



FOOTPRINTS 2023

A MAGAZINE BY THE
LANKARAMA BUDDHIST YOUTH GROUP

FOOTPRINTS 2023

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FOOTPRINTS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU:

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1/
EDITORS NOTE
NETHMI DISSANAYAKE

2/
VEN. BHANTE PUNDIT'S ADDRESS
VEN. DHAMMAGAVESI THERO

3/
SLBVA PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
PRABHATH AMARASINGHE

4/
LBYG PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
PRASHAN AMARASINGHE

6/
LBYG VICE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
VENUK DE SILVA

8/
HEARING THE DHAMMA
& THE ARISING OF FAITH
AKALIKO BHIKKU

11/
VESAK 2023 REPORT
NISALI WELLEGE

14/
THE FIVE HINDRANCES-
HOW TO TAME THE MIND
KALPA ABEYSINGHE

16/
CONNECTING THE LBYG:
SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING
NAOMI M. JAYAWARDENE

18/
BUDDHIST PLACES OF WORSHIP
AROUND THE WORLD
DINU SAMARATUNGE

20/
BUDDHIST TRADITIONS
VENERABLE CANBERRA DAMITA

21/
KATINA 2022 REPORT
ANUPA ABEYSINGHE

24/
EQUILIBRIUM
CHARINDA DISSANAYAKE

26/
UNDERSTANDING REALITY:
EXTRACT FROM YUTTADHAMMO
BHIKKU
THUSHIRA SINGHABAHU

28/
INNER PEACE: AN ILLUSTRATION
TIHARA GALLAGE

30/
BUDDHISM & MODERN SOCIETY
PRASHAN AMARASINGHE

32/
BUDDHISM & SCIENCE
NAOMI M. JAYAWARDENE

34/
A TRIBUTE TO MY PARENTS
TERUNI SAMARATUNGE

39/
REFERENCES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 2023 edition of the Footprints magazine!

Footprints is an annual magazine published by the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group (LBYG), distributed with the aim to edify readers on a variety of Buddhist concepts. Each magazine contains valuable contributions from members of both the LBYG and the wider community, broadening our collective knowledge base each year.

Once again, I am proud to saying that we have put together an informative and wonderful magazine with articles from a variety of topics as well as some beautiful creative pieces.

A massive thank you to our president, Prashan Amarasinghe for giving me the opportunity to put together another edition of this magazine. It has been such a pleasure to read over every page and see what our contributors have put together. Another thank you goes to Venuk De Silva and Naomi Jayawardene for being a huge support along every step in this journey.

Thank you to our wonderful contributors for taking the time to research and put together articles and creative pieces on such a wide range of topics. It's so refreshing to see all the different aspects of Buddhism explored in the coming pages.

I hope that you enjoy going through this magazine as much as I enjoyed putting it together. It is my greatest wish that there is something in here for everyone; hopefully you find something that resonates with you.

Happy reading!



NETHMI DISSANAYAKE
CHIEF EDITOR - FOOTPRINTS



VEN. BHANTHE PUNDIT'S ADDRESS

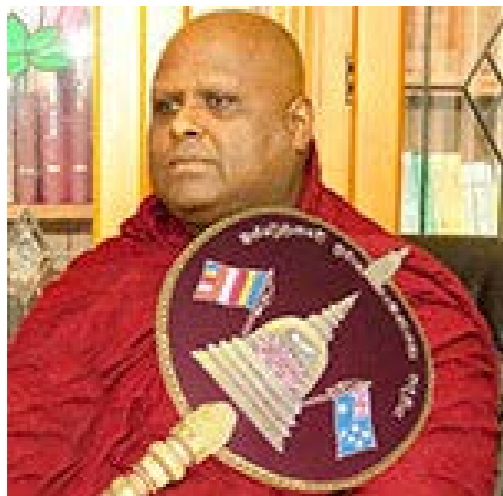
It brings me great joy to write this message for the FootPrint Magazine published and circulated by the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group. I would like to express my cordial gratitude to the Youth Group for their unwavering commitment and dedication to carrying out numerous religious and compassionate projects in the past.

I am delighted to see the continued publication of this esteemed magazine for many years, providing a platform for young people to express their views and share their experiences. I have no doubt that this year's edition will be as good or even better than the previous ones.

I want to thank all the members of the Youth Group for their active involvement in the development of the physical and spiritual aspects of the Lankarama Buddhist Temple. It is reassuring to see the younger generation taking an interest in the matters of the Temple, and I hope that this trend continues for years to come.

As we embark on another year, I would like to wish the blessings of the Triple Gem on all the members of the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group. May you continue to inspire others through your selfless service and compassion, and may you achieve success in all your future endeavours.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to all the readers of this magazine for their continued support. Your commitment is essential in keeping this publication alive and thriving. I look forward to your continued support in the future. May the blessings of the Triple Gem be with you always.



VENERABLE BANTHE PUNDIT
MEEGAHAKUMBURE DHAMMAGAVESI THERO
CHIEF RESIDENT MONK

SLBVA PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Today our youth live in a very complex and challenging environment compared to which their parents lived. They should be able to deal with psychological, financial, cultural, spiritual, technological, and educational pressures. It is paramount that our youth have the knowledge to find solutions to overcome such issues as well as to distinguish what is right and what is wrong for the well being of the world.

Humans have created many of the burning contemporary issues we encounter. Good examples of these are the financial crisis, terrorism and increased inhuman acts. Greed, lack of responsibility and selfishness are some of the paramount drivers behind such inhuman behaviour.

Buddhism is a philosophy that has continued for over 2500 years. Buddhist culture and dedication of Venerable Sangha have been the main pillars of existence of Buddhism today. These basic vital foundations required for existence of Buddhism are being challenged today by individuals and organisations, as they appeared to have harvest the fruit from the tree and cut the roots off.

Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group (LBYG) have engaged in many activities within the guidance of Buddha's teachings and developed many qualities, skill and knowledge that are necessary to survive today's complex world and to protect Buddhism for future generations. This fact is quite evident in the publication of "Footprints" and the activities of LBYG.

May the blessings of the Triple Gem be with the LBYG and everyone who assisted in the making of "Footprints" a success.



PRABHATH AMARASINGHE
SLBVA PRESIDENT 2022/23

LBYG PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dear Friends and Members of the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group,

I am honored to address you as the President of the LBYG for the 2022-2023 term. It has been a privilege to serve and lead this remarkable organization which has been a pillar of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Sydney. I would like to first and foremost thank all members for their hard work and dedication over these last few years and commend their efforts to build LBYG into what it is today.

As I reflect on the past year, I'm proud of the way our group adapted to the challenges posed by the pandemic. We shifted some activities online, came up with innovative solutions to organize our regular events, and continued to foster a sense of community and connection while doing more to give back to local and international communities. Our members' dedication and resilience have been truly inspiring.

A key highlight of my time as President of LBYG has been the school project initiative we conducted alongside the Foundation of Goodness in November of 2022. Thanks to the hard work of our members as well as the generosity of our donors, we were able to deliver over 140 essential school packs to disadvantaged school children in Seenigama, Sri Lanka. Being a first-hand witness to the joy and happiness the efforts of the LBYG brought to the young children was one of the most humbling and fulfilling moments of the year and I look forward to seeing what the LBYG will continue to achieve to leave a lasting and positive impact in the years to come.



Looking ahead, we have ambitious plans for the coming year. Our primary focus will be on youth engagement, empowering young people to take an active role in the LBYG's mission of promoting Buddhist values, culture, and education. We will provide opportunities for leadership development, mentorship, and networking, and encourage our members to share their ideas and perspectives.

LBYG PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

We also recognize the importance of community service and will continue to support charitable initiatives that align with our values such as our school project initiative. Another highlight of mine was attending as the LBYG representative at the NSW Premier's 2023 Harmony dinner where I got the pleasure of meeting and networking with other Buddhist organizations in Australia such as the Buddhist Council of NSW. We will continue to collaborate with other organizations to address social issues such as homelessness and child poverty in Sri Lanka and strive to make a positive impact in our local and global Sri Lankan communities.



Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the outgoing committee members and leaders for their dedication and hard work, which have set a strong foundation for us to build upon in the years to come. Your enthusiasm and commitment are the driving force behind our success. I also extend my thanks to the SLBVA and other organizations who have played a pivotal role in the growth and development of LBYG.

In closing, I am excited about the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead and look forward to working with you all to make the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group a vibrant and meaningful organization that enriches the lives of our members and the wider community.

May the blessings of the Triple Gem be with you all.



PRASHAN AMARASINGHE
LBYG PRESIDENT 2022/23

LBYG VICE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dear Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group members, family and friends,

I would like to start off my address by saying how much of an amazing and impactful year it has been for the LBYG. We would not have been able to achieve everything we have without the unwavering support of our members, family, friends, and the Lankarama Buddhist Vihara community. Through the numerous religious, social, charity and fundraising events held throughout our 2022-23 term, it has made my time serving the community as Vice President of the LBYG worthwhile and memorable.

However, as we move forward, it is essential to address the challenges that our youth group is facing in this rapidly evolving digital age. In today's world, young people are communicating in new and innovative ways, and this shift has presented unique challenges for the LBYG in its efforts to engage with the younger generations. One of my goals upon stepping up for the role of Vice President was to reinvigorate the youth of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community and work on bringing in new members to the LBYG. Being a youth group, it is vital to maintain a steady stream of new members to ensure the group does not stagnate and lose relevance over time.

In conclusion, the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group has accomplished remarkable feats this year. However, as we look to the future, it's important to recognize the challenges facing youth groups in the digital age and adapt accordingly. By working together and implementing innovative strategies, we can ensure the continued growth and success of the LBYG for years to come.

If you're interested in learning more about how we worked to engage the new generation and address these challenges, I encourage you to read my upcoming article on the topic.

Engaging the New Generation

In today's digital age, the ways in which young people communicate have drastically changed. The proliferation of social media platforms and the internet has created new avenues for connection, communication, and collaboration. However, these new platforms have presented challenges for the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group (LBYG) as we attempt to engage with the younger generations.

The LBYG has been a community-driven group that seeks to engage young people in Buddhist teachings, culture, and traditions whilst surrounded with like-minded individuals. Throughout our term, we have arranged a diverse range of events and activities aimed at building a sense of community and understanding among our members. These include social events that provide opportunities for new and current members to connect, as well as religious events that deepen the youth's knowledge of the teachings of Lord Buddha. However, despite our best efforts, engaging with the new generation has become increasingly challenging.

One of the primary challenges faced by the LBYG is the fact that young people today have multiple platforms of communication at their disposal. These include social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, messaging apps like WhatsApp and Snapchat, and video-sharing platforms like TikTok and YouTube. As a result, youth are constantly bombarded with information and are constantly switching between different platforms, making it difficult for youth groups to catch their attention.

LBYG VICE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Another challenge faced by the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group is the need to constantly adapt to new platforms and technologies. As soon as a new platform or app becomes popular, it can quickly become the preferred mode of communication for young people. This means that youth groups must constantly stay up-to-date with the latest trends and technologies to effectively engage with young people.

Despite these challenges, we have been fairly successful in engaging with young people through a variety of initiatives. For example, we have maintained a strong social media presence by regularly updating our Facebook and Instagram pages with news and information about upcoming events. We also have a dedicated Facebook group for members, which allows for easy communication and coordination. A more recent initiative that has been piloted by our executive team has been SMS texting new members who have recently signed up and discussing upcoming events with them. This has given us the opportunity to get to know our members and start conversations that encourages them to join the upcoming events.

While it is crucial to engage with the new generation to ensure the LBYG's longevity, we must also keep our previous generations, such as our parents, uncles, and aunties, informed and involved. Their unwavering support has played a vital role in the LBYG's progress and achievements. In light of this, I have taken the initiative to create an LBYG Newsletter, which will provide regular updates on our activities and serve as a means of communication for all members across generations. By staying connected and informed, we can continue to build a strong sense of community within the LBYG.

In conclusion, engaging with the new generation will always be a challenge for the LBYG in this rapidly evolving digital age. The Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group has thus far been successful in adapting to these challenges by leveraging social media, experimenting with new platforms, and creating engaging content. By doing so, we have been able to connect with the youth of the next generation in the hopes of ensuring the continuity of the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group.



VENUK DE SILVA
LBYG VICE PRESIDENT 2022/23

HEARING THE DHAMMA & THE ARISING OF FAITH

A Gradual Path Towards Wisdom

They have experiential confidence in the teaching: The teaching is well explained by the Buddha—visible in this very life, immediately effective, inviting inspection, relevant, so that sensible people can know it for themselves.'

(Vattha Sutta MN7)

The importance of hearing the Dhamma is referred to over and over again in the suttas. Hearing the Dhamma for the first time is the beginning of a movement away from ignorance, an opportunity to develop wisdom that can propel the listener from harmful states towards wholesome states, and eventually out of Saṃsara completely.

The Buddha was an excellent instructor. One of his epithets is: “unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed.” He was perfectly able to match his teaching to the ability of his listeners, pitching it at a level they would understand. To lead people from their present level towards the next level of knowledge, the Buddha often used a technique of gradual instruction (anupubbikathā) which sequentially built understanding and developed faith in the listener, allowing them to see for themselves the truth of the Buddha’s teaching.

A good example of the gradual instruction is the Suppabuddhakuṭṭhi Sutta, about Suppabuddha, a layperson who had leprosy. The Buddha starts by surveying the crowd, realises that Suppabuddha is ripe for developing in the Dhamma and directs his talk to him. The Buddha begins by talking on generosity—a subject relatively easy to see the benefits of for oneself and therefore gain conviction in. Next the Buddha talks on progressively more complex themes: ethics, the heavenly realms, the drawbacks of sensual pleasures, and renunciation. After Suppabuddha’s mind has been gradually prepared by these concepts and he has already developed some faith in the teaching, only then does the Buddha introduce the more nuanced doctrine of the Four Noble Truths, which helps liberate Suppabuddha.

This gentle guidance towards deeper truths shows the Buddha’s sophistication as a teacher. With each successive theme, the faculties of wisdom and confidence are woven together simultaneously, nourishing each other’s growth and creating a stronger support for knowledge to arise.

In the Inquirer Sutta (Vīmaṃsaka Sutta MN47), the Buddha encourages his followers to scrutinise him and examine his qualities to determine whether or not he is enlightened. Once again he places particular importance on experiential knowledge which leads to faith and confidence. Again, this process is achieved by gradual instruction, but this time specific themes are not mentioned, however the principle of step-by-step instruction remains the same. We see the starting point of approaching the teacher and listening to the Dhamma, and how effective the Buddha’s method of gradual instruction is for developing direct knowledge which leads to deeper faith in the Triple Gem:

‘I approached the Buddha to listen to the teaching. He explained Dhamma with its higher and higher stages, with its better and better stages, with its dark and bright sides. When I directly knew a certain principle of those teachings, in accordance with how I was taught, I came to a conclusion about the teachings. I had confidence in the Teacher: “The Blessed One is a fully awakened Buddha! The teaching is well explained! The Saṅgha is practising well!”

(Vīmaṃsaka Sutta MN 47)

The Buddha knew that the quality of faith developed through gradual instruction—which is reinforced by personal verification and direct knowledge—is much stronger than faith that is merely devotional, or which remains abstract. There is also longevity in this sort of faith, it can be sustained over a lifetime. The spiritual path is a long journey, and our progress may not always seem swift, but when faith is combined with wisdom, our practice will not fall away abruptly. We will be able to keep gradually inclining our mind in the direction of freedom, so that inevitably, we must eventually reach our destination.

In this gradual training, wisdom is developed incrementally and is cumulative. The Buddha often uses the image of the gradually sloping floor of the ocean to describe the inexorable nature of this path. Once certain causes and conditions have been put into place, there is an unstoppable momentum at play, slowly but steadily resulting in the gradual deepening of knowledge.

Just as the great ocean, monks, gradually inclines, gradually slopes, gradually slants, certainly does not fall away abruptly, so, monks, in this Dhamma and Discipline there is a gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual practice, it certainly does not have an abrupt penetration of knowledge.

(Uposatha Sutta Ud5.5)

Faith as a Nutriment for Wisdom

The Buddha’s first-hand understanding of the path and his skill as a teacher allowed him to impart the Dhamma in such a way that his own attainment could be replicated, resulting in the liberation of others. Those people, having experienced the path for themselves, are in turn capable of leading others to the same result. This is one of the most marvellous aspects of the path; it indicates that the truth of the Dhamma is a universal experience; something that can be apprehended by all beings, providing certain supporting conditions are present.

In the sutta called Ignorance (Avijjā Sutta AN 10.61), the dependent nature of the path is outlined by the Buddha in an elegantly straightforward way. Step-by-step, he details the differing causal results that can be expected from the presence of particular nutriments or fuel (āhāra). Unsupportive nutriments have the potential to deepen ignorance, whilst supportive nutriments have the potential to lead to awakening. Once again, we see a link between the development of faith and hearing the Dhamma:

...Faith, too, I say, has a nutriment; it is not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment for faith? It should be said: hearing the good Dhamma. Hearing the good Dhamma, too, I say, has a nutriment; it is not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment for hearing the good Dhamma? It should be said: associating with good persons.

(Avijjā Sutta AN 10.61)

In this causal list—which goes all the way to enlightenment—the Buddha points out that associating with good people is the first and, therefore, most essential nutriment to have if we are to come out of ignorance and make progress on the spiritual path. It may not have been obvious before, but once we have read this passage, it is clear that in order to hear the Dhamma, we need to hear it from someone, and that person needs to be capable of teaching the Dhamma in such a way that causes faith to arise in us.

So, who is it that should we associate with? Here, the 'good person' is a sappurisa, also translated as 'virtuous person' or as a 'true individual'. A sappurisa is someone who has consummate moral qualities, who is learned in Dhamma and has made substantial progress on the spiritual path.

In the sutta called *One Who Knows the Teachings* (Dhammaññū Sutta AN7.68), some of the qualities possessed by a sappurisa are listed, including; knowing the truth of the Dhamma; knowing the meaning and purpose of the Dharma; and knowing the nature of the self. Such knowledge is essential in a teacher if they are going to be able to lead others on the path.

In the *Benefits of a Good Person Sutta* (Sappurisānisaṃsa Sutta AN 4.241), we learn that relying on a sappurisa as a teacher helps us to develop positive qualities within our self. By associating with them, we can expect four benefits: growth in noble ethics, samadhī, wisdom, and freedom. Having a teacher that we can trust and rely upon is, thus, an essential nutriment for development on the spiritual path. The Buddha provides a beautiful and evocative simile, likening the teacher and their teaching to raindrops, which drop-by-drop eventually fills up the ocean:

Just as, when it is raining and the rain pours down in thick droplets on a mountaintop, the water flows down along the slope and fills the clefts, gullies, and creeks; these, becoming full, fill up the pools; these, becoming full, fill up the lakes; these, becoming full, fill up the streams; these, becoming full, fill up the rivers; and these, becoming full, fill up the great ocean; thus there is nutriment for the great ocean, and in this way it becomes full.

So too, associating with good persons, becoming full, fills up hearing the good Dhamma. Hearing the good Dhamma, becoming full, fills up faith. Faith, becoming full, fills up careful attention. Careful attention, becoming full, fills up mindfulness and clear comprehension. Mindfulness and clear comprehension, becoming full, fill up restraint of the sense faculties. Restraint of the sense faculties, becoming full, fills up the three kinds of good conduct. The three kinds of good conduct, becoming full, fill up the four establishments of mindfulness. The four establishments of mindfulness, becoming full, fill up the seven factors of enlightenment. The seven factors of enlightenment, becoming full, fill up true knowledge and liberation. Thus there is nutriment for true knowledge and liberation, and in this way they become full.

(Avijjā Sutta AN 10.61)

This simile demonstrates the rich potential for spiritual development that comes from associating with good people and hearing the Dhamma. These days, we have all the suttas online, thousands of Dhamma teachings on YouTube and millions of free publication books available to us, but unless we make the best use of these resources and take them to heart, we won't make much progress on the spiritual path. We need to investigate these teachings and apply them to our own lives. When we see these things for ourselves, faith will arise naturally, all by itself.



"Faith, too, I say, has a nutriment; it is not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment for faith? It should be said: hearing the good Dhamma."
(Avijjā Sutta AN 10.61)

Akāliko Bhikkhu is an Australian monk currently residing at Lokanta Vihara (the Monastery at the End of the World) in Sydney, Australia.

Bhante Akāliko is the founder of Rainbodhi LGBTQIA+ Buddhist Community and a Buddhist chaplain at Western Sydney University. He is also on the board of directors of the Buddhist Council of NSW and the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils.

AKALIKO BHIKKU
FOOTPRINTS CONTRIBUTOR

Vesak is one of the most significant events of the Buddhist calendar and celebrated on the full moon day of May. Every year the LBYG actively participates in the Lankarama Buddhist Vihara's Vesak celebrations, including creating a Vesak display, organising an engaging Youth Sil program and Bakthi Geetha item.

This year the LBYG decided to create a display that reflects what Vesak commemorates; the birth, the enlightenment and passing of the Buddha. Over multiple workshops since February, LBYG members have utilised their artistic talents and teamwork skills to create the different elements of our display. This year the LBYG team also created some larger lanterns which we hope will add depth to our display and complement the many lights, flags and lanterns displayed throughout the Lankarama Vihara during Vesak.

A big thank you to Kingsley Uncle for his guidance as well as our Vesak Display coordinators Kalpa and Manuga and Vesak Display planners Emil, Navi, Samadhi and Susani for all their contributions to our display. A big thank you also to everyone who participated in our workshops. We'd also like to thank our Bakthi Geetha coordinator Kalpa and all our singers. We hope our Vesak display and Bakthi Geetha performance are well received and a great success!

This year on the 6th of May LBYG and community members are invited to participate in our Youth Sil program. The day will include a meditation session conducted by Dhammagavesi Thero and interactive discussion sessions with guest monk Bhante Sujato. This will be followed by Vesak Day, during which our display will be launched, and Bakthi Geetha performed.

To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to cleanse one's mind - this is the teaching of the Buddhas.



NISALI WELLEGE
HEAD OF RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL EVENTS



THE FIVE HINDRANCES - HOW TO TAME THE MIND

Nibbana. It is the ultimate goal that Buddhists must achieve in order to reach blissful freedom, free from the perpetual cycle of birth and death known as Samsara. Achieving this goal is no easy feat, however, with various obstacles obstructing the journey. These obstacles can be overcome through the specialised technique of mind development that was taught by the Buddha. This technique is known as meditation. It is an impartible component of Buddhism which is used when practising the Dhamma and realising the reality of life. Practising meditation will tame and enhance your mind, allowing you to think critically, develop your existing knowledge and fully grasp foreign concepts. This in turn will all lead to you developing a strong, resilient character that will allow you to flourish and ultimately understand the Buddha's teachings, the Dhamma, which will lead you to the final stage that is Nibbana.

The two main types of meditation the Buddha had taught were Samatha Bhavana or Calming Meditation and Vipassana Bhavana or Insightful Meditation. To gain insight into the Buddha's teachings and their relation to the nature of this life, a calm mind that is not cluttered and has infallible Samadhi (concentration) must be developed. Samatha Bhavana will be initially required to tame and strengthen the mind, combating any mental conflict or confusion that arises because of what is known as the Five Hindrances or Panca Nivarana. These Five Hindrances will impede the development of the mind, which in turn will make reaching the bliss of Nibbana next to impossible, which is why identifying, understanding and combating these mental obstacles is paramount. So, what are these Five Hindrances that try to divert us away from blissful freedom?

1. Kāmacchanda - (Sensual desire):

The constant attraction to pleasure which arises from our five sense faculties (pleasant sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and tangible sensations). Such strong desires will distract you from mindfulness and lead to attachment and suffering. There is nothing inherently wrong with experiencing pleasure, the problem arises when we become attached to it. When attracted to sensual pleasures, during meditation, it will start a fire-like conflict in your mind, instead of bringing your mind into a calming and soothing state. Strong sensual desire will arise when there is no control over the five sense faculties. Therefore, these sense faculties must be carefully controlled in order to overcome sensual pleasure.

2. Vyāpāda - (Ill-will):

Negative or harmful thoughts and emotions towards oneself or others, which can lead to anger, resentment, and conflict. These negative thoughts and emotions predominantly revolve around unpleasant sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and tangible sensations. The antidote for this hindrance is loving-kindness. Practicing loving-kindness will not give Ill-will an opportunity to flourish in your mind and run rampant.

3. Thīnamiddha - (Sloth and torpor)

The sluggishness, apathy, and lack of energy or motivation within our mind, which can hinder one's practice and progress. This hindrance is the result of boredom, tiredness or being overwhelmed. When we experience this hindrance, it will encourage us to give up, find the easy route out, and we will struggle to engage in meditation or other spiritual practices. When your mind does become sluggish, you can arouse energy and motivation through the contemplation of birth and death, disease and decay, and the impermanent nature of this life.

4. Uddhacca kukkucā - (Restlessness and remorse)

Restlessness and remorse characterises this hindrance and is one that will lead to a scattered mind that is preoccupied with worries and concerns. This hindrance will arise when we feel uncertain or stressed about the future, or when we become occupied with recollecting concerns about the past. The more restless the mind is, the more opportunities for defilements to arise in your mind. The Buddha taught being in the present is key to spiritually developing yourself, however, this hindrance will prevent you from being present and focused on the present moment.

5. Vicikicchā - (Sceptical Doubt)

This is the lack of faith or confidence in the teachings of The Buddha and the actions you must conduct to realize these teachings, the Dhamma. You may ask yourself, "Is what the Buddha has taught, truly the correct path to freedom?" or "Will I really be able to succeed through meditation?" When we experience doubt, we will struggle to commit fully to the path the Buddha has taught and may feel discouraged or uncertain about our spiritual progress.

It is a must that these Five Hindrances be overcome and subdued within your mind to be able to clear the cluttered and confused state of your mind and wholly grasp the teachings of the Buddha. In this modern era in particular, overcoming the Five Hindrances is easier said than done, however, it is most certainly possible with the development of the mind and understanding of the Dhamma that the Buddha has taught.

So where do you start from? The main factor in successful meditation is confidence in the Buddha's teachings, such confidence is known as Saddhā. The Buddha showed the way to develop our minds and is the only supreme teacher for this purpose. Thinking on this, if we develop confidence in the Buddha, learn His instructions well and follow the guidelines He has set out, we'll be able to develop our minds through meditation. This is why initially; Samatha Bhavana should be practised to subdue these hindrances and develop calmness and mindfulness within the mind. The most popular forms of Samatha Bhavana are Myhri Bhavana (Loving Kindness Meditation) and Anapanasatti Bhavana (Breathing Meditation) which are taught by the Buddha that will assist in calming your mind.

Whether it's sitting cross-legged on the floor or sitting at your desk or bed, practice at least 10 minutes of either of these meditations each day. Simultaneously, learn the Dhamma and try to grasp the concepts regarding the nature of this life and what else is holding us back from freeing ourselves from Samsara. In the end, this strengthens and sets in motion the vessel that will carry you to enlightenment; that vessel is your mind.

"The mind is the forerunner of all our actions. Act with an impure mind, suffering follows you like the wagon wheel that follows the foot of the ox. Act with a pure mind, and happiness will follow like your never departing shadow."



KALPA ABEYSINGHE
VESAK CO-ORDINATOR 2023

CONNECTING THE LBYG: SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING

The Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group (LBYG) is a dynamic and vibrant community of young Buddhists based in Sydney, Australia. Established in 2009, the LBYG has been actively engaging with the youth through various activities and events that aim to promote Buddhist values, teachings and practices whilst engaging socially to make friends with the youth around us. As head of Social Media and Marketing, LBYG has established a Social Media and Marketing platform to utilise digital platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to expand its reach and connect with more young people effectively.

Social Media Strategy:

The Social Media and Marketing department is vital to LBYG's outreach efforts. By creating engaging content and managing LBYG's social media presence, the team ensures the community stays updated and connected with its members and followers. The department has a well-planned social media strategy that regularly posts inspirational quotes, images and videos that highlight the essence of Buddhism. The platform also shares the latest upcoming events and activities updates, ensuring the community stays informed and involved.

The LBYG Website:

In addition to social media platforms, the LBYG has a website that provides a comprehensive view of the community's activities and programs. The website features details about upcoming events, past events, and general information about the LBYG. The website also serves as a hub for members to register for events and stay updated on the latest news and developments.

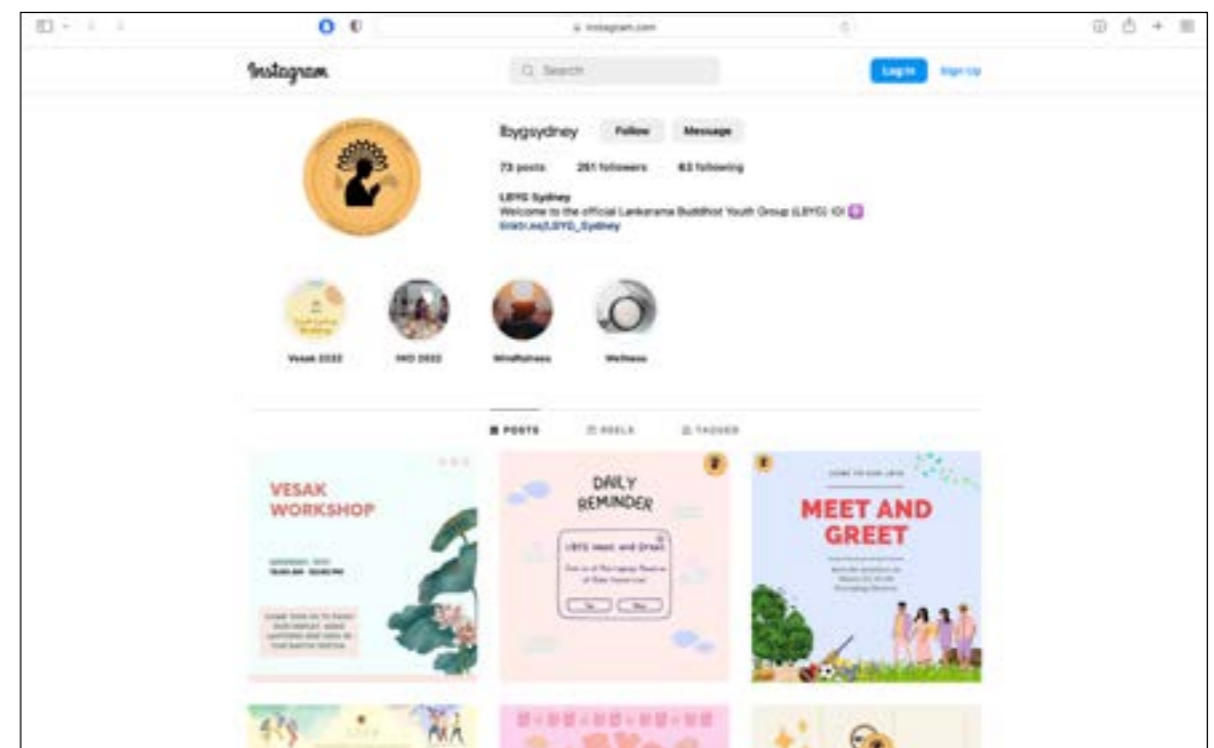
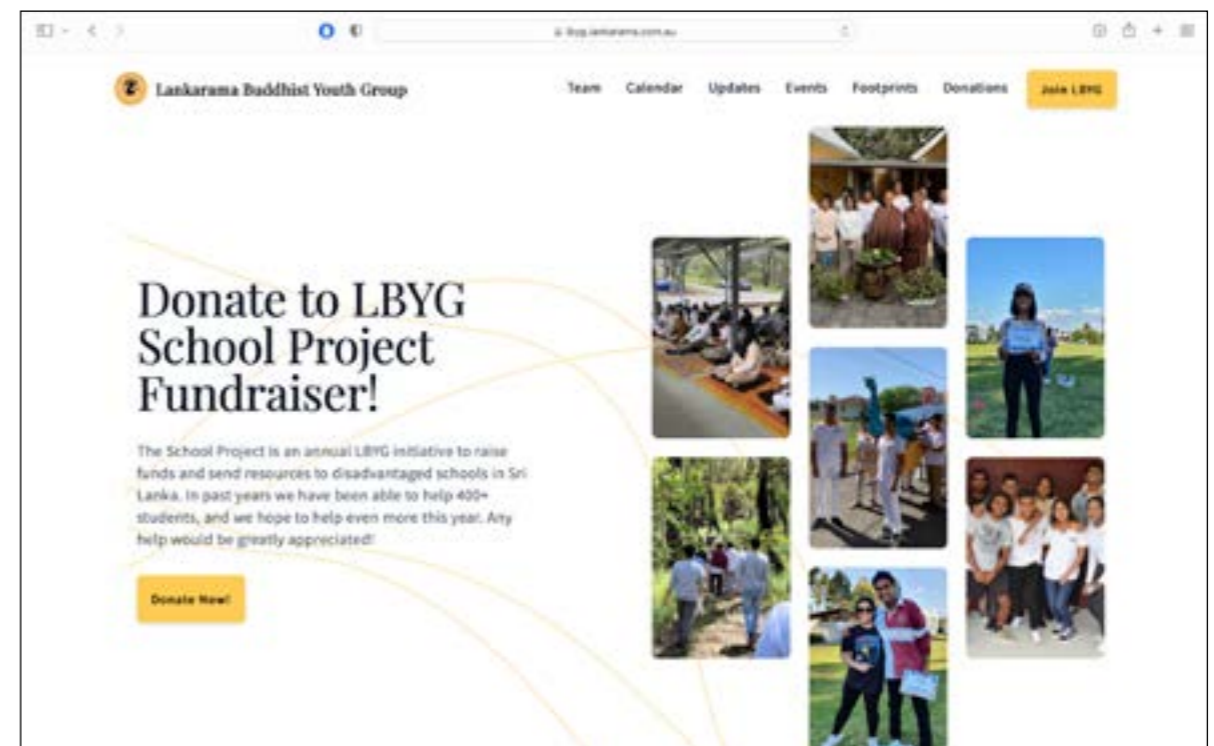
Marketing Efforts:

Apart from social media, LBYG's marketing efforts also include email marketing, which is an effective way to communicate with members and promote events. The Social Media and Marketing team sends members regular newsletters, including updates on upcoming events, details about past events, and other relevant news.

Conclusion:

The Social Media and Marketing department is critical to LBYG's outreach efforts. By utilising digital platforms, the department effectively engages with the community and spreads the message of Buddhism to a broader audience. With the team's dedication and hard work, the LBYG continues to grow and attract more young people interested in learning about and practising Buddhism.

As the Head of Social Media and Marketing, working in this department has allowed me to explore my creativity and express myself in ways I don't always get to do in my day job. One of the most fulfilling aspects of my job is seeing our efforts' impact on the community. I am grateful for the opportunity to have become the head of social media and marketing at the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group. This role has allowed me to explore my creativity, express myself, and positively impact the community. I look forward to passing this work on and seeing the many ways in which it will continue to grow and flourish in the years to come.



*"How people treat you is their karma;
how you react is yours"*



NAOMI M. JAYAWARDENE
HEAD OF SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING

BUDDHIST PLACES OF WORSHIP AROUND THE WORLD



Mahābodhi Mahāvihāra (*Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India*)

The Mahabodhi Mahavihara was built by Emperor Ashoka and marks the place of Enlightenment of the Gautama Buddha, under the sacred Mahabodhi Tree. The Buddha attained Enlightenment after three days and three nights. The Buddha then spent the next seven weeks meditating at seven different spots around the Mahabodhi tree. During the second week, the Buddha remained standing and stared at the Mahabodhi tree in veneration.



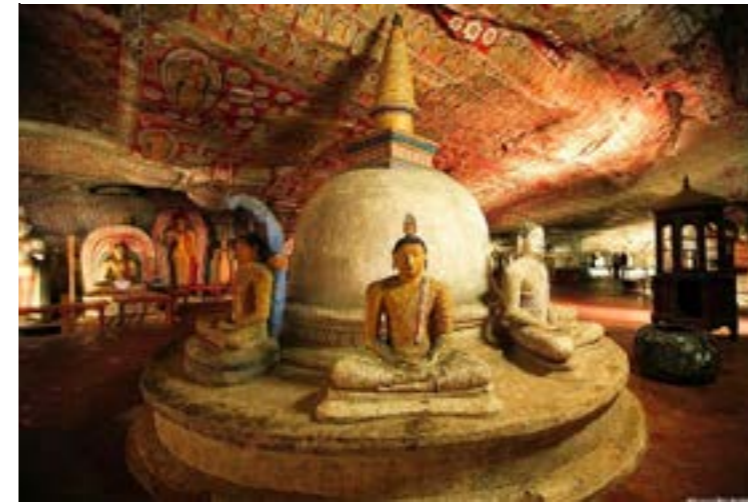
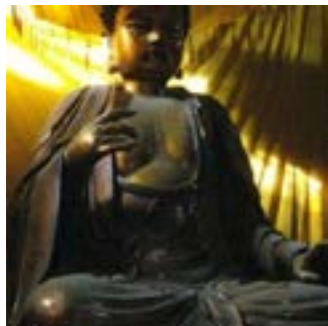
Shwedagon Pagoda (*Yangon, Myanmar*)

The Shwedagon Pagoda has the relics of four previous Buddhas: the staff of Kakusandha Buddha, the water filter of Koṇāgamana Buddha, a piece of the robe of Kassapa Buddha, and eight strands of hair from the head of Gautama Buddha.



White Horse Temple (*Luoyang, Henan, China*)

The White Horse Temple is the first Buddhist temple in China, established by Emperor Ming in the Eastern Han dynasty. The Emperor sent two emissaries to search for Buddhist scriptures and they returned with two Indian Buddhist monks. The monks brought Buddhist scriptures, relics and statues on two white horses. The Emperor built the temple in their honour and Buddhism spread throughout China from here.



Dambulla Cave Temple (*Dambulla, Matale District, Sri Lanka*)

The Dambulla Cave Temple is a World Heritage site with extensive murals depicting the Gautama Buddha and his life. There are five caves, which have a total of 153 Buddha statues. King Valagamba of Anuradhapura built the Dambulla Cave Temple to pay respect and gratitude to the monks who gave him refuge when he was usurped from his throne for 15 years.

Wat Pho, Temple of the Reclining Buddha (*Phra Nakhon District, Bangkok, Thailand*)

The temple has the largest collection of Buddha images in Thailand, and famously has a 46-metre-long reclining Buddha statue. The reclining posture symbolises the Buddha's entry into the supreme bliss of Nibbana. The soles of the Buddha's feet are inlaid with mother-of-pearl and divided into 108 panels, with auspicious symbols. At the centre of each foot is a circle which represents a chakra or 'energy point'.



DINU SAMARATUNGE
LBYG MEMBER

Traditions are theoretically based because the bearers or the individual's practice do not always uphold the true practice of that tradition.

Sometimes, an individual or groups can stray from the practice. At least with the orthodox Buddhist Teachings, those who have strayed can return to the basics and start again after realizing that there are no longer in accordance with the true orthodox Buddhist Teachings. It is just a yardstick for gauging how far they are prepared to stray before changing course back towards the Middle Path or join another Buddhist School of Thought that accords to their inclination.

Traditions are the basis for propagation, but practicing the Teachings is the essence of any belief system. For instance, if that belief system only intellectualizes its Teaching to defend or to dispute a misnomer, at the end of the day nothing will have been achieved except for exercising our vocal cords. The results of any discussion must truly actualize some practical use for humankind for acting out. For the original Founders or Native Aborigines of Australia and not its conquerors, many Royal Commissions written to improve Aboriginal health and education still clutters the walls of Parliament House but so far little action has been seen and few of those recommendations are implemented as 'only good intentions but poor management of those intentions.'

In Buddhism, there are two main streams of practice. One stream of practice is to study and intellectualize the Teachings in that belief system, which Buddhism identifies as living according to the 'letter of the Dhamma'. This phrase means that the student studies and trains in that belief system until he or she understands and gains practical knowledge and experience of how it works. At this stage, he can really put it to practice. Even to explain or teach that belief system to others falls into this category, including its propagation of it. Many religious leaders would know there are many variations to propagating a belief system.

The second stream is called living according to the 'Spirit of the Dhamma', which goes one step further to apply that practical knowledge and understanding and tries to experience it directly within oneself. The student's direct experience confirms what the 'Letter of the Dhamma' states. To live by the 'Spirit of the Dhamma' in one's daily life brings that belief system to life. It is more than just preaching it! This is the first true awakening of the interrelatedness with all living things or phenomena.

When all that has been lived flows into his daily life as if it was always there, he or she who has truly awakened to the teachings of that belief system. In Buddhism, if one or more students experience that belief system directly, we say that, that belief system is alive. When a student no longer has direct experiences in that belief system according to the 'Letter of the Dhamma', we can say that, that belief system is dead.



VENERABLE CANBERRA DAMITA
FOOTPRINTS CONTRIBUTOR

In summary, if students who also practice in daily life what was preached, this is truly living according to the 'Spirit of the Dhamma' rather than just preach it according to the 'Letter of the Dhamma' (and other religious dogmas). Each has its place and importance to an individual and the world in general. However, the ultimate purpose for any practice in a belief system is to relieve suffering, and not exacerbate it.

"The mind is everything. What you think is what you become"
- Lord Buddha

What is Katina?

Katina is a significant Buddhist festival celebrated in Sri Lanka, usually in the month of October or November. The festival is a time for devotees to express their gratitude to the monks who have devoted themselves to the teachings of the Buddha.

During the festival, laypeople offer Katina robes to the monks. The Katina robes are special garments made from fine cloth, and offering such robes brings great merit to the donors. In most cases, the robes are even made by the laypeople themselves, who work tirelessly to ensure they are of the highest quality.

The Katina festival lasts for a month, during which time the monks who receive the robes engage in intensive meditation and study. Laypeople also participate in the festival by offering food and other necessities to the monks.

The origins of the Katina festival can be traced back to the time of the Buddha. There was once a group of monks who were stranded in a forest during the rainy season and had to remain there until the rains ended. When they finally emerged from the forest, their robes were in tatters, and they were in desperate need of new ones. A group of laypeople came to their aid, offering them new robes and thus creating the tradition of the Katina festival.

Today, the Katina festival remains an important part of Sri Lankan Buddhist culture, providing an opportunity for devotees to express their gratitude and devotion to the Buddha and his teachings. It is a time for reflection, meditation, and the renewal of spiritual practices, and it is celebrated with great joy and reverence throughout Sri Lanka.

LBYG Katina 2022

In 2022, LBYG celebrated the Katina Perahera by showcasing a grand white swan, traditional dance choreography, and sesath. The procession featured traditional drummers, the LBYG swan, sesath bicycles, traditional dance choreography, and the Primary & High School Dhamma School students' perahera.

The Katina coordinators, namely Anupa, Kalpa, Nisali, Sugandha, and Kingsley Uncle played a crucial role in leading the Katina workshops and successfully delivering the swan and sesath. To make the perahera more aesthetically pleasing, LBYG members creatively converted the peacock into a striking white swan. Moreover, sesath was added to bicycles, making them more vibrant during the perahera.

Tiffany and Naomi led the traditional dance choreography with great finesse, and Theekshana, Taniya, Tiffany, and Naomi's efforts were highly appreciated in making the perahera a triumph. The hard work and dedication of all LBYG members who participated in the traditional dance were acknowledged and praised by many Aunties and Uncles.



ANUPA ABEYSINGHE
SECRETARY & TREASURER



EQUILIBRIUM

What do you value the most in life? Is it your family and friends? Is it your job? Maybe it is your car or house. The answer to this question varies based on the person and the stage of life they are in. What we value the most now is likely far different to what it was when we were children.

Personally, the thing I value most is my peace of mind, or rather balance of mind. I do not mean to say that a state of mental equilibrium solves all my problems – it does not. You still do what you have to in order to achieve whatever it is that you want in life. However, what I believe a balanced mind provides me with is the ability to optimize my life and maximize my opportunities.

We live in a very dynamic age. As a society we are ‘developing’ at breakneck speed. Everyday, someone, somewhere has made a breakthrough in some field of study that will apparently revolutionize the way we do something. I do not have an issue with this. Anyway, there is no point in having an issue with it because there is nothing I can do about it.

But it is not only these technological marvels that we are faced with every day. We are also blessed with an abundance of wars, social and political crises, environmental calamities, pandemics, epidemics, and the like.

In the midst of this all, we are still expected to go about our daily lives, do our jobs, pay the bills, go on vacation. Most of the time, the mundaneness of everyday existence dulls the mind into forgetting how extraordinary these times are. Sometimes I just sit back, and it hits me just how nuts the world we live in is.

And it is not like our everyday lives are challenge-free either. Problems at work or at home, increased taxes, having to do three jobs just so you can afford the mortgage, not getting the chance to do the things we love the most, the constant struggle to achieve the mythical “work-life balance”, trying to find time to spend with your loved ones. And that is if you are one of the lucky few that have a job, an apartment to pay the mortgage on and loved ones to try and spend time with.

It is at this point that I should say that this is written from a personal point of view based on my life, which, compared to most people that inhabit this giant, floating rock, is pretty damn good. So good in fact that I can afford to strive to achieve a state of mental balance rather than have to spend that time and effort on securing two square meals a day.

At this point you must be wondering how mental equilibrium solves the problems of everyday life. Like I said before, it does not. But it definitely makes the problem-solving process a whole lot easier. It is like driving a car with a broken radio that will not turn off and at the same time manages to capture the feeds of multiple stations. Imagine trying to get anywhere in that car. You can still get from point A to point B, but that journey will be hell. Mental equilibrium is essentially fixing that radio. Now you can get from A to B, but also enjoy the ride, focus on driving and be able to avoid crashing into the idiot who decided the best way of rectifying his mistake of going down the wrong lane was to overtake from the left and cut right in front of you.

A state of mental equilibrium helps me prioritize the challenges I face so that I can work towards solving them in the most effective manner. It helps me shut out unhelpful chatter from those around me trying to be helpful. It keeps my mind open to new opportunities and ways of doing things better. The outcome is one where I get what I need to and want to, done.

But the other thing that mental equilibrium ensures is the comity of our interactions with those around us. That quote that gets plastered all over social media is quite apt; “Everyone is fighting a battle we know nothing about. Be kind”.

Be kind.

That’s the other critical, incredibly important thing that mental equilibrium allows us to do. I may be going through a lot. Sure. But that does in no way give me the right to lash out at the people around me. However, that is just what happens when we are mentally overwhelmed. We need a release, and we take the first opportunity to do so. When we can think, analyze, and assess clearly, we remain in control of our thoughts, speech, and actions. Mental equilibrium results in emotional equilibrium and the absence of chaos.

That is why I value mental equilibrium the most in life. It allows me to maintain healthy and close relationships with loved ones, it enables me to perform my job well, it makes sure I enjoy the things I like doing and it prevents me from raging against Colombo’s insufferable tuk tuk drivers.

Someone once said that life is so much brighter when we focus on what truly matters. Well, mental equilibrium is the lens that provides the clearest image.

*Aniccā vata sankhārā,
uppādavaya-dhammino;
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti,
tesam vūpasamo sukho*



CHARINDA DISSANAYAKE
FOOTPRINTS CONTRIBUTOR

UNDERSTANDING REALITY - EXTRACT FROM YUTTADHAMMO BHIKKU

Extracted from Yuttadhammo Bhikkhu's Talk:

In this extract, Yuttadhammo Bhikkhu discusses the experience of reality and suffering seen through insight meditation. In insight meditation ones' intention is to see and understand reality without pre-existing misconceptions and misunderstandings of the world we live in. Reality is an illusion that comprises of numerous experiences, and it is important that one understands these experiences only for what they are – simply states of emotion, feeling or knowledge and thus experiences that arise and cease with nothing intrinsically special about them. Understanding of our reality occurs when one can simply take it as an experience, observe with no partiality, let it go and move on.

The teaching of the Buddha states three “poisons” that pollute the mind which are a cause for most of our problems. We characterise these as greed (raga), anger (dvesha) and delusion (moha). We identify greed as any partiality for something, anger as any partiality against something, and delusion as the misunderstanding leading to partiality towards or against something. One lives their life being attached to certain experiences and repulsed by other experiences, thus in a constant state of chasing and repelling experiences – it is the delusion that we can gain happiness from clinging onto certain experiences that gives rise to greed and anger.

The reason why we give rise to greed is because we conceive our belongings and life to be permanent, satisfying and ‘controllable’. When we see our life and the things we love disappear and fall apart, we experience stress, discomfort and pain as we are unsatisfied by the unpredictability that may come upon us. Even when our bodies disobey us whereby we lose responsiveness of our sense faculties (for example our mind or our memory), this also gives rise to suffering and anger. The reason why we get angry is our disappointment to the reality based on our existing expectation that we should be able to find something or someone that is permanent, satisfying and ‘controllable’ in our life. This expectation we create is our delusion to the nature of reality. The misunderstanding that we are going to somehow find something permanent, satisfying or controllable/belonging to us, is the aspect of delusion we face. Yuttadhammo Bhikkhu further relates life to being a dance that has a rhythm – where everything is changing and if we can accept that rhythm (i.e. accept reality for what it is or whatever it is at any given time) then we can live in peace, happiness and freedom from suffering.

As stated by the Buddha, the nature of reality is that there is nothing which we chase for that will give us peace, happiness and freedom from suffering. The Buddha taught that all phenomena, including thoughts, emotions and experiences are marked by three characteristics; impermanence (anicca), dissatisfaction (dukkha) and non-self (anatta). Dissatisfaction arises due to the fact that the satisfaction we may gain in our life will eventually end and thus is impermanent. The experience of “I” continuing through life as a separate singular being is in fact an illusion, whereby what we identify as “self” is merely a construction of physical, mental and sensory processes that are experienced by our six (6) senses and are in constant flux.

Once we begin to see the impermanence, dissatisfaction and non-self, we will start to let go and let go clinging onto things we ultimately do not have control over. Yuttadhammo Bhikkhu further states instead of seeing people as a person, we will see them as a set of experiences – that is, a set of phenomena that arise. We will hear them as sound, see them as ‘seeing’ and essentially the idea of a person falls apart. For example, when someone may be yelling or scolding us, by identifying it as hearing and being aware of it as simply sound, we don’t process the sound as good or bad, we simply know what is being said and are aware of what is being said and take it for what it is. We process it based on the meaning of the words and thus we are able to see it impartially.

It is only through the freedom of our mind, that is, through the ability to accept and live with change, discomfort and the uncontrollability of the universe where we can experience peace, happiness and freedom from suffering. Once we understand the nature of reality, we will come to appreciate how having an impartial mindset to the changes around us will keep us free from greed, anger and delusion.

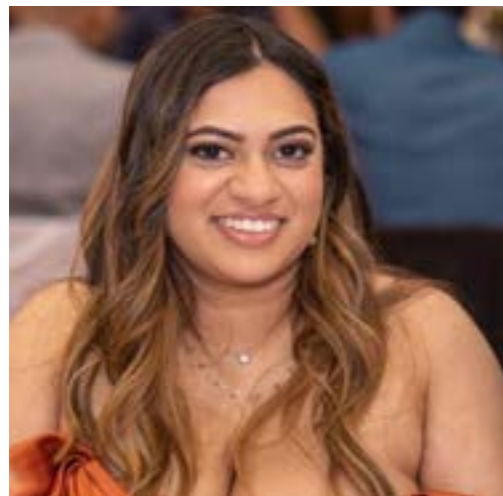
“Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta”



THUSHIRA SINGHABAHU

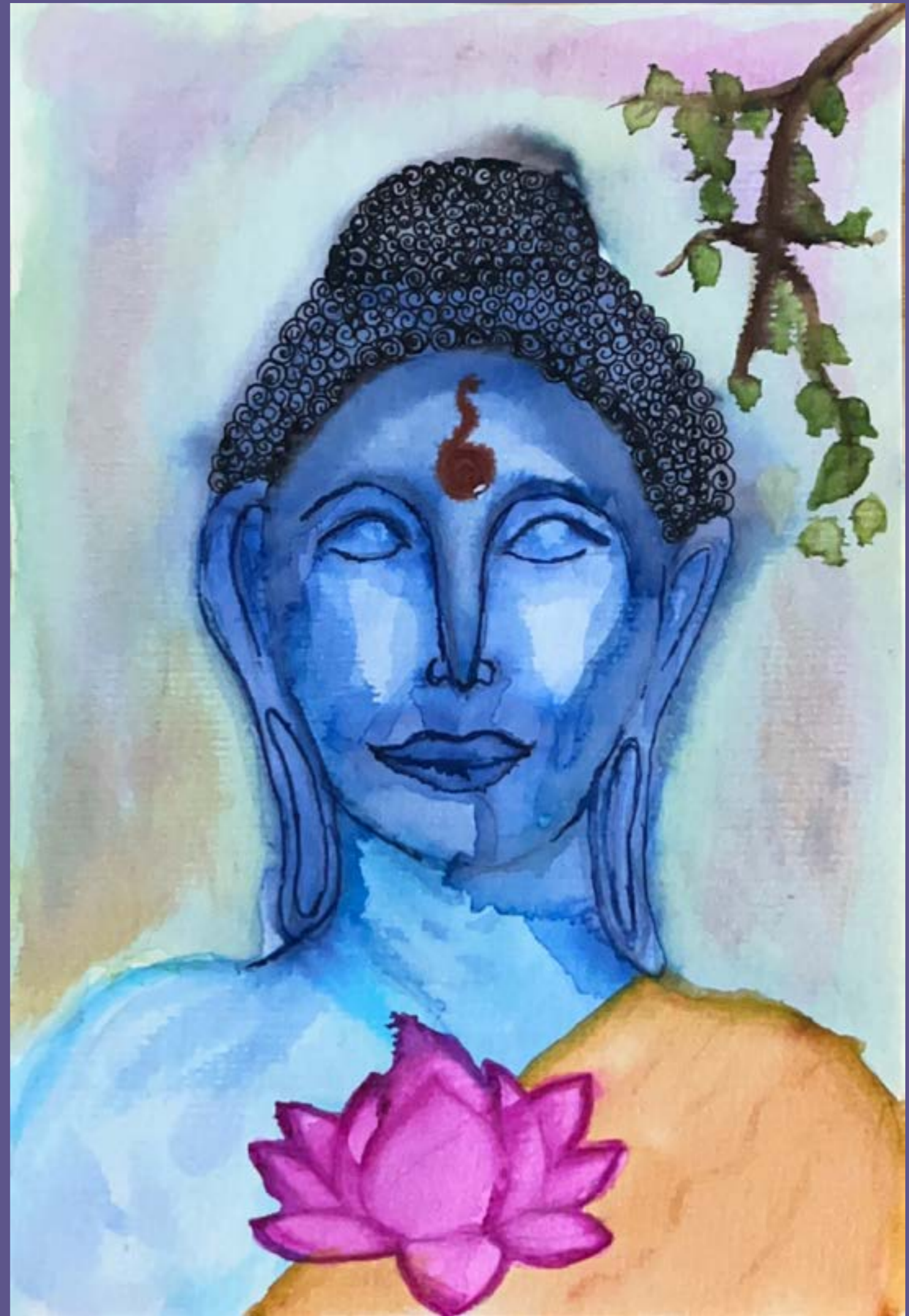
HEAD OF SOCIAL EVENTS & GROUP DEVELOPMENTS

"Quiet the mind and the soul will speak"
-Lord Buddha



TIHARA GALLAGE
HEAD OF CHARITY & FUNDRAISING

INNER PEACE : AN ILLUSTRATION



BUDDHISM & MODERN SOCIETY

Buddhism is a religion that originated in ancient India over 2,500 years ago, and it has since spread across the world, influencing millions of people's lives. Its teachings and practices have transcended time and culture, making it one of the most significant religions and spiritual traditions of humanity. Despite being one of the oldest religions in the world, Buddhism's message of peace, compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom continues to resonate today, offering a roadmap for personal and social transformation. It's arguably more relevant in today's society than it ever was. With global wars, a pandemic, a looming recession, a climate crisis and mental health issues on the rise, the teachings of Buddhism and the tools it provides can be utilized to establish prosperity, happiness, peace, and stability in a world besieged by chaos.

In modern society, people face various challenges, including stress, anxiety, addiction, injustice, and environmental degradation. Buddhism's values and teachings are relevant today, and they offer practical solutions to address these challenges. The following are some of the Buddhist values that are relevant in modern society.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is one of the most widely recognized Buddhist practices. It involves paying attention to the present moment with an open and non-judgmental attitude through tools such as meditation and the Noble Eightfold Path. In modern society, people face various distractions and stimuli, and mindfulness provides a way to cultivate inner peace and bring clarity to their minds amidst the chaos. Studies have shown that mindfulness can reduce stress, enhance well-being, and improve mental health. As a result, many schools, workplaces, and healthcare settings have incorporated mindfulness practices into their programs. For example, many modern workplaces have introduced wellness programs for their employees which promotes Buddhist practices such as meditation. Some schools have even begun introducing meditation sessions for their students to learn basic meditation skills thereby demonstrating the relevance of Buddhism as a tool for living a happy life in modern society.

Compassion

Compassion is another essential Buddhist value that is relevant in modern society. It involves feeling empathy and concern for others' suffering and taking action to alleviate it. The fast-paced environments, especially in modern western societies, often lead people to be consumed by their own lives. Whether it be work lives, social lives, or romantic lives, we often get caught up in our own journeys and can sometimes even tend to be self-centered without much consideration for the happenings of other peoples' lives. In a world where inequalities, conflicts, and crises are prevalent, cultivating compassion and consideration for others can help us develop a sense of connection, community, empathy, and solidarity with others, especially those who are vulnerable and marginalized. Buddhist teachings on compassion emphasize the importance of interdependence and interconnectedness. This insight recognizes that all beings are connected and interdependent, and that our actions have far-reaching consequences that affect not only ourselves but also others and the environment. Such teaching encourages acts of kindness, generosity, and service, which can make a positive impact on others' lives and contribute to a more just and peaceful world.

Wisdom

Buddhism's emphasis on wisdom makes it particularly relevant in modern society, where many individuals are grappling with existential questions and seeking deeper meaning and purpose in their lives. The Buddhist teachings on impermanence, interdependence, and non-self (i.e., abolishing the ego) offer profound insights into the nature of reality and the human condition. By recognizing the impermanence and interdependence of all things, we can overcome the illusion of separateness and develop a more holistic and ecological worldview. This insight is particularly important in a world where environmental degradation and climate change threaten the very survival of our planet. Buddhism's teachings on wisdom and interconnectedness can help us develop a greater sense of responsibility and care for the environment, promoting sustainable practices and working towards a more harmonious relationship with nature. Furthermore, the practice of meditation and mindfulness that Buddhism preaches can help individuals to develop greater clarity and insight, leading to a deeper understanding of the nature of reality and a more fulfilling and satisfying life. Overall, Buddhism's teachings on wisdom offer a powerful tool for navigating the complexities of modern society and finding deeper meaning and purpose in our lives.

Equanimity

Equanimity is another core value in Buddhist teachings that emphasizes the importance of remaining calm and balanced in the face of life's ups and downs. In modern society, individuals face numerous challenges and stressors, ranging from work pressures and relationship difficulties to health problems and financial insecurity. These challenges can often lead to emotional turmoil and stress, making it difficult to maintain a sense of calm and balance. The practice of equanimity offers a powerful tool for developing resilience, emotional intelligence, and the ability to respond to difficult situations with clarity and composure. By cultivating equanimity, individuals can develop a greater sense of inner peace and stability, even amid life's challenges. This perspective is particularly relevant in modern society, where the pace of life is often fast and frenetic, and individuals are bombarded with stimuli and distractions. By cultivating equanimity, individuals can navigate the complexities of modern life with grace and wisdom, promoting mental and emotional well-being. Moreover, the Buddhist practice of equanimity also emphasizes the importance of cultivating a sense of equanimity towards all beings, regardless of their background or circumstances. This perspective can help to promote greater empathy and compassion, fostering a more harmonious and inclusive society.

Buddhism's Relevance in a Changing World

In conclusion, Buddhism's values and teachings have enduring relevance in modern society, providing us with a vision of a more peaceful, compassionate, and wise world. By applying these values in our personal and social lives, we can contribute to a more harmonious and sustainable world. Buddhist youth groups, such as the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group, are important vehicles for promoting these values among young people and fostering a sense of community and service. As we navigate the challenges of a changing world, we can draw inspiration from Buddhism's timeless wisdom and cultivate the qualities of mindfulness, compassion, wisdom, and equanimity to lead noble and prosperous lives.

*"What you think, you become. What you feel, you attract.
What you imagine, you create."
- Lord Buddha*



PRASHAN AMARASINGHE
LBYG PRESIDENT

BUDDHISM AND SCIENCE

Buddhism is a religion that has a rich philosophical and spiritual tradition that has been practiced for over 2,500 years. In recent years, there has been growing interest in the scientific side of Buddhism as researchers have begun to investigate the validity of Buddhist teachings and practices using scientific methods. In this article, we'll explore the intersection of Buddhism and science and examine how these worldviews can complement and enrich each other.

The Science of Mindfulness:

One of the most well-known aspects of Buddhism is mindfulness, which has been defined as "the awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally". Mindfulness practices have been shown to have a range of benefits, from reducing stress and anxiety to improving cognitive performance and emotional regulation.

Neuroscience research has also begun to investigate the effects of mindfulness on the brain. Studies have shown that regular mindfulness practice can lead to changes in the brain's structure and function, including increased prefrontal cortex activity and decreases in amygdala activity, a region associated with emotional reactivity. These findings suggest that mindfulness practices may have neurobiological effects contributing to the observed benefits.

The Four Noble Truths and the Nature of Suffering:

Another key aspect of Buddhism is the Four Noble Truths, which outline the nature of suffering and its causes. The first truth is that suffering exists, the second is that suffering arises from craving and attachment, the third is that it is possible to end suffering, and the fourth is that the Eightfold Path can lead to the cessation of suffering.

While the Four Noble Truths may seem like purely philosophical concepts, they have been the subject of scientific investigation. Researchers have found that negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and anger activate the amygdala and other regions associated with the stress response. Positive emotions such as love and compassion activate the prefrontal cortex and other regions associated with reward and motivation. These findings support the idea that attachment and craving can lead to suffering and that loving-kindness meditation can help cultivate positive emotions and reduce suffering.

Emptiness and Quantum Physics:

The concept of emptiness, or shunyata, is a central idea in Buddhism that describes all phenomena' lack of inherent existence. Emptiness has been the subject of philosophical and theological discussions for centuries, but it has also been compared to the findings of quantum physics.

In quantum physics, the idea of "emptiness" is expressed through the concept of "quantum vacuum," a quantum mechanical system's lowest possible energy state. The quantum vacuum is not empty in the traditional sense but is a seething sea of virtual particles that arise and disappear constantly. This has led some scholars to argue that the concept of emptiness in Buddhism may have implications for our understanding of the nature of reality.

Conclusion:

Buddhism and science are two worldviews that have traditionally been seen as incompatible, but recent research has begun to explore the intersection of these two fields. By using scientific methods to investigate Buddhist teachings and practices, researchers have shed light on the potential benefits of mindfulness, the nature of suffering, and the relationship between emptiness and quantum physics. Some findings suggest Buddhism and science can complement and enrich each other, providing new insights into the nature of reality and the human experience.

*Remembering a wrong is like carrying
a burden on the mind*



NAOMI M. JAYAWARDENE
HEAD OF SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING

A TRIBUTE TO MY PARENTS

Gratitude

As was said by the Lord Buddha:

“Dvinnāham, bhikkhave, na suppatikāram vadāmi. Katamesam dvinnam? Mātu ca pitu ca.

Ekena, bhikkhave, amsena mātaram parihareyya, ekena amsena pītam parihareyya vassatāyuko vassatajīvī so ca nesam ucchādanaparimaddananhāpanasambāhanena. Te ca tattheva muttakarīsam cajeyyum, na tveva, bhikkhave, mātāpitūnam katam vā hoti paṭikatam vā.

Imissā ca, bhikkhave, mahāpathaviyā pahūtarattaranāya mātāpitāro issarādhipacce rajje paṭiṭṭhāpeyya, na tveva, bhikkhave, mātāpitūna katam vā hoti paṭikatam vā. Tam kissa hetu? Bahukārā, bhikkhave, mātāpitāro puttānam āpādakā posakā imassa lokassa dassetāro.

Yo ca kho, bhikkhave, mātāpitāro assaddhe saddhāsampadāya samādapeti niveseti paṭiṭṭhāpeti, dussīle sīlasampadāya samādapeti niveseti paṭiṭṭhāpeti, maccharī cāgasampadāya samādapeti niveseti paṭiṭṭhāpeti, duppaññe paññāsampadāya samādapeti niveseti paṭiṭṭhāpeti, ettāvata kho, bhikkhave, mātāpitūnam katañca hoti paṭikatañcāti.”

-Aṅguttara Nikāya, Dukanipāta, Paṭhamapaṇṇāsaka, Samacittavagga, 33

“Mendicants, I say that these two people cannot easily be repaid. What two? Mother and father.

You would not have done enough to repay your mother and father even if you were to carry your mother around on one shoulder and your father on the other, and if you lived like this for a hundred years, and if you were to anoint, massage, bathe, and rub them; and even if they were to defecate and urinate right there.

Even if you were to establish your mother and father as supreme monarchs of this great earth, abounding in the seven treasures, you would still not have done enough to repay them. Why is that? Parents are very helpful to their children: they raise them, nurture them, and show them the world.

But you have done enough, more than enough, to repay them if you encourage, settle, and ground unfaithful parents in faith, unethical parents in ethical conduct, stingy parents in generosity, or ignorant parents in wisdom.”

-Collections of Numbered Discourses, The Book of Twos, The First Fifty, The Chapter on the Peaceful Mind, 33

Our parents love us selflessly. They feel our happiness and our sadness, they know our discomforts and our fears, they fuel our strength and our motivation. Our parents have taught us the Dhamma and given us the best of everything they can without expecting anything in return. They have and will continue to sacrifice their needs and even their lives for us. Thus, the Lord Buddha says it is not easy to repay our parents.

In the above verse, the Lord Buddha explains that even if one were to carry their mother on one shoulder and their father on the other shoulder for hundred years, and were to look after them by anointing, massaging, bathing and rubbing their limbs, and they were to defecate and urinate on one's shoulders, one would not be able to repay their parents. Also, if one were to establish their parents as supreme monarchs reigning over Earth, one would still not be able to repay their parents.

The Lord Buddha says the only way one can repay their parents is by helping them in their path to Enlightenment by doing the following:

1. Establishing one's parents in conviction (*saddha*) of the Noble Triple Gem; Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Encourage your parents to worship the Noble Triple Gem. Take them to the temple when they are old and cannot go by themselves.

2. Establishing one's parents in morality (*sila*).

Encourage your parents to always abide by the five precepts and to abide by the eight precepts on Full Moon Poya days.

3. Establishing one's parents in generosity (*caga*).

Encourage and assist your parents to give (*dana*) food, robes, shelter and medicines to the Sangha, and to give necessities and gifts to other living beings.

4. Establishing one's parents in wisdom (*panna*).

Encourage and create opportunities for your parents to listen to Dhamma sermons and read Suttas. Show them how and where they can find resources online.

Sabbadanam dhammadanam jinati

The gift of the Dhamma excels all gifts.

-Dhammapada Verse 354

The Lord Buddha gave the invaluable gift of Dhamma to His parents and expressed gratitude to them throughout His life. The Lord Buddha's natural mother, Queen Mahamaya, passed away seven days after giving birth to the Lord Buddha. Queen Mahamaya was born in the Tusita celestial (*deva*) world. Seven years after attaining Enlightenment, the Lord Buddha visited the celestial world and preached the Abhidhamma (The Higher Teachings of the Dhamma) to His mother and other devas for a period of three months.

The Lord Buddha travelled back to His hometown Kapilavastu one year after His Enlightenment. The Lord Buddha preached the Dhamma to His father, King Suddhodana, who attained the noble stages of Stream Enterer (*Sotapanna*), Once Returner (*Sakadagami*) and Non-Returner (*Anagami*). The Lord Buddha visited His father again when He heard about His father's impending death. King Suddhodana became an Arahant by listening to Lord Buddha's teachings before passing away.

When Queen Mahamaya passed away seven days after childbirth, Queen Maha Prajapati Gothami nursed and cared for the Bodhisattva with unwavering selfless love as if He was her own son. Following the Lord Buddha's Enlightenment, Queen Maha Prajapathi Gothami approached the Lord Buddha and requested if she could become a Bhikkhuni (nun). After multiple requests, the Lord Buddha finally accepted Queen Maha Prajapathi Gothami's request and ordained her. Venerable Maha Prajapathi Gothami was the first nun, and five hundred women followed her to create the order of the Bhikkhuni nuns (Bhikkhuni sasana). By listening to Lord Buddha's teachings, Venerable Maha Prajapathi Gothami attained Arahant hood. Furthermore, after Arahant Maha Prajapathi Gothami passed away the Lord Buddha paid respect and homage to her by attending her funeral procession. The Lord Buddha gave Arahant Maha Prajapathi Gothami's relics to kings to build stupas to enshrine her relics.

The Lord Buddha paid immense gratitude and respect to His parents. Through this one can understand the importance of repaying one's parents and showing gratitude for their selfless love.

The teachings of the Buddha given below further exemplifies why we need to treat our parents with utmost respect and gratitude.

Parikuppa Sutta

"Pañcime, bhikkhave, āpāyikā nerayikā parikuppā atekicchā. Katame pañca? Mātā jīvitā voropitā hoti, pitā jīvitā voropito hoti, araham jīvitā voropito hoti, tathāgatassa duṭṭhena cittaena lohitam uppāditam hoti, saṅgho bhinno hoti. Ime kho, bhikkhave, pañca āpāyikā nerayikā parikuppā atekicchā"ti.

-Aṅguttara Nikāya, Pañcakanipāta, Tatiyapaṇṇāsaka, Gilānavagga, Parikuppasutta

"Mendicants, these five fatal wounds lead to a place of loss, to hell. What five? Murdering your mother or father or a perfected one; maliciously shedding the blood of a Realized One; and causing a schism in the Saṅgha. These five fatal wounds lead to a place of loss, to hell."

-Collections of Numbered Discourses, The Book of Fives, The Third Fifty, The Chapter on Sick, Fatal Wounds

In the Parikuppa sutta, the Lord Buddha states that killing one's mother or father are two of the five heinous crimes (panchanantharika kamma) that cause one to be born in the hell of deprivation; one of the realms with the most suffering. The five heinous crimes are:

1. Killing one's mother
2. Killing one's father
3. Killing an Arahant (a fully enlightened one)
4. Shedding the blood of a Buddha
5. Causing a schism in the Sangha

Vasala Sutta

*Yo mātaram pitaram vā,
jiṇṇakam gatayobbanam;
Pahu santo na bharati,
tam jaññā vasalo iti.*

*Yo mātaram pitaram vā,
Bhātaram bhaginim sasum;
Hanti roseti vācāya,
Tam jaññā vasalo iti.*

-Khuddaka Nikāya, Suttanipāta, Uragavagga, Vasalasutta, Stanzas 9 & 10

*Though able, he does not look after
his mother and father
when elderly, past their prime:
know him as a lowlife.*

*He hits or verbally abuses
his mother or father,
brother, sister, or mother-in-law:
know him as a lowlife.*

-Minor Collection, Anthology of Discourses, The Serpent Chapter, The Lowlife, Stanzas 9 & 10

In the Vasala Sutta, the Lord Buddha describes what makes one an outcast (lowlife) in society. The Lord Buddha explains that one's caste is not defined by one's birth, but by one's actions. The above two stanzas from the Vasala sutta state that:

- If one who is able, does not take care of their parents, they will be known as an outcast.
- If one abuses their parents, they will be known as an outcast.

Mangala Sutta

*Mātāpituupaṭṭhānam, ...
...etam maṅgalamuttamam.*

- Khuddaka Nikāya, Khuddakapāṭha, Maṅgalasutta, Stanza 5

*Caring for mother and father, ...
...this is the highest blessing.*

- Collections of Minor Discourses, Basic Passages, True Blessings, Stanza 5

In the Mangala Sutta, Lord Buddha explains the thirty-eight highest blessings that would lead one to achieve success and happiness in this life and in countless future lives. The supporting of one's parents is included as one of the highest blessings; one of the most meritorious deeds.

Mātā yathā niyam puttam
 Āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe;
 Evampi sabbabhūtesu,
 Mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam.

- Khuddaka Nikāya, Suttanipāta, Uragavagga, Mettasutta, Stanza 7

Even as a mother would protect with her life
 her child, her only child,
 so too for all creatures
 unfold a boundless heart.

- Minor Collection, Anthology of Discourses, The Serpent Chapter, The Discourse
 on Love, Stanza 7

In the Karaniya Metta sutta, the Lord Buddha describes how we should share loving kindness to living beings. In above stanza, the Lord Buddha says that we should share loving kindness with a boundless heart, in the same way a mother would protect her child with her life. The Lord Buddha tells us to love all beings as if they are our own. When you are angry, jealous, or scared of a person, think of the way your mother loves you and share the same loving kindness towards that person. The power of metta (selfless love) will protect you from danger and ill-will, allow you to find peace and make you a beautiful person inside and out.

Prayers

It is a Buddhist tradition to worship our parents and say a short prayer. By worshipping our parents daily, we develop respect and gratitude for our parents, and we remind ourselves of how much they do for us. In this life, if you repay your parents even to a small extend you would accrue much merit that will bring you happiness in many lives in your samsara. Always find opportunities to support your parents in their spiritual journey to achieve Enlightenment!

Prayer for worshipping one's mother:

Dasa mase urekatva-posesi vuddhi karanam
 Ayu digham vassasatam-matu padam namamaham

For protecting me within the womb - for almost ten months, and for bringing me
 up well, I worship the feet of my mother wishing her a life of a hundred years.



TERUNI SAMARATUNGE
 LBYG MEMBER

Prayer for worshipping one's father:

Uddikaro alingthva Chumbitva piya puttakam
 Raja majjam supatittham Pitu padam namamaham

I worship the feet of my father who showed me
 affection and helped me to become a good member
 of the society. May he be honoured in royal company.

“The gift of the Dhamma excels all other gifts”

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