

FOOTPRINTS 2022

A MAGAZINE BY THE
LANKARAMA BUDDHIST YOUTH GROUP



Devni Goonaratne

LBYG.LANKARAMA.COM.AU

FOOTPRINTS 2022

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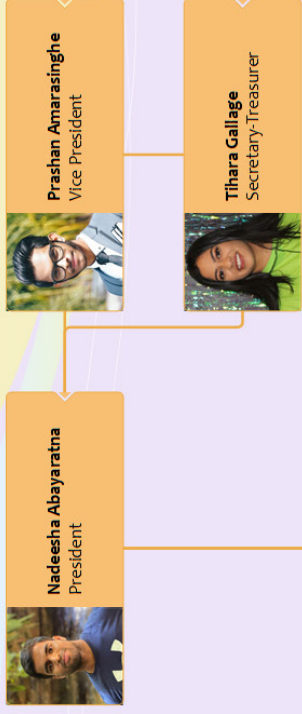
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 2021/22 Edition of Footprints; an edition like no other. As our magazine's previous edition was unable to be produced in hardcopy, this year's publication aims to combine the best of two years' worth of content.

'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.

Following on from the introduction of creative pieces into last years' edition of the magazine, this years' also includes poems and drawings as well as the regular enlightening articles about various Buddhist principles.

A massive thanks goes to our president, Nadeesha Abayaratna, for entrusting me with the responsibility of putting together this publication. It has been my great pleasure to read and look over every submission in this years' edition, and I am immensely proud of the final outcome. Again, I thank Nadeesha as well as Nipuna Weerasinghe for their support and guidance every step of the way. Another thank you goes to Ashnith Wickramanayake for the hours he dedicated to help me iron out the finer details of the magazine.

I am extremely grateful to the LBYG members along with our contributors from the wider community who took the time to research, write and create the variety of submissions you will see in the coming pages.

It is my greatest hope that there is something in here that clicks with everyone; whether it is an image you relate to, an article that sparks a memory or an LBYG event that intrigues you to join our group.

But above all, I hope that you learn something new; maybe there is a topic in here that inspires you to delve deeper, learn more and may even, change your life.

Happy Browsing!



NETHMI RATNAYAKE

CHIEF EDITOR - FOOTPRINTS

VEN. BANTHE PUNDIT ADDRESS

I am pleased indeed about the action taken by Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group to release its annual publication Footprints 2021 /22 this year by using the most popular modern communication methodology, the Internet. It is a very appropriate decision taken by the Lankarama Buddhist Youth community under the current social environment in the State of NSW and Australia.

It is very well-known that the COVID-19 epidemic has disturbed Australia's usual way of life and the whole world. COVID-19 restrictions introduced globally have curtailed the organisation of social activities, which requires the assembly of people. This affects the organisation of religious assemblies as well. In a pandemic like what we are experiencing now, we should all take the necessary steps to adhere to the public health advice and follow good hygiene practices. I would like to give merit to all Lankarama devotees and Sri Lankan Buddhist Vihara Association for continuing Lankarama religious observances in an exemplary manner with Resident Maha Sangha during this difficult period.

At this point, I would like to recall the guidance the Buddha gave us to get ourselves protected and live well. At the time of the Buddha, once he was spending his time in the great ancient City of Vesali, currently known as Vaishali Nagar in the state of Bihar, which was Magadha in India in ancient times. At that time the people of Vaishali had a very bad time.

They suffered from three major disasters. Firstly, it started with famine because they found it very difficult to find food for consumption. Secondly, they became very sick due to unavailability of food. Thirdly, evil spirits and various kinds of misfortunes became rampant. To protect the community of Vesali, the Buddha delivered the Ratana Sutta to help the people get back to their normal way of life. The Buddha requested Ananda Thera to go from street to street with other monks chanting the Ratana Sutta and spreading blessed water to bless the people. Ananda Thera with Five Hundred monks followed the instructions given by the Buddha and helped the Vesali Community to dispel the three disasters they were suffering from.

Therefore, it is vitally important to remember the spiritual power and truthfulness of the Ratana Sutta of the three jewels or three refuges: the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

This Ratana Sutta identifies, in depth, the positive qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Therefore, we should always develop a practice to chant this Ratana Sutta at least once a day as it is going to bless us in many ways and help us lead a practical Buddhist way of life with peace and tranquillity.

VEN. BANTHE PUNDIT ADDRESS

Lankarama Ven. Banthes, SLBVA and Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group have worked together to develop the LBYG and let's continue to further support the LBYG so they can provide a unique service to the youth.

Sabbitiyo vivajjantu - Sabbarogo vinassatu- Mate bhavattvan tarayo - Sukhi dighayuko bhava

May all misfortunes be warded off - May all ailments cease - May no calamities befall me - May I live long in peace.

It is needless to say that the current social circumstances force us to follow a way of life by following positive health habits adhering to the Buddhist way of living.



**VENERABLE BANTHE PUNDIT
MEEGAHAKUMBURE DHAMMAGAVESI THERO**

CHIEF RESIDENT MONK

SLBVA PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Today our youth live in a very complex and challenging environment compared to which their parents lived. They should be in a position to face pressures such as psychological, financial, cultural, spiritual, technological, and educational. 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 wellbeing 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 the dedication of the Venerable Sangha have been the main pillars of existence of Buddhism today. These basic vital foundations required for the existence of Buddhism are being challenged today by individuals and organisations, as they appear to have harvested the fruit from the tree and cut the roots off.

Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group (LBYG) has 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 every one who assisted in the making of "Footprints" a success!



PRABHATH AMARASINGHE

2021/22 SLBVA PRESIDENT

LBYG PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the 2021/22 Edition of 'Footprints'! Thank you for your interest in this publication; I hope your curiosity is well rewarded.

Overview

This year has seen significant change in the structure and processes utilised by the Lankarama Buddhist Youth Group (LBYG). These changes have been greatly supported and executed by the always eager Executive Committee, and the Sri Lankan Buddhist Vihara Association (SLBVA). Our members continue to motivate us to strive in being better leaders and mentors. Our primary aims will always consist of recognizing members' efforts and enabling them to further develop their skills and strengths, while they give back to the community.

Each and every member of our Committee has contributed heavily to our development as a productive and prominent Youth Group. The Social Media Team's consistently top tier posts and engagement with the community through our channels has resulted in a significant increase in our online following and overall presence. The Group Development & Initiatives Team continues to develop membership packs, our membership database, and new methods to incentivize membership and ongoing engagement with the LBYG. The Events Team has been so diligently directed by our Executives, and our Event Coordinators continue to amaze us with their ideas and implementation with each LBYG event.

The upcoming sections of this address will outline significant developments and events which have occurred throughout the current term, thus far. There is still plenty more to come, up until the end of the current term and onwards. I strongly believe what the group has achieved this year will act as a robust foundation for it to continue growing as a prominent youth group – one which gives back to its members and the wider community.

Member Engagement

Our Group Development & Initiatives Team are making great progress in developing membership packs. The aim of distributing these packs to members is to reinforce the structure of the group, maintain visibility on members' roles, establish a group identity, and strengthen the sense of community amongst members. The membership packs are currently expected to include the following:

- LBYG shirt
- Booklet (physical and/or PDF) detailing:
 - LBYG vision, mission, and history
 - Roles and responsibilities of committee members
 - Ways to get involved and make a positive impact
- Accessories (pens, bookmarks, pins/badges)

There's still quite a bit to be done, but we're passionate about creating these and for our members to receive them!

Community Relations

Our group has initiated connections with groups including the Buddhist Council of NSW (BCNSW) and the International Peace Youth Group (IPYG), and will continue to collaborate with these groups with the aim to further develop each other and their communities.

LBYG PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The LBYG hosted the BCNSW at the Lankarama Temple on the 27th of February 2022, for their first board meeting of the year. The BCNSW kindly invited the LBYG to join in on the discussion and to offer insights where possible. The groups exchanged introductions, and discussed a variety of topics including community events, member engagement, collaboration between the BCNSW and LBYG, and more. Following the meeting, the LBYG gave the BCNSW a tour around the temple, and took a few photos together, to mark the start of a wonderful partnership!



The BCNSW and LBYG at Lankarama Temple



The BCNSW and LBYG in front of the Bodhi Tree and Chetiya at Lankarama Temple

The Executive Committee and members attended the 'Break the Bias' High Tea hosted by the Sri Lankan Association Women's Network (SLAWN), an event which facilitated the discussion of issues women regularly face, how they detrimentally affect both women and men, and how everyone can work together to overcome them. I also had the honour of attending the 2022 Premier's Harmony Dinner, thanks to a generous invite from the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2022 Local Organising Committee!



The LBYG Executive Committee at the SLAWN 'Break the Bias' High Tea

LBYG PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Our Social Media initiatives include sharing awareness posts from other organisations, such as 'Evening with a Star', an event hosted by Future Kidz with the aim to raise funds for disadvantaged children's education, in Sri Lanka. Health tips and quotes are posted on Instagram on a weekly basis in the form of 'Mindful Mondays' and 'Wellness Wednesdays'.

Michelle Rowland MP's Visit to Lankarama Temple

On Saturday, 12th of February, the LBYG (and by extension, the Lankarama temple) had the pleasure of hosting Michelle Rowland MP, Federal Member for Greenway.

The day started off with an exchange of introductions and a tour of the temple. The tour involved exploring the Chetiya, Dharmasalawa, and walking around the Bodhi Tree. This was then followed by Michelle, together with our good friend Geeth Geeganage, crafting a Vesak lantern for our upcoming Vesak celebrations. The LBYG then presented Michelle with a small gift as a token of our appreciation for her visit, and some Sri Lankan short eats.

On behalf of the LBYG, I wish to thank Michelle and Geeth for attending the LBYG workshop. The group looks forward to hosting them in the near future!



Michelle Rowland MP with LBYG President and Vice President, Nadeesha and Prashan



Michelle Rowland MP with members of the LBYG and SLBVA President, Prabath Amarasinghe

Move for Movember

In November 2021, LBYG members participated in 'Move for Movember', an event hosted by the Movember Foundation, with the intent to raise awareness of men's health issues.

Together, the team moved over 345km and raised more than \$3,300! Thank you to the members who participated in the event, to those who supported them in their efforts, and to all those who so kindly donated to the participants and the LBYG!

LBYG PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Summer 2022 Retreat

In February 2022, the LBYG Summer Retreat was held at Santi Forest Monastery in Bundanoon, NSW. This event was highly successful with the event reaching the designated max capacity of 30 attendees. More importantly, it was thoroughly enjoyed by those attending, with the LBYG team overjoyed to hear how positively affected they were by participating in this event.

I wish to thank the Venerable Bhikkhunis for bestowing their wisdom on us in such graceful fashion. I also wish to thank our Retreats Team, led by our Retreat Coordinator, Nisali Wellege, for their outstanding organisation and communication with the monastery and attendees prior to the event, and those who so generously donated to the dana (offering) of meals on the day.

'Sacred Space' Sessions

In October 2021, the LBYG debuted its 'Sacred Space' initiative, a recurring event where attendees are encouraged to reflect on Buddhist concepts and share their experiences, thoughts, and sources of inspiration, including poetry, writing, and art.

Topics so far covered include: Making Room for Stillness, Dana (Generosity), Ambition and Love. Most sessions have been held online via Zoom, but as the pandemic and its effects continue to diminish, it's expected more sessions will be held on premises at the Lankarama Temple. The LBYG also has plans to invite religious leaders to attend as guest speakers for some sessions, so they can impart their wisdom to participants.

The Executive Committee wish to thank Gianna Edirimanne, our 'Sacred Space' Coordinator, for the planning and effort she has placed into this, and we believe her enthusiasm will continue to foster attendees' partaking in knowledge sharing.

School Project

Our School Project Team continues to develop ideas for raising funds for disadvantaged schools in Sri Lanka, and will host their first fundraising initiative on Vesak Day (15th May, 2022), by means of a Bake Stall. Future plans for fundraising include a walkathon, cricket day, and art auction. The team's enthusiasm is gaining momentum, and I'm excited to see the group work so well together and how much money we can raise!

'Footprints'

'Footprints' is an annual magazine published by the 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 year upon year.

Previous editions of 'Footprints' are enriched with informative and thought-provoking articles which provide deeper insights into Buddhist principles. We have maintained this tradition while promoting the inclusion of more creative pieces, including poems and illustrations.

LBYG PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The publication of this magazine has been made possible thanks to the submissions of many kind and diligent contributors. I have very much enjoyed reading through their works; I hope members continue to express their knowledge and thoughts through this publication. Please note 'Footprints' articles are published on an ongoing basis through our website, and are collated in the form of a hardcopy magazine once per year, usually during the Vesak period.

I wish to thank our Footprints Chief Editor, Nethmi Ratnayake, for her determination in publishing this edition. With much persistence and eagerness, she has crafted a magazine which will draw in readers and keep them engaged.

I highly recommend anyone reading this considers taking up the role of 'Footprints' Chief Editor in the future. As Chief Editor of last year's (2020-21) 'Footprints' Magazine, I found it to be an incredibly rewarding experience through witnessing the excitement of contributors and leading the publication of their works.

Saying Thank You

I could go on about plans for the LBYG, but I'd spend way too much time writing numerous pages for this address if I don't stop myself, here. I'm incredibly keen to continue leading the team as President until the end of September, when responsibilities will be handed over to the next Committee. I look forward to supporting future leaders and members to the best of my ability, and to lead in other places, with the aim to embrace the strengths of myself and my peers, while supporting our communities.

In the final words of this address, I wish to thank so many wonderful people. I wish to thank my family and friends for their continued care and words of wisdom. I wish to thank the 2021-22 Executive Committee and Committee Members for their ongoing support and invaluable contributions. I wish to thank our general members, and members of the public, who set aside time to volunteer or attend our events, and cement the LBYG as a welcoming, supportive environment, where anyone can join to make greater things happen!



NADEESHA M. ABAYARATNA

2021/22 LBYG PRESIDENT

IS BUDDHISM A RELIGION?

The answer I have consistently heard is “no”. Many describe Buddhism as a way of life, with meditation gaining popularity in the 21st century among Entrepreneurs, Executives, and western communities, in a bid to navigate the ever-increasing demands of contemporary life.

Although most of the western world considers Buddhism as a philosophy, whenever I go to Sri Lanka and visit a temple, I enter into a place that very much resembles a church or a mosque, enshrining inanimate objects of significance, revered by people who look like worshipers. Upon conversing with these worshipers, you soon learn that their view of Buddhism is much like a belief system, revealed a long time ago by someone who is idealised like a god and whose passing away has led to their revelations being interpreted like theology.

I like to characterise myself as a logical thinker, and this is why the question of religion is something that has always fascinated me.

When you distill the purpose of religion into a single fact, it is supposed to be the answer to humans’ search for meaning in their lives. It is this curiosity that is considered dangerous - what if people think there is no reason for living or consequences for their actions? Through this idea is how I believe religions were formed and as word spread of these “answers”, they were translated and transcribed differently which has led to differences between the religions we see today.

This inherent purpose is where I believe Buddhism differs from other religions. The Buddha taught us a method rather than a belief. Buddhism isn’t something to believe in, rather it is something to do. His texts don’t speak of big revelations about the universe or esoteric facts that provide meaning to life - instead, they provide us with a set of tools to begin our journey into gaining the same realisations the Buddha had. He challenged us to find the reason for suffering, how to let go of its source, and finally, how to realise its cessation.

This is commonly known as the four noble truths, which are at the core of the Buddha’s enlightenment and teachings.

What I like about this perspective on Buddhism is that it is inherently scientific. We are given a set of practices and asked to solve a problem - humankind’s search for true happiness and meaning. Most religions aim to help individuals by providing a reason - a simple answer that can miraculously save them. They are reaching for consolation. Buddhism on the other hand should not be viewed through the same lens. The commonality between Atheists and Buddhists is their acceptance that the universe is devoid of reason and meaning, however, it is not their reluctance or disinterest that leads to their agnostic stance but rather their recognition of “I do not know”. The metaphor that resonates with the Buddha’s teaching is that of existential confrontation rather than consolation. This confrontation is what truly leads each human’s journey as they attempt to peel away layer by layer the mysteries of their existence, either by affirming it as something or denying it as nothing.

Shortly before the Buddha's passing away, he refused requests from his disciples to appoint a successor, telling his followers to find their own salvation with diligence. Since then, this agnostic dimension to Buddhism has slowly eroded, leading to Buddhism becoming more institutionalized as a religion in the eastern world and its teachings being uncritically accepted as doctrine verbatim.

In the end, it doesn't matter whether Buddhism is a religion or not, what matters is the individual's journey to realisation. My challenge to anyone reading is to use the tools and teachings in the Dhamma to search for their own meaning, but never forget to keep questioning.

*"No one saves us but ourselves.
No one can and no one may.
We ourselves must walk the path"*

- Lord Buddha



NIPUNA WEERASINGHE

LBYG COMMITTEE - HEAD OF TECH & COMMUNICATIONS

ABHAYAGIRI STUPA

NADEE MANCHANAYAKA

LBYG MEMBER



BUDDHIST PSYCHOTHERAPY

*“According to Buddhist psychology,
most of our troubles stem from attachment
to things that we mistakenly see as permanent”*

- Dalai Lama

Psychotherapy (originally “psycho-therapeia”) was first coined in 1853 by English psychiatrist Walter Cooper. In essence, psychotherapy improves an individual’s mental health through deep conversations, focusing on connecting our thoughts and emotions (Jeon, 2021). Sigmund Freud is famously the first profound contributor to the field, with his explanations of the unconscious, dreams, and models of the human mind. Despite popular belief, the beginning of scientific psychotherapy did not originate in the 19th century, but over 2,600 years ago with Buddhism (Haggerty, 2021).

The practice of Buddhism covers philosophy, psychology, and ethics. It provides theories of the human mind and condition (psychology), beliefs about reality (philosophy) and recommendations for appropriate human behaviour (ethics). The cumulative goal of these different facets of Buddhism is to achieve Nibbāna or the ending of suffering. Having Buddhist practice centred around the achievement of fulfilment and end of suffering makes it intrinsically therapeutic.

Buddhism is increasingly influencing modern psychotherapeutic techniques because its intrinsic nature provides a deep and holistic approach; one which deals with the mind, emotions, and body (Kelly, 2008).

Buddhist psychotherapy is a growing counselling discipline integrating Buddhism, psychotherapy training, and clinical mindfulness (Strong, 2021). The treatment aims to deconstruct the habitual negative patterns that bring suffering and restore positive habits, awakening wellness and happiness through compassionate and loving openness. It centres on the phenomenology that our problems (dukkha) originate from self-clinging (upādāna) (Baehr, 2009). Our recent experiences do not have an independent basis; they are influenced by our sense of self, rooted in our past and conditioning (Fink, 2015). For example, an individual failing to achieve a particular goal within their childhood leads them to develop a mindset that they are not ‘good enough’ or worthy.

Their thoughts then project into their future, becoming an expectation for their tomorrow, next week, next month - perpetuating themselves into feelings of unworthiness throughout their lifetime, if left unresolved (Amir, 2011). Experiencing through a filter of the past and repeated experience creates a world of ignorance, experiencing “what seems to be” rather than “what really is” (Baehr, 2009, p.109).

Buddhist Psychotherapy helps us break free from self-clinging, the habits of thoughts and behaviour which have formed a cage around us. It frees us from automatic patterns of thoughtless compliance while opening our minds to responding with spontaneous presence and wisdom (Baehr, 2009). One of the central techniques used by Buddhist Psychotherapy is transcendental meditation, created by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in India during the 1950s (Hjelle, 1974). Transcendental means to extend beyond the surface. While some forms of meditation focus on the surface of the mind to clear intrusive thoughts, transcendental meditation recognizes a vertical dimension to the mind; a level that is constantly calm, peaceful, and alert (Roth, 2018). Through a mantra (repeated words or sounds), the mind may transcend into a deeper level of calmness, anchoring it to the present moment. This may enable the meditator to experience the world as “what really is” opposed to “what it seems to be” (Baehr, 2009, p.109; Hjelle, 1974; Roth, 2018).

Transcendental meditation should be practiced twice a day for about 20 minutes. It involves sitting with closed eyes while chanting/listening to a mantra. Randomized control trials conducted by Elder (2014) found significant reductions in transcendental meditation groups compared to control groups for variables identified as perceived stress and burnout.

It is important to note that although spiritual practices within Buddhism influence Buddhist Psychotherapy, the therapy does not assume the client or therapist identifies with any religion, and its effectiveness is not dependent on faith. It is a non-religious method for stress reduction, relaxation, and self-development. The practice’s success depends on the willingness and authenticity of the client and therapist engaged in the session (Baehr, 2009). In the wise words of the Dalai Lama, Buddhism is a “science of the mind”, with teachings to contribute, not convert (Baehr, 2009, p. 107).



RIDMEE NANAYAKKARA

LBYG COMMITTEE - PICNIC DAY COORDINATOR

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDITATION

This is an unprecedented time period of human history. We all are aware of the emotional burden placed upon the youth due to lockdown health orders. We all suffer from self-isolation and social distancing. Some of us are prohibited to interact with our beloved family members and friends. Even a casual meet up with a friend or two is a 'No – No!!' Unavoidable health restrictions have placed immense pressure on every one of us creating clouded minds. Is there a way to deal with our clouded minds? Meditation is indeed a positive way to maintain sanity during the challenging times of COVID 19 lockdowns.

Meditation, or *Bhavana*, is an essential part of the Buddhist way of living that provides mental training to achieve a calm and luminous mind; to develop concentration, clarity, emotional positivity, and a calm seeing of the true nature of things. Meditation is the treasured way Great Buddha practised to achieve the complete liberation of mind, towards the realization of the Ultimate Truth, Nibbana.

Two main types of meditation are *Vipassana* and *Samatha*, which require different mental skills and modes of functioning or qualities of consciousness. The Buddhist practice of meditation aims at producing a state of perfect mental health, tranquillity of mind, and understanding of reality.

There are several methods of practising meditation that are beneficial to our health & wellbeing. Most of these methods are easy to follow and quite relaxing. Some of them are as follows:

- 1. Movement meditation** – The use of mindful and purposeful physical activity such as walking, gardening, or any physical activity as a form of meditation. The benefits of movement meditation include increased awareness, decreased anxiety, enhanced peace of mind, and an improved connection with the present moment.
- 2. Visualization meditation** – This method is practised by visualizing a positive scenario or memory to calm anxious feelings and achieve peace, relaxation and serenity. This is heavily used to reduce stress, depression, and anxiety, because of its therapeutic benefits.
- 3. Loving kindness** – Dhamma school students frequently practice this method in their Buddhist learning. By focusing on compassion, equanimity, and kindness towards others, both anger and resentment are diminished. They open their minds to send kind messages to loved ones; family, friends and people all over the world.

Meditation has a history spanning over five thousand years for spiritual purposes. Today, meditation is being widely practised to increase mental wellbeing due to its benefits to the body, mind, and wellness. Buddhist styles of meditation are the most widely practised forms of meditation all over the world. Health professionals advocate that engaging in 5-10 minutes of meditation daily can ultimately lead to deep inner peace, where practising meditation on a regular basis can make a significant impact on our health & wellbeing.

Meditation can be a valuable way to maintain our sanity during these challenging times of COVID 19 lockdowns. Please give it a try!

“May you all be well and happy”

- Lord Buddha



M. DINITHA R. SENEVIRATHNE

LBYG MEMBER

KATINA: ORIGINS AND SIGNIFICANCE

*“Wonderful, indeed, it is to subdue the mind, so difficult to subdue,
ever swift, and seizing whatever it desires.
A tamed mind brings happiness”*

- Lord Buddha

The Katina ceremony is a Theravada Buddhist tradition that is over 2500 years old. It commemorates the conclusion of Vas, a 3-month rainy season retreat that monks undertake between the Esala and Vap full moon Poya days.

In the Buddha's time, there were several major religions in India, including Jainism. Ascetic Niganta Natha Putta was a well-known Jain leader. During the rainy season, he would stay indoors and perform special rituals. Since Buddhist monks have no home, they would often travel between monasteries by foot to spread the Dhamma. However, after criticisms from followers of other religions, the Buddha recognised the potential damage monks could cause by traveling during the rainy season. This included accidentally stepping on insects during their journey. In turn, the Buddha recommended during Vas that monks reside in one monastery, dedicate additional time to practicing the Dhamma and share the Dhamma with laypeople.

Before monks undertake the retreat, laypeople need to invite monks to observe Vas. This ceremony is called *Vas Aradhana* and originated after the Buddha accepted a female disciple's (Visakha) offer to invite monks to Vas and present each monk with a special cloth. When inviting a monk to observe Vas, the layperson assumes the responsibility of ensuring monks are provided with the required food, clothes, shelter, and medication. During this period laypeople will prepare a special robe called the *Katina chivara*.

To signify the end of the Vas period there is a *Pavarana* ceremony. In this ceremony, monks come together to provide constructive criticism regarding their practice during the Vas period. This ceremony provides the opportunity for all monks to reflect upon their spirituality and is followed by a Katina robe offering ceremony. The Katina Perahara is a parade involved with this ceremony during which laypeople offer monks the *Katina chivara*.

The monks decide amongst themselves, who will receive the robe. It is important to note, monks cannot request the robe; instead, it must be given by laypeople of their own accord. The offering is of great significance and is thought to be immensely meritorious.

Overall, the Vas period is an important time for both laypeople and monks. It provides a great opportunity for devotees to listen to pirith chantings and Dhamma sermons as well as participate in religious discussions and meditation programs.

**LBYG PARTICIPATING
IN KATINA ACTIVITIES
OVER THE YEARS**



NISALI WELLEGE
LBYG COMMITTEE - RETREAT COORDINATOR



KATINA 2019: LEARNINGS FROM CREATING A PEACOCK

The Katina Perahera has always held dual cultural and religious significance in the Buddhist calendar. The Perahera, or “parade”, marks the conclusion of the rain retreat, with Buddhist laypeople’s subsequent offering of the Katina robe to the Sangha. This event has formed a rich tapestry of cultural achievement over the years at Lankarama Buddhist Vihara, where laypeople have united in creating lavish mobile displays, playing rhythmic beats on percussive instruments, and performing intricate dance routines.

The year 2019 was no exception – and not simply because it happened to be the last time Katina was held in a blissful pre-COVID history. In 2019, the LBYG Katina team made the innovative decision to construct a blue peacock, rather than the famous walking elephant that had been constructed in years prior.

We had come to this decision due to several factors. Although the elephant constructed for previous Katina events had served us well, it was far too bulky to be stored on temple premises during off-months and unfortunately had to be disposed of. Consequently, a display that was lightweight, compact, durable and that could be more easily dismantled for storage was desired.

We also hoped to produce a display that had not been made before, but also held importance as an animal native to Sri Lanka, and one that reflected Buddhist values. This thought process led us to the blue peacock as LBYG’s featured display for Katina 2019.

As one of the LBYG coordinators for Katina 2019, my intention in writing this article is to preserve the knowledge our team gained in creating the peacock – in particular, the design process, the materials and equipment used, and the outcomes that were achieved. Too often knowledge is lost to the sands of time, so it is hoped that what is documented here will inspire future generations of LBYG members to follow in our footsteps, but also to use their imagination to create something new.



Construction

We began construction of the peacock in September, incrementally working during weekend workshops for approximately six weeks before its presentation during the Katina Perahera on the morning of Saturday October 19th, 2019. The display was built in three parts: first the body, then the tail (or more accurately, the "peacock train"), and finally the head, after which assembly occurred and finishing touches were applied.

Materials

- 6mm Galvanised Wire
- 2mm/5mm Fibreglass Rods
- Blue Silk Satin Fabric
- 'Dragon Scale' Fabric
- Green and Gold Polyester Fabric
- Newspaper
- Polystyrene
- Reddish-Pink Felt Sheet
- Glitter EVA Foam Sheets (Blue, Green, Gold, Silver)
- Light Blue Foam Balls
- Blue Marbles
- 0.5mm Fishing Line
- 12mm x 2m Metal Tubes
- Screws and Metal Plates
- Artificial Flowers
- Thumbtacks

Adhesives

- Copper Solder
- Selleys 'Liquid Nails' construction adhesive
- '3M Super 77 Multi-Purpose Classic Spray' fabric adhesive
- PVA Glue
- Hot Glue Gun Sticks
- Masking Tape
- Cable Ties

Tools

- MAPP Gas Torch
- Hot Glue Gun
- Handsaw
- Sandpaper
- Scissors
- Screwdriver
- Utility Kitchen Knife



Forming the peacock body's frame with galvanised wire.



Winding the 5mm fibreglass rod helically around the body frame.

Body

The peacock body's frame was primarily made of galvanised wire - its properties of flexibility and strength would ensure the frame would be easy to form and hold its shape. As illustrated in the photos, the basic body outline was formed with screws inserted into a worktable with a drill. The wire was then wound around this outline to form the initial 2D frame. As an aside, it is noted that additional length was left in the neck for later insertion of the head into the body. To add depth, three ellipses parallel to each other were wound around this frame in such a way that their planes would be parallel to the ground. These ellipses were formed at approximately a quarter, half and three-quarters of the body's height, and were sealed and connected to the initial frame with copper solder using the MAPP gas torch.

To complete the frame, circles of varying radii were wound around the body, starting from the neck moving back until the end of the body. This was achieved with galvanised wire and copper solder, with appreciable gaps in between the circles. Afterwards, these gaps were filled with a long 5mm fibreglass rod wound helically around the entire body from the neck to the end. Due to its lightweight property, the use of fibreglass would prevent the frame from being too heavy to carry had it been made solely of galvanised wire. The fibreglass rod was secured to the pre-existing frame with cable ties.

At this stage the body's basic frame was complete. To ease the work on the body that remained, the frame was secured to a worktable with metal plates and screws. This decision would also enable easy transport of the body between the work area and storage area in the temple during workshops.

What followed next was the body's dressing with peacock plumage. Newspaper sheets were placed all over the body and attached to the frame with masking tape and the occasional cable tie. Once this was complete, blue silk satin was draped over the body and cut to appropriately sized pieces, before being attached to the newspaper exterior – and any overlapping pieces of fabric – using 3M Super 77 fabric adhesive. This fabric adhesive was used because its stickiness allowed sufficient time to position materials properly, while also enabling efficiency of work due to its fast-drying action. However, the fabric was not adhered to the end of the body just yet, as this would have to wait until the tail was completed and inserted into the main body.

The peacock's feathers were formed from a liberal amount of glitter EVA foam sheets, mostly blue and green colours. Once a simple feather shape had been cut out to the team's satisfaction, it was traced repeatedly with pencil on the foam sheets, in almost tessellating patterns to minimise material wastage. These were then cut out and glued to the silk satin covered body using PVA glue, first from the end of the body towards the front in overlapping fashion. These feathers were also applied until close to the top of the neck.



The finished peacock body frame.

Tail

The tail's frame was made entirely out of fibreglass rods, with the aim that its lightweight nature would help it be positioned upright behind the peacock's body – although ultimately this would not quite be achieved. The main structure was formed from 5mm rods, while 2mm rods were used for the internal support structures, all of which were secured with plenty of cable ties and masking tape. As illustrated in the photos, three vertical and two diagonal excess fibreglass rods were left outside so that the tail could be inserted and attached to the peacock body's frame.

Now that the tail's frame was complete, it was draped with blue silk satin, like the peacock's body. The 3M Super 77 fabric adhesive was used to adhere the fabric over the frame on both sides. To achieve this, slits were made at frequent lengths where the fabric hung over the frame, forming rectangular sections. These sections were sprayed with the fabric adhesive and then attached over the frame onto the fabric.

The tail was decorated with feathers arranged in four radial patterns, placed from the outside first and incrementally towards the centre, so that inner feathers overlapped outer feathers. Each feather had a blue pointed-elliptical shape made as its base, with a smaller green and an even smaller gold ellipse attached on top with PVA glue. These feathers were made from glitter EVA foam sheets, and were attached to the fabric with PVA glue.

Head

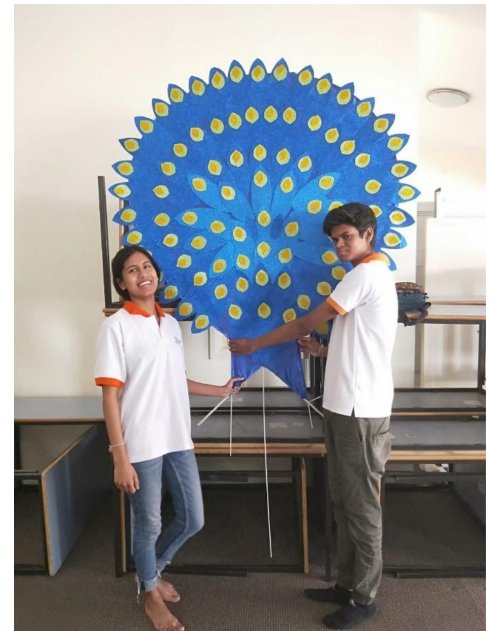
The third and final part of the peacock was its head and upper neck. First, the circumference where the lower neck ends on the peacock's main body was measured, to ensure the upper neck would fit onto it. The head and upper neck was composed from one piece of polystyrene and was carved into its general shape with a sharp utility kitchen knife. The head's features were then smoothed using sandpaper while wearing a mask to prevent breathing in any particulate matter.



Gluing the blue silk satin fabric over the tail's fibreglass frame.



Attaching feathers to the tail's fabric with PVA glue, in radial patterns from the outside in.



The completed peacock's tail. The three vertical and two diagonal excess fibreglass lengths are visible at the bottom.

Once the head's form was satisfactory, it was secured to the peacock's main body. As stated earlier, the body's frame had 4 excess galvanised wire pieces extending upright out of the lower neck, to which the upper neck would be attached. These wire lengths were inserted into the polystyrene head piece until it was positioned correctly and sat flush with the top of the body's lower neck. The head was then removed from the wires, and Liquid Nails construction adhesive was applied to the holes that had formed in the polystyrene. This followed with the repositioning of the head onto the excess galvanised wires so that it was connected to the body while being locked in place with the construction adhesive. Masking tape was also applied to the boundary between the body and head for further security.

Now that there was no longer a head and body separation, decoration of the head resumed in a similar fashion to the body. First, the blue silk satin was cut to size and attached to the polystyrene head and upper neck using PVA glue and the 3M Super 77 fabric adhesive.

Feathers like those that adorned the body were attached with PVA glue up until close to the top of the peacock's neck, while a different feather arrangement was arranged and glued on for the very top. The eyes were formed from green and gold glitter EVA foam and attached to the silk satin fabric with PVA glue. Blue marbles were attached to the foam eyes with a hot glue gun to form the eye's pupils, as well as around the top of the neck to form decorative elements. The beak was formed from gold glitter EVA foam. Pieces of "dragon scale" fabric were cut out and pasted with PVA glue to the bottom half of the head. Finally, the peacock's crown was made from light blue foam balls. It should be noted that the blue marbles and light blue foam balls were purchased from a dollar store.

Assembly and Finishing Touches

The final part of the peacock's construction involved the assembly of the body and tail, and the application of finishing touches. As mentioned earlier, the tail's frame included three vertical and two diagonal excess fibreglass lengths which were specifically designed to be slotted and secured to the peacock body's frame.



Side view of the peacock body with partially completed plumage.



Front view of the peacock body. The four excess galvanised wire lengths that connect to the head piece are visible.

The blue silk satin fabric covering the end of body also had not been glued, expressly for this reason. Consequently, the excess fibreglass tail lengths were carefully inserted into the end of the peacock's body so that the bottom of the tail sat flush with the body. This was followed by reaching into the body and securing the tail's excess fibreglass pieces to the body's frame with several cable ties. The silk satin fabric covering the end of the peacock's body was then sealed in place with 3M Super 77 fabric adhesive, after which the remaining glitter EVA foam feathers were attached with PVA glue.

It was hoped that the tail would be lightweight enough to stand directly upright behind the peacock's body, much like a real peacock's iridescent feathers would appear during a courtship display. Unfortunately, the weight of the tail did not allow this, but two alterations partly remedied this effect.

First, a wooden rod and two fibreglass lengths were attached to the tail's internal structure with cable ties and angled against the table the peacock lay on, to prevent the tail from falling any lower. Second, the sides of the tail were tied to the top of the body with 0.5mm fishing line, so that tensile forces would hold the tail more upright.

This was followed by applying finishing touches to polish the peacock's presentation. The peacock's wings were cut from "dragon scale" fabric and attached to both sides of the body with the hot glue gun. Blue marbles were attached in a ring around the body with the hot glue gun, just as they had been to the upper neck. The body was briefly unscrewed from the table it had been attached to, so that the table could be decorated with green and gold polyester fabric. A placard with the word "LBYG" was created with silver and gold glitter EVA foam sheets and stapled to the front of the table. Furthermore, leftover green EVA foam feathers and blue marbles were attached to the table, with staples and the hot glue gun respectively.

Metal tubes were attached with cable ties to the legs of the table that the peacock rested on, to provide a good hold for carrying it during the Katina Perahera. The tubes were also covered with fabric (attached with the 3M Super 77 spray), to minimise contact with the metal surface while carrying the display. Lotus petals were made from reddish-pink felt sheet and curved into shape by tying them with rubber bands to a tube for a week. Finally, artificial flowers and the reddish-pink lotus petals were attached to the table with thumbtacks, so that they surrounded the peacock.



The body-tail assembly, with wooden and fibreglass supports to hold the tail upright.



The peacock with wings made from "dragon scale" fabric, attached to the feathers with the hot glue gun.

Final Remarks

Ultimately, the project to construct a blue peacock for the 2019 Katina Perahera proved to be a great success. Although there was some uncertainty that the display would be finished in time within the short, allocated timespan of six weeks, progress accelerated towards the deadline and all finishing touches were applied in the final week leading up to the Perahera. During the procession, a team of 8 LBYG members carried the peacock display around the circuit that started from the road outside the temple, led into the temple grounds and around the Dharmasalawa, circled the Bodhi Tree and finally the Cetiya. Without a doubt, the peacock's inclusion in the Perahera injected a sense of colour and vibrancy into the day's festivities.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge every individual who contributed in any way, shape or form to the immense collective effort that created this blue peacock display. I would first like to thank the LBYG members, and parents – in particular, Balasuriya Uncle and Leslie Uncle – who so selflessly devoted their valuable time on the weekend to the Katina display workshops.

The LBYG 2019/20 Executive Committee also deserve special acknowledgement, especially 2019/20 LBYG President Nadee Manchanayaka, Religious Vice Presidents Prashan Amarasinghe and Anupa Abeysinghe, and Katina Coordinators Thushira Singhabahu and Anuja Jayamuni, who were a joy to collaborate with in coordinating this event.

Finally, I would like to thank Kingsley Uncle, who has undoubtedly been the driving force of this entire project. Kingsley Uncle's presence at every step of the way, from inception to delivery, was incredibly valuable in ensuring the project stayed on track, and it is not an exaggeration to say that much of the knowledge documented here is derived from decades of his lived experiences.

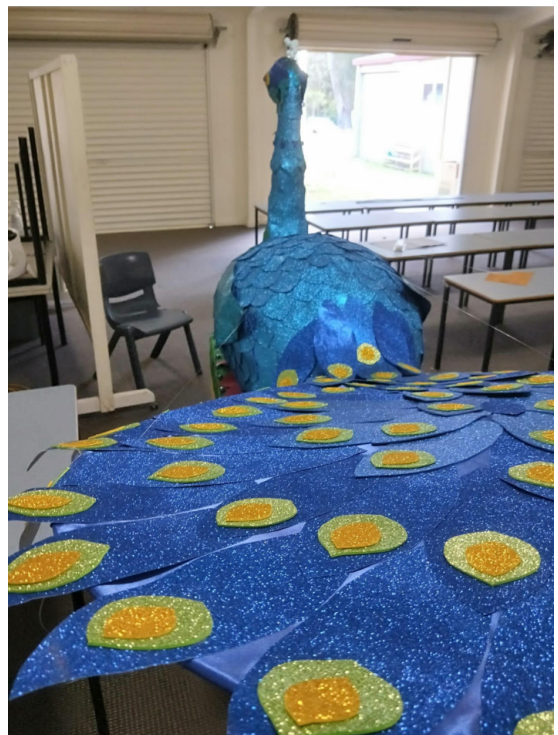
"Learning never exhausts the mind"

- Leonardo da Vinci



ASHNITH WICKRAMANAYAKE

LBYG COMMITTEE - HEAD OF GROUP DEV & INITIATIVES / VESAK COORDINATOR



The body-tail assembly, with 0.5mm fishing line connecting the body's centre to the tail's sides.



KATINA





2019



MY REFLECTIONS ON MEDITATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

“Mind your step”

Meditation has been an integral part of my life for as long as I can remember. As a child growing up in the then green and forested outskirts of Colombo, I remember my late grandmother sitting me down after the evening *Buddha Pooja* and teaching me the basics of *Maithree Bhavana*, which were to show loving kindness to all beings, myself, first amongst them. A monk here in Sri Lanka, well known to my family, even has a photo of me sitting cross-legged on the grass, eyes closed, a picture of tranquility. Whether 6-year-old me was actually meditating is a question to which we will never know the answer.

Fast forward a couple of decades, meditation continues to play a key role in my everyday life, but my personal application of it has changed much along the way. Maybe I speak for most when I say this (for those whom I don't, I envy you), but my life has become incredibly complicated over the last few years. This should have been expected; the further one goes through life, the greater one's needs and wants become and the more one does to meet those ends. This journey is often not the most comfortable ride and is filled with ups and downs. The peaks are typically easier to deal with compared to the troughs, the latter filled with a myriad of unpleasant emotions including frustration, disappointment and anger.

Such things are inevitable, as the *Atalo Dahama* or the Eight Worldly Conditions teach us. What is important is how we deal with it. For the longest time, the definition of meditation to me remained the *Maithree Bhavana*. However, as the complexities of everyday life became a daily occurrence, a pivotal introspection took place. One consequence of this was that I began looking at meditation in a different way. Rather than something that is to be done only while sitting down in peace and quiet, meditation became a daily, nay, perpetual effort.

Mindfulness or *Sathiya* is one of the most important takeaways from the Buddha's teachings. One is being continually mindful of one's thoughts, speech and actions in the day to day. I realized that practicing this was much easier in terms of opportunity to do so than anything that involved me having to find time away from daily work and life. This is something I have incorporated into my life for a number of years, but I'm nowhere near perfect at it. But I have noticed evident changes in myself, for example, in how I react to situations, particularly those of an unexpected and unpleasant nature. At this point, I would like to narrow down what I will talk about in the next few paragraphs. Maybe, after reading, it might help you too. Anger.

For the longest time, I thought anger was only something extreme. Therefore, I considered myself someone who does not get "angry". How wrong was I. Once I started to keep closer tabs on myself and being more mindful, I realized that anger was the emotion that I experienced the most. The phone rings and no one picks it up, I got angry. My mother asks me to hop over to the shop across the road to buy milk, while I was working, I got angry. Somebody disagreed with me, I got angry. A tuk-tuk cuts across me, I got angry. A mosquito bites me, I get angry, slap it, kill it and now I have taken a life as well. I stub my toe against the bed leg, I kicked the bed and hurt my foot even more and it made me angrier.

Now, by angry, I do not mean furious (except maybe with the bed). Just that casual, beneath the surface anger that one chalks off to human nature. But that is still anger. If I died in that moment, well, let's just say, that would be incredibly bad timing.

All this I noticed after I actually started paying attention. I didn't realize it at the time, but this was arguably the most important part. Once I knew it was happening, that is when I decided to try and deal with it. Usually, I try to do this in one of three ways. One is by extending the benefit of the doubt; second through *Meththa* and third is by simply focusing uselessness of getting angry. I think it is important to mention that I do not use all three every time. Horses for courses and all that. Let me illustrate with an example.

Let us take the *tuk-tuk*. As is the norm when one drives in Colombo, a *tuk-tuk* cuts me off. I realize that I am getting angry, so what do I do? I give the *tuk-tuk* driver the benefit of the doubt. Maybe he's in a hurry because he's rushing to the hospital, or some other emergency. The anger immediately subsides. Then I might extend *Meththa* towards him. May he be well and happy and whatever problems in his life causing him to drive like that, sort themselves out. Anger, poof! Gone! The third method I mentioned also works in this scenario, but it is easier to visualize with an inanimate object, for example, my bed. I stub my toe. I start to get furious. But then, I think why? Did the bed move into my way and hit me? No, I am the one who stubbed my toe. If you think about it, I literally went and kicked my bed and then got angry at the bed for what, exactly? For staying completely still in the exact same place it has been for as long as I can remember, the place where I put it. Besides, what good does shouting at the bed do? Pretty much the same amount of good that would come of shouting at a *tuk-tuk* driver. It is at that point, I burst out laughing at the utter ridiculousness of getting ticked off at my bed. Honestly, why?

You may have realized in all these scenarios, I sense the anger coming. When one reaches a state of true, complete mindfulness, even that will cease. But I am nowhere near that stage yet. I am so far only able to realize its onset and deal with it before it pollutes my mind any further or causes me to act out verbally or physically, for example when I killed that mosquito when it bit me. And that has been through being present in the moment. Whether I am brushing my teeth or walking down the road. Always trying to be aware. To be present.

Now, nothing I have said, have I discovered. The Buddha elaborated on all this and much more 2,500 years ago. But sometimes, we forget all that as we get caught up in our seemingly never-ending quest in search of work-life balance. So maybe, after reading this, you will be reminded to be a bit more mindful as you go about your day. Remember, the wisdom hidden within a "Mind Your Step" sign is far greater than you might think.



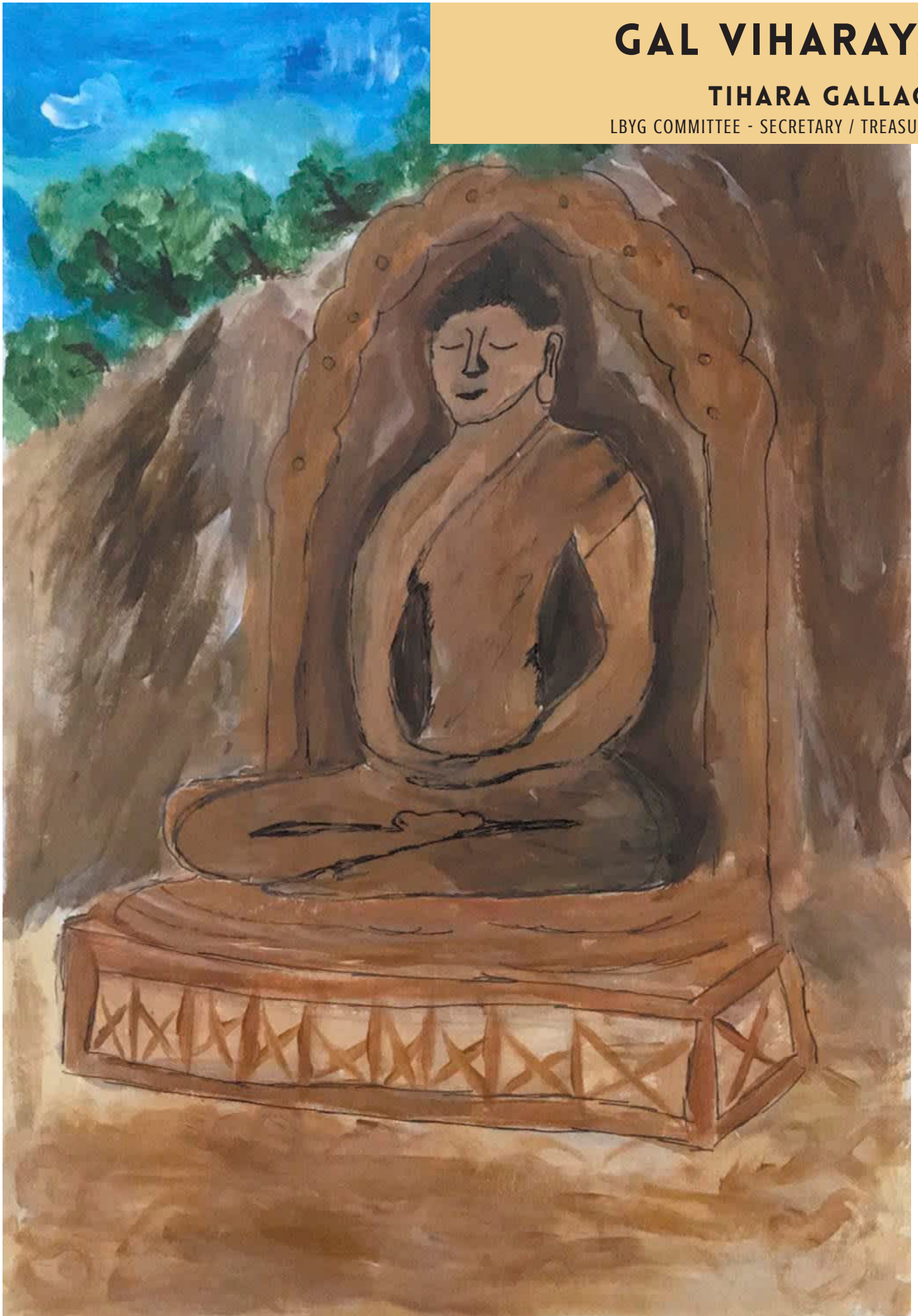
CHARINDA DISSANAYAKE

FOOTPRINTS CONTRIBUTOR

GAL VIHARAYA

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LBYG COMMITTEE - SECRETARY / TREASURER



BRANCHES OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism as a global religion is an ancient doctrine, predating the birth of Christ, spreading across hundreds of countries over millennia. It has been encountered by thousands of different cultures and people groups and translated into dozens of languages and dialects. Over the centuries however, different doctrines within Buddhism have branched off and developed into their own branches. From the inception of the teachings of the Gautama Buddha to the present day, there have been many different interpretations of the Buddha's teachings, but there are 3 prevailing schools: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana.

Before delving into each specific branch, it is important to understand where they agree and where they differ. These sects arose for a variety of different reasons. Some resulted from schisms within the original doctrine, based on their differing interpretations of the Buddha's teachings, or their level of understanding of the dharma. Others were established by adapting to local beliefs and cultures as Buddhism spread around the world.

As different interpretations on what they consider the best path to Enlightenment, each offers their respective methods and draws upon specific Buddhist canonical texts, traditions, and values.

However, at the end of the day, all schools proclaim the virtues of loving kindness and mindfulness, as well as acknowledging the concepts of *anicca*, or impermanence, and *anatta*, the non-self, in perpetuating the cycle of birth and death, otherwise known as *samsara*. Through this, all schools are valid vehicles in overcoming *dukkha*, or suffering, and to attain Nirvana.

Theravada Buddhism is the oldest school of Buddhism, and the most conservative in the sense that there is little difference between the present form and the original teachings of Gautama Buddha. Known in Pali as the "Doctrine of the Elders," Theravada serves as the fundamental basis of modern Buddhism as a whole, even for practitioners of the Mahayana and Vajrayana denominations. The school derives the teachings of the Buddha that are preserved in the most authentic early Buddhist scripture, the Pali Canon, written in Sri Lanka in the 1st Century BCE. The Canon is the original Tripitaka, or three baskets, referring to the baskets used to collect manuscripts, and is divided into three pitaka. These are the Vinaya Pitaka, the Sutta Pitaka, and the Abhidhamma Pitaka, the baskets that held the rules and discipline of the Sangha, the overarching teachings of the Buddha's sermons and discourses, and Buddhist philosophical doctrines, respectively.

Theravada places an emphasis on the individual, in their ability to recognise *anatta*, in recognising one's inherent selflessness, reflected in the 4 stages of Awakening. *Sotapanna*, *Sakadagamin*, and *Anagamin*, are the key steps in breaking the 'fetters' of *samsara*, with the ultimate goal of achieving Nirvana by breaking the cycle of rebirth and becoming an *Arahant*, someone who has become enlightened by following the teachings of the Buddha. Modern Theravada is descended from the Mahavihara Order, the Sri Lankan branch of the Vibhajjavada tradition, themselves a sect of Sthavira Nikaya, one of the earliest Buddhist schools that arose from a schism in the Sangha at the Second Buddhist Council, around 300 BCE. It is most prevalent in South and South-East Asian countries, notably Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar.

Mahayana Buddhism is what most people in Western countries associate with the idea of Buddhism, having the largest number of adherents, with more than half of the world's Buddhists adhering to this school. Mahayana, meaning "great vehicle" in Sanskrit, shares the same origin as Theravada from the Second Buddhist Council, where the Sangha split into two factions: the conservative Sthavira Nikaya, who were ancestors to Theravada, and the reformist Mahasamghika, of whom Mahayana are descendants. As previously mentioned, it uses the traditions of Theravada as a fundamental, as it is the closest to the original scriptures. However, Mahayana views itself as an expansion upon the pre-existing notions of Buddhism, adding new scriptures such as the Mahayana Sutras, and placing emphasis on more cosmic concepts such as Trikaya.

Whereas Theravada Buddhists strove to reach enlightenment to become an arahant, the path of a Mahayana is to become a Bodhisattva, a spiritual being who compassionately vows to achieve Buddhahood, but have deferred their aspirations in order to liberate all beings in the universe from suffering and to help them achieve Nirvana. This is a valid and complex interpretation of *anatta*, of selfless actions to help guide others in the same direction, with the key difference of teaching others rather than following existing teachings.

Further versions of Mahayana introduce the concept of celestial beings who are there to help guide would-be Bodhisattvas in achieving their goals. Indeed, Mahayana depicts the Buddha as being omnipotent and divine, who remains active in helping sentient beings even after attaining Nirvana. Like Theravada, Gautama Buddha is seen as the most recent in a line of Buddhas that constantly appeared throughout history. However, a core belief in Mahayana is the Trikaya doctrine, or the 3 bodies of Buddha: The *Dharmakaya*, or Dharma body, the embodiment of the ultimate truth; *Sambhogakaya*, or Enjoyment body, a reward for a Bodhisattva finally achieving Nirvana; *Nirmanakaya*, or Transformation body, the physical manifestation body.

Mahayana encompasses further complex theories, concepts, and traditions that delve deeper into Buddhist cosmology and theology. Mahayana is most prevalent throughout Eastern Asia, notably China, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam.

Vajrayana Buddhism itself is a subset of the Mahayana traditions, but with further emphasis on the Tantras, or esoteric traditions of Buddhism, which are believed to help accelerate the path to Enlightenment. The term is derived from the Sanskrit word *vajra*, a ritualistic weapon symbolising the indestructibility of a diamond and the power of a thunderbolt, hence translating to "indestructible vehicle." The Buddhist tantras upon which Vajrayana are based upon were created as a reaction to feudalism in Medieval India around 6th Century CE, where kings were seen as physical manifestations of divine beings.

One common factor within tantric Buddhist traditions is the accumulation of rituals and concepts from many different sources, including mantras, mandalas, pagan rituals, yogic tradition, deities, and parts of Indian philosophy. A great deal of importance is placed in the importance of a guru, a religious teacher who has mastered the philosophical and ritual traditions; in Tibet, they are known as a "Lama." While meditation is the primary ritual practiced in Theravada and Mahayana, Vajrayana traditions include more transgressive elements such as the use of skulls, mandalas and other symbolic imagery, singing prideful hymns or stava, ritual sacrifice, or the consumption of taboo substances such as drugs and alcohol.

The driving theory behind these acts of transgression is that all humans have a fundamental impurity or mala that binds them to the cycle of *samsara*. By conducting these actions as outlined by the tantras, the impurity can be removed by expanding one's consciousness. This initial act is known as diksa, initiating the process of liberation with death.

According to the Hevajra Tantra, "By passion the world is bound, by passion it is too released," so by partaking in immoral actions considered unknown by "heretical Buddhists," one may dispel their own immorality with it, and by doing so show reverence to the seeds of enlightenment which all beings possess. Vajrayana Buddhism is prevalent in Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Mongolia, and pockets throughout Central Asia.

All main denominations share many similar traits but differ in how they seek to achieve Nirvana. In Theravada, this is attained by recognising the inherent selflessness of all beings as opposed to Mahayana, where selflessness is used to aid others on their path, while Vajrayana sees the importance of transgressive rituals to achieve this sense of selflessness. Thus, these are the main branches of Buddhism and their traditions.

"Better than a thousand hollow words is one word that brings peace"

- Lord Buddha



MEVAN WIJEKOON

LBYG COMMITTEE - SCHOOL PROJECT COORDINATOR

FIND A WORD

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BUDDHA
SANGHA
DUKKA
ANATTA
KARUNA

MAHAYANA
BODHISATTAVA
KARMA
METTA
MUDITA

SAYDANA
PALI
DHAMMA
NIBBANA
BODHICITTA

ANICCA
THERAVADA
SUNYATA
ARHAT
BODHI

BY INODH DEKUMPITIYA

GOD IN BUDDHISM

Throughout most of the world's religions, the concept and belief in God dictate the fundamental ideologies and pillars of those respective religions. Whether it be the belief and worship of one God, many Gods, or distinct Gods that represent different aspects of life, civilisations throughout history have put their faith and dedicated their lives to a "higher power" or "divine power" watching over them from the heavens. Despite such a widespread ideology dominating much of the world, Buddhism does not adhere to such beliefs.

Before elaborating further, I think it's first important to understand clearly what the concept of God is. Different religions and different schools of thought all have varying definitions for who/what God is. In the monotheistic school of thought, "God is conceived as the supreme being, creator of the universe and the principal object of faith. God is seen as being omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and omnibenevolent." These beliefs are common amongst Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), whereby God is the sole creator of the universe, is supreme, almighty, and has unparalleled power over the universe.

Some Dharmic religions such as Hinduism believe in supreme beings and deities who are seen and worshipped as different manifestations and incarnations of a single God.

Other religions believe in many Gods and divine beings that represent different aspects of existence such as "the God of love", "the God of war", "the God of fire" etc. This brings to question, does Buddhism follow similar beliefs? Did the Lord Buddha preach the existence of a God?

Through the remainder of this article, I will aim to address this question as accurately as possible through general research, understanding, and interpretation of Lord Buddha's teachings. The short answer to my questions above is no, Buddhism does not subscribe to the belief in God, and no, the Lord Buddha did not preach the existence and religious observance to a God. Although Buddhists believe in divine beings such as deities (*devas*), they do not believe in a single supreme God as defined earlier.

At its foundational beliefs, Buddhism focuses primarily on spirituality and achieving a higher sense of mindfulness through various forms of meditation. It emphasises the importance of leading a righteous life full of peace, love, and equanimity to the benefit of the broader community. Buddhist teachings essentially direct focus away from speculation and servitude of a supreme god or deity in the heavens and rather focus on achieving enlightenment and higher spiritual existence.

Furthermore, Buddhism follows the laws of cause and effect (i.e., Karma) and the belief in the continuous cycle of birth which in turn encourages the followers of Buddhism to lead a life focused on serving the people and animals around them rather than serving a God above.

A common motif that's attached to the belief in God is the idea that God created the universe and all beings within it. So, if Buddhist teachings don't agree with the existence of a god, then this brings to question; from a Buddhist lens, who/what created the universe? When it comes to answering such questions, Lord Buddha often avoided giving a direct response but instead insisted that there are some aspects of life that humans are incapable of understanding and the universe didn't necessarily need a creator. He explained that pondering on such questions does not provide much value to an individual's life. He explains that Buddhists should focus on their self-liberation and attaining Nibbana rather than constantly questioning the past or the future. To elaborate, he used the analogy of a man who was shot by an arrow that refused to have the arrow removed and his wounds treated until he found out who shot him in the first place. Wasting his time on such unnecessary questions would ultimately lead to his demise. Similarly, the Lord Buddha promoted concepts of spiritual awakening and righteous living instead of chasing after answers that may not be beneficial to begin with.

Although he refused to give a direct answer to the question of creation, Lord Buddha still suggested that if one insisted on pursuing such questions, they should investigate the sciences, astronomy, geology, biology, and anthropology of the universe.

Similar to a circle or a wheel that has no starting point nor endpoint, the universe is an eternal existence that operates in different phases. This also correlates to scientific theories on the big bang and the big contraction (crunch) in which scientists hypothesise that the universe will keep expanding to a point in which its matter and components will collapse upon itself and contract to a minute element in which the resulting forces and pressure will cause another big bang and hence lead to the creation of a new universe. From a Buddhist perspective, this cycle of life and death, creation and destruction, happiness, and sorrow, and so on, are eternal and so Buddhist strive to be free of such cycles by attaining Nibbana.

The absence of a creator God or an almighty being watching over humans and their actions then brings into question the need to lead a righteous life. If there is no God watching over us to hold us accountable for our actions, is there a need to follow rules, be good people, and do good? Although Buddhism doesn't believe in a God that will punish us if we lead sinful lives, the laws of cause and effect (Karma) are still prevalent in Buddhist teachings. This means that if one does bad deeds and leads an unjust life, they will generate bad karmic energies which will have negative consequences on their life because as mentioned earlier, the universe works in cycles, and "what goes around, comes around". The same is also true when it comes to the law of attraction, which is a western concept that Buddhist ideologies coincide with. If one has bad intentions, surrounds themselves with bad people, and leads an immoral life, they will only continue to attract bad consequences into their lives.

In saying so, the beauty of Buddhism as a religion is that it is a very flexible religion in which followers have the freedom to subscribe to ideologies and concepts, provided they process them thoroughly through their own thought filters and opinions. The Lord Buddha himself said, "Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."

There's a myriad of concepts and philosophies within Buddhism that discusses the notion of a God or rather the lack thereof. This article only touches on a handful of these ideas and hence, I hope it has inspired interest and curiosity to do further in-depth research on the wealth of knowledge and wisdom shared by the Lord Buddha some 2600 years ago.



*"There are only two mistakes one can make along
the road to truth;
not going all the way and not starting"*

- Lord Buddha

PRASHAN AMARASINGHE

LBYG COMMITTEE - VICE PRESIDENT

RELAXATION VS. MEDITATION

“The mind is everything. What you think is what you become”

- Lord Buddha

The abrupt shift in life under lockdown has created stress on most households, resulting in many of us neglecting basic self-care needs related to our mind. Against the uncertain context of our society, it is essential to improve our mental wellbeing, and there are steps that we can take directly from Buddhism, such as mindfulness. Additionally, it is crucial to find ways to relax, because while these ideas might be interrelated, these methods can provide different, but equally important benefits.

Firstly, relaxation relates to having low tension either physically, mentally, or spiritually. This is characterised as the absence of strong emotions such as anger or fear. Examples include doing something that you enjoy, such as reading, exercise, watching a movie, or playing an instrument. Also, assigning separate spaces in your home for work and relaxing can aid this shift from working to relaxing at home. Relaxation is linked to reducing stress and mental health conditions, as well as regulating physiological symptoms including heart rate and digestion.

Reaching a state of relaxation is also integral towards focusing on mindfulness. Mindfulness is the awareness of your environment and yourself. This is different to relaxation as you are able to acknowledge your current emotions, adjust your mindset to reduce stress, and improve your mental wellbeing. Meditating for as little as 15 minutes a day can provide significant benefits such as gaining a new perspective, focusing on the present, increasing patience and creativity, and reducing negative emotions, which is especially relevant to the current state of the pandemic.

Ultimately, relaxation contributes to mindfulness, and becoming more mindful can help you relax better. No matter how you relax or become mindful, it is important to schedule time in the day to have a focus on both of these methods and create these habits; They should continue throughout the lockdown and into our everyday life.



RUKSHALI BADDEVITHANA

LBYG COMMITTEE - SOCIAL MEDIA LEAD



SUNSETS AT RUWANWELISEYA

SUGANDHA HABAKKALA HEWAGE

LBYG COMMITTEE - BAKTHI GEETHA COORDINATOR

THE NINE QUALITIES OF THE BUDDHA

*“Can you count the waves in the ocean?
Sometimes you can count the large waves from the shore.
Similarly, the Buddha’s qualities are immeasurable,
but the Buddha himself condensed them into 9 great virtues”*

-Bhante Seelananda

Since we were young children, we were taught to recite a Homage to the Buddha as a stanza. Little did we know that we were chanting a beautifully concise description of the qualities of the Buddha. The Buddha has innumerable virtues, however, for our ease, he has summarised them into 9 main qualities in this stanza.

Iti pi so bhagavā: araham, sammāsambuddho, vijjācarana sampanno, sugato, lokavidū, anuttaro purisadammasārathi, satthā devamanussānam, buddho, bhagavā’ti.

Thus, indeed, is that Blessed One: he is the Holy One, fully enlightened, endowed with clear vision and virtuous conduct, sublime, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, the teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed.

(The Mirror of the Dhamma by Nārada Thera and Bhikkhu Kassapa)

This stanza is a form of protection; a good way to dispel fear, uncertainty, or uneasiness in different situations. Therefore, having a good understanding of its meaning, and the qualities of the Buddha, is necessary. So, let’s go through them individually.

1. Araham (the Holy One) - Araham, also known as ‘arahant’, is a person who is rid of all impurities and defilements of the mind. Examples of these include anger, jealousy, sadness, desire, lust, gossip, greed, and hatred. Being free of these defilements allows him to have a clear and peaceful mind. He is also worthy of receiving puja from all humans and devas.

2. Sammāsambuddho (fully enlightened) - Sammāsambuddho refers to someone who has discovered, understood, and comprehended the 4 Noble Truths on their own without the help of a teacher or any other being. These 4 Noble Truths are suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering (the Noble Eightfold Path).

3. Vijjācarana sampanno (endowed with clear vision and virtuous conduct) -Vijjā means ‘knowledge or vision’ and carana means conduct, or more simply put – theory and practice. The Buddha was endowed with both; he says as he does, and he does as he says. With this quality, the Buddha holds many types of knowledge and uses this knowledge in the way that he acts.

4. Sugato (sublime) - Sugato refers to the Buddha's quality of being a sublime leader and speaker. Buddha was able to best walk the path to the cessation of suffering, achieve the supreme bliss of Nirvana, and show others the way down this path as well. This was best shown through his virtue as a sublime speaker.

5. Lokavidū (the knower of worlds) - Loka meaning 'worlds', specifically the three worlds; kama loka, rupa loka and arupa loka. The Buddha had the ability to see and understand all these worlds, as well as how they all work together and teach us about them all.

- Kama loka – Human world, six Deva worlds and four Apaya worlds.
- Rupa loka – sixteen Brahma worlds where people with higher meditation powers are born
- Arupa loka – four Brahma worlds where a mind only exists, very high meditation powers will take one there

6. Anuttaro purisadammasārathi (the incomparable leader of men to be tamed) - Anuttaro meaning 'incomparable or unsurpassed' and purisadammasārathi meaning 'tamer of men' together highlight the quality of the Buddha where he is able to rationalise and teach even the most un-tameable of men. One of the most well-known examples of this is the tale of Angulimala, the man intent on making a necklace of 1000 fingers. In this case, the Buddha was able to speak to him compassionately and show him the way back from where he was.

7. Satthā devamanussānam (the teacher of gods and men) - Satthā means 'teacher', deva means 'gods' and manussānam means 'men' together form the Buddha quality of being a teacher to gods as well as men. The Buddha was able to preach the Dhamma to both, in ways that each would understand.

8. Buddho (enlightened) - Buddho, similar to sammāsambuddho, brings back the idea that the Buddha was enlightened with the wisdom of the 4 Noble Truths on his own. He carries deep knowledge regarding the subject and has the wisdom to pass it onto others and show them the way. The Buddha had the ability to see and understand how to preach in a particular way that would ultimately benefit the listener. He was a master at teaching anyone in a way that they would best understand.

9. Bhagavā (blessed) - Bhagavā, the Blessed One is the Buddha who has all of these special powers and more. He is the most fortunate and liberated being, rid of all evil and free of all defilements; he is blessed to have humans and Devas offering him pooja even up to this day; he is Blessed to have all these qualities and more that make him the Buddha.



NETHMI RATNAYAKE

LBYG COMMITTEE - CHIEF EDITOR FOOTPRINTS

REPAYING ONE'S PARENTS

As I sit down for daily prayer
I feel the snug carpet brush my feet,
The strong walls of the house are cold
But I am warm in the room's heat.

Feeling gratitude for the house
That keeps me sheltered, safe and sound,
This is what my parents give me
I send them merit, and love abounds.

As I sit down for daily meals
I taste the good food that nourishes,
The hunger is abated, gone
I get through the day and flourish.

Feeling gratitude for the food
That keeps me content and alive,
This is what my parents give me
I send them merit, and love thrives.

As I sit down for daily travel
I see the Bodhi leaf that protects,
The journey is safe and completes
I come back home and have a rest.

Feeling gratitude for the faith
That keeps me grounded, virtuous,
This is what my parents give me
I send them merit, love flourishes.

As I sit down for daily prayer
I seek refuge in the Triple Gem,
Confident in the life I lead
My heart is light, my mind open.

I wish to repay my parents
Who are worthy of offerings,
Having good, kind-hearted parents
Is a great fortune and great blessing.

Even if I were to hold them
On my shoulders for one hundred years,
They would still not be paid enough
For their deep kindness - it is dear.

Respect and support our parents
Honour their virtues and guidance,
Help them to follow the Dhamma
That way we start to recompense.



POEM BY ACHINI KURUPPUARACHCHI

LBYG MEMBER

PICNIC DAY 2021

On the 18th of April 2021 the LBYG committee members organised a fusion of 'LBYG meet and greet' with 'LBYG family day' and named it 'LBYG Picnic Day'. Picnic day was created to introduce and welcome new members and their families into LBYG, as well as to create a fun-filled day with the current members of the youth group.

The initial stages in organising the event consisted of finding a suitable park to accommodate the possible activities that had been planned. Since most past LBYG events had taken place at Nurragingy Reserve, the committee members were seeking a new location that would be close to both the current members and those that were attending on the day. With all this in mind, Lakes Edge Park was chosen as the most suitable park for our very first Picnic Day.

Lakes Edge Park is located beside a lake with play equipment, several bridges to walk across whilst viewing a metal sculpture rising out of the lake, plenty of greenery, and huts with built-in electric BBQs.

As the location for the event was chosen, it was then discussed amongst the committee members what types of games would be included on this day. Considering this event would have participants of all ages, the games that we had decided for everyone to participate in were:

- **Trivia** - participants were given a sheet full of questions from categories such as Buddhism knowledge, general knowledge, music, tv shows, movies, history, and geography
- **Amazing race** - a competition where teams had specific stops all around the park to complete different challenges to gather clues to help them reach the finish line
- **Broken telephone** - players in their teams stood in a line whilst the committee members sent a phrase to be passed from one person to the other
- **Tug-of-war** - a customary activity that occurs every LBYG event with two teams on opposite ends of the rope trying to drag the other across a centerline

During the weeks leading up to picnic day, the committee members created a Facebook page to spread the word and invite those within the community. Once a considerable amount of people had notified the LBYG committee of their attendance on the day, a list was created to arrange and allocate those attending to preferably bring a plate of food or drink.

Whilst the planning for the day such as the food and items were being established, two of the members – Tihara (LBYG Treasurer) and Sugandha (LBYG President), visited various entertainment venues to obtain sponsors for the upcoming event. Strike Bowling and Holey Moley had kindly agreed and offered 5 tickets for each venue with the inclusion of some giveaways. Within the final week leading up to picnic day, all the committee members started to shop for essential items such as food, utensils, and activity props.

During this time, one of our committee members decided to assemble a winner's hamper with gifts such as a planner, jigsaw puzzle, word search book, bottles, sweets, and car scents to name a few.

The first ever LBYG picnic day was a huge success with those who participated enjoying the new location for the event, the excitement of meeting new faces, and the challenging games that had been planned for our members, families, and friends.

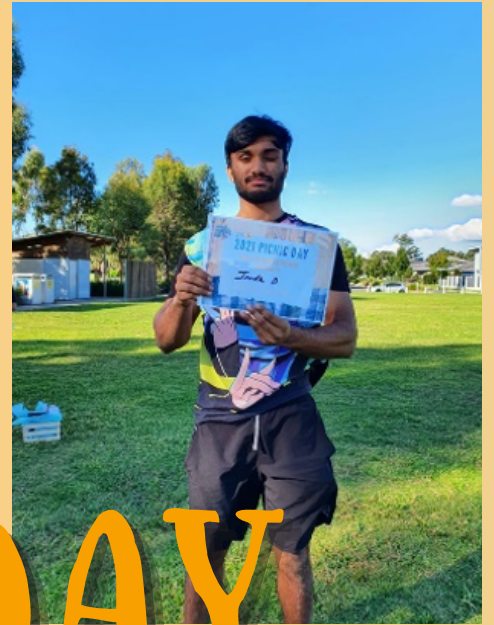
*“Nothing ever exists entirely alone;
everything is in relation to everything else”*

- Lord Buddha

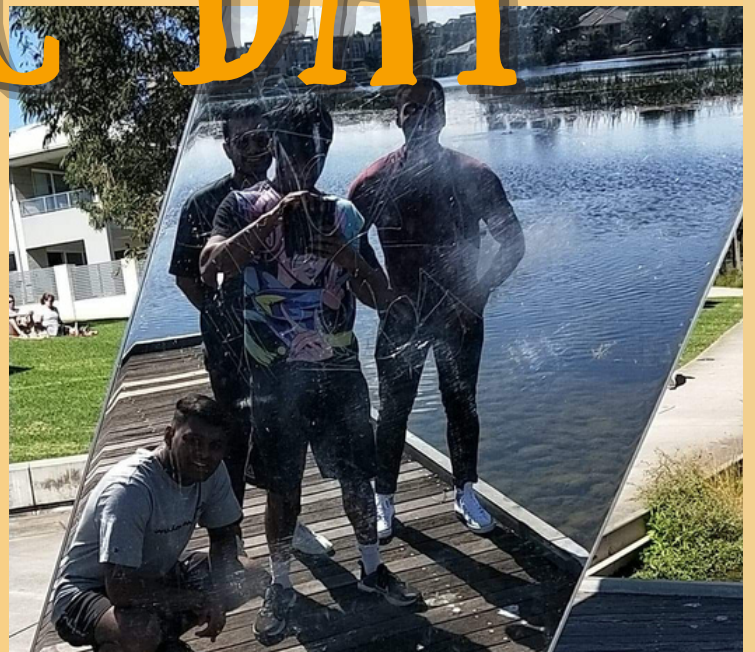


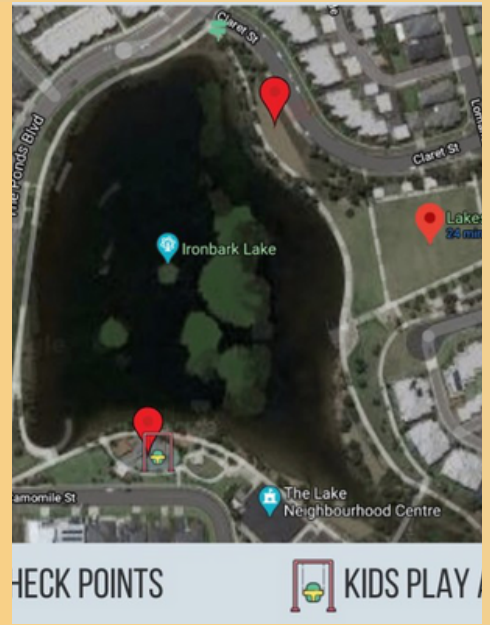
NAOMI M. JAYAWARDENE

LBYG COMMITTEE - HEAD OF EVENTS

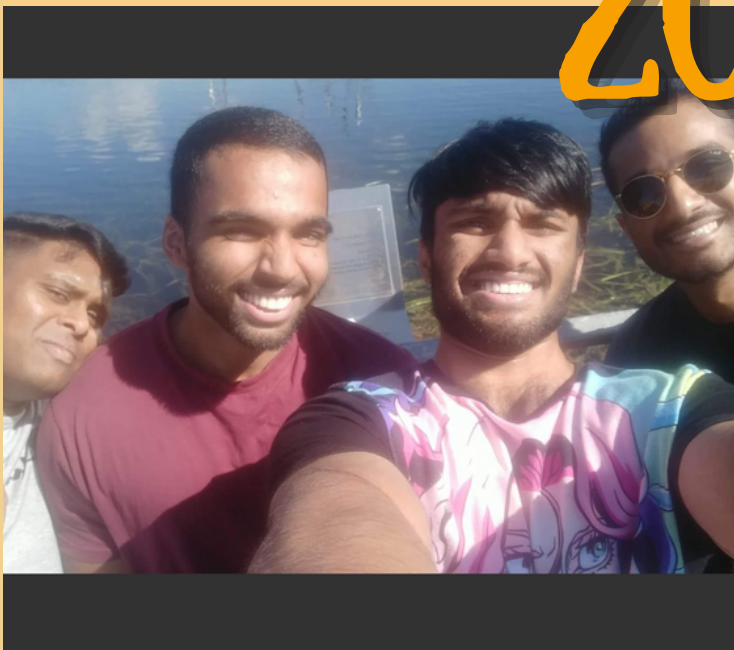


PICNIC DAY





2021



BUDDHISM AND FEMALE MONKS

Lord Buddha not only preached a great Dhamma but displayed great qualities of equality, freedom etc when he created the Buddha sasana. One such great example is allowing females to become monks. At the beginning of the sasana, it was all males who got ordained as monks. When Buddha visited the city of Kapilavastu to preach Dhamma to his father and family, his stepmother Queen Prajapati Gothami entered the enlightened path by becoming Sovan. She was very keen to become a monk.

One day she sought permission from Buddha to become a monk. He did not say no but said "this is not the correct time for it." She asked him again but received the same reply.

A few years later Buddha visited the region again to prevent a war between the Sakyas and Koliyas over sharing of water from the river. Once they listened to Buddha and war was prevented thousands of princes and other males became monks. This left many females without their husbands and other without their fiancés and brothers. All of them looked up to Queen Prajapati Gothami for leadership to seek Buddha's permission to become monks.

One day they decided to walk from Kapilavastu to city of Rajagaha where Buddha was residing at the time. They cut their hair short, wore simple dresses in yellow and started a walk. A total of around five hundred did this with hope, determination and great devotion to dhamma and desire to end the sansaric journey.

Upon arriving at the destination Queen Prajapati Gothami did not want to approach Buddha directly to avoid possible blame on him later that this permission was given due to his close relationship. Such was her devotion to the Buddha. They sought the help of Ven. Ananda for this.

Ven. Ananda approached Buddha and without asking him directly for permission he asked three questions:

1. Can a female attain Nibbana?
2. Can a female be a monk?
3. Were there female monks in previous Buddha sasana?

Buddha answered yes to all the questions. Ven. Ananda then praised Queen Prajapati Gothami and reminded Buddha of how she looked after him after his mother passed away and sought permission for the females who have arrived at the temple to be ordained as monks.

Buddha then instructed Ven. Ananda that females must agree to abide by six rules if they are to become monks. Ven. Ananda informed the group regarding the rules and when they consented they were ordained as the first female monks of this Buddha sasana. This happened on a Full moon day of September. This was followed by thousands of other females who joined the order later and many of them ended their long sansaric journeys with that.

It was a member of this order Rev Sangamitta, daughter of King Ashoka, who brought the sapling of sacred Bodhi tree to Sri Lanka. She started the Bhikkuni order (female monks) in Sri Lanka. This generation of female monks in Sri Lanka lasted for about 1000 years and came to a natural end with low numbers. Despite that there are females who observe higher precepts even today and follow a semi traditional female monk status in Sri Lanka and other countries in order to shorten their sansaric journey faster.

“The art of being happy is to be satisfied with what you have”

- Lord Buddha



LALITH RATNAYAKE

FOOTPRINTS CONTRIBUTOR

BUDDHIST REFLECTIONS ON DEATH AND DYING

“Let the Dhamma and the discipline that I have taught you be your teacher. All individual things pass away. Strive on, untiringly.”

- Lord Buddha

In Buddhism, decaying (*jara*) and death (*marana*) are described as inseparable from the existence of any form of life. Death is a key factor in suffering (*dukkha*) and is a reality of the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (*samsara*). Contemplation on death and experiencing it as a certainty of life leads to a deeper understanding of *dukkha*, a prerequisite to attain freedom from *dukkha*.

This article explores how the Lord Buddha’s teachings (*dhamma*) can help us to reflect on and embrace death as a universal experience, through:

1. Reflections on impermanence and change (*annica*)
2. Meditations on death (*marana-sati*)
3. Confronting death in certain situations.

It is acknowledged that the topic of death and dying is difficult to discuss for many people. This article aims to provide you with some insights to think about in everyday life, as well as to face difficult periods of life.

1. Reflections on impermanence and change (*annica*)

‘All that arises, passes away...’ As all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, that is they are subject to change (*annica*).

This includes oneself, made up of the five aggregates: materiality (*rupa*), feeling (*vedana*), perception (*sanna*), mental formation (*sankhara*), and consciousness (*vinnana*). These five aggregates are interdependent on each other and always in a flux of arising and passing away. This change is so rapid.

All mental factors (*vedana*, *sanna*, *sankhara* and *vinnana*) are named as “*nama*”; *nama* and *rupa* are mutually interdependent. That is, *nama* cannot exist without *rupa* and *rupa* cannot exist without *nama*. There are two forms of death: instantaneous death (what is continuously happening in the current existence) and conventional death (what we normally consider as death at the end of one’s existence) (Personal communication – P.R Kurupparachchi)

One can see *samsara* at a conventional level or with a deep understanding of the flux of continuous change. Either way, *samsara* is an inevitable process with no independent self, soul, or enduring being (*anatta*). *Annica*, *dukkha*, and *anatta* are three universal characteristics of all physical and mental phenomena described by Lord Buddha.

Reflecting on these characteristics together will help us to realise that conventional death is the process of the five aggregates ending in the current existence (however, continue in the next existence if one cannot attain *Nibbana*). There is no self who dies but there is a continuous *dukkha* in the process of existence (Personal communication – P.R Kurupparachchi).

2. Meditations on death (*marana-sati*)

Death (i.e. conventional death) is a strong case of *annica*. From the time of our birth, it is uncertain when, where, and how our death will come. We may die due to any reason, including illness, old age, or accident. However, death contemplation is not meant to be a negative experience.

The main benefit of *marana-sati* is changing our priorities so that we spend our remaining time and energy to develop wisdom practices and gain insight into Dhamma. With guidance, one can begin *marana-sati* by: 1. becoming calm, for example being mindful of the breath (*anapana sati*), 2. focusing on contemplation, such as the fragility or repulsiveness of the body, and 3. reflecting deeply on this. Visualising a decaying body from death to the separation of the skeleton will reduce attachment to the body.

As you practice diligently, you can achieve deep calmness of the mind (*samadhi*). With *samadhi* you can understand the real nature of nama and rupa (Personal communication – P.R Kuruppuarachchi).

3. Confronting death in certain situations

Although the timing of death is uncertain, there are circumstances where confronting death may be more imminent, presenting one with the opportunity to train the mind and to have a better quality of life. For example, there is much potential for dhamma to assist in palliative care. Understanding *annica*, *dukkha* and *anatta* and practicing *marana-sati* and other forms of meditation may assist terminally ill individuals: focusing their minds in the present; realising their consciousness is a guest staying in their body; managing and coping with the physical and psychological symptoms through knowledge of impermanence. With wisdom and receiving compassionate care, one's *dukkha* can be reduced. The body cannot be controlled, but it is possible for the mind to remain clear until the end of life. Developing meditative skills in advance can help this.

Sudden death from accidents or other conditions can be particularly difficult for both the person dying and their loved ones. This reinforces the urgency of developing wisdom to prepare the mind for the moment of death and being compassionate towards all beings. One should therefore resolve to practice the dhamma at every opportunity.

To conclude, death is a key component of *dukkha* but it is also the key to facing our difficult existence.

Contemplating death and understanding the Dhamma helps us to be mindful of our mortality, with fewer attachments and less fear. We come to accept death as a reality, during everyday life and periods of sorrow. Ultimately, we should remember the last words of the Lord Buddha: "Let the Dhamma and the discipline that I have taught you be your teacher. All individual things pass away. Strive on, untiringly."



ACHINI KURUPPUARACHCHI

LBYG MEMBER

THE LONE SEEDLING

In a quiet, damp and lonely place
A lone seedling sprouts with frailty and grace
Braves harsh winds and rains and through heat it strains
Grows tall and wide to embody strength and peace
To branch out and plant seeds as far as it can reach
Its colour then fades and deadwood pervades
Its seeds soon sprout and take its place

*"If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts,
happiness follows them like a never-departing shadow"*

– Lord Buddha



POEM BY NADEESHA M. ABAYARATNA

LBYG COMMITTEE - PRESIDENT

VESAK 2021

For this year's Vesak Day Display, the Executive Committee decided to use the story selected in 2019 for Vesak 2020 and its relevant decorations, as it was cancelled due to the emergence of COVID-19. The story, further detailed in the paragraphs below, illustrates the importance of maintaining moral conduct and how desire can cause negative repercussions.

The Bodhisattva hatched from a golden egg into a golden and radiant peacock due to the immense good karma he accumulated from his past lives. As time went the peacock grew larger than other peacocks and with size, he became more mesmerising. He had never seen his own beauty, until one day when he saw his reflection through some clear water, seeing his radiant golden hue. The Bodhisattva was shocked and knew he would be hunted if he was seen by humans.

The Bodhisattva flew for many months, from mountain to mountain, and he eventually reached the Himalayan mountains. He was able to accomplish this because of his immense good karma that gave him incredible strength. After landing on the tallest mountain, the Bodhisattva thought he was finally safe from all humans and animals. Every morning at the first ray of sunlight, the Bodhisattva climbed up to the top of the mountain. He faced the rising sun and chanted the two verses:

*Udet'ayam cakkhumā ekarājā
Harissavanno pathavippabhāso
Tam tam namassāmi harissavannam, pathavippabhāsam
Tay'ajja guttā viharemu divasam*

"There he rises, sun king all-seeing, making all things bright and illuminating our world with his golden light. Thee I worship, glorious being, keep me safe, I pray, through the coming day."

*Ye brāhmanā vedagū sabbadhamme
Te me namo, te ca mam pālayantu
Namatthu Buddhānam, namatthu bodhiyā
Namattu Buddhānam, namattu bodhiyā
Namo vimuttānam, namo vimuttyā
Imam so parittam katvā moro carati esanā*

"All Buddhas that have lived in this Universe, them I honour and worship with my whole heart. May all these Buddhas protect me. All the Supreme Buddhas, Pācicca Buddhas and Arahants who conquered defilements. I worship them with great respect. I worship the path to enlightenment. May I be protected"

His chanting was so powerful, that not even a rotten branch or leaf fell upon him from that day on. During sunset, the peacock would again chant to gain protection from the darkness.

*Apet'ayam cakkhumā ekarājā
Harissavanno pathavippabhāso
Tam tam namassāmi harissavannam, pathavippabhāsam
Tay'ajja guttā viharemu divasam*

"There he sits, the sun king all-seeing, He that makes all bright with his golden light. Thee I worship, glorious being. Making all things bright with thy golden light. Through the night, as though the day, keep me safe, I pray."

Ye brāhmanā vedagū sabbadhamme
Te me namo, te ca mam pālayantu
Namatthu Buddhānam, namatthu bodhiyā
Namattu Buddhānam, namattu bodhiyā
Namo vimuttānam, namo vimuttyā
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“All Buddhas that have lived in this Universe, them I honour and worship with my whole heart. May all these Buddhas protect me. All the Supreme Buddhas, Pāccekka Buddhas and Arahants who conquered defilements. I worship them with great respect. I worship the path to enlightenment. May I be protected”

The Bodhisattva was able to live in secrecy and protection for 700 years. In the kingdom of Baranasa, there lived a king called Brakmadhata and his queen Khema. One day, Queen Khema saw a magnificent dream of a dhamma sermon from a radiant and mesmerising golden peacock. Soon the queen had a strong desire to actually hear the dhamma sermon from such a golden peacock.

Queen Khema knew the King would not believe her if she told him about the dream, so she made him believe she was pregnant and needed to hear this same dhamma sermon from a golden peacock. The king summoned all his ministers and all the Vedas across the country to find a golden peacock and in return, he promised them the wealth of an entire village or even a palace if they so desired.

The Vedas told him in all their generations they have never seen a golden peacock. However, one Veda mentioned a story told by his ancestors of a golden peacock who lived in the Himalayan mountains. Hearing this, the king became overjoyed and ordered them to find the peacock. The Veda immediately left, armed with spears, arrows, traps, and other weapons. From mountain to mountain he travelled.

After many months, he saw a beautiful golden peacock fly through the mountains. The Veda was stunned - the ancient story was indeed true. The Veda was very skilled in creating traps, and aimed his traps towards the peacock. The traps flew straight for the peacock but at the last minute changed direction. This continued to happen with everything with which the Veda tried to trap the peacock.

He even used a special mantra that would curse that trap into trapping the peacock, but alas, the Bodhisattva's chanting was much stronger. The Veda tried for many months yet was defeated each time. He thought to himself it would be easier to kill the peacock than capture it, and the king would still reward him.

One morning, the Bodhisattva was standing on a tree branch and the Veda aimed his arrow and shot right at it, and again at the last minute, it changed direction. The Veda was stunned as his arrows never missed, he knew there had to be another reason for this and decided to study the peacock. Thus, he followed the peacock everywhere, and one day he saw the peacock travel to the highest mountain and saw it observing the Brakmachari moral conduct.

He realised that the chanting was the secret to the Bodhisattva's protection and that he need to break the moral conduct in order to capture him. The Veda went deep into the forest in search of a beautiful peahen. Once he found one, he taught her to dance when given a signal.

When the time was right, he brought the peahen to the mountains. When the Bodhisattva climbed up the mountain, he stared at the sun, but before he could begin his chanting, the Veda clapped loudly. The peahen chirped sweetly and danced beautifully spreading her feathers. The Bodhisattva, who hadn't heard a peahen in over 700 years was perplexed.

Immediately, he was so mesmerised and infatuated that he forgot his chant and flew towards her. As he landed next to her, he fell into the Veda's trap. Overjoyed, the Veda took the peacock to the king. The king, elated with the Veda's accomplishments, showered him with immense wealth and presents. The king suddenly remembered an ancient tale, that if one eats the meat of the golden peacock, he will be able to live for an eternity. Suddenly, the king cared more about the possibility of immortality than his Queen's wish. He announced to the Bodhisattva that he would eat him in order to live forever and rule as king eternally.

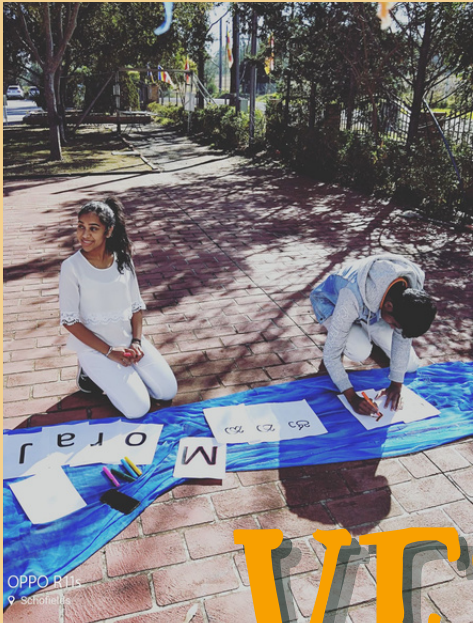
The Bodhisattva ridiculed him: "Oh, King! If it is possible for a creature as exotic and divine as me to die, how is it possible that the one who eats my meat will live forever?"

The king was baffled. He was unsure whether he would be able to kill the Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva told the king of stories from his past lives, informing him of his immense good karma that he accumulated resulting in his present appearance.

The King did not believe him, so the Bodhisattva told him to dig deep inside his lake and he would find a golden cart. The king immediately sent his soldiers out to start digging. They found the cart after some time and, in great astonishment, released the Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva preached the dhamma to the kingdom, and afterwards, flew far away to the Himalayan mountains. In the Mora Jataka, our Bodhisattva lived with exemplary moral conduct. This moral conduct was so powerful that the Bodhisattva lived for 700 years without experiencing harm. However, a single moment of desire was enough to break this moral conduct. Thus, it is clear - always protect your sila, or moral conduct, with mindfulness in every moment.

"Happiness will never come to those who fail to appreciate what they already have"

- Lord Buddha



VESAK DAY





LBYG 2022 SUMMER RETREAT

“Train your mind to see something good in everything”

Over the last few years, the LBYG has held several retreats aimed at providing a day for members and friends to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of everyday life while learning and practicing the Dhamma. This year the LBYG held their summer retreat on the 12th of February at Santi Forest Monastery located in Bundanoon. The grounds of the monastery span 198 acres and provides residence for Bhikkhunis and other female monastics. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the retreat was conducted in an outdoor shelter, which allowed the beautiful and tranquil surroundings to provide a peaceful backdrop for the day.

The retreat centred around the three key themes of creating your own happiness, dealing with stresses within the changing world and forgiveness. The day began with a lovely welcome by the Bhikkhunis and members introducing themselves to each other. The day's first Dhamma discussion explored how creating one's own happiness involves active individual effort and self-reflection. Attendees were also encouraged to share the different stressors they experience with responses including work deadlines, not fulfilling personal goals and familial pressures. The Bhikkhunis provided great insights into managing these issues; including methods such as non-violent communication, being accepting and willing to forgive one's shortcomings, and the importance of being present in the moment.

After an engaging discussion, the LBYG offered dana to the Bhikkhunis. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the dana. Afterwards, the Bhikkhunis invited members for an “excursion” of the property. During this time members were asked to split into 4 groups, each led by a Bhikkhuni. They were encouraged to ask the Bhikkhunis about their monastic journey as well as questions about Buddhism. It was interesting to hear what influenced them to pursue monastic life. The Bhikkhunis also provided great points of view regarding different Buddhist topics such as meditation practice.

During the excursion, attendees were shown one of the nun's huts to highlight the simple life of Bhikkhunis; attempting to maintain the essence of the Buddhist Forest Tradition. Further in the bush was an outdoor meditation area where the Bhikkhunis then guided attendees through meditation to help us practice being present and aware of their surroundings. The attendees then visited a cave in which a nun had carved a beautiful statue of the Buddha. Inside the Bhikkhunis led another guided-meditation session followed by chanting of the Karaniya Metta Sutta (the Buddha's discourse of Loving Kindness).

After an extremely enjoyable and relaxing walk amidst nature, the members returned to the outdoor shelter to discuss forgiveness and undertake a guided meditation. A great point raised by the Bhikkhunis was how forgiving someone provides us inner peace, without condoning the other person's actions. The guided meditation provided attendees an opportunity to reflect upon the importance of forgiveness. For the final part of the retreat, attendees shared what makes them happy and key lessons they will take away from the retreat. There was also a Q&A session where attendees asked the Bhikkhunis various thought-provoking questions.

Overall, the LBYG's summer retreat was a great success. The LBYG is extremely grateful to the Bhikkhunis for bestowing their knowledge of the Dhamma on us and providing the attendees with an extremely informative and insightful program. As the retreat coordinator, I would also like to thank everyone who attended and actively engaged with the retreat. Furthermore, I extend my thanks to Tihara Gallage, Naomi Jayawardene and Nadeesha Abayaratna for their help in organising the event.



NISALI WELLEGE
LBYG COMMITTEE - RETREAT COORDINATOR

A MORNING IN ANURADHAPURA

"If you light a lamp for somebody, it will also brighten your path"

I recently had the fortune of travelling to Sri Lanka for a short holiday. During my time there, my father and I decided to do a daytrip to Anuradhapura, as neither of us had been there in over 2 years.

We departed from Colombo a touch before 4am in the morning. It was dark and there was no traffic on the road, so it was a fairly easy journey which saw us arrive in Anuradhapura by 7:30am. First stop: Ruwanwelisaya.

Most commonly referred to as the Great Stupa, Ruwanwelisaya was commissioned by King Dutugemunu in 140BC. It is one of the most well-known stupas not only in Anuradhapura, but the whole of Sri Lanka as it enshrines the largest portion of relics of the Buddha. It measures 90m in diameter at its base and stands at just over 100m high.

We had come prepared to offer the usual Buddha pooja of kiribath and other various gilampasa items, but we also decided to offer 100 oil lamps, 100 sticks of incense and 100 flowers as well. We first tackled the laborious task of lighting 100 oil lamps followed by using those lamps to light the 100 sticks of incense. We then walked over to the stupa and found a spot to offer the 100 flowers and the rest of the pooja items.

It is an extremely peaceful and calming experience to walk around Ruwanwelisaya. A good place for some quiet self-reflection, pirith chanting and learning of the Dhamma; it would be very easy to spend several hours immersed in the atmosphere of Ruwanwelisaya.



The offerings of 100 oil lamps, 100 sticks of incense, 100 flowers, as well as the pooja in front of Ruwanwelisaya

From there we made our way to our second stop: Jaya Sri Maha Bodhiya.

Jaya Sri Maha Bodhiya is, of course, a cutting of the sacred Bo Tree under which the Lord Buddha attained enlightenment. As noted by English author and historian H.G. Wells, "in Ceylon there grows to this day a tree, the oldest historical tree in the world, which we know certainly to have planted as a cutting from the Bo Tree in the year 245BC." This cutting was brought to Sri Lanka by Theri Sanghamitta and planted in Mahameghavana Park by King Devanampiya Tissa. The word "Bodhi" means "wisdom to understand the Four Noble Truths," hence the tree that helped the Lord Buddha attain enlightenment is called the Bodhi Tree.

A beautiful place to find a quiet spot for some morning meditation, we slowly made our way around the base of the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhiya. Again, we offered some lamps, incense as well as some flowers.

From here we made our way to our third stop: Thuparama.

Thuparama was built by King Devanampiya Tissa on the instruction of Ven. Mahinda Thero. The stupa enshrines the right collar bone of the Buddha. It was built soon after the establishment of the Buddha Sasana in Sri Lanka and the entire Thuparama complex covers approximately 3.5 acres.

Again, we spent a short time here making the usual offerings and chanting pirith, before calling it a day on our time in Anuradhapura.

I am sure I speak for most of us when I say our trips to Sri Lanka quickly fill up with meetings with family and conversations with old friends. This often makes it hard to find time to make trips to places like Anuradhapura to visit and make offerings at some of Sri Lanka's most significant Buddhist sites. However, I hope this demonstrates that you do not need to spend weeks planning a trip. All you need is a day (with a potentially early start from Colombo) to make a trip to Anuradhapura. You can even be home in time for dinner with those cousins you have not seen in years. I guarantee that you will be grateful that you made the effort.



Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi



Thuparama

NETHMI RATNAYAKE

LBYG COMMITTEE - CHIEF EDITOR FOOTPRINTS

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DANA

As was said by the Lord Buddha:

“Evañce, bhikkhave, sattā jāneyyū dānasamvibhāgassa vipākam yathāham jānāmi, na adatvā bhuñjeyyū, na ca nesam maccheramalam cittam pariyādāya timmheyya. Yopi nesam assa carimo ālopo carimam kabamam, tatopi na asamvibhajivā bhuñjeyyū, sace nesam pamiggāhakā assu. Yasmā ca kho, bhikkhave, sattā na evam jānanti dānasamvibhāgassa vipākam yathāham jānāmi, tasmā adatvā bhuñjanti, maccheramalañca nesam cittam pariyādāya timmhatīti.”

-Dānasutta, Itivuttaka 26, Ekakanipāta, Tatiyavagga

“Bhikkhus, if beings knew, as I know, the results of giving & sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would the stain of miserliness overcome their minds. Even if it were their last bite, their last mouthful, they would not eat without having shared, if there were someone to receive their gift. But because beings do not know, as I know, the results of giving & sharing, they eat without having given. The stain of miserliness overcomes their minds.”

-Giving, The Buddha's Sayings, Section One, Chapter Three

The practice of giving (Dana) is a fundamental and basic human virtue that brings much merit when done with good intentions. As noted in the above stanza, Lord Buddha says that the result of giving is so fruitful that if we fully understood the value of it, we would not eat without sharing even if it was the last morsel. In the Suttas (Lord Buddha's teachings), Lord Buddha has emphasised the importance of Dana time and time again. The practice of giving is the first of the three bases for developing merits and gaining happiness in this birth and future births.

The three bases of meritorious activity are:

1. Giving (Dana)
2. Moral Conduct (Sila)
3. Meditation (Bhavana)

Dana is also the first of the Ten Perfections (Dasa Parami). One who aspires to attain Nibbana must cultivate the ten perfections.

You may think that you need to be wealthy to give what you have, but this is a wrong notion. Lord Buddha encouraged everyone to give - even the poorest man - because you do not lose when you give, instead you gain an immense amount of merit that will bring you happiness, good health and wealth for many births to come. If we truly understand the value of Dana, we would always be thinking of an opportunity to give.

How should we give?

In order to yield the most merits from giving to others, a gift should be given:

- In a manner that does not make the recipient feel humiliated or embarrassed.
- With respect, kindness and empathy - a good and selfless heart. You should be happy and mindful as you prepare a gift, when you give the gift and when you reflect and remember about the good deed. You should not expect anything in return.
- With one's own hand. Getting someone else to give on behalf of you, because it is inconvenient for you to do it yourself will not help you overcome your own craving and attachment to worldly desires.
- Because it is something the recipient will find useful. You should not give items that you only want to get rid of, that are unpleasant for you, or things that you do not need. You will earn much more merit by giving items that are precious to you by overcoming your attachment to such items.
- In a manner that will make the recipient feel like coming again to you to bear the fruit of your generosity.

When you practice giving in the manner described above, it would be possible to overcome the root causes of unwholesome deeds - greed (lobha), ill will (dosa) and ignorance (moha). Further you would be able to alleviate qualities such as craving, stinginess, jealousy and anger. When you give with pure and honest intentions you feel a sense of happiness and fulfilment unlike any other.

Who should we give to?

In the Dakkhina Vibhanga Sutta (The Discourse on the Analysis of Gifts) of the Majjhima Nikaya, Lord Buddha explains to Venerable Ananda that there are fourteen groups of recipients that we may give donations to. The fourteen groups are ranked based on purity and virtue, starting with the most supreme:

1. A Samma Sambuddha (the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha)
2. A Pacceka Buddha (a Buddha awakened for themselves)
3. An Arahant
4. One who is on the path to Arahant hood
5. A non-returner (Anagami)
6. One who is on the path to non-returner
7. A once returner (Sakadagami)
8. One who is on the path to once returner
9. A stream enterer (Sotapanna)
10. One who is on the path to stream entry
11. A non-Buddhist ascetic who is free from sensual desire
12. A virtuous person
13. A non-virtuous person
14. An animal

In the sutta Lord Buddha explains that the more virtuous and moral the recipient, the more merit you will gain when giving a gift. Lord Buddha says that giving to any of the first ten in the above list will yield incalculable, immeasurable returns. So dear reader, are you already thinking to yourself about an opportunity to give?

We are lucky to have been born as human beings during the time of a Buddha Sasana (a time when Lord Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha exist). As human beings we can understand the value of giving and we can give mindfully. At home or at the temple, we offer pooja items to Lord Buddha – such as food, water, candles, flowers, incense sticks. When you keep Buddha poojawa you are offering gifts to the most supreme and virtuous recipient possible - the Samma Sambuddha. You should understand that this yields immeasurable merits that will bring you happiness, good health and wealth for eons to come.

Furthermore, giving to the Sangha also brings an abundance of merits to you. Lord Buddha has taught us that we should offer the following items to the Sangha:

1. Civara Dana - Robes to wear
2. Pindapatha Dana - Food
3. Senasana Dana - Dwelling places
4. Gilanpasa Dana - Medicines

When we give an item, we gain the most merit when we do not have attachment to the item or to the recipient. An example of attachment to the recipient, is when we favour someone over another and only give to our favourite. In the context of giving to Sangha, Lord Buddha taught us that we gain much more merit when we offer gifts to a group of Sangha representing the entire Sangha Order. This is known as a Sangika Dana. By offering gifts to one or multiple monks, but keeping the entire Sangha Order in mind, we overcome the feelings of attachment, infatuation and desire.

What should we give?

The practice of giving (Dana) can be classified into three groups:

1. Gift of Buddha's teachings (Dhamma Dana)
2. Gift of fearlessness (Abaya Dana)
3. Material gifts (Amisa Dana)

Of the three types of Dana, Dhamma dana is greatest gift and will result in the most merit for the giver. We can participate in Dhamma Dana by organising sermons, by helping publish and distribute Buddhist books or by being a teacher at a Dhamma school. Below is a stanza from the Dhammapada:

*Sabbadanam dhammadanam jinati
sabbarasam dhammaraso jinati
sabbaratim dhammarati jinati
tanhakkhayo sabbadukkhham jinati.*

*The gift of Truth excels all (other) gifts.
The flavour of Truth excels all (other) flavours.
The pleasure in Truth excels all (other) pleasures.
He who has destroyed cravings overcomes all sorrow.
-Dhammapada Verse 354*

Abhaya Dana, the gift of fearlessness, can be practiced by doing loving kindness meditation and by observing the five precepts. By doing so you will not live with fear of any harm. You will also not cause others to fear you. Abaya Dana is the practice of sharing positive energy by thinking good thoughts and doing good deeds. Lastly, Amisa Dana is the act of giving material items. We should always give appropriate items that we know the recipient needs or will value.

Do not ever hesitate to give

If you ever feel miserly, reflect on Lord Buddha's words from the Kula Sutta, Samyutta Nikaya:

"I recollect ninety eons back but I'm not aware of any family that's been ruined merely by offering some cooked almsfood. Rather, rich, affluent, and wealthy families—with lots of gold and silver, lots of property and assets, and lots of money and grain—all acquired their wealth because of generosity, truth, and restraint."

Whatever adverse situation we are faced with, let us not have any qualms about giving!

"Sabbadanam dhammadanam jinati - The gift of the Dhamma excels all gifts"



TERUNI SAMARATUNGE

LBYG MEMBER

SOWING THE SEEDS OF COMMUNITY - SACRED SPACE

*“You need a community. They remind you when you forget,
and you remind them when they forget”*

- Jack Kornfield

We often create the things we truly need for ourselves.

Buddhism has been my compass and refuge throughout my life, however my journey has been a lonely and isolated one. I would often read books, listen to dhamma talks and meditate in solitude. However, there were many periods of time when I would fall out of practice, a part of me wished I had a friend I could share my learnings with and reflect upon how I can integrate these new learnings into my life.

The extended periods of isolation during the pandemic reminded me of just how crucial it is to be rooted in community in order to restore understanding, learning, strength and awareness. It was in the absence of community that I realised just how healing consistent practice would be during times of uncertainty. In a culture where everyone rushes, everyone is caught up in their habitual patterns, practicing is extremely hard. That is why ‘Sacred Space’ has been my salvation, by sitting beside you, I am pulled back into the present moment.

Sacred Space is a safe and supported container where the spiritual dimension of our human experience can be explored and deepened through community. During this gathering we meditate together and read passages in an informal yet respectful atmosphere. A sense of unity is generated by these gatherings as all insights and reflections are treasured and valued. So far, we have explored the themes - ‘making room for stillness’, ‘dāna - generosity’, ‘what it means to lead both a spiritual and ambitious life’, and ‘love through the Buddhist lens’.

In this space I’ve been able to witness the discovery of our own inner pearls of wisdom and clarity which comes from giving our experiences a voice. I will always be inspired by those little ah-ha moments, when someone’s story deeply resonates with our own, erasing our sense of alienation and revealing our shared humanity. May we continue to bolster one another to embody the Dhamma by honestly meeting ourselves in this moment. May the strength of our roots in community bring about an awakened response which will allow us to rediscover and embrace what is beneficial within the world around us and to rebuild things that are not.



Sacred Space is open to all people of all backgrounds, it is an extension of my heart to expand this community together. I light up at the thought of all the faces I am yet to meet and stories I am yet to hear and I hope it is yours.

GIANNA EDIRIMANNE

LBYG COMMITTEE - SACRED SPACE FACILITATOR

ANAGARIKA DHARMAPALA: AN IMMEASURABLE ACT OF DHAMMA DANA

Anagarika Dharmapala is a revolutionary figure in both Buddhist and Sri Lankan history. He was a prominent contributor to Sri Lanka's independence against the British rule and revitalised Buddhism in Sri Lanka and across the world. Considered a true national patriot, his contribution to Buddhism is priceless.

Early Life and Revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka

Anagarika Dharmapala was born on 17 September 1864. Before and at the time of his birth, Ceylon had suffered years of foreign intervention. Ceylon was under the rule of the Portuguese (1505-1658), Dutch (1658-1796) and British (1796-1948).

Hence, Dharmapala was born in a time when Buddhists were subject to discrimination and harassment. Sinhalese children were given Christian names and sent to missionary schools, including Dharmapala who was born as Don David Hewavitharana.

Although he attended Christian schools, Dharmapala's family was devoutly Buddhist and frequently visited Buddhist temples. He was also influenced by two Buddhist leaders, Venerable Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thera and Migettuwatte Sri Gunananda Thera. The influence of his Buddhist teachings remained strong despite the suppression of Buddhist education by the colonial administration. Dharmapala was disgusted by the violence in the Old Testament and recognised the hypocrisy of Christianity when he witnessed Christians attacking a peaceful Buddhist procession in 1883, at just nineteen years old. This prompted him to leave his Christian education and study independently.

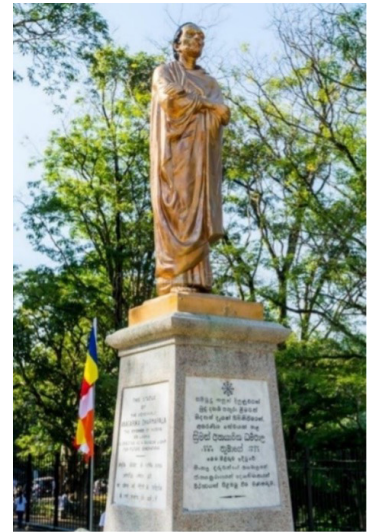
In 1884, Dharmapala became a member of the Theosophical Society founded by Colonel Henry Steel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky. Dharmapala helped Olcott open over 300 Buddhist schools throughout Sri Lanka and revitalize Buddhism through Dhamma teachings and introduction of the Buddhist flag. During this time, he changed his name to Anagarika Dharmapala. Dharmapala means "Guardian of the Dhamma" and Anagarika means "one who has no home", which indicated his dedication to following Buddhism and he took the eight precepts for life.

Maha Bodhi Society of India and Restoration of Sacred Buddhist Sites in India

On January 22, 1891, Dharmapala visited the Mahabodhi Temple, where Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment. He found it in the dilapidated state under the control of a Saivite priest. The Buddha image had been made into a Hindu icon and Buddhists were barred from worship.

To protect the sacred Buddhist places of worship, Dharmapala founded the Maha Bodhi Society on 31st May 1891 in Ceylon and raised funds for the restoration of these sites.

Dharmapala brought legal action against the Hindu priests who had control of the Bodhi Gaya Temple. After many years, there was partial restoration of management to the Maha Bodhi Society in 1949. Today the Bihar State government has the responsibility for the protection and management of the Mahabodhi Temple. *The Bodhi Gaya Temple Act of 1949* states that the management responsibilities must be shared with the Bodhi Gaya Temple Management Committee, which consists of four Buddhist and four Hindu representatives.



Anagarika Dharmapala statue
in front of the Sri Dalada
Maligawa in Kandy, Sri Lanka.



Mahabodhi Temple before restoration (left); Mahabodhi Temple today, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Dharmapala also constructed the Mulagandhakuti Vihara, where the Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* and restored the site of the Buddha's parinibbana (physical death) at Kushinagar.

Dharmapala's work ensured the religious regeneration of Buddhism in India at a time when it was practically extinct, and protected these sacred sites from being under the control of non-Buddhists. We must ensure that we protect the Buddhist places of worship around the world for generations to come.

World's Parliament of Religions

In September 1893, Dharmapala attended the World's Parliament of Religions that convened to create an understanding



Mulagandhakuti Vihara in Sarnath, Isipatana



At the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, September 1893. Left to right: Virchand Gandhi (Jainism), Anagarika Dharmapala (Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka), Swami Vivekanda (Hinduism), and G. Bonet Maury (a French protestant historian)

of different faiths. He represented the Buddhists of South Asia and gave two talks "The World's Debt to Buddha" and "Buddhism and Christianity". At the Parliament, Dharmapala explained the concepts of karma and denied the existence of a creator. He explained the Buddha's teachings as such:

"Accepting the doctrine of evolution as the only true one, with its corollary, the law of cause and effect, he condemns the idea of a creator and strictly forbids inquiry into it as being useless."

Dharmapala also conducted the first Three Refuges ceremony and the first Vesak celebration in the USA. Hence, Dharmapala took Buddhism to the global stage.

The impact today

On 13 January 1933, Dharmapala was ordained a bhikkhu, with the name Venerable Devamitta Dharmapala Thera and passed away three months later on 29 April 1933.

Anagarika Dharmapala's final words were:

"Let me die soon. Let me be reborn. I can no longer prolong my agony; I would like to be born again twenty-five times to spread the Buddha Dhamma."

Even his final thought was to spread the Dhamma to all corners of the world. Therefore, as young Buddhists, we must be grateful for him as the teachings of the Lord Buddha and sacred Buddhist sites may have been lost to us otherwise. It is our duty as the next generation to make sure that the teachings of the Buddha are protected and spread around the world in the form of Dhamma dana.

"If the mind is clear, whatever you do or say will bring happiness that will follow you like your shadow"

- Dharmapada



DINU SAMARATUNGE

LBYG MEMBER

MOVE FOR MOVEMBER CHALLENGE 2021

*“Though one may conquer a thousand times a thousand men in battle,
yet he indeed is the noblest victor who conquers himself”*

-Lord Buddha

Introduction

Movember is an annual fundraising event hosted by the Movember Foundation, held in the month of November, and famed for its involvement of growing moustaches. It seeks to address mental illness and suicide, prostate cancer, and testicular cancer – the three largest issues that pose a significant threat to the longevity and quality of life of men. Since its inception in 2003, the charity has funded over 1200 projects across 20 countries and engaged men’s health experts across the world, with the purpose of fundamentally changing the way men in need are treated and supported, and ultimately, reducing the number of preventable deaths in men.

One of the visions of the 2021/22 LBYG Executive Committee is that the LBYG be more involved with wider community initiatives, even if they are not necessarily in the Sri Lankan or Buddhist domains. Although the LBYG continues to engage in its own fundraising initiatives (such as the annual School Project), we recognise that initiatives which promote cohesion within the youth group, uphold Buddhist values and positively contribute to the wider community, should also be championed. The Movember event was by all metrics a great opportunity to raise both awareness about mental health and men’s health, and much-needed funds for a worthwhile cause. And so it was that in the month of November 2021, four Mo Bros and one Mo Sister – Nadeesha Abayaratna, Nipuna Weerasinghe, Rukshali Baddevithana, Senith Vidanapathirana, and I – would sign up as a team to represent the LBYG in the 2021 Move for Movember Challenge.

The Challenge

The Move for Movember Challenge presents participants with the challenge to run or walk 60km over the month of November, for the 60 men lost to suicide every hour across the world. Unfortunately, men are one of the groups greatest at risk to suicide, as they account for 75% of all suicides. Due to the stigma surrounding mental illness, and societal conditioning that men should not be vulnerable or express their emotions, many experiencing mental illness continue to be undiagnosed or untreated. However, had these men received adequate intervention, support and treatment, this loss of life would be largely preventable. This challenge was thus a worthy platform for our team to unite on, in raising awareness about mental health, while engaging in one of the best activities to improve one’s general wellbeing and mental health – regular exercise.

At the start of the month, we set up our individual and team’s Mo Spaces (i.e. donation pages) on the Movember website, where supporters could kindly donate, leave comments of support, and view our progress in meeting our individual 60km targets, and team’s 300km target. We initially set our fundraising goal to be \$2500, an average of \$500 raised per teammate. The five of us then proceeded to promote our participation in this fundraiser and raise awareness about mental health through our individual social media accounts (such as Facebook and Instagram), personal messages to our peers, colleagues, friends, and family, and through the LBYG platform. Nipuna’s company had an internal donation-matching scheme, which greatly helped the cause. The four male participants, Nadeesha, Nipuna, Senith and I, also grew out our moustaches over the month.

Each of us recorded our activity using fitness-tracking apps or devices such as Strava, ensuring that the distances and times that were subsequently logged on our Mo Spaces were accurate. Over the course of the month, we found ourselves alternating our exercise between shorter-distance lengths performed more frequently, and longer-distance lengths performed more occasionally. As the month progressed and each of us settled into a rhythm, the benefits of regular exercise – such as better sleep, an elevated mood, and increased running stamina – became apparent.

In addition, I eventually discovered Strava had a route-mapping function from my frequent use of the app. As a result, from careful examination of the street maps of neighbouring areas, I created a few “Strava Art” pieces, including “Australia” in Norwest, “Cassowary” in Stanhope Gardens, “Neuron” (in the spirit of mental health) in Bella Vista, and “Fish” in Kings Langley. It was an incredibly enjoyable exercise to map out these elaborate routes in the real world as a team, balancing the challenges of not overshooting the streets on the route, taking care to perform road crossings, maintaining a similar pace, the threat of our phone batteries nearing 1%, and the occasional wet weather, but ultimately being rewarded with great conversation, camaraderie, and a completed artwork painted with the brushstrokes of our movement.



Final Remarks

By the end of the month, our collective fundraising efforts proved to be extremely fruitful. As a team we raised an incredible \$3309 and moved 345 km collectively, more than achieving our respective targets of \$2500 and 300km. Our gratitude goes to the many donors and supporters of our team, without which this outcome would not have been possible. It was heartening to see so many of our peers, colleagues, friends, and family support us over the month-long challenge, while appreciating the importance of this fundraiser in addressing critical aspects of men's health, especially mental health and suicide prevention.

I also wish to thank my teammates Nadeesha, Nipuna, Rukshali and Senith, for their inspiring fundraising efforts and great friendship over the month. As a team, we proved that the youth group could positively and successfully contribute to wider community initiatives. I therefore have no doubt that the LBYG will continue to engage in these efforts with fruitful results in the future.



ASHNITH WICKRAMANAYAKE

LBYG COMMITTEE - HEAD OF GROUP DEV & INITIATIVES / VESAK COORDINATOR

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