

Venerable Dr. M. Punnaaji Maha Thera
26th Nov 1929 – 27th July 2018

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PHOTO NEWS - Kathina



*BMV Committee of Management wish to inform that
the Kathina ceremony this year will be held on the
4th of November 2018 @ 6.45am*



VENERABLE DR MADAWELA PUNNAJI MAHA THERA

26th November 1929 – 27th July 2018

*Aniccā Vata Sankhārā
Uppāda vaya dhamminō
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti
Tesam vūpa samō sukhō*

Impermanent alas are formations
Subject to rise and fall
Having arisen, they cease
Their subsiding is bliss

It was with deep sadness that the Maha Sangha and BMV Management and staff learnt of the sudden demise of Venerable Punnaaji or popularly known as Bhante Punnaaji on the morning of the 27th of July 2018. Venerable passed away in his sleep sometime after midnight while residing at the Nisala Arana International Meditation Centre and Monastery, Karauwa, Mollkawa, Sri Lanka after giving a sermon on 26th July afternoon. He would have turned 89 later this year.

Venerable Dato K Sri Dhammaratana Nayaka Maha Thera, Chief Abbot and Bro Sirisena Perera, President, represented the Buddhist Maha Vihara at the funeral which was held on 30th July at 1.00pm at the Vajiraramaya Temple, Primrose Road, Kandy. A small contingent of devotees from the Vihara attended the funeral as well and some stayed on till the 7-day memorial Dana. After the funeral service, Venerable's remains were donated to the Peradeniya University, Kandy at his request. In gratitude and honour of our departed teacher who had been sharing the Dhamma at the BMV since 2007, a memorial service was held on Friday, 3rd August followed by Sanghika Dana on Saturday, 4th August at the Buddhist Maha Vihara. Venerable Punnaaji leaves behind with us wonderful memories of his Dhamma talks, Meditation Retreats, Dhamma books and invigorating Dhamma discussions.

Our heartfelt condolences to Venerable Punnaaji's family. He will be dearly missed by the Buddhist community in Malaysia especially at the Buddhist Maha Vihara where he resided for the last 10 years. We are confident that Venerable Punnaaji will be reborn in a sublime abode, an environment where he will be able to purify the mind freeing it from all impurities. May his journey in Samsara be short and may he experience the bliss of Nibbana soonest. This is the fervent wish and hope of every one of us at BMV who had the pleasure of knowing the Most Venerable Dr Madawale Punnaaji Maha Thera.



Venerable Dhammaratana at the funeral in Kandy.

Lay Life

Ven. Dr. Madawela Punnaaji Maha Thero was born on 26th November 1929 as Pushpananda Wijayratna Madawela in Kurunegala district to M. R. Banda Madawela and Kav Amma Kumarihami. He had 2 older sisters and was the only son of a prosperous aristocratic family with close links to some of the well-known hill country peerage.

After completing his primary and secondary education in Kurunegala and Kandy, he entered medical college at Colombo University. Meanwhile, he improved his interest in music under the guidance of Sunil Shanta, a reputed musician in Sri Lanka.

Professional Career

After graduating with a medical degree, he rendered his service as a doctor in several government hospitals in Sri Lanka.

Monastic Life

To perfect his noble qualities and escape samsara, his mind did not remain attached to sensual pleasures. So that he could lead a solitary life dedicated to the Dhamma, he received his noble ordination under the Most Venerable Madihe Paññasiha, the late Maha Nayaka Thera of Vajirarama, Head of the Mihiripanne Dhammarakkhita Amarapura Nikaya and the Most Venerable Ampitiye Siri Rahula Maha Thero at the Bhikkhu Training Centre, Maharagama.



Maha Sangha and family members and BMV devotees transferring merits.

In 1969, he received his higher ordination under the same two Venerable monks. He was the first student to receive higher ordination under them.

Educational qualifications

During his 40 years in North America, Bhante Punnaaji continued researching the original teachings of the Buddha. During this period, he completed a Doctorate in Modern Psychology, in association with Boston and Harvard Universities. He also completed a second Doctorate in Western Philosophy and Comparative Religion.

He also expanded his knowledge by studying such subjects as science, Pāli, the Tripitaka, psychology and philosophy as well as developing his own meditation experience.

Noble Dhamma Missionary works

- 🕉 In 1971, Bhante Punnaaji was sent by his preceptor to the Washington Buddhist Vihara in America.
- 🕉 In 1977, Bhante founded the Triple Gem Society of Boston.
- 🕉 In 1981, he began teaching at the University of Vermont and also became the resident teacher at the Toronto Maha Vihara in Canada.
- 🕉 In 1992, Bhante assisted in establishing the West End Buddhist Monastery in Ontario, Canada.
- 🕉 In 1993, Bhante was invited by President Premadasa of Sri Lanka to establish the Mihindu Sarasaviya, a Buddhist Research Institute in Mihintale.
- 🕉 In 1997, Bhante served as a teacher of Buddhism at the FoKuan Shan Monastic University in Taiwan.
- 🕉 From 2007 till his passing, Bhante was based at the Buddhist Maha Vihara in Kuala Lumpur as a Resident Bhikkhu at the invitation of the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society, preaching the Dhamma, conducting short and long Meditation retreats as well as teaching Sutta classes, researching and writing several books and publications. Bhante also travelled within Malaysia as well as to Singapore, America, Canada, Australia and England.

Some of the tributes in memory of Venerable Punnaji

"Venerable Punnaji has been visiting many countries preaching and teaching the Dhamma. He was invited to Buddhist Maha Vihara, Malaysia and was convinced to stay to teach the Dhamma in 2007. Our Devotees were very fortunate to have him here for more than 10 years, writing books, conducting Meditation Retreats and preaching the Dhamma. A big loss to our Buddhist community here. Bhante will be greatly missed."

- Venerable Datuk K Sri Dhammaratana Nayaka Maha Thera, Chief Abbot, Buddhist Maha Vihara, Kuala Lumpur.

"The unconventional wisdom you gave us to revisit the teachings of the Buddha will remain with us for our lives and beyond. We are ever grateful to our great teacher. You will live in our hearts."

- Venerable S. Pamarathana Thera, Chief Abbot, Pittsburg Buddhist Vihara (Bhante Punnaji's facebook page)

"To commemorate the passing of the great Mahathera Bhante Madawela Punnaji, my ordination teacher. I shall not try to make words about it. Our meditation on the path to nibbana says all. Many beings have been freed from avoidable suffering by his inspiration, great example and noble blessings on us all. Innovator, great author, scholar, investigator into truth, expositor, wordsmith, public speaker. It was my humble privilege. My great friend."

- Bhante Rakkhita Thera, former student (Bhante Punnaji's facebook page)

"Admiring what he did towards peace and harmony in the world especially during his time here in America, we will be holding a memorial service to transfer merits. May the late Venerable Punnaji attain the ultimate bliss of Nibbana"

- Ven. M. Dhammasiri, Chief Abbot, Washington Buddhist Vihara (WBV facebook page)

"We would like to express our deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathies on the demise of the Late Ven Punnaji whom we highly respected for his great teachings and inspiring Dhamma talks to our devotees at Mahindrama Buddhist Temple. May he attain eternal bliss of Nibbana."

- Ven. E. Indaratana Maha Thera, Chief Abbot, Mahindrama Buddhist Temple, Penang. (whatsapp message)

"I remember attending his first dhamma talk in August 2007 and realised how Bhante reminded me of the late Chief Dhammananda in the manner he speaks and the way he delivers the Dhamma. After attending his second talk, I realised that this person had very special qualities and that I should learn the Dhamma from him. As a meditation teacher, Bhante was compassionate, patient and understanding with his yogis. I am sure with his level of practice and years of dedication to the Dhamma, Bhante will finally attain the most supreme bliss of Nibbana."

- Excerpt from Bro Vong Choon Choy's Eulogy given during a memorial service at BMV on 3rd August 2018

"Bhante Punnaji was like an elderly brother to me. He would always seek me out if he needed something personal or needed some food. He would also joke and say that since I had 3 grandsons, one should follow in his footsteps. I will miss Bhante dearly. May his journey in samsara be short and may he attain eternal bliss of Nibbana soonest."

- Auntie Rupa Peyadasa, Buddhist Maha Vihara.



Hearse bearing the remains of Bhante Punnaji leaving for the Hospital.

"I personally and all who knew him were saddened to hear of the passing of our Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji. He made a lasting impression on everyone he met. He certainly was not the average Sri Lankan Theravadan monk, who becomes a novice in his teens or pre-teens and then has his entire education and life dedicated towards practicing as a Buddhist monk, which he continued until his death at age 89, when he passed away with his mind and his voice as sharp and as clear as ever.

Bhante Punnaji was highly educated in both Western science and Buddhism. He was in fact a practicing physician for many years before deciding to dedicate himself to a life as a Buddhist monk. He became

one of the foremost meditation teachers in all of Buddhism. He was an iconoclast – indeed, many traditional Sri Lankan Buddhists and even Buddhist monks were sometime uncomfortable with his teachings -- but he backed up everything he said with his own experience and his research. He was totally dedicated to the truth, and he found that truth in Buddhism. He was quite taken with Western Psychology and the relationship between psychology and Buddhism was an ongoing theme for him. He wrote countless articles and books on these subjects while maintaining a steady schedule of meditation classes and retreats.

Bhante Punnaji traveled extensively until his last years, rarely staying in one place too long. Fortunately, one place he came back to time and again, starting from its founding in 1980, was Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara. He wrote many of his articles here with the assistance of some of our Western disciples. He conducted retreats, taught some yoga, and continued his own research throughout his life.

Yes, Bhante Punnaji was his own man: he wasn't afraid to express ideas that ran counter to traditional thinking, but it was always supported by his vast knowledge, and never did he do anything to bring

Buddhism or the Sangha into disrepute. While I personally did not always agree with his ideas, I realized the importance of the discussion he brought up. And there is no denying that many of the Western disciples as well as Asian Buddhists who practiced meditation with him felt he was the best meditation teacher they had ever encountered.

He left a fairly extensive body of writing, books and articles, which are timeless and which will be sure to influence future generations of meditators. Many will miss that twinkle in your eye. Thanks for all your years of service to Buddhism and to mankind."

Ven. Dr. Walpola Piyananda, Maha Nayaka Thera, Dharma Vijaya Vihara (DVV),
Los Angeles , California.
DVV facebook page



Seven Day Memorial Dana held at BMV.



Devotees came to honour Bhante Punnaji.



REMEMBERING BHANTE PUNNAJI

by Bro K Don Premaseri (Vice President of BMV)

(A brief summary of this write up was delivered at the Memorial Dana held at the Buddhist Maha Vihara (BMV) on 4 August 2018)



At the time of his death, Venerable Dr Punnaji Maha Thera or fondly known as Bhante Punnaji was 88 years old, 4 months short of attaining 89 years old in November. Bhante passed away in his sleep, after having delivered a good Dhamma talk in Sinhala on the Ariya Atthangika Magga (Sublime Eight-fold Way) in the evening at the Nisala Arana International Meditation Centre & Monastery in Sri Lanka.

Bhante elucidated the Dhamma clearly in this talk and smiled often throughout the talk in his usual happy feverish style of teaching the Dhamma passionately giving it all his energy, enthusiasm and confidence in his usual trademark way of delivering a talk. There were some parts of the talk which Bhante said he will elaborate further at the next talk. This was not to be. He left us in style, leaving all of us in disbelief and shock when we received news of his death.

I had received whatsapp messages from several friends who could not believe the news of Bhante's death and wondered if it was fake news. Some even got a bigger shock when I told them Bhante was 88 years old. That was even a bigger shock to them as they thought Bhante's age was in the late sixties as he did not look aged in the way he spoke and walked.

Many of us got to know Bhante in 2006 when Bhante delivered an amazing talk at the Memorial service of our late Venerable Chief, Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda Nayaka Maha Thera. We were glad and happy that our current Venerable Chief, Ven. Datuk K. Sri Dhammaratana Nayaka Maha Thera, several monks and the Committee of Management of the Buddhist Maha Vihara (BMV) managed to persuade Bhante to continue to reside at the BMV to share the Dhamma with the devotees. Bhante Punnaji considered it carefully given that he had a following of devotees in North America and also Sri Lanka who were also in need of Dhamma. Thankfully, Bhante decided to divide his time between all three places. Over time, he was giving talks in various places in Malaysia and Singapore too. Bhante had come to Malaysia earlier in the 1990s too and he had given talks at the Vihara. Some of Bhante's talks can be found in the cassette tape collection of the late Venerable Chief.

Bhante's trademark statement always was, **"Everything happens because of the presence of the necessary conditions"** which was essentially from the Paticca Samuppada and all his talks featured this same principle for a very good reason. He essentially stayed away

from the traditional way of relying on others' interpretations of the Dhamma or dependence on the Commentaries or sub-Commentaries. Bhante preferred to approach, read and teach from the Buddha Vacana in the Suttas directly. It was a paradigm shift to the interpretation of the Dhamma from his medical science, philosophy and world religions background. Bhante was a practising doctor before he became a monk and Bhante also had 2 PhDs in world religion and philosophy.

I must add here that the way Bhante taught the Dhamma was different and unacceptable to some who had been too used to the traditional interpretation of the Dhamma and terms. It caused confusion, but this is the acceptance part of the Dhamma in the spirit of **Ehipassiko-Come and See** and also the **Kalama Sutta** where we are encouraged to not blindly accept anything, to investigate. We can use different lenses to view the Dhamma, from a medical science perspective, from psychology perspective, from a religion perspective, a philosophy perspective, etc. Each of this perspective gives a different paradigm but it does not change the Dhamma. It is only that our view of the Dhamma differs from one another.

It was in this area, Bhante kept emphasising the need to go beyond belief to reach to the state of knowing. Many Suttas such as **Sabbasava Sutta** illustrated this important aspect of the Dhamma. It was Bhante's continuous emphasis of this practise of constant reading of the Suttas, contemplation, reflection of the Dhamma and meditation. This constant practise brings one to abandon beliefs to reach the state of knowing, the state of non agitation, the harmonious state of Nibbana. One lives and walks in Nibbanic bliss on Earth, unaffected by the world. There is nothing to belief anymore, because one now knows for sure if one is living the very state of Nibbana. He was the very epitome of what Nibbana is all about. He also reaches the state of Deathlessness and Immortality. When there is no death, there is no more rebirth to take place.

During one of Bhante's Dhamma talk in Sinhala on the Net, listened by many in various countries, a listener interrupted him saying what Bhante was preaching was all wrong and he wanted another Venerable to take over the Dhamma session and teach it properly. Bhante Punnaji stood his ground and asserted that he was invited to the session by the monks to teach, and he did not invite himself into it. Secondly, only he, would continue with the session and not anyone else, and only he would field the questions asked. Senior monks jumped in and reiterated that Bhante Punnaji was teaching at their invitation and they wanted Bhante to continue. If the listener was not happy, he was free to stay or leave the session but he should not continue to interrupt the session as many listeners want to listen to Bhante Punnaji. Bhante then continued his session uninterrupted.

During the last 12 years Bhante Punnaji conducted many Dhammadutta programmes at the BMV. Among them were Dhamma talks, Sutta classes, Novitiate Programs, Meditation Retreats, private Dhamma discussions, authoring books, etc. Bhante's books could be found in English, Sinhala, Marathi and Japanese. Many CDs and MP3 have been produced too while the Net is abundant with his writings and audio and video talks.



Bhante Punnaji's Meditation Retreat in session.

The production of Bhante's books and CDs in the last 12 years at BMV (60,000 copies), Mahindarama in Penang (27,000 copies) and Sugava Prakashan in India (20,000 copies) has been more than the rest of the period of his life. There are other publishers too, elsewhere in Malaysia and abroad, but on record this is what we have. Among the book titles are:

Ariya Magga Bhavana Level 1 – Selective Thinking

Ariya Magga Bhavana Level 2 – Tranquility of Mind

Ariya Magga Bhavana Level 3 – Awakening from the Dream of Existence

Return to Tranquility

Philosophy of Wesak

Beyond the Horizon

Among the books that were in the process of being published or still WIP (Work in Progress) because Bhante was still editing these titles are :-

Buddha – The Radical Shrink (Although the book was in its final editing stages, Bhante gave permission to publish it first in the BMV monthly Newsletter beginning from the February 2018 issue.

Becoming a Buddhist

What is this religion and Why?

Beyond the Threshold of Hope

Bhante had also clearly indicated that he had a few other articles he would like us to publish as free publications and he would give it to us periodically.

Indeed, the last 12 years has seen so much vigour, joy and happiness in Bhante in sharing the Dhamma. Allow me to literally phrase this in

Bhante's own words, "it was because of the presence of the necessary conditions". The continuous support from the Sangha and devotees from KL, elsewhere in Malaysia and abroad he received since coming to BMV, had been infectious. His publications and thoughts travelled far and wide and he became so happy to share the Dhamma. Many attended his sharing sessions, and many supported him in his various needs of getting books he liked to read and research, assisted him to attend to problems on the laptop and network outage, helped him through his medical conditions, etc. Never before had the support been this great, encouraging and contagious. Bhante derived great rejoice in this, to keep going at it with rejoice. I humbly salute all of you in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, North America, etc for giving him the best years of his life. Your enthusiasm made the big difference. I must admit on a personal note, this was the very same vigour our late Venerable Chief had too, that kept him going and going to teach and share because there was this great inner sense of fulfilment and happiness. He too passed away at the age of 88 years.

Bhante Punnnaji personally attended to his emails and it was amazing to see Bhante in his advanced age, to keep working on his books, authoring, editing, proof reading, etc. At times, this was the challenge. He kept revising a book several times to make it better, always highlighting in yellow or red what he had changed. We could not complain too much either because each time Bhante edited, the book just got better and better.

If there was a regret on our free publications front, it was the inability to get the book "Compendium of Buddhism" published. It had been 8 years in the making and we had kept encouraging Bhante to work on it. The chapters were ready, and the points in but needed to be elaborated. Some of the chapters - Buddhism as a Religion, Buddhism and Philosophy, Eschatology, Soteriology, Epistemology, etc. But this was not to be.

Bhante leaves behind with us the best 12 years of his life, filled with wonderful memories of his beautiful publications, invigorating talks and discussions and the humbling experience of a giant in Buddhist science, who just did not stop but kept going and living. Even in death, he keeps reminding us to keep reading the Suttas, to keep reflecting on it, to keep meditating to attain the state of Deathlessness and Immortality- Nibbana.



Some of Bhante Punnnaji's popular books.



Bhante Punnnaji during Wesak 2018.

Past Activities in July 2018

Esala Full Moon Day - 27th July

There was a good crowd that attended the Puja. Chief Reverend gave a short sermon on the significance of the Esala full moon day. He also announced the sad news of Venerable Punnaji's passing. President of BMV, Bro Sirisena Perera spoke on the funeral details. The Maha Sangha then recited the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta. Since it was also the start of the Rains Retreat or Vassa period, Bro Siri offered the traditional tray of betel leaves to Chief Reverend as well as a sheaf of betel leaves to each monk present to invite them to stay at the Vihara.



Bro Siri offering tray of betel leaves to Chief Reverend.

WW Chinese Medicine Qigong Class - 28th – 29th July

About 100 participants attended a basic WW Chinese Medicine Qigong class conducted by Sara Low Laoshi at the Wisma Dharma Chakra of Buddhists Maha Vihara on 28-29 July 2018 to learn this ancient Chinese body-mind practice over one and half days.

Qigong is a mind-body technique that incorporates gentle exercise, meditation, mind adjustment, and breath regulation. It is a traditional Chinese health and healing practice used for thousands of years. Follow up weekly practice was scheduled to start in August, and will continue every Saturday morning from 8:30am to 10:30am.

Despite the demanding program, most participants enjoyed themselves, and found time to network with old friends and new, during lunch and tea breaks, provided by the organising committee, supported by Buddhist Maha Vihara and a group of dedicated volunteers.

Report by Y P Chong



Participants listening to theory of qigong.



Practice what has been heard.



Qigong Class.



Group photo at the end of the 2 day workshop.

BISDS Choir- One Year On - 15th July 2018

Today was a typical Sunday School day. The BISDS Choir were in the midst of practising for the BISDS Sanghika Dana on the 5th August 2018. The kids were in high spirits and were looking forward to their upcoming performance. The room was filled with melodious music and the cacophony of voices from the children.

The other reason for the hustle and bustle is- we were celebrating the first year anniversary of the setting up of BISDS Choir. How time flies! It was like just yesterday when the few of us volunteered to set up the Choir under the instruction of our Principal.

Though we are still in our infancy, we are marching forward to greater heights. The children are still keen and enthusiastic. So are their supportive parents. As the saying goes, "The music lives on and so shall we." The BISDS Choir will be around to spread the cheers of the Dhamma.

By Teacher Chua G. K.



BISDS Annual Sanghika Dana 2018 - 5th August 2018

We were very honoured to have 42 Sangha members from various traditions, present at our BISDS Annual Sanghika Dana on Sunday 5 August 2018.

BISDS's Sanghika Dana is to inculcate and show to our BISDS students the act of generosity and giving. All students especially the youth and teens played an active role in this Sanghika Dana. This year, we used the opportunity to promote the 3 Rs: - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle as everyone brought our own cutlery, did our part and took our little steps in helping our Environment.

I would like to express my gratitude to all BISDS teachers, staff, parents and students as well as Buddhist Maha Vihara, Sis Yanna and her team. The Event would not have been successfully carried out without each and everyone's assistance, co-operation and participation.

Teacher Foong Ah Chee (Head of Project)





BUDDHA THE RADICAL SHRINK – Buddhist Psychotherapy (Part 8)

Buddha's idea of personalization

More than twenty-five centuries ago it was Siddhatta Gotama, the Buddha (the Awakened One), who discovered a different way of understanding and solving this same problem of low self-esteem or inferiority complex. He called this problem “*dukkha*,” which means, “pain,” or discomfort both physical and mental. He saw this as the “discomfort of being,” (*bhava dukkha*). The word “being” here refers to “being a self.” In other words, this “self-consciousness” or consciousness of being a “self” or having a “personality,” is the problem. We tend to personalize and identify ourselves not only with our body and mind, but also with things outside the body, such as our family, our culture, our nation, our job, our financial and social status, our educational qualifications, our achievements, and all such internal and external material and spiritual things that people normally identify with.



This identification is also called “personalization” (*upadana*) in Buddhism. It is through personalization that we acquire a “personal identity,” or “personality.” To “personalize” is to think and feel, “this is mine.” One tends to personalize the body by thinking, “this body is mine.” The body becomes a personal property. In the same way one personalizes sensations that arise and pass away in the body. One similarly personalizes perceptions, conceptions, emotions, actions, and consciousness itself, as “mine.” One personalizes, not only the body and the mental processes that continue inside the body; one even personalizes external objects, like one’s family members, one’s ancestry, one’s social status, one’s job, one’s income, one’s house, one’s car, one’s bank account, and many more such things. The sum total of all that has been personalized becomes one’s “self.” What has been personalized is what one identifies with, and calls “mine” or “myself.” Then one’s “identity” becomes what one identifies with or personalizes. In other words, the Buddha saw that personality is only a concept, a perspective, which results from personalization of perceived objects such as the body and the mind. It is accompanied by a mental image of how one sees oneself, and is therefore called the “self-image.”

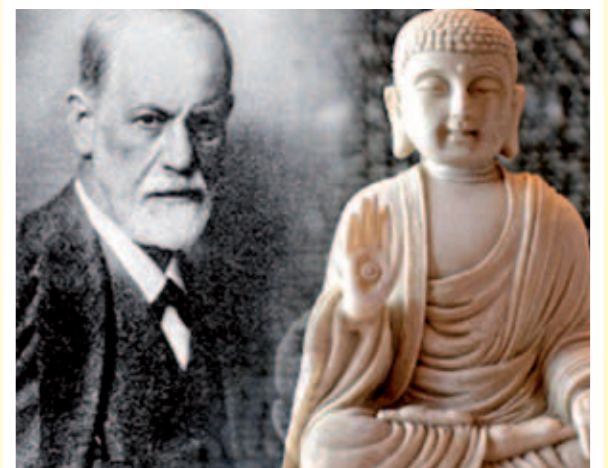
Having “personalized” things and having thus created a “self-image,” or personality perspective (*sakkayaditthi*), one then begins to compare these “personalized objects” (*upadhi*) with those of others. In other

words, having identified one’s “self” this way, one begins to compare oneself with other selves (*mana*). Not only does one compare one’s body or mind with that of another, one even compares one’s social or economic status, one’s house, one’s car or any other personalized property. By comparing this way, one begins to feel inferior (*hina mana*), superior (*seyya mana*) or equal (*sadisi mana*). This is how the problem of self-esteem begins. Personalization results in a personality, which is seen as one’s “self,” and this self-consciousness leads to comparison with other such selves, resulting in the low “self-esteem,” “inferiority complex,” and the whole host of psychological problems described above. They are all the consequence of personalization and the formation of the notion of “self.” The painful experiences recounted above are all the result of this personalization. It may be true that out of all the animals in the world, the human being is the only animal that is aware of a “self.” This does not, however, mean that this “self-consciousness” has to be preserved despite its painful consequences.

Personality perspective

As mentioned above, the Buddha saw this “personal identity” as a psychopathological burden that we carry throughout life. This “personality perspective” (*sakkaya ditthi*) was seen to be pathological and unhealthy because it is productive of pain and suffering to oneself as well as to others. It is this “personality perspective” that is responsible for the “identity crisis” described by Erik Erikson. This “identity crisis” is what the Buddha called “indecision” (*vicikiccha*), which is the inability to decide what one should identify with. “Uncertainties” like “Who am I now?” “Who was I in the past?” and “What will I be in the future” can arise only if one is conscious of a “self.” This “uncertainty” is also the inability to decide whether to take sides with our personalised emotional impulses (*asava*) and become pleasure seekers (*kamasukhallikanuyoga*), or to take sides with our personalised conscience (*hiri ottappa*) and become ascetics (*attakilamatanuyoga*). But asceticism is not better than pleasure seeking. The Buddha saw that asceticism is based on mere suppressive, self-denying vows (*silabbata*) that split the personality and create conflict within. The person who is free from the “personality perspective” is free from uncertainty and self-denying vows. Such individuals are able to successfully eliminate an emotional impulse, because they do not give it power by personalising it. They do not see the impulse as a part of themselves, and therefore can easily let it go.

The solution to the problem of self-esteem, which the Buddha offers, is simple. It is to attack the problem at its root. It is to give up personalising and the measuring. In other words, we have to depersonalise what has been personalised. This is something that people generally hesitate to do. They hate to lose their “self” however unpleasant it may be. To lose the “self,” they feel, is to lose their very “being” or “existence.” They do not realize that their



Sigmund Freud.

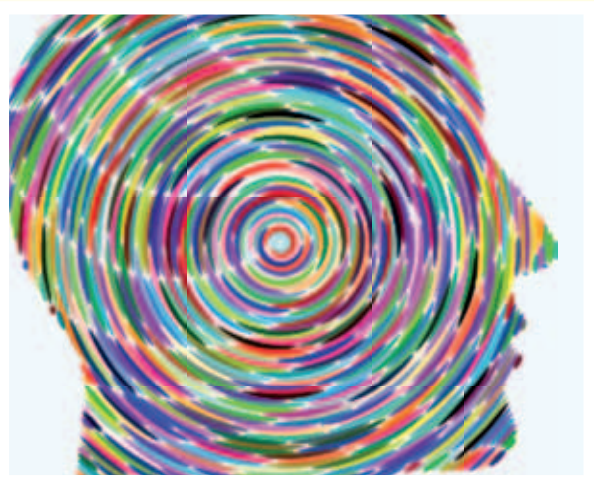
notions of “self,” “being,” “existence,” and “identity” are only pathological concepts, which they have acquired through the personalization of perceived objects. Because we do not generally meet people who have consciously rooted out their “self identity” we think it is abnormal to be without such a “self identity.” The absence of a “self identity,” does not reify a person or turn a person into a “thing,” such as a robot. It only turns a selfish, frightened, defensive, and unhappy person into an unselfish, fearless, cooperative, kind, and happy one. It leads a self-centred person to become interested in the welfare of others, to see that another’s pain is as important as one’s own. Such a selfless individual does not make a distinction between one-self and others, because to do so is not only to be egoistic and self-centred, but also to be egotistic and selfish.

In Buddhism this conscious removal of the “self identity” is regarded as a hallowed, extraordinary, “supernormal” (*ariya*) condition, which is a superior state of mental health. Because this is not the ordinary human state, it is also seen as a “superhuman” (*uttarimanussa*), transcendent (*lokuttara*), and divine (*brahma*) state. This absence of the notion of “self” is not merely a peculiar Buddhist concept, even Jesus seems to refer to it in the Christian Gospels: “He who loses his self for my sake shall find it” (Mat. 10:39). This concept is also found in Hinduism where enlightenment is seen as the loss of the “individual self” when it merges with the “Universal Self” of God (*Brahma*). This is also the common mystical experience of “at-one-ment” in all theistic religions, where the soul unites with God. If the individual soul unites with the universal soul of God, the individual soul cannot remain separate, just as when a river enters the ocean, it cannot remain as a separate entity.

Depersonalization disorder

Although, according to ancient religious thinking, depersonalisation is seen as a healthy activity that transforms a person from a normal to a supernormal state, I am aware that this idea is seen in modern psychiatry as a pathological condition. According to the *Dictionary of Psychology* by Arthur S. Reber (Penguin Books), this term “depersonalisation” represents an emotional disorder in which there is loss of contact with one’s personal reality, a *derealization* accompanied by feelings of strangeness and an unreality of experience. In severe cases, parts of one’s body feel alien or altered in size and one may have the experience of perceiving oneself from a distance. This condition is called *depersonalization disorder* or *depersonalization neurosis*. The conscious depersonalisation of personality by the Buddhist can easily be confused with the pathological condition mentioned above, although it is quite distinct from the pathological condition in several ways.

This confusion seems to arise due to a staunch belief of the neo-Freudians, in a personal ego. It was Paul Schilder (1886-1940) and Paul Federn (1872 - 1950), both Freudians who described the *ego* as the “omnipresent component of consciousness.” Paul Schilder identified the *ego* not only as the “thinker” as Decarte did, but also as the feeler, perceiver and actor. “The *ego* thinks, feels, perceives, has a past and present... every experience presupposes an *ego*.” (Schlder, P. *Medical Psychology*, pp 290-300, 1953). Paul Federn spoke of a “sense of *ego*” not as something that is perceived specifically but as something that one is generally aware



of continuously. Edoardo Weis writing about Federn says, “The sense of *ego* which is omnipresent, is not ordinarily recognized. Yet, variations in intensity of *ego* feeling are a matter of common experience. When tired or drowsy, we feel numb; upon waking from a refreshing sleep, or upon receiving exciting news, we feel an invigorated “sense of *ego*”. Federn spoke of an “*ego* cathexis.” This fluctuation of the “sense of *ego*” was explained by means of his theory of “libido cathexis,” or emotional investment. What it means is that if the *ego* becomes emotionally interested in an object, there is the experience of the “sense of *ego*.” When the *ego* withdraws its interest, the object appears strange. The feeling of depersonalisation, which is described as the “loss of the sense of reality of one’s self,” is understood to be a similar estrangement, similar to inadequate investment of libido either in the body or in the mind, and can be caused by different emotional reasons.”

We do concede that there can be pathological cases of depersonalisation resulting from what the Buddha called “the urge to get rid of existence” (*vibhava tanha*), which is based on a dislike for what exists. These pathological cases of depersonalisation are in fact “unconscious” processes. What we are referring to here is a “conscious” process of depersonalisation based on a full awareness of reality. This conscious depersonalisation is something practiced not only in Buddhism, but also in other religions like Hinduism and even in Christianity as mentioned before. There is, however, a difference in the degree of depersonalisation in the different religions. In Hinduism and Christianity, there is always a subtle “self” that remains, which is called “soul” or “atman.” But in Buddhism, there is a radical depersonalisation where nothing remains to identify as a “self.”



Alfred Adler.

It is interesting to notice, however, that the pathological case of depersonalising as described by Federn involves the withdrawal of libido cathexis from the object, though unconsciously done by the patient. The Buddhist practice of conscious depersonalisation is quite similar to the above in that it could be seen as a withdrawal of libido cathexis, but this is done consciously. Further, this pathological depersonalisation is not a complete depersonalisation. It is a partial depersonalisation where the *ego* remains as the subject while the object alone is depersonalised. Edoardo Weiss says on this subject, “The *ego* may react to an external situation presenting a conflict, by withdrawing itself from the sense organs, thus causing the outer world to be unreal; it may withdraw itself similarly from a body organ, which has become the source of unpleasant sensations, or from some objectionable wish or affect. (Weir, E. *The Principles of Psychodynamics*. NY. Grune and Stratton, 1950).

Complete depersonalization

It is clear that this unconscious partial depersonalization is the reason for the complaint and the suffering in the pathological condition, as Reber described in his *Dictionary of Psychology*, “feelings of strangeness and unreality of experience. In severe cases, parts of **one’s body** feel alien or altered in size and **one** may have the experience of perceiving **oneself** from a distance.” (*The **Bolds** are mine, in order to draw attention to the **personalized** subject, and the **depersonalized** object*). Complete depersonalization consciously executed results in freedom from worry and fear because such depersonalization frees one from the “notion of self,” which is responsible for all worries and fears. The self-centered

mind is always unhappy while the selfless mind is always happy. It is because people prefer to hold on to the “personality perspective” rather than let it go, that they continue to suffer from personality disorders. The few individuals who learn to consciously let go of the “self consciousness” gain freedom from mental sickness and suffering.

Although letting go of the “self identity” sounds like an impossible or at least a very difficult task, it can be achieved. The Buddha did it, and so did all his enlightened disciples. It is what all Buddhists attempt to do in their practice. It involves a sacrifice of what one cherishes most, the feeling of “being.” The people who feel their “self” crushed or rejected are the people who hesitate most to let go, they hang on to their “self” and are very defensive. Yet their freedom lies only in letting go of this false “self.” This “self” has to be seen as a burden that we are carrying all the time. Freedom is found by letting go of the burden. In Buddhism, this letting go of the “self” is called “laying down the burden.” Probably this was what Jesus meant when he said, “Come unto me those who are heavy laden, and I shall give you rest.”

The Buddha not only saw that this “self identity” has to be eradicated from our thoughts, feelings and behaviour, but he also discovered the technique of doing so. This technique is what He taught as the Supernormal Eight-fold Way (*ariya atthangika magga*), the eight constituents of which are as follows:

1. Harmonious perspective
2. Harmonious orientation
3. Harmonious speech

4. Harmonious action
5. Harmonious life style
6. Harmonious practice
7. Harmonious attention
8. Harmonious equilibrium

This technique begins with the Harmonious Perspective, which is a perspective free of self-centred or selfish thinking, where self-consciousness disappears, because it is not supported by self-centred emotions. Such a mind is calm and tranquil, free of conflict both internal and external. It is also kind and compassionate, thinking of “all” instead of “I” and “you.” This is a paradigm shift within a person, which brings about peace and harmony within and without.

Look out for the conclusion and final Part(9) in the October Newsletter

About the Writer

The late Venerable Dr Madawale Punnaaji Maha Thera was a senior resident monk at BMV since 2007. Venerable was from Sri Lanka and was a scholar of the Pali Canon and had done extensive studies in science, medicine and western psychology. Venerable spent more than fifty years making an in-depth intensive study of both the theory as well as the practice of Buddhism. He was a researcher of the original teachings of the Buddha, and served in North America as a Teacher of Buddhism and a Meditation Master, for nearly 40 years. Venerable Punnaaji passed away peacefully in his sleep in Sri Lanka on the 27th of July 2018 at the age of 88.

APPRECIATION-

LATE VENERABLE DR. MADAWALA PUNNAJI THERO



An outstanding monk who enriched the Vajirarama lineage
Ven Dr. Punnaaji of Madawala
Remembered for exceptional service rendered to Sasana
Ending his great Dhamma Mission has passed away.
Venerable Punnaaji lives forever, revered in our grateful hearts.

Expecting no laurels, no popularity, nor fame
Using the practice of deep meditation
Striving incessantly to dispel the darkness of ignorance
A true son of Buddha was he..

Researching the timeless message of Buddha
With deep understanding selflessly shared
The knowledge and wisdom gathered over the years
With thirsty minds eager to learn the Dhamma..

Forsaking comforts, luxuries of a household life..
Inconvenience of his own health,
An inspiration to both young and old
Of how a virtuous monk should live.

Compassionate, joyful always a pleasure to behold and listen to,
Simple austere life of humility, though born to wealth and nobility,
The noble Eightfold Path, his watchword in life.

On this seventh day of Ven Dr Punnaaji's passing away
These words are a tribute, an honour
To the illustrious name carved for himself
An erudite scholar, a disciple worthy emulate.



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*Thirikunamale Ananda Mahanayake Thero
Siri Vajiraramaya, Bambalapitiya.*



PEN PORTRAITS

– Portraits of 93 Eminent Disciples of the Buddha

No. 21 Ratthapāla Maha Thera

Ratthapāla was born in a place called Tulla Kotthita in the country of Kurus. Buddha visited this locality and was received with acclamation by the people. Ratthapāla was the only son and heir of a very wealthy family, upon which even the ruler depends in times of financial stringency. One day, after listening to a Discourse of the Buddha, he asked for ordination. But he was told by the Buddha that he should obtain the consent of the parents as he was a minor.

His parents were against the ordination as he was the sole heir of the family. They pleaded that he could become a very pious young man and use his wealth to advantage. But Ratthapāla was adamant. He had strong faith in his ordination. He fasted to obtain the consent of his parents. The parents became alarmed as the seventh day was reached and implored his friends to save him. As last his friends suggested that they give consent for his ordination. The parents, fearing for his life, relented and Ratthapāla realised his wish.

Nevertheless it is said that he took 12 years to become an Arahant. The Buddha forbade Ratthapāla from visiting his parents during his probation. When he finally did, upon arrival at his parents' home, the embittered father who greatly disliked Bhikkhus, was shaving at the dressing table in the veranda and bluntly abused the visitor. He never paused to consider that the Bhikkhu might well be his own son as those who are prejudiced are blind. So Venerable Ratthapāla on going out saw the servant-maid, who was going to empty some stale food in the dustbin. Venerable Ratthapāla requested her to put the food in his bowl. Thus he broke no Vinaya rules. As soon as the maid recognised his voice, hands and feet, she lost no time informing the parents. They could not believe their eyes. When Venerable Ratthapāla was asked why he did not enter his own house, the reply was that a Bhikkhu had no house of his own and instead of alms, he received abuse.

So the giving of alms was put off for the next day. To atone for his fault, the father prepared a grand show. It was a vain bid, for Venerable Ratthapāla was an Arahant. It was merely temptation of spirit. Ratthapāla said on seeing piles of gold, that wealth, instead of being hoarded should be cast to the river, as it was a source of sorrow. To the women who were his former sweethearts, he addressed them as "sisters". The father was determined to detain Venerable Ratthapāla, even against his wish. But the Maha Arahant by means of psychic power, escaped. Later, he went to the King's park. The royal gardener who was expecting the King on tour, recognised him and informed the King. The King who was called Dananda Korauwa, went to him. He too had heard of the renunciation of Venerable Ratthapāla at the age of 18 years.



Ven Ratthapala verbally abused when he came to visit his parents' house.

The Venerable said that for four reasons, people renounced the world namely – (1) Old age and death (2) Illness (3) Isolation at death (4) Limitless greed

Each of the above, Venerable Ratthapāla explained to the King.

Regarding the first, Venerable Ratthapāla explained to the King that at the age of twenty, the King was physically very powerful in the arts and sciences of war. Today, at the age of 80 years, he was weak and weary and not very steady in his gait.

Regarding the second, the Venerable Ratthapāla said that if the King had any sickness or any disability, he cannot part with it.

Regarding the third, Venerable Ratthapāla said that the various treasures the King had, would be left behind without any exception, on death.

Illustrating the fourth, the King was asked what his reaction would be, if he found a neighbouring kingdom weak. The King replied that he would seize it. Further, if he found or liked a kingdom beyond the shores, the King replied that he would seize that too. There was no limit to one's greed.

Moralising further Venerable Ratthapāla declared:-

1. *There were people blinded with ignorance of amassing wealth but would give it to none, instead, would pine for more*
2. *There were Kings who, however extensive were their Kingdoms, were anxious to own more.*
3. *People and rulers alike, motivated by greed, multiplied their possessions. There was no satisfaction. Yet, upon death, they leave their treasures behind.*
4. *There was none among the relatives or friends who could save a person from dying.*
5. *The living gladly receive the possessions of the dead distributed among them while the dead were confined to the grave or funeral pyre and they secure a rebirth to suit their good or bad kamma. They reap what they sow.*
6. *Neither old age nor death could be avoided.*
7. *Death was most democratic. Death was the great leveller whether high or low, rich or poor. The foolish tremble with fear, while the wise face death calmly.*
8. *Those who realised Nibbana were utterly free. Others, in life after life, would roam incessantly exposed to all the hazards that flesh is heir to.*
9. *The ignorant follow in the wake of people who take sorrowful rebirth. There was no end.*
10. *As in ancient days, punishment was meted out to the burglar on the spot. So the guilty, upon the next birth would face punishment.*

Thus Venerable Ratthapāla summed up his sermon.

The Buddha addressing the monks said that among his Maha Arahants, Ratthapāla was outstanding for having renounced the world by reason of faith (saddha)

*The youth and wealth may be sung,
He gave up the worldly laughter;
The consent of the parents he wrung,
To gain the bliss he was after.*



Ven Ratthapala giving a sermon to the King.

LEND A HAND

The Buddhist Maha Vihara “Lend A Hand” programme is to support the undertaking of a number of crucial projects that are needed for continuous maintenance and upgrading for the benefit of all devotees. We appeal to your kind generosity to help us realize the following:

- Shrine Hall External Painting (Heritage Refurbishment)
- Est : RM120,000 balance (from RM150,000)
- Shrine Hall Lights
- Outside - Est : RM 40,000
- Inside - Est : RM 7,000 balance (from RM8,000)



- Replacing the 56 Buddha Statues’ Huts with stainless steel panels/tampered glass
- Est : RM23,800 balance (from RM24,800)



- Vehicle for Transport
- Est : RM80,000



- Commercial Four-Door Refrigerator
- Est : RM5,000



BISDS BUILDING

BUDDHA FRIEZE FOR SPONSORSHIP



- Seated Buddha Frieze
- RM18,000 each
- 54 statues left to be sponsored

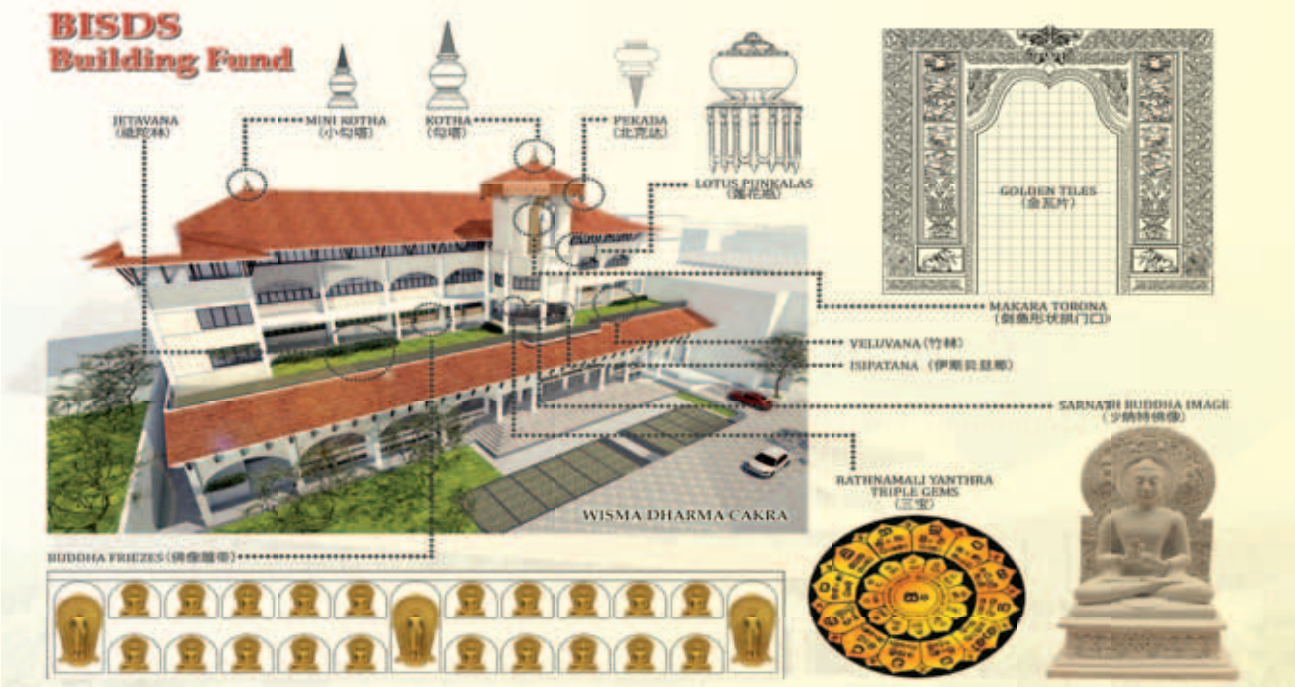


- Standing Buddha Frieze
- RM38,000 each
- 4 statues left to be sponsored

INSTALLATION OF RATNAMALI YANTRA AT MEDITATION PAVILION



THE BEAUTIFUL AND CAPTIVATING SARNATH BUDDHA IMAGE



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THERAVADA AND MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

by the late Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula

Let us discuss a question often asked by many people: What is the difference between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism? To see things in their proper perspective, let us turn to the history of Buddhism and trace the emergence and development of Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism.

The Buddha was born in the 6th Century B.C. After attaining Enlightenment at the age of 35 until his Mahaparinibbana at the age of 80, he spent his life preaching and teaching. He was certainly one of the most energetic man who ever lived: for forty-five years he taught and preached day and night, sleeping for only about 2 hours a day.

The Buddha spoke to all kinds of people: kings and princes, Brahmins, farmers, beggars, learned men and ordinary people. His teachings were tailored to the experiences, levels of understanding and mental capacity of his audience. What he taught was called Buddha Vacana, i.e. word of the Buddha. There was nothing called Theravada or Mahayana at that time.

After establishing the Order of monks and nuns, the Buddha laid down certain disciplinary rules called the Vinaya for the guidance of the Order. The rest of his teachings were called the Dhamma which included his discourses, sermons to monks, nuns and lay people.

The First Council

Three months after the Buddha's Mahaparinibbana, his immediate disciples convened a council at Rajagaha. Maha Kassapa, the most respected and elderly monk, presided at the Council. Two very important personalities who specialised in the two different areas - the Dhamma and the Vinaya - were present. One was Ananda, the closest constant companion and disciple of the Buddha for 25 years. Endowed with a remarkable memory, Ananda was able to recite what was spoken by the Buddha. The other personality was Upali who remembered all the Vinaya rules.

Only these two sections - the Dhamma and the Vinaya - were recited at the First Council. Though there were no differences of opinion on the Dhamma (no mention of the Abhidhamma) there was some discussion about the Vinaya rules. Before the Buddha's Parinibbana, he had told Ananda that if the Sangha wished to amend or modify some minor rules, they could do so. But on that occasion Ananda was so overpowered with

grief because the Buddha was about to die that it did not occur to him to ask the Master what the minor rules were. As the members of the Council were unable to agree as to what constituted the minor rules, Maha Kassapa finally ruled that no disciplinary rule laid down by the Buddha should be changed, and no new ones should be introduced. No intrinsic reason was given. Maha Kassapa did say one thing, however: "If we changed the rules, people will say that Ven. Gotama's disciples changed the rules even before his funeral fire has ceased burning."

At the Council, the Dhamma was divided into various parts and each part was assigned to an Elder and his pupils to commit to memory. The Dhamma was then passed on from teacher to pupil orally. The Dhamma was recited daily by groups of people who often cross check with each other to ensure that no omissions or additions were made. Historians agree that the oral tradition is more reliable than a report written by one person from his memory several years after the event.



Different robes for Mahayana and Theravada.

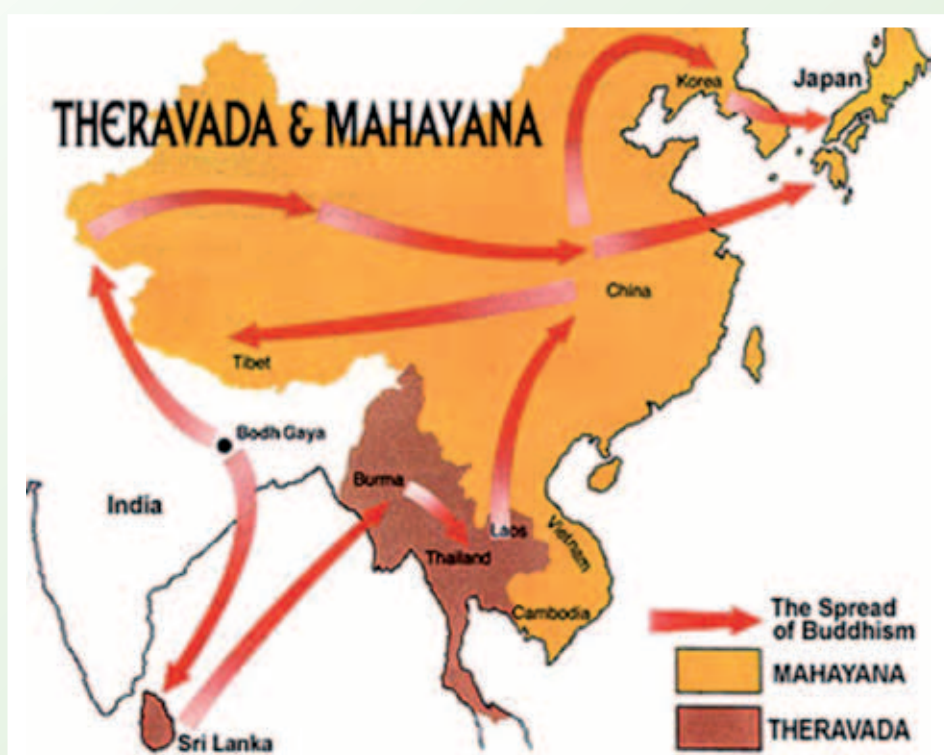
The Second Council

One hundred years later, the Second Council was held to discuss some Vinaya rules. There was no need to change the rules three months after the Parinibbana of the Buddha because little or no political, economic or social changes took place during that short interval. But 100 years later, some monks saw the need to change certain minor rules. The orthodox monks said that nothing should be changed while the others insisted on modifying some rules. Finally, a group of monks left the Council and formed the Mahasanghika - the Great Community. Even though it was called the Mahasanghika, it was not known as Mahayana. And in the Second Council, only matters pertaining to the Vinaya were discussed and no controversy about the Dhamma is reported,

The Third Council

In the 3rd Century B.C. during the time of Emperor Asoka, the Third Council was held to discuss the differences of opinion among the bhikkhus of different sects. At this Council the differences were not confined to the Vinaya but were also connected with the Dhamma. At the end of this Council, the President of the Council, Moggaliputta Tissa, compiled a book called the Kathavatthu refuting the heretical, false views and theories held by some sects. The teaching approved and accepted by this Council was known as Theravada. The Abhidhamma Pitaka was included at this Council.

After the Third Council, Asoka's son, Ven. Mahinda, brought the Tripitaka to Sri Lanka, along with the commentaries that were recited at the Third Council. The texts brought to Sri Lanka were preserved



Spread of Buddhism of Theravada and Mahayana traditions.

until today without losing a page. The texts were written in Pali which was based on the Magadhi language spoken by the Buddha. There was nothing known as Mahayana at that time.

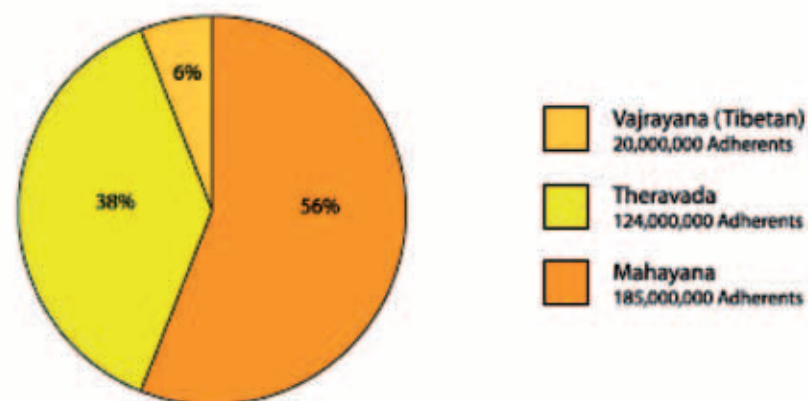
Coming of Mahayana

Between the 1st Century B.C. to the 1st Century A.D., the two terms Mahayana and Hinayana appeared in the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra or the Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law.

About the 2nd Century A.D. Mahayana became clearly defined. Nagarjuna developed the Mahayana philosophy of Sunyata and proved that everything is Void in a small text called Madhyamika-karika. About the 4th Century, there were Asanga and Vasubandhu who wrote enormous amount of works on Mahayana. After the 1st Century AD., the Mahayanists took a definite stand and only then the terms of Mahayana and Hinayana were introduced.

We must not confuse Hinayana with Theravada because the terms are not synonymous. Theravada Buddhism went to Sri Lanka during the 3rd Century B.C. when there was no Mahayana at all. Hinayana sects developed in India and had an existence independent from the form of Buddhism existing in Sri Lanka. Today there is no Hinayana sect in existence anywhere in the world. Therefore, in 1950 the World Fellowship of Buddhists inaugurated in Colombo unanimously decided that the term Hinayana should be dropped when referring to Buddhism existing today in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, etc. This is the brief history of Theravada, Mahayana and Hinayana.

Statistics on the Major Branches of Buddhism



Mahayana and Theravada

Now, what is the difference between Mahayana and Theravada?

I have studied Mahayana for many years and the more I study it, the more I find there is hardly any difference between Theravada and Mahayana with regard to the fundamental teachings.

- Both accept Sakyamuni Buddha as the Teacher.
- The Four Noble Truths are exactly the same in both schools.
- The Eightfold Path is exactly the same in both schools.
- The Paticca-samuppada or the Dependent Origination is the same in both schools.
- Both rejected the idea of a supreme being who created and governed this world.
- Both accept Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta and Sila, Samadhi, Panna without any difference.

These are the most important teachings of the Buddha and they are all accepted by both schools without question.

There are also some points where they differ. An obvious one is the Bodhisattva ideal. Many people say that Mahayana is for the Bodhisattvahood which leads to Buddhahood while Theravada is for

Arahantship. I must point out that the Buddha was also an Arahant. Pacceka Buddha is also an Arahant. A disciple can also be an Arahant. The Mahayana texts never use the term Arahant-yana, Arahant Vehicle. They used three terms: Bodhisattvayana, Prateka-Buddhayana, and Sravakayana. In the Theravada tradition these three are called Bodhis.

Some people imagine that Theravada is selfish because it teaches that people should seek their own salvation. But how can a selfish person gain Enlightenment? Both schools accept the three Yanas or Bodhis but consider the Bodhisattva ideal as the highest. The Mahayana has created many mystical Bodhisattvas while the Theravada considers a Bodhisattva as a man amongst us who devotes his entire life for the attainment of perfection, ultimately becoming a fully Enlightened Buddha for the welfare of the world, for the happiness of the world.

Three Types of Buddhahood

There are three types of Buddhahood: the Samma Sambuddha who gains full Enlightenment by his own effort, the Pacceka Buddha who has lesser qualities than the Samma Sambuddha, and the Savaka Buddha who is an Arahant disciple. The attainment of Nibbana between the three types of Buddhahood is exactly the same. The only difference is that the Samma Sambuddha has many more qualities and capacities than the other two.

Some people think that Voidness or Sunyata discussed by Nagarjuna is purely a Mahayana teaching. It is based on the idea of Anatta or non-self, on the Paticcasamuppada or the Dependent Origination, found in the original Theravada Pali texts. Once Ananda asked the Buddha, "People say the word Sunya. What is Sunya?" The Buddha replied, "Ananda, there is no self, nor anything pertaining to self in this world. Therefore, the world is empty." This idea was taken by Nagarjuna when he wrote his remarkable book, "Madhyamika Karika". Besides the idea of Sunyata is the concept of the store-consciousness in Mahayana Buddhism which has its seed in the Theravada texts. The Mahayanists have developed it into a deep psychology and philosophy.

Source : "Gems of Buddhist Wisdom",
Buddhist Missionary Society, Kuala Lumpur.

About the Writer

The late Walpola Rahula (1907–1997) was a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, scholar and writer. In 1964, he became the Professor of History and Religions at Northwestern University, thus becoming the first bhikkhu to hold a professorial chair in the Western world. He also once held the position of Vice-Chancellor at the then Vidyodaya University (currently known as the University of Sri Jayewardenepura). He has written extensively about Buddhism in English, French and Sinhalese. He wrote the book What the Buddha Taught about Theravada Buddhism and many other books.



THE HISTORY OF THE BUDDHIST FLAG

Origin of the Buddhist Flag



The Buddhist Flag, first hoisted in 1885 in Sri Lanka, is a symbol of faith and peace used throughout the world to represent the Buddhist faith.

There appears to have been a controversy over as to who designed the Buddhist Flag.

Some give the credit to Henry Steele Olcott, a retired American Army Colonel to Sri Lanka in May 1880.

Olcott embraced Buddhism and joined the Buddhist revivalist movement and pioneered Buddhist education. He initiated the establishment of close to 400 Buddhist schools and colleges in Sri Lanka. Ananda, Nalanda, Mahinda and Dharmaraja stand as monuments to his pioneering efforts.



Henry Steel Olcott.

In 1884, the Buddhists succeeded in getting the British rulers to declare Vesak Poya Day as a Public Holiday as from May 1885. At this stage the Buddhists established the 'Colombo Committee', and Olcott was indeed one of its members, but there were also more than ten other eminent members of the Sri Lankan laity and sangha.

This committee set about the task of evolving a Buddhist Flag to be hoisted on Vesak Full Moon Day, 28th May 1885, the day declared as a Public Holiday, for the first time.

Thus it is this committee that jointly designed the Buddhist Flag and the then Secretary of the Committee presented it to the public as approved by the 'Colombo Committee' on 17th April 1885.

The Buddhist Flag, so designed, was hoisted for the first time on 28th May 1885, Vesak Full Moon Day, by Ven. Migettuwatte Gunananda Thera at Deepaduththaramaya in Kotahena.

On a suggestion by Olcott, the flag was modified to be of the normal size of National Flags. The Buddhist Flag so modified was hoisted on Vesak Full Moon Day in 1886. It remains unchanged to this day and is used



Ven. M. Gunananda Thera.

by all the traditions and schools of Buddhism throughout the world.

Professor G .P. Malalasekera was instrumental in making it the Flag of the Buddhist World. His proposal at the meeting of World Federation of Buddhists held in Kandy on 25th May 1950, to accept it as the official Buddhist Flag.

It was accepted as the International Buddhist Flag by the 1952 World Buddhist Congress.



Professor G.P. Malalasekera.

Meaning of the Colours of the Buddhist Flag

The original design's six colours; **Blue** (nila), **Yellow** (pita), **Red** (lohita), **White** (odata), **Scarlet** (manjestha), and the mixture of these six colours (prabaswara) of the flag represented the colours of the aura that emanated from the body of the Buddha when He attained Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.

The original colour of Scarlet, was subsequently altered to **Orange**.

The Horizontal Stripes represent the races of the world living in harmony and the Vertical Stripes represent eternal world peace.

The colours symbolize the perfection of Buddhahood and the Dharma.

The Blue light that radiated from the Buddha's hair symbolises the spirit of Universal Compassion for all beings.

The **Yellow light** that radiated from the Buddha's epidermis symbolises the Middle Way which avoids all extremes and brings balance and liberation.

The **Red light** that radiated from the Buddha's flesh symbolises the Blessings that the practice of the Buddha's Teaching brings.

The White light that radiated from the Buddha's bones and teeth symbolises the Purity of the Buddha's Teaching and the Liberation it brings.

The **Orange light** that radiated from the Buddha's palms, heels and lips symbolises the unshakable Wisdom of the Buddha's Teaching.

The Combination Colour, on the flag, symbolises the universality of the Truth of the Buddha's Teaching.

Therefore, the overall flag represents that regardless of race, nationality, division or colour, all sentient beings possess the potential of Buddhahood.

A more modern, contemporary definition of the six colors is given as:

1. **Blue**: signifying the concept of loving kindness and peace in Buddhism
2. **Yellow**: signifying the Middle Path, that is, the complete absence of form and emptiness
3. **Red**: signifying achievement, wisdom, virtue, fortune and dignity.
4. **White**: signifying purity, emancipation, that the Dharma will always exist regardless of time or space.
5. **Orange**: The essence of Buddhism which is full of wisdom, strength and dignity.
6. The Combination of these five colors symbolizes that it is the one and only Truth.

A brief history of the 124 year old Buddhist Maha Vihara, Brickfields

The Buddhist Maha Vihara was founded in 1894 by the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society (SAWS), the oldest registered Buddhist Society in the Klang Valley.

From its very inception, the Vihara has been managed by the Sinhala Buddhist community but always financially supported by the Chinese and Indian communities. The first structure of the Vihara was the Main Shrine Room, with its ceremonial laying of the foundation-stone taking place on 25th August 1894 and the simple rectangular shaped building completed sometime during the first decade of the 20th century. The donors for the Shrine room, as recorded in the Selangor Government Gazette 1896, pg 408 were clearly Chinese and Indian communities and among the main donors were:

Kapitan Yeap Quang Seng, Towkay Loke Yew, K. Tambusamy Pillay, R. Doraisamy Pillay, Loke Chow Kit, San Peng and Son, Lim Tua Taw, etc...

The Vihara was always the focal point to mobilise the Buddhist community. The large gathering to protest and stop the screening of the then controversial film "Light of Asia" in 1927 in Malaysia was also held at the Vihara, and so was the mass gathering and signature campaign in the 1950s to lobby the government to declare Wesak as a national holiday.

During the Emergency period of 1948-1960, monks from the Vihara made a massive impact reaching out to calm and educate the psychologically disoriented

Chinese New Villagers who were evicted from their traditional lands and placed in new settlements by the Governments which was fighting a communist insurgency.

Since the 1940s, the Vihara commenced a free Dhamma publications programme as a Dhammadutta outreach to the masses which by the year 2012 was made available in 28 languages, with millions of copies of books and CDs produced. The Vihara's Buddhist Institute Sunday Dhamma School (BISDS), founded in 1929, is the oldest Sunday School in the country with an enrolment of more than 1200 students and continues to produce systematic books on Buddhist studies for children.

The Wesak procession organised by the Vihara since the 1890s is the oldest and largest religious procession in the country. The 3-day Wesak celebrations at the Vihara attracts about 100,000 people.

Many students or devotees who have studied and benefited from the BISDS, the Vihara's Free Publications, Dhamma programmes, classes, talks, etc have gone on to set up new Buddhist societies and centers which help to spread Buddhism in the country far and wide.

The SAWS is also one of the founding members of the Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) formed in 1983, a Council which constructively engages the Government on matters

affecting non-muslims in the country. The MCCBCHST Administrative office is based at the Vihara.

In 2004, the Vihara was a major focal point in the country to collect relief aid to assist the South Asian Tsunami that killed almost 280,000 people. Several forty foot containers equivalent of relief aid were dispatched by the Vihara to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Myanmar and Thailand by air, sea and land.

Buddhists remain the country's largest organ donors, thanks to Cornea and Organ Donation Campaigns carried out by the Vihara. The Vihara continues to operate to deliver its obligation to the Buddhist community till this day and is governed and directed by its Vision, 4 Missions, 6 Strategic Objectives and 4 Ennoblers in tribute and gratitude to all our past and current Sangha, volunteers, donors, friends, etc. We would be failing in our duty if we fail to mention the name of the foremost amongst them, our late Venerable Chief, that is Venerable. Dr. Kirinde Sri Dhammananda Nayaka Maha Thero.



DAILY ACTIVITIES

Mon - Sun

- 6.30am - 7.30am
- 11.30am - 12noon
- 7.30pm - 8.30pm

Daily Morning Buddha Puja
Daily Noon Buddha Puja
Daily Evening Buddha Puja

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Mon, Wed, Thurs

- 8.00pm - 10.00pm

Tues

- 8.30pm - 10.00pm

Thurs

- 7.30pm - 9.00pm

Fri

- 1.00pm - 2.00pm

Sat

- 8.00pm - 9.30pm

- 7.30pm - 8.30pm

- 9.30am - 11.30am

Sun

- 8.30am - 9.30am

- 9.30am - 11.00am

- 9.30am - 12noon

- 10.00am - 11.30am

- 10.00am - 2.00pm

- 11.00am - 12.30pm

- 1.30pm - 5.00pm

- 2.00pm - 3.00pm

- 2.00pm - 7.00pm

- 5.00pm

Meditation Class

BMV Choir Practise

Senior Club Yoga Practise

Afternoon Puja & Talk

Dhamma Talk

Bojjhanga Puja

Sanskrit Class

Morning Puja

Abhidhamma Class

Sunday Dhamma School Session

Dhamma Talk

Traditional Chinese Medicine

(1st and 3rd Sun of the month. Please note there will be no clinic if a Public Holiday falls on the allocated Sunday)

Pali and Sutta Class

Sinhala Language Classes

Sinhala Cultural Dance Classes

Dhamma for the Deaf (fortnightly)

Diploma & Degree in Buddhism Classes

Feeding the Needy and Homeless

You can donate towards our many projects :

- Dhammadutta
- Free Buddhist Publications
- Welfare Activities
- Monks Dana
- Sunday Dhamma School
- Maintenance of Shrine Hall
- K Sri Dhammananda Library
- Temple Lighting
- BISDS Building Fund

DONATIONS CAN BE MADE BY :

- Cash (at the BMV Counter)
- Cheque (made payable to "BISDS Building Fund")
- ATM Transfer / Direct Bank-in (Bank Acct : BISDS Building Fund, A/C No : CIMB 86-0011008-6. Please send the bank-in slip to info@buddhistmahavihara.org)

Payments can be made via :

BMV Office Counter : Cash, cheques & credit cards

Postage : Make cheques payable to "Buddhist Maha Vihara" & write your name & contact telephone at back of the cheque.

Direct Debit : Hong Leong Bank Brickfields
Acct : 292-00-01161-8

BMV Statement of Accounts :

Buddhist Maha Vihara's Monthly Statement of Accounts is displayed on the Notice Board at the Reception area for public viewing. Please address all queries to the Hon. Secretary in writing.

We accept VISA and MASTERCARD for donations. Thank You.

Donations to Buddhist Maha Vihara operations are tax exempt.

Any donor who wants a tax exemption for computation of personal or corporate tax can request for a tax exempt receipt.

PLEASE BEWARE OF UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS SOLICITING DONATIONS.

KINDLY ENSURE THAT ALL DONATIONS ARE ISSUED WITH A NUMBERED BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA OFFICIAL RECEIPT.

BMV OFFICE HOURS

MON - SAT : 9.00 am - 9.00 pm

SUN & PUBLIC HOLIDAYS : 9.00 am - 5.00 pm



BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA

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Website: www.buddhistmahavihara.org