

The Path of Joy

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Celebrating Vesak Day 2017 in Singapore and Sri Lanka.



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*If my sickness is of benefit to living beings,
let me be sick.
If my death would benefit them, may I die.
But if my recovery would help, may I be cured.
Bless me to accept whatever happens with
JOY and use it as my **PATH**.*

Gyelsay Togmay Sangpo

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Bhante Says

The Profound Implications of Vesak Day for Buddhists

On the 1st day of each year, we always wish each other *'Happy New Year.'*

But, actually, for Buddhists, the happiest day of the year is Vesak Day, the most important day for Buddhists to celebrate.

It is the day of the birth of the Buddha as a prince, the day he attained enlightenment after living for 35 years and the day he passed away at the age of 80 years.

There is a huge difference between an ordinary human being and a Buddha.

Even calling him a *'human being'* is questionable because, when he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, he was completely and irrevocably transformed.

We know that, soon after he attained enlightenment, the Buddha was asked by a curious brahman what he was. The questioner was impressed by the Buddha's appearance. He could not believe that the Buddha was a human being and so asked him a series of questions.

"Are you a deva?"

"Are you a gandhabba?"

"Are you a yakkha?"

To each of these questions, the Buddha replied, *"No."*

Perplexed by the Buddha's denial, the questioner finally asked him. *"Then, are you a human being?"*

To the utter astonishment of the questioner, the

Buddha again said. *"No."*

The brahman finally asked the Buddha, *"Then what sort of being are you?"*

The Buddha finally explained.

"Brahman, the fermentations by which — if they were not abandoned — I would be a deva: Those are abandoned by me, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

The fermentations by which — if they were not abandoned — I would be a gandhabba... a yakkha... a human being: Those are abandoned by me, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

"Just like a red, blue, or white lotus — born in the water, grown in the water, rising up above the water — stands unsmear by the water, in the same way I — born in the world, grown in the world, having overcome the world — live unsmear by the world.

Remember me, brahman, as 'awakened.'

And so, the Buddha himself chose the title by which he is most commonly known to this day.

The word, *"Buddha,"* means *'an awakened one'* which cannot be applied to any kind of being, whether human or celestial, let alone a being in the lower realms like hell.

Although the Buddha was, at the time he was asked the question, still living and breathing in

the form of a human being, his mind had been totally purified. All his defilements or negative emotions had been uprooted and destroyed. He was, in effect, a perfect being, incomparable to any being, even a god.

What is noteworthy here is that, by saying that he was *‘awakened’*, the Buddha answered the question with pin point accuracy and as a matter of fact, without any pride or sense of accomplishment.

There are a couple of important implications here, as I shall explain.

Firstly, the answer implied that his mind had awakened to the reality of this world. What is that reality?

Impermanence is the first characteristic or nature of reality as realised and taught by the Buddha.

If you reflect on your own life from birth to this present moment, you will obviously observe that there have been so many changes. If you ask yourself, *“Am I fully satisfied with my life?”* you may think, *“Yes, I am.”*

But that happiness or satisfaction is not permanent. It comes and goes from moment to moment as everything is constantly changing. Because of this, there is unsatisfactoriness, dissatisfaction or, sometimes, even pain or suffering, the 2nd characteristic of reality that the Buddha taught.

So when you like things that are going on, you are happy. But those very things that bring you happiness can just as effectively make you unhappy as, for example, when they leave you or change in any way that you dislike.

Sometimes, even if the external factors do not change, the passage of time alone can transform our happiness or pleasure to unhappiness or suffering.

On a hot day, for example, after we have walked for some time in the burning sun, we feel wonderful when we enter a cool, air-conditioned room.

But after we have stayed in the room for an hour or so, we may start feeling cold and we may then turn down the air conditioner to a more acceptable level or switch it off entirely. Then, after a while, we may decide to turn the air-conditioner on again.

The 3rd and final characteristic of reality according to the Buddha is *non-self*.

We always talk about ‘non-self’ but, at the same time, we are always influenced by our sense of *‘self’*.

When we live in a small house, we may have a small sense of *self* but when we live in a bigger house, our sense of self grows. In this way, when we accumulate more things or more wealth, our sense of *self* increases. But this *self* is always changing. There is no permanent *self* in our bodies or minds. So clinging to our sense of *self* is like clinging to a dream as if it were true.

The Buddha was the one who was awakened to these three characteristics of this world. This is the greatest revolution that has ever happened in the human world.

Secondly, there is another, more profound, implication of the way the Buddha described himself, one which affects all of us in the most fundamental way.

If the Buddha was a celestial or supernatural being, the implication is that we are all, by definition, incapable of attaining enlightenment. Why? Because we are human, not celestial or supernatural, beings.

Conversely, if the Buddha had described himself as a *‘human being’*, that would also not be true or accurate because, as I have explained above, he had fully and irrevocably transformed himself when he became enlightened.

But, when the Buddha said that he was *‘awakened’*, it implied that we, as ordinary human beings, are asleep. Being asleep, we can always awaken like the Buddha did.

No matter how horrible or desperate our situation is, even if we are in prison or in hell, there is nothing inherent in any of us or in anything we may have done that can prevent us from attaining enlightenment by realising the Four Noble Truths and practising the Noble Eightfold Path, which the Buddha taught specifically for assisting us to be liberated from suffering, though the spiritual path may, of course, be longer or more problematic for some compared to others, depending on our specific circumstances.

In a sense, we can call this the promise and hope of the Buddha nature in all of us.

Thus, contrary to popular misconception, rather than Buddhism being pessimistic for being obsessed with suffering, as some ignorant people claim, the message of the Buddha is the most hopeful possible.

I will end here by giving a short explanation of the offerings that we traditionally make on Vesak Day.

When we make offerings to the Buddha to celebrate Vesak Day, we do this to show our appreciation to the Buddha for giving us clarity and hope in the midst of confusion and hopelessness, and light in the presence of darkness.

But the greatest appreciation must come from our own hearts.

If we follow the teachings of the Buddha and make a sincere effort to practise his teachings, that is the greatest offering we can possibly make to the Buddha.

May you all achieve your spiritual aspirations to the highest level possible as quickly as possible.

Bhante (Dr.) B Dhammaratana

Religious Advisor

Buddhist Library

Reference:

Dona Sutta: With Dona: AN 4.36. Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu
<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.036.than.html>

Article

Sitting with Uncertainty

by Mike Min Zheng Hou

Most of us don't like uncertainty. It is unsettling, and we feel uncomfortable. We prefer certainty over uncertainty in many aspects of our lives: from the mundane (e.g. whether the bus will come on time or not; whether a meeting with a client will go smoothly or not), to the supramundane (e.g. whether we will find the 'right' partner in our lives or not; whether we will have a favorable afterlife or not). These are questions that most of us ask ourselves frequently, although it is not without a good reason.

Understandably, certainty has its merits and practicalities.

With certainty, there is a sense of order and predictability, which makes living feel a lot more manageable, especially in our modern society that greatly emphasises efficiency.

In this vein, routines and habits can be important and useful in enabling us to fulfill the roles that we play in our social lives, and coping with the stresses of our everyday living.

Yet, it is when the quest for certainty becomes an obsession – when we no longer act as mindful and autonomous agents, but instead feel owned and compelled by this need – that it (obsession) takes a toll on our psychological and spiritual well-being.

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Celebrating Vesak Day

Some people, when they meet some important people, they behave differently, when they meet a beggar, they behave differently. That's totally wrong.

*His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama,
Building Bridges: Religious Leaders in conversation
Organiser: Theosophical Society of America*

In this issue of POJ, we commemorate the most important event in the Buddhist calendar, namely, Vesak Day. On that day, Buddhists celebrate three momentous events – the birth of Prince Siddhartha Gotama, his attainment of enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree thirty-five years later and his passing away at Kusinara forty-five years after that. Three events all falling on the same day and the same month of the lunar calendar.

“That’s amazing,” a non-Buddhist friend of mine said recently when I explained to him the significance of Vesak Day in response to his enquiry.

“Sure,” I replied. *“He was an amazing person!”*

To illustrate how amazing the Buddha was would take many volumes but here’s a simple story from his life that does the job quite adequately for our purpose.

This is a beautiful story that begins with Ananda, the Buddha’s cousin and personal attendant, and ends with the Buddha himself.

I first heard this story in a podcast by Jack Kornfield.

Intrigued, I tried to locate the sutra that relates it but in vain. Fortunately, I came across the story again in Thich Naht Hanh’s book, *Old Path, White Clouds*, which contains a comprehensive account.

One day, on his way back to the monastery after his usual alms round, Ananda felt thirsty and requested a girl at a well for a drink. The girl refused his request saying that she was an untouchable person who could not give a drink to him without polluting him.

Ananda assured her that there was no problem and repeated his request. The girl then relented.

Unfortunately, in the process, she became infatuated with Ananda.

To cut the story short, on another occasion, Ananda accepted from the girl a drink she had laced with a love potion. Fortunately for Ananda, he was rescued by a monk despatched by the Buddha to look for him.

When Ananda returned to the monastery with the girl and her mother, the Buddha gave a teaching which is worth quoting in full here.

“The Buddha gently asked Prakriti, “You love Bhikkhu Ananda deeply, don’t you?”

Prakriti answered, “I love him with all my heart.”

“What is it you love about him? Is it his eyes, his nose, or perhaps his mouth?”

“I love everything about him - his eyes, his nose, his mouth, his voice, the way he walks. Master, I love everything about him.”

“Besides his eyes, nose, mouth, voice, and walk, Bhikkhu Ananda possesses many beautiful qualities which you do not know yet.”

“What qualities are those?” asked Prakriti.

The Buddha answered, “His heart of love is one. Do you know what Bhikkhu Ananda loves?”

“Sir, I do not know what he loves. I only know that he doesn’t love me.”

“You are mistaken. Bhikkhu Ananda does love you, but not in the way you desire.

Bhikkhu Ananda loves the path of liberation, freedom, peace, and joy. Thanks to the liberation and freedom he experiences, Bhikkhu Ananda often smiles.

He loves all other beings. He wants to bring the path of liberation to all others so that they too may enjoy freedom, peace, and joy.

Prakriti, Bhikkhu Ananda’s love comes from understanding and liberation. He does not suffer or feel hopeless because of his love, unlike the way your love makes you feel.

If you truly love Bhikkhu Ananda, you will understand his love and you will allow him to continue living the life of liberation he has chosen.

If you knew how to love in the way Bhikkhu Ananda does, you would no longer suffer and feel hopeless. Your suffering and hopelessness result from your wanting Bhikkhu Ananda all to yourself. That is a selfish kind of love.”

Prakriti looked at the Buddha and asked, *“But how can I love in the way that Bhikkhu Ananda loves?”*

“Love in a way that will preserve the happiness of Bhikkhu Ananda as well as your own happiness. Bhikkhu Ananda is like a fresh breeze. If you catch a breeze and trap it in a prison of love, the breeze will soon die and no one will be able to benefit from its coolness, including yourself. Love Ananda as you would a refreshing breeze.

Prakriti, if you could love like that, you could become a cool, refreshing breeze yourself. You would relieve

your own pains and burdens and those of many others as well.”

“Please, Master, teach me how to love in such away.”

“You can choose the same path as Bhikkhu Ananda. You can live a life of liberation, peace, and joy, bringing happiness to others just as Bhikkhu Ananda does. You could be ordained just as he (was).”

Thus the Buddha taught Prakriti how to love with compassion, wisdom and renunciation. As a result, she was happy to ordain as a nun and eventually attained enlightenment herself.

If we want to appreciate the true significance of Vesak Day, one way is to bear in mind that the most wonderful quality of the love and compassion that the Buddha practised and taught is that it is profound, universal, consistent and, above all, unconditional.

No one is undeserving of the Buddha’s love and compassion. He has love and compassion for everyone. And ‘everyone’ includes not only untouchables but also animals, ghosts and hell beings. And we don’t even have to be Buddhists or to worship the Buddha.

Even those among us who may have committed serious offences are not excluded. In the story, Prakriti was not only an unfortunate being shunned by society but she had also drugged a monk, no less. Yet the Buddha neither condemned nor punished her. On the contrary, he taught her. And he taught her so skillfully that she agreed to live the life of a nun.

In short, there is only one thing we need to be to deserve the Buddha’s love and compassion – a sentient being.

And, if we are grateful to the Buddha for the tremendous opportunity he afforded us to practise the Dharma, the best way we can return the favour, so to speak, is to try and emulate his example to the best of our ability in any way we can.

In this issue, we are happy to bring you some great memories of the celebrations held by BL and its sister organization, Paramita Meditation Centre in Kandy, Sri Lanka, to celebrate Vesak Day this year.

As always, I wish you pleasant reading.

Chwee Beng

Editor

Reference:

Old Path, White Clouds by Thich Naht Hanh. Published by Parallax Press.
<https://terebeess.hu/zen/mesterek/Thich%20Nhat%20Hanh%20-%20Old%20Path%20White%20Clouds.pdf>

*A foolish man clings to wrong views,
 Mocks the teachings of the righteous.
 Such a person reaps what he sows,
 Inviting ruin and destruction
 Like the fruit-bearing bamboo tree.*

*By oneself is evil done,
 by oneself is one made impure.
 By oneself is evil undone,
 by oneself is one made pure.
 Each one is responsible for purity and impurity
 No one can cleanse another.*

*One should heal oneself
 before attempting to heal another.
 Learn first before teaching another.
 Let each one embrace his own truth
 And devote himself to its fulfillment.*

The Dhammapada

Translated by Ven Balangoda Ananda Maitreya

BL EVENT

MOTHER'S DAY 2017

Date : May 7, 2017

Venue : Buddhist Library Auditorium

Photo Credit : Yeo Koon Teck



BL EVENT

BL'S VESAK DAY CELEBRATION 2017

Date : May 10, 2017

Venue : Buddhist Library

Photo Credit : Tan Yew Beng



BL EVENT

PARAMITTA MEDITATION CENTRE'S VESAK DAY CELEBRATION 2017

Date : May 10, 2017

Venue : Paramita Meditation Centre, Kandy,
Sri Lanka

Photo Credit : Joe Lim

Note : Paramita Meditation Centre was founded
by our (Dr.) Bhante Bellanwila Dhammaratana
Thero and sponsored by members, friends
and supporters of the Buddhist Library.



BL EVENT

EIGHT PRECEPTS RETREAT 2017

Date : April 14, 2017

Venue : Buddhist Library Auditorium

Photo Credit : Yeo Koon Teck



BL EVENT

LABOUR DAY RETREAT 2017

Date : May 1, 2017

Veneu : Buddhist Library Auditorium

Photo Credit : Yeo Koon Teck



BL EVENT

DHAMMA TALK by PROF FRANK HOFFMAN

Dates : May 10 to May 12, 2017

Venue : Buddhist Library Auditorium

Photo Credit : Yeo Koon Teck



This might occur more commonly than we expect. For example, in our workplace, we may feel uncertain about how our superiors evaluate us. We fear losing out. We want our bosses to like us and to give us a good appraisal and promotion. As a result, we feel the need to curry favor with the leadership or to sabotage our competitors, in a manner that could be 'out of character' with how we feel about ourselves and what we deem as morally correct.

In our relationships, we may feel uncertain about our partner's loyalty. We may fear being cheated on. We want our spouse to be loyal. Consequently, we may feel the need to 'tighten' our control over our partner emotionally and head down the path of mistrust and hostility.

In our spiritual development, we may feel uncertain about where we are headed to in our afterlife. We fear a 'bad' rebirth. As a result, we feel compelled to practise rituals and accrue merit – not out of our genuine belief but instead out of fear.

What is the Buddhist response to uncertainty?

As the saying goes, *'The wise man lets go of all results, whether good or bad, and is focused on the action alone.'*

Indeed, it is for good reason that the principle of non-attachment is constantly being emphasised. As we contemplate on the notion of non-attachment, we learn to sit with uncertainty and to embrace our underlying fears. We learn to concentrate on simply giving our best and with all our heart, and not to be fixated on outcomes.

Finally, here are some measures that we can take in our daily life, in accordance with the principle of non-attachment:

(1) Observe uncertainty around us. Embrace uncertainty as a natural, and inevitable component of our lives. Allow ourselves to accept uncertainty, and recognise the fears that underpin our quest for certainty.

(2) Make a conscious decision not to impose our insecurities and fears onto others. Don't attempt to control others or the outcomes of situations which we have no control over. Allow others to simply be themselves.

(3) Embrace spontaneity and surprises with an open mind. Learn to be comfortable with changes – add some spontaneity in our lives by deliberately changing some of our routines and being open to new experiences.

Mike Min Zheng Hou is an avid student of Buddhism and Psychology, having completed a foundational course in Buddhism at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the Buddhist Counselling course at the Buddhist Library. He is currently aspiring towards a PhD in Social and Political Psychology at the Australian National University.



Wat Phra Thad Chum Gitti, Sansai,
Chiang Mai, Thailand.
Photo Credit : Thummanoon Inchai

幸福。。阿难尊者有如一陣清新微風。如果你抓住清風並把他困在你愛情的監獄，這陣清風就會死去。其他人，包括你在內也無法享受這清風的涼爽。愛阿難尊者有如你愛清新微風一樣。

*Prakriti*如果你可以這樣愛的話，你自己也變成了一陣涼爽的清風。你將能解除他人和你自己的痛苦與抱負。

“師父，請教我這種愛的方式”。

“你可以選擇與阿難尊者同樣的道路。

你可以過着自由自在的生活，安寧、喜悅，並且向阿難尊者一樣給他人帶來快樂。妳也可以像他一樣出家。”

如此，佛陀教導*Prakriti*如何以慈悲，智慧和出离心發出的愛。結果，她歡悅的出家，並逐漸的悟道。

如果我們要欣賞衛塞節真正的意義，就要切記佛陀所修持，與教導的慈愛是高尚完美、意義深遠、普遍一致，尤其是無條件的。

沒有人不配接受佛陀的慈愛。他對所有眾生都有慈愛。不止卑微不淨之人，也包括了畜生，餓鬼和地獄道的眾生。不需要是佛教徒也可以參拜佛陀。

就算我們當中有犯過嚴重罪行的人也不例外。在故事里，*Prakriti*不但是被社會鄙視的一群，她也是下過迷藥給法師的人。佛陀不但沒有藐視或責罰她，還反過來教導她。而且還如此細心的教導她，導致她願意過着比丘尼的生活。

簡短的说，只有一件事情，需要得到佛陀的慈愛，那就是我們生為有情眾生。

感恩佛陀給予我們这么好的機會修持佛法。我們回報佛陀最好的方法就是盡量以身，口，意，行皈依佛法；盡量于佛陀的慈悲、智慧為我們學習的榜樣。

這刊物里，我們很高興能與讀者分享今年佛教圖書館和斯里蘭卡Paramita Meditation Centre慶祝衛塞節的回憶。

一如既往，我希望您閱讀愉快。

Chwee Beng

編輯

BL EVENT

MEDICHANT 2016

Dates : May 10 to May 12, 2017

Venue : Buddhist Library

Photo Credit : Yeo Koon Teck



庆祝卫塞节

“有一些人遇到某些重要人物时，他们的态度就会改变，比如遇到乞丐，他们的态度也会改变。这么做是非常错的。”（第十四世达赖喇嘛，建桥：宗教领袖论坛，主办：美国神智学协会）

在这期的刊物，我们纪念佛历最殊胜的日子，卫塞节。这天，佛教徒庆祝三样盛举；悉达多太子的诞生，他在三十五年后菩提树下的悟道，和他说法四十五年后的究竟涅槃。这三样盛举都在同月，同日发生的。

当我向一位非佛教徒朋友解释卫塞节的意义时，他说“太不可思议了”。

我回答“当然，他是个不可思议的人物!”

要描述佛陀的一生，需要费一番功夫；在此，就用一个简单的故事来说明。

这个美丽的故事是从佛陀的表弟侍者阿难开始的，并由佛陀本身结束。

我第一次听到这个故事是从Jack Kornfield的博客传来的。

听了之后，我很受启发，多次寻找相关的经文但一无所获。幸亏我在ThichNaht Hanh的一本书《Old Path, White Clouds》里找到详细的说明：

有一天，阿难在他通常托钵回寺院的路上感到非常口渴，向一位在水井旁边的女子讨口水喝。女子拒绝他的要求，并且解释自己是个卑微不净的人，不配供养水给尊者。

阿难向她确认这么做没有问题后再次向女子讨水，她才同意供养。

不幸的是，在这过程中，女子变得对阿难起了暗恋。

长话短说，在另一个场合，阿难接受女子的水，水里却下了迷药。幸亏阿难后来被一位佛陀派遣去找他的和尚给救了回去。

当阿难与女子和她的母亲一同回到寺院时，佛陀便开示。在这里我一字不漏的抄出来。

“佛陀温柔的问女子Prakriti，”你深爱阿难尊者吗？”

Prakriti回答“我全心全意的爱他”。

“你爱他的什么？是他的双眼，他的鼻子，又或者

是他的嘴巴？”

“我爱他的一切－他的眼睛，鼻子，嘴巴，声音，他走路的方式。师父，我爱他的一切”。

“除了他的眼睛，鼻子，嘴巴，声音，和走路的方式，阿难尊者还有很多你不知道的优点”。

Prakriti问道“什么优点？”

佛陀回答“他专一的心。你知道阿难尊者的最爱吗？”

“释尊，我不知道他爱的是什么，我只知道他不爱我”

“你错了，阿难尊者确实爱你，但不是你所贪恋的那种方式。

阿难尊者爱解脱之道，自由，安宁和喜悦。因为他感受到解脱之道和自由所带来的喜悦，所以阿难尊者经常面带笑容。

他爱众生。他要把解脱之道带给众生让他们也能享受自由，安宁和喜悦。

Prakriti，阿难尊者的爱是来自谅解和解脱。他不受爱所带来的痛苦和无奈，与你不同。

如果你真心爱阿难尊者的话，你就能理解他的爱，并让他继续过他选择自由自在的生活方式。

你如果了解阿难尊者爱的方式，你就不再会感到痛苦和无奈。你的痛苦和无奈是因为你要独占阿难尊者。这是一种自私的爱。”

Prakriti看着佛陀问道“但我要如何像阿难尊者拥有这样的爱？”

“爱是一种保持阿难尊者幸福的方式，以及妳的

我们又会想要开空调。

根据佛陀所教的第三个实相的启示是无我。

我们经常谈到无我，而同时也经常被我执所影响。

当我们住在小间的屋子里，我们可能就有小小的我执。但当我们住进大房子里，我们的我执就增长了。因此，当我们累积越多东西或财富时，就会助长我们的我执。但这个我执是无常的。我们的身体或心灵是没有永恒存在的。所以执著我们的自我意识就像执著于一场梦一样，妄想梦会成真。

佛陀是从这三样启示证悟的尊者。这是人间道最伟大的进化。

其二，佛陀有另一种更深奥的解释来描述自己，其称号基本上影响着我们。

如果佛陀是天神或具有超能力，这意味我们就无法证悟。为什么呢？因为我们是人，不是天神或具有超能力的众生。相反的，佛陀称自己为人，虽然这如我之前所说也不准确，因为他在证悟之后已经脱胎换骨，已彻底的改变了。

但当佛陀“证悟”时，这意味着我们凡人还在昏睡。既然昏睡，就会像佛陀一样有苏醒的一天。

无论状况多么可怕或无助，即使我们身入监狱或地府，没有任何东西能阻止我们，也没有任何我们做过的错事能禁止我们通过佛陀教导的四圣帝、八正道来脱离苦海，究竟涅槃。当然，这时间的长短因人而异。

在这里，我们可以称所有人心中的承诺和希望为[佛性]。

因此，佛教不像许多流传的误解一般悲观或执迷于痛苦。相反的，佛陀所传达的讯息是充满希望的。

我现在简单的解释卫塞节传统的贡品来结束这个开示。

当我们在卫塞节时供养佛陀，是在展现我们对佛陀感恩的心。感恩他在我们迷茫和无助的时候给予我们解释和希望，在黑暗中点亮心灯。

但最好的感恩是来自我们的心。

如果我们真诚的精进修行，那就是对佛陀最好的供养。

祝愿你们以最快的时间，达成你们心灵的志向。

达摩拉哒那法师

宗教顾问

佛教图书馆

‘Then, Bahiya, you should train yourself thus:

In reference to the seen,
there will be only the seen.

In reference to the heard,
only the heard.

In reference to the sensed,
only the sensed.

In reference to the cognized,
only the cognized.

That is how you should train yourself.

When for you there will be
only the seen in reference to the seen,
only the heard in reference to the heard,
only the sensed in reference to the sensed,
only the cognized in reference to the cognized,
then, Bahiya, there is no you in terms of that.

When there is no you in terms of that,
there is no you there.

When there is no you there,
you are neither here nor yonder
nor between the two.

This, just this, is the end of stress.’

Bāhiya Sutta: Bāhiya (Ud 1.10)
Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu



达摩拉旦那法师开示

《卫塞节对佛教徒的深刻意义》

在开年的头一天，我们经常会互相祝愿“新年快乐”。

其实对于佛教徒，一年最开心和重要的日子是卫塞节。

这一天是佛陀出生为太子，三十五岁后悟道和八十岁究竟涅槃的日子。

凡人和佛陀有天渊之别。

当他在菩提树下证悟后，要称他为“人类”是被质疑地，因为他已经脱胎换骨，彻底的改变了。

我们知道在他证悟后，有一位好奇的婆罗门人问他是谁。发问的人对佛陀的外表所震惊。他不相信佛陀是人类并向他发问一系列的问题：

“您是天神吗？”

“您是天龙乾闥婆吗？”

“您是紧那罗夜叉吗？”

佛陀对以上所有的回答都说“不是”。

发问人对佛陀的否定感到困扰，又问“那您是人吗？”

佛陀对吃惊的发问人又再次回答“不是”。

最后，婆罗门人问佛陀“那您是什么样的众生？”

佛陀终于解释。

“婆罗门人，‘天龙乾闥婆，紧那罗夜叉，无善阿修罗，诸摩睺罗伽，人与非人等，悉由烦恼生。

如是烦恼漏，一切我已舍，已破已磨灭，如芬陀利生。虽生于水中，而未曾着水，我虽生世间，不为世间着。历劫常选择，纯苦无暂乐，一切有为行，悉皆生灭故。

离垢不倾动，已拔诸剑刺，究竟生死际，故名为佛陀。”

此后，佛陀选择了这个至今最普遍的称号。

“佛陀”这个字代表“证悟者”，不能与其他如人或天神等下三道的众生相提并论。

虽然佛陀在被问的时候还是如一般人的色身一样，但他的心却已完全净化了。所有的烦恼和负面情绪都已磨灭。他已经变成了不可与他人，甚至神做比较的完美众生。

更值得一提的是，当他说他已经“证悟”时，佛陀的这个回答一针见血，纯粹属实，并无任何骄傲或成就感。

在这里我要解释两样重要的启示。

其一，他的回答意味着他的心已经醒悟于这世界的实相。这实相是什么呢？

无常是佛陀教导我们的第一个特性或实相的本质。

如果你回顾你的一生，从出生到现在，你会发现有很多变化。如果你问自己“我对我的生活满意吗？”你可能会想“是，我满意。”

但那喜悦或满足不是永恒的。它随着时光的流失而不断的改变。因此，就有了不满，不悦甚至痛苦。这也是佛陀教导的第二启示。

当你顺心如意时，你就感到喜悦。但也就是这些让你喜悦的事物能让你感到不愉快，比如当他们离开你或变成你不喜欢的样子。

有时，即使外在因素不变，时间也能转换你的喜悦或享受，变成不愉快或痛苦。

比如一个大热天，我们在烈日下走了一段时间后，当我们走进凉爽的空调室里，就会感到非常舒服。可当我们呆在空调室一个钟头左右，就会感到冷而调高温度或把空调关掉。过了一阵子，