



KALYĀNAMITRA

Buddhist Chaplaincy Support Group

BCSG Newsletter

Fostering spiritual support in the community Volume 5 Issue 2 December 2010

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Mission

To support and facilitate individual Buddhist chaplains enabling them to provide Buddhist spiritual and pastoral care to the community inclusively, effectively and professionally within a multi-faith environment.

'Gift of dhamma excels all other gifts.'

CHAPLAINCY TRAINING SESSIONS

Chaplains and Trainee
Chaplains only

Venue: The Buddhist Society,
58, Eccleston Square, London
SW1V 1PH

Time 10.00 am - 300 pm

Please bring your lunch.

Sundays: 12th december 2010
06th February 2011

Buddhist Chaplaincy Training Day 14 November 2010

"A friend in need..."

Not to abandon someone in adversity' (*āpadā-su na jahati*) is the **sixth** quality which epitomizes a *kalyānamitta* (true friend). Sunil spelled out the topic drawing mainly from the Pali Canon. The Buddha's language is very precise. The emphasis here on the word *āpadā* (the derivative nominal of which is *āpatti*) is interesting. *Āpadā* / *Āpatti* refers to the adversities caused by one's own actions whereas corresponding cognate *vipatti* refers to those caused by any external causes which doesn't necessarily have anything to do with one's willful action(s). As we know, the results of one's own deliberate actions, and their rippling effects, are referred to as *kamma* (*karma*) (action) and *phala* (*result*) respectively in Buddhism. *Karma* in Buddhism is just one out of five laws that are operative in the cosmic universe. These actions and their results (*karma* and *karma phala*) consist of both wholesome and unwholesome experiences of their doers. A *kalyānamitta* does not abandon a friend either to commit (if he she is in a position to prevent it) such *karma* (actions) or to bear the results of such bad *karma* exposing one to it if s/he is able to help with it. The role of a *kalyānamitta* thus is to support one in the direction of wholesome *karma* by preventing one from engaging in unwholesome and support one even when one is in the process of bearing not so pleasant results of one's own unwholesome *karma*. In this process, a *kalyānamitta* selflessly demonstrates his/her true and genuine friendship. This, in turn, provides an opportunity for both the giver and the receiver to develop wisdom and clear understanding. True friendship thus opens doors not only to great compassion but wisdom too.



Breathing with Loving-kindness

Mr. Keith Munnings managed to take the trainees through a practical session of meditation which combined both Bhrahmaviharas and different lengths of breath which provided a sound foundation for the day. Remember to keep breathing not just for yourself but for others as well!



Buddhayāna: the Common Ground of Buddhist Schools

Mr. Anil Gunawardane, the author of the *Buddhayāna* delivered the day's guest speech. His talk divided up firstly to a general section: that the foundation teaching is common, and secondly as an example to look at the texts dealing with selflessness (*anatta*). The first part of his speech referred to the birth of the Buddha in 623 BCE, i.e. before Christ, and forty-five years of his teaching after the Buddhahood (enlightenment). Then he drew our attention on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd councils. After the second council, there were divisions: the start of Buddhist schools of the Elders (*sthaviravāda*) and of the Mahāsaṅghikas who held different views on some items of the Discipline. The third council held at the time of Emperor Ashoka, about the 3rd Century BC was attended by only the Sthaviravādins. As usual in every council the teaching was recited, rehearsed and finalised. There was the fourth council in the first century BCE when the teaching was written down in Pāli at Alu Vihāra in Sri Lanka, as a result, the capacity of change of the teaching was reduced.

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There was also a fourth council held in the north of India in the first century CE. This was mainly attended by the Mahāsaṅghikas. They wrote the texts in Sanskrit. Both these traditions categorized the texts more or less in the same manner: the monastic rules, the Sūtras, and the Abhidharma. There was no substantive difference in the teaching. The Pāli canon has been the basis of the teaching and practice of South Asia: Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand and so on. The Sanskrit canon existed in North India until about 11th century and got decimated by the advance of Islam. However, the Sanskrit canon had already been translated into Chinese. There were new Sūtras written in the Northern tradition, but they covered the same material in a different style. Buddhism was introduced to Tibet, too, around 7th CE. From China Buddhism went to Korea and from Korea to Japan. Yet, the foundation teachings of Buddhism are common to all these countries.

Selflessness & Emptiness

The three signs of being refer to impermanence, non-satisfactoriness and selflessness (no-I). To anchor the teaching *the Buddhayāna* refers to the Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy by Prof Donjiro Takakusu for the Mahāyāna, *the Buddhism of Tibet* by the Dalai Lama for the Tibetan teachings, and the Pāli canonical texts for the Southern Tradition.

Prof Takakusu lists the three signs of being starting from selflessness. He even adds nirvanic bliss as the fourth. The Dalai Lama says that all products are impermanent, all contaminated things are miserable (*dukkha*), and all phenomena are empty and selfless. It is the same idea that we find in the Southern (Theravāda) tradition, too in terms of the three signs of existence.

Selflessness is set out in the Anattalakkhaṇasutta in the Pāli canon. By listening to it all the five ascetics became arahats (free of defiling tendencies). This discourse teaches: this body is not self. If the body were self it would not be subject to *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness). Since this body is not self it is subject to *dukkha*. Similarly, the feelings, perceptions, volitions and consciousness are not self. These five aggregates are the Buddha's analysis of a living being.

Some religions talk about a soul, an unchanging entity that each living being has. After a person's death it goes to heaven, hell or God or Brahma. According to some other religions it is only human beings who have souls. However, the Buddhist view is different. All living beings are classed as one, but living in different planes. Plants are excluded because they do not have the capacity to think, or motivate themselves. So the plants do not come within this particular classification of living beings.

The human personality: the five aggregates are constantly changing. The body, like the other aggregates, for instance, consists of different energies. A living being is a process of matter units and mind units. The body aggregates are analyzed into four main divisions: solid, liquid, heat and motion, and in other words: earth, water, fire and air respectively. The Abhidhamma divides them into various multitude of entities.

The body is the form. The feeling is the first impressions that the living beings get of other objects. The perception is recognition of these senses. The volitions are voluntary mental activities. The fifth is the six kinds of sensory consciousness: of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and the mental consciousness. What we call an individual is a process of aggregates comparable to a continuous flow of a river which does not consist of the same water but there is a river.

No Self but Rebirth: according to Buddhism there is a continuing and changing stream of consciousness. The flame of a candle is burning and changing. It is not the same in the second moment what it was in the first moment. This is the explanation given in the Southern (Theravāda) Buddhism. The same teaching is explained in the Northern schools of Buddhism in terms of *śūnyatā* (emptiness). It is an extension of the idea of selflessness. There is nothing self-existent. The Prajñāpāramitā sūtras explain the emptiness of the five aggregates.

There is one slight difference: in the Southern Buddhism selflessness is explained as an analysis in which the individual things are minutely analyzed whereas in the Mahāyāna Buddhism it is one of syntheses where the emptiness is seen by intuition, which is called the *prajñāpāramitā*. However, taking the texts of both Southern and Northern traditions of Buddhism they cover the same ground though expressed in different words.

