep and constant in sadness. He feels though no feeling and numbness in his heart.

I can feel that numbness and feeling less days when I lost my father and mother. I could feel her pain. Therefore, I told him about my loose and bereavements. How difficult those days that I went through. I also told him that being mindful of our feeling of the body helped me a lot to realise and able to accept that loose. I told him that his mother would not be happy if she knows that he is in pain and suffering that much. Therefore, I request him to learn to connect with body. Feel the body inside out and feeling connected within own self. I realised after about 10 minutes of practice helped him to feel grounded and relaxed.

Each one of them that I spoke to and through the practice of meditation able to heal in certain stages as they realise and able to accept those situations. Almost all of them cried at the end of meditation and deeply felt relieved after such a long holding and mental suffering. According to their stories, some of them had gone to see psychiatrist for help but remain unsolved mystery but with mindfulness meditation they came across and able to heal their wounds. I feel very privileged to hear their stories and rejoice on their practice that help them to release and set free from those bindings into vicious cycle of suffering.

May all be happy and peace.

*gender and stories slightly changed for confidential issue.

By Ajahn Sujana

23/6/17

To achieve higher states of practice of meditation one has to fulfilled four conditions;

1. Having an experienced and competent teacher.
2. Practitioner listens attentively and carefully to the techniques and methods.
3. Practitioner honestly reports their practice; good and bad to the teacher.
4. Practitioner diligently practice with no faults in accordance with guidance. Do not pick and mix.

One says good other remains silent, former regards real practitioner



24. Varapunya Meditation Centre

The Varapunya Meditation Centre was set up as a place of learning and sharing personal experiences and understanding on Buddhism and practice of meditation. It is a small charitable Buddhist organisation, a pure intension to help people through meditation and teachings in accordance with Buddha's teachings. It was formally registered as a Scottish Charity in 2013 and was running at a ground floor flat providing all classes are free and everyone volunteers. The centre runs entirely on generous donations.

Since 2013, every members are working hard to help each other and also help people from all backgrounds; English, Scottish, EU & Asian migrants living in the Aberdeen City and Shire; particularly from Westhill, Drumoak, Banchory and Stonehaven. Significant number of people from all background living in the city and shire have benefited from the services that the centre provide. Similarly, the centre participated and worked along with other local organisations; Instant Neighbour (providing food), 50+event, Interfaith Group Aberdeen etc. Similarly, local people also have significantly benefited from the services at the centre.

Meditation is a skill to learn our own mind and dealing with it peacefully. It requires peaceful environment and away from city for the development of insight. Therefore, the centre began to plan to move away from city. That was the reason we choose to be in Westhill area, which appeared to be a centre for everyone and peaceful country side. Finally, the centre took ownership of Easter Mains Cottage on 3 August 2016 and gradually moved in to its new place.

The centre officially moved in on Saturday 3 September 2016 after House blessing chanting from venerable monks, which was attended by around 50 members from all background and nationalities. The centre also circulated notice

to neighbours on the day but only four neighbours turn up on our house blessing ceremony.

I, Venerable Sujano, personally born in Nepal but working with multi-nationals for over ten years in the UK. Although major supporters are Thai at the Varapunya Meditation Centre, majority of people who are benefited from the classes are from Western countries; Scottish, English and EU national respective in higher numbers. Having seen the benefit of our service, on behalf of the centre, I took an initiative step to take a private loan of £360,000 to buy this property with a pure intension to help people by providing meditation classes and retreats. Providing conducive and peaceful environment for quiet contemplation and retreat.

Therefore, on behalf of the centre I would like to invite everyone to be part of establishing a Buddhist centre in Aberdeen Scotland and contribute for the centre, its activities and support to continue its noble work for the better service of the community. The centre is here for you to heal your heart and your life. So, your every little support will help us to keep its works to help you. With your valuable supports, the centre able to make difference in the community and I look forward to your continued support.

Donation by Cheque payable to Varapunya Meditation Centre and send it to the centre's address or Donation through Banking: HSBC; Varapunya Meditation Centre: Sort Code: 40-01-25 Account No: 8139-2948

IBAN: GB05MIDL40012581392948

BIC: MIDLGB2115T

All services are again free of charge and open to all. Everyone volunteers with a intension of helping hands healing hearts.

Ways to support the Centre's activities

The Varapunya Meditation Centre provides all services free of charges. So, your any generous donation is essential part to carry out the service.

1. Any volunteer and financial support to run the centre and its activities

2. Offering necessities for the centre. Please call the centre for its requirements.

3. The centre welcome donation by cheque or Banking or direct debit/standing order for regular financial support.

Name: Varapunya Meditation Centre,

HSBC: S/C: 40-01-25, A/C: 8139-2948

(IBAN: GB05MIDL40012581392948 // BIC: MIDLGB2115T)

Things not to do while visiting centre

*Not pointing legs towards the Buddha it may be offensive to others

*Shoes are not permitted in the shrine room

*Unexposed and comfortable cloths are recommended.

Dhamma.Digital

For further information:

Varapunya Meditation Centre

Easter Mains Cottage

Kinmundy, near Westhill

Aberdeen, AB15 8RB, Scotland

www.varapunyabuddhistsociety.org

ขอเชิญร่วมบริจาคปัจจัย

สร้างวัดในต่างประเทศ

สำนักปฏิบัติธรรมวรปุญญะ



สำนักปฏิบัติธรรมวรปุญญะ ก่อตั้งขึ้นในปี พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๕ เพื่อเป็นศูนย์การศึกษาและปฏิบัติธรรมตามแนวพระพุทธศาสนาเถรวาท พร้อมเป็นที่ประกอบพิธีกรรมสำคัญทางศาสนา และเผยแพร่คำสั่งสอนของพระพุทธศาสนาในเมืองอเบอร์ดีน ประเทศสกอตแลนด์ เมื่อสมาชิกที่เข้ามาศึกษาและปฏิบัติธรรมเพิ่มขึ้น สถานที่ปัจจุบันที่เช่าอยู่นั้นคับแคบลง ไม่สะดวกต่อการปฏิบัติธรรม สถานที่เดิมจึงกรมแคบกับทั้งมีปัญหาที่จอดรถ จึงคิดหาทางที่จะขยายสถานที่อื่น

ในปี ค.ศ. ๒๐๑๖ ทางสำนักสงฆ์ได้พบบ้านพร้อมที่ดิน อิสเตอร์ เมนต์ คอตเทจ อยู่ในชนบท หมู่บ้าน เวสต์ฮิลล์ เป็นสถานที่ร่มรื่น สบายต่อการปฏิบัติ สงบ มีบริเวณกว้าง ไม่ห่างไกลจากหมู่บ้าน และมีรถเมล์มาถึงหมู่บ้านสะดวก เหมาะสมที่จะให้เป็นสำนักปฏิบัติธรรม พระสหธรรมิก และสมาชิกหลายท่าน ได้ไปดูสถานที่แล้วมีความเห็นร่วมกันว่า เหมาะสม และสะดวกต่อคนที่จะมาปฏิบัติธรรม จึงได้ตกลงซื้อบ้านพร้อมที่ดิน เพราะฉะนั้น สำนักสงฆ์ตัดสินใจเดินเรื่อง วางมัดจำ และเดินเรื่องยืมเงินกู้จากองค์กรอิสระ เพื่อซื้ออิสเตอร์ เมนต์

คอดเทจให้เป็นสำนักปฏิบัติธรรม โดยถูกต้อง วันที่ ๓ สิงหาคม ๒๕๕๘
ทางสำนักได้รับกรรมสิทธิ์เป็นเจ้าของบ้าน และที่ดิน พร้อมได้ย้ายเข้ามาอยู่

พันธะการเงิน

ในปี ๒๕๕๘ เดือนสิงหาคม สำนักสงฆ์ได้ซื้อบ้านพร้อมที่ดิน ในราคา
๓๖๐,๐๐๐ ปอนด์ (สามแสนหกหมื่นปอนด์) ๑๗ ล้านบาทในขณะนั้น
และจะขายคืนเป็น ระยะ ปัจจุบันยังไม่ได้ชำระหนี้สินทั้งหมด
จึงเจริญพรมมาเพื่อทราบและขอเชิญทุกท่านร่วมเป็นเจ้าของภาพบริจาคทรัพย์
สมทบสร้างสำนักปฏิบัติวิปัสสนากรรมฐาน ณ ประเทศสกอตแลนด์
ท่านผู้มีจิตศรัทธาสามารถบริจาคได้ตามกำลังศรัทธา บริจาคด้วยเช็คในนาม
Varapunya Meditation Centre แล้วส่งมาที่อยู่วัด หรือบริจาคผ่านธนาคาร
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ขอให้ทุกท่านและครอบครัวจงประสบแต่ความสุข
ความเจริญตลอดกาลเทอญ.

ของจงมีแต่ความสุขความเจริญ



พระสุชน สุขโน

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