



Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore Alumni (BPCA) - Quaterly E-Bulletin



Jan - March 2021

More than a year has passed since the COVID-19 pandemic started, infecting more than 120 million people and causing more than 2.7 million deaths worldwide.

The pandemic has caused much disruptions to everyone in every way. It was fortunate that our Diploma classes had their examinations in November 2020, while the General Arts Qualifying (GAQ) and Bachelor of Arts (BA) classes had their examinations in February 2021. The 2021 classes have commenced on 2 March 2021, with a combination of lessons in physical classrooms and via zoom. The “Introduction to Buddhism Course” in English has also commenced on 10 March 2021, and we are looking forward to the course in Mandarin planned for June 2021.

With the COVID-19 vaccination programs rolled out in many constituencies, we look forward to a gradual resumption of dhamma activities and new courses. Please keep a look out for them.

In this issue of the BPCA quarterly e-bulletin, we are featuring articles of the theme Emerging Stronger (Part I), hopefully, to motivate one another to stay strong as we attune to the new norm. We hope you will find great value in its content and aid you in your own goals to your spiritual growth.

Please reach out to the editorial team if you would also like to share your inspiring stories or give any feedback or suggestions via email to bryan_law2002@yahoo.com.

In the meantime, let's stay safe and healthy.

The Editorial Team

Emerging Stronger

- *with the wonders of “nimitta”*

by Sis Amāyā Quek

Kamma nimitta, a sign of kamma, an object or image associated with the good or evil deed that is about to determine rebirth, or an instrument used to perform it, may be familiar to some Buddhists. For Misty, the wonders of the power of the Dhamma and her resolve to walk on the Noble Eightfold Path, manifested as “nimitta” and enabled her to ride through one of the tougher moments in the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic...

Early last year, when the world’s understanding of the disease epidemiology was at its infancy stage, there were fears of asymptomatic spread of the virus, resulting in many countries, including Singapore, locking down to contain the virus. At the hospital, the pressure was even greater as this has become the population’s last refuge for survival and recovery. Serving in the hospital to support external operations to test and identify potential COVID-19 carriers and keep the hospital safe for its patients and visitors meant working seven days a week, from dawn to dusk.

Misty witnessed firsthand the indomitable human spirit of team work, learning together and overcoming limitations in service of population health. The healthcare workers’ contributions were also deeply appreciated by the leaders, both at national and hospital levels, and by fellow Singaporeans. It was a gratifying experience as she humbly contributed to the bigger national solidarity effort in fighting this disease that has shaken the world and Singapore. Despite the heavier work commitments, Misty went back to Dhamma classes once her workload lightened.

How should One Deal with Unfair Criticism

One day, a sharing from a Dhamma chatgroup caught her attention. It was about “*How should One Deal with Unfair Criticism*”, from Ajahn Jayasāro. He exhorted that **one helpful way of reflecting on unfair criticism is to recollect how normal it is, how many times even the purest of beings such as the Buddha, have been subjected to such treatments.**



The accusations faced by the Buddha and Venerable Sariputta were quoted.

“The most famous example is perhaps the occasion when a woman called Ciñcā Mānavikā who accused the Buddha of making her pregnant.”

Mahāpadumajātaka Ja 472 -
<https://suttacentral.net/ja472/en/ro>

Misty could not help but wondered if she could be unshaken if she were the one facing the allegation, and pondered on how she should react following the Dhamma e.g. Right Effort and Brahma Vihara (the 4 sublime abodes, in particular equanimity). Never did it occur to her that this was a “nimitta” to what she would face in a couple of months’ time ...

“Venerable Sāriputta was accused by another monk of an unconscious discourtesy (he’d inadvertently brushed against the ear of the monk who was jealous of him) and leaving the monastery without apologizing.” His response was captured in the Dhammapada:

Like the earth, a balanced and well-disciplined person resents not. He is comparable to an Indakhīla. Like a pond, unsullied by mud, is he; such a balanced one life’s wanderings do not arise.

Dhammapada Verse 95
Translation by Narada Thera

Misty was called to an interview at her workplace, regarding an anonymous complaint made against her. This complaint took the wind off her sail. Over the past few months, she had been flying high to support the operations against COVID-19 and rendering morale support to her colleagues, but now, she felt that she was falling flat. However, as more details were shared with her, she listened as though it was somebody's story. She reacted rather calmly, though a little anxious due to the uncertain outcome. Strangely, she wondered about the complaint, but not the anonymous complainant. There was no feeling of anger or ill will against the complainant. She chose to dwell on the bliss of her supportive supervisor, colleagues, friends and family members.

On reflection, she marvelled at how well she was being prepared to face this through the "nimitta". The allegation was something that she never expected, considering her cordial relationship with her colleagues and her nurturing working style. She appreciated the chance to experience the vicissitudes of life closely: pleasure and pain, gain and loss, praise and blame and fame and disrepute; the impermanence of worldly gains; the chance to practise equanimity and Right Effort. By focusing on wholesome thoughts, unwholesome feelings would not arise. The energy could also be diverted to her work to continue supporting the fight against COVID-19 to keep the community safe, and continue her Dhamma courses. She hoped that the blip would strengthen her resolve to emerge stronger and strive on with more conviction along the Path.

*Suddhasaṃ sunipunaṃ, yattha kāmanipatināṃ
Cittaṃ rakkhetha medhāvī, cittaṃ guttaṃ sukhāvahaṃ*

The mind is very hard to perceive, extremely subtle, flits wherever it listeth.
Let the wise person guard it; a guarded mind is conducive to happiness.

Dhammapada Verse 36
Translation by Narada Thera

Travel Memories

By Sis Amāyā Quek and the Diploma class of 2018/2019

Mount Kyaiktiyo (Kyite Htee Yoe), famous for the huge **Golden Rock** perched at its summit, is one of the three most **sacred religious sites in Myanmar**, along with the Shwedagon Pagoda and the Mahamuni Temple. Pilgrims come from afar to pay reverence to the Buddha while travelers marvel with surreal sensation to watch the Golden Rock, which seems to defy gravity by delicately balancing on the edge of the 1100-metre high mountain.



Getting to Golden Rock, located at the summit of Mount Kyayktiyo, around 200km from Yangon, in Mon State.

"When I visited Golden Rock many years ago, a big truck carried us at the back without proper seats. We had to grab tight to whatever was available as the truck sped round the winding mountain roads throwing us up and down, left and right. When the bumpy ride came to a stop, we needed to tread barefooted along the winding path to the Golden Rock. For city dwellers like me, my feet were not used to the rough pebbles and sharp rocks. I wished to reach the end of this rough and uneven path at every turn... However, it was well worth the pain when we were greeted with grand golden rays, a wonder to behold, the Golden Rock."

Sis Tan Siew Kwang

In recent years, from Kinpun, the village at the foot of the Mount Kyayktiyo, one can either take a 16km hike (about 4 hours) up or take a typically crowded open-top truck, which rushes alarmingly through the spectacular jungle scenery like a roller coaster. For the latter, at midway, one has the option to disembark and continue the journey via Myanmar's first cable car.



At the summit, one will not only find the Golden Rock Pagoda but also a huge complex made-up of several temples, restaurants, guesthouses and stalls (aka pasar malam) that sell a wide variety of things, from food, to clothes and toys etc. Yet, the Golden Rock is the holiest point of interest. Every year, dozens of thousands of Myanmar citizens came from all over the country to pay reverence to the Buddha through offering and prayers, including those who travel hundreds of kilometers at the back of very small vans. It is also an attraction for overseas Buddhists and travelers, both for the Legend of the Golden Rock, and the mesmerizing view, especially at sunset.



Legend of the Golden Rock

The legend associated with the Golden Rock is that on one of visits by the Buddha, he gave a strand of his hair to a hermit, who tucked in the tuft of his hair to keep it safely. The hermit went to see the King and requested him to enshrine the hair on a boulder in the shape of the hermit's head. The King who possessed magical powers, found a suitable stone on the bottom of the sea and brought it over to Kyaiktiyo where it was placed in its current location, and built a pagoda to enshrine the Buddha's hair. It is said that it is this strand of the Buddha's hair that prevents the Golden Rock from crashing down.



The Golden Rock is best viewed at sunset, when it shines in all its glamour.



Bhante U Cittara and students of the 26th Diploma Class, Dec 2019

"The view is mesmerizing, and the story of the rock being balanced by a strand of the Buddha's hair is amazing."

Sis Grace Seow

"I visited the Golden Rock twice, in 2006 and more recently, in Dec 2019. In the earlier visit, we had to trek from midway up to the summit. The place has changed immensely in the lapse of 13 years. The Holy Rock remains serene as ever but the surrounding is now a well-tiled complex. My feelings, unchanged as it was with the same delightful anticipation, exhilaration mixed with an immense gratitude to be there again. The sunset was spectacular, the Golden Rock remains an awesome sight to behold and venerate. I would go again and again in this lifetime if my karma permits as it is such a deeply spiritual place to be in".

Sis Heng Qwee Siang



"The morning pindapata was an event that I looked forward to, where I could have the privilege to offer food to the Sangha. The solemn yet peaceful look on their faces inspired awe and demonstrated a good representation of the Buddhist culture proper."

Sis Amāyā Quek



This article is dedicated in memory of Brother Seah.

May the people in Myanmar be well and happy.
May peace and stability return to the country soon.

Additional References:

Go-Myanmar.com;

Wikipedia;

<https://againstthecompass.com/en/reasons-visit-kyaiktiyo-pagoda-golden-rock/>

Happiness is Within

By bro Bryan and his cat Siha

Siha! After this pandemic I realized that life is not what as it seems. I expect to have a perfect life in a perfect world. But they are not what I expected!

Yes, Bb, this world is conditional, impermanent, and unreliable. People can easily sink into a bottomless pit of despair, disappointment, and anger without right understanding.



**Happiness
is within**

If we are just helpless victims and dependent on external conditions to bring us happiness, and when they change, we get lost in misery; if we get pulled along, up and down, in pleasure and pain, then life is a sad joke.

Instead, **we have the ability to transcend it not by avoiding, rejecting, or running away but by understanding it.**

impermanence
conditional
unreliable
constant change



The world may be imperfect, but it does not mean we should live in despair. The pandemic, the wars, the disaster took away many things, but remember, they should not take away our spiritual qualities, compassion, kindness, determination, equanimity, etc. **There are still kindness and compassion in this world too!**

Worldly happiness

External



Spiritual happiness

Internal

There are three kinds of happiness: worldly happiness, spiritual happiness, and true liberation. When one expects the world to give us permanent happiness, we will be disappointed. Only when one develops spiritually can one experience calmness, peace, equanimity and eventually attain true happiness.

Worldly happiness
Spiritual happiness
True liberation



When we focus on getting worldly happiness, there are cravings, attachments and expectations. We act, expecting results and outcomes that bring permanent happiness, not knowing the world is impermanent. We may be happy for a while but disappointed and unsatisfied again. **We are asking from the world what it cannot give.**

I expect to have permanent happiness!



Instead, we should gradually shift our focus on developing spiritual qualities because that is beyond expectations. We have true compassion and kindness for others regardless of the outcome. **We act out of compassion and kindness for the world.** Spiritual happiness comes from within.

Even if the world is imperfect, I will continue to be kind to people, and that is what matters!



Remember, we **do not wait for the world to be perfect to be happy**. Instead, we can be happy by living in the present moment, leading a wholesome life, helping and caring for people. We should **focus on the process instead of the result**.

With right understanding, we are not shaken by any difficulties we face in life. When the next difficulty, problem, disaster comes, we do not fall into despair and anger, because happiness comes from within.

A mindful day is a perfect day.



Thus even if the world is imperfect, even if the outcome fails us, **we will continue to act with equanimity, wisdom, and kindness, helping and caring for others**, because we know that is what truly matters. By understanding that all beings suffer, we have compassion for them without personal gratification.



Compassion with no personal gratification.

Do not feel despair Bb, we hold the keys to happiness.

There will always be ups and downs and impermanence, but we can be kind, calm, equanimous, and have compassion for all beings who suffer like us.

Instead of clinging to worldly pleasures, we should **gradually realign our life from the worldly life to the spiritual life. By cultivating wisdom, morality, and stillness**, there will be true happiness.

“If by renouncing a lesser happiness one may realize a greater happiness, let the wise man renounce the lesser, having regard for the greater.”



From now on, I will shift my priorities and focus on developing my spiritual qualities and live a meaningful life!

Health is the most precious gain and contentment the greatest wealth.
A trustworthy person is the best kinsman, Nibbana the highest bliss.

Dhammapada Verse 204
Translation by Acharya Buddharakkhita



原始 佛教

基础课程

讲师：佛学与巴利文学院讲师

佛教的本质是什么？

课程详情

日期：2021年6月2日(8周)
次数：每个星期三
时间：7.30pm 至 9.30pm
地点：Mangala Vihara 祝福寺
30 Jalan Eunus S419495

课程报名

学费：随喜乐捐
电邮：chinesebuddhismbpca@gmail.com
电话：8101 0017 Lynn Leng
8288 9888 Lynn Choy

课程内容

- 佛教之创立 • 佛教发展简史
- 业果论 • 轮回
- 三共相 • 四圣谛
- 因缘法 • 皈依三宝的意义
- 巴利三藏 • 佛教派系和传播
- 佛教的伦理思想
- 真假老师和朋友 • 快快乐乐学佛人
- 死亡，人生必修课
- 佛教故事 • 今生最美的际遇
- 佛教禅修

2021 BPCA Committee



(From far top left) Sister Lynn Leng, Sister Lynn Choy, Brother Jeff Chan , Brother Bryan Law, Sister Sandra Koh, Sister Jasline Lin, Sister Maureen Hui, Bhante Seelananda, Brother Jebsons Chia, Sister Wong Mee Kee, Sister Quek Tyy Yn, Brother Adrian Tan
Not in photo(Brother Philip Ku and Brother Khaw Khaw)

Current School Activities

- **Buddhist Pali College Courses**

All courses are ongoing

- **Introduction to Buddhism Course**

Course date: 10th March 2021 – 12 May 2021

Every Wednesdays, 7.30pm-9.30pm

Upcoming Activities

- **Vesak Day Celebrations**

(tentative and subject to reconfirmation)

- **Diploma in Buddhism 2021/ 22 (29th Intake)**

Course Preview will be conducted at 2 locations:

1) Mangala Vihara in July 2021

2) Poh Ming Tse Temple in July 2021

- **Introduction to Buddhism (In Chinese)**

Course starting on 2 June 2021 (see advertorial)

Every Wednesdays, 7.30pm-9.30pm

- **Basic Certificate in Counselling**

Course starting in September 2021

(tentative and subject to reconfirmation)

For more information, please contact

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