



BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Newsletter

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A NEW UNDERTAKING

This year has been a time for the BPS to initiate new undertakings. Having outgrown our home of the last twenty years, we recently moved into spacious new quarters equipped with the larger facilities our expanding work requires. Another new undertaking inspired by our growth is the issuing of this newsletter, to accompany each of our future mailings. The newsletter gives expression to our wish to establish closer contact with you - our members, readers and friends. In these columns we will be providing you with information concerning our activities and publications, as well as book reviews, news notices and short Buddhist essays.

Perhaps we can best begin this regular essay column by exploring the purpose which guides our work at the BPS today. Put quite simply, that purpose is to offer to the world the teaching of the Buddha as set forth in the oldest collection of Buddhist scriptures, the Pall Canon. However, we do not aim merely at providing objective factual accounts of the Buddha's teachings of interest solely to Oriental scholars and their students. Our purpose, we candidly admit, is advocative and prescriptive: we are convinced that the Dhamma communicates a message which is still very much alive and relevant, and through our publications we seek to make that message widely known.

In line with this aim it is essential for us that the Dhamma be addressed not only to its original and primary task of indicating the timeless path to deliverance, but also to those vexing existential problems posed by the particular circumstances of our age. Prominent among these is the widespread moral and spiritual deterioration evident in so many spheres of human life. For increasing numbers of people both East and West, cynicism, skepticism and a narrow fixation on material goals have toppled traditional views and values without offering any satisfactory alternatives to replace them. Thus, while our sciences unlock the most obscure secrets of nature and yield its powers to our control, we find ourselves beset with a sense of inner poverty, destitute of those fundamental guiding principles which can give a deeper and richer meaning to our lives.

At the root of our current spiritual disorder lies a distorted conception of value which locates the ultimate end of human activity in the satisfaction of personal desire. Tacitly accepted and adhered to without reflective awareness, this thesis has become the dominant working basis for contemporary civilization. Mobilizing individuals, ethnic groups and nations alike, it draws them into an enervating chase after the achievement of power, wealth and pleasure, and pits them against one another in a struggle for supremacy marked either by cool suspicion or by vehement hate. Given a creed of self-fulfillment in an age of declining

moral vigour, it is not astonishing that in the midst of plenty we witness all around us a frantic search for instant gratification and a rising tide of destructiveness unconstrained by even the least human sympathy.

To remedy this disturbing situation, moralistic preaching will not suffice, nor can much be expected from economic, social and political reforms isolated from more fundamental changes. For at its core our crisis is a crisis of consciousness. Its real origins go deeper than our institutions, deeper than our cultural **norms, deeper than our avowed motives** and goals. Its origins lie in the hidden strata of the mind, in the breeding place of those tumultuous emotional and volitional forces which the Buddha summed up in the three "roots of evil" - greed, hatred and delusion.

What is most crucial, therefore, if there is to be any change in the direction of the world, is a change in those who make up the world, that is, in ourselves. To achieve our own genuine welfare and effectively promote the welfare of others, we require the acumen to distinguish clearly what is truly in our interest and what may be immediately pleasurable but ultimately harmful; and we require too the stamina to undertake the work of liberating our minds from the bonds of greed, hatred and delusion. Admittedly, the number of those who will see the need for inward change and make the appropriate effort will always be small. However, the difficulty does not annul the necessity. For those of clear vision who are responsive to the call of the good there can be no choice but to take up the long hard task of selftransformation.

If the work of inner cultivation is to come to full fruition, it must begin with and be guided by correct understanding, by that discernment of the true nature of existence which is called in the language of the Dhamma "right view." The unfailing pointer which the Buddha has provided for right view is the teaching of the Four Noble Truths. It is this perspective of the Four Noble Truths, with the light it sheds on the perplexing relationship between desire, happiness and suffering, which may be the most important contribution the Dhamma can make towards dispelling the rampant confusion of our time. In contrast to the whole world, which stands on the assumption that happiness is to be achieved through the satisfaction of desire, the Buddha teaches that the entire enterprise aimed at appeasing desire is doomed to futility, that the pursuit of desire leads not to happiness but to suffering. In the teaching of the Enlightened One the way to genuine and unshakable happiness lies in the restraint and mastery of desire. It is only by training ourselves to resist the lure of pleasure and power, to abandon the quest for self-aggrandizement, and to relinquish our hold on our attachments, that we can find for ourselves the indestructable peace of deliverance. And it is only thus that we can act with true compassion for the benefit of others, for the good, welfare and happiness of the world.

Bhikkhu Bodhi

EXPLORING THE WHEELS

Wheeled vehicles on the road get worn out in the course of time, or their shape becomes unfashionable, and so they are discarded and replaced.

Not so with the Wheel of Dhamma turned by the Buddha more than 2500 years ago. It is never worn out by ages passing, it is ever timely and vigorous in its movement.

In these great qualities of the Teaching our WHEEL books have a modest share. Even those printed in the very first year of our Society's life, twenty-seven years ago, are far from being dated. They still carry the flavour and nourishment of the Dhamma, undiminished. But many of our readers who have joined us either recently, or five or ten years ago, may not know these earlier WHEELS, though they are well worth knowing. The WHEEL series has now more than 300 issues.

So we can well understand that among so many, some very good issues escape notice.

In these Newsletters we wish to call your attention to some of the titles. We shall select single books, as well as groups of titles on related subjects. The latter, we hope, may stimulate a closer study of specific aspects of the Dhamma.

When we began the BPS and the WHEEL series, we did so because we were convinced of **The Value of Buddhism for the Modern World**. And just that is the title of WHEEL No. 2321233, written by Dr. Howard L. Parsons, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bridgeport, Conn. U.S.A.

This thoughtful book, written with deep understanding and sympathy, should be better known by our friends for it may be used for conveying the flavour of the Dhamma to others. The author stresses "the truth of (the Buddha's) moral vision for all human times and hence for modern times." A passage from this WHEEL indicates his thoughts on the Dhamma: "Not only does man undergo privation and pain and eventual death; he knows that he dies. And so he enters into the realm of suffering. Suffering arises out of a sense of the difference between what is and what might be. It is the tragic sense. It is the realization that the creative possibilities have not been fulfilled; that man can never fully 'find' or complete himself; that time is greater than one moment, and eternity vaster than time; that death conquers individual life, but that collective life transcends individual death; that no matter how rich or full a single life may be, it cannot begin to encompass the richness and fullness of the multiform cosmic life around it, and is destined to be singular and lonely in the midst of that great abundance."

Kindred in its subject is "Buddhism and the Age of Science" (WHEEL 36/37) by the eminent Burmese lay Buddhist, U Chan Htoon. In particular, the second essay applies in this context.

We also recommend BODHI LEAVES (No. B 43) "The Relevance of Buddhism in the Modern World" by Princess Poon Pismai Diskul of Thailand, the former President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. We suggest that our friends, especially those in Buddhist groups, keep a few copies of these three titles on hand for passing them on when the occasion occurs to discuss the applicability of Buddhism to today's world.

NEW BOOK RELEASES

The Road to Inner Freedom: A Survey of the Buddha's Teaching. Edited by Nyanaponika Mahathera. 248 pp. U.S. \$4.90, SL Rs 75.

This book, the BPS's 25th Anniversary commemoration volume, offers a wide-ranging introduction to the teachings of the Buddha compiled from BPS literature issued over the past twenty-five years. To provide diverse points of entrance to the Dhamma, the book is

divided into fourteen chapters, each consisting of short essays and pithy passages from the pens of outstanding Buddhist writers. **The Road to Inner Freedom** will be of value, not only for personal study and reference, but also as the ideal gift. Friends already interested in the Dhamma will welcome it as a worthy addition to their Buddhist readings, while for those potentially disposed towards the Dhamma it might be just the right book to awaken their interest and spur them on to further study.

From the contents: The Buddha. The Buddha's Charter of Free Inquiry. Buddhism and Science. The Four Noble Truths. Impermanence, Suffering and No-self. Karma and Rebirth. Nibbana. Buddhist Ethics. Meditation. Right Mindfulness.

The Seven Stages of Purification and the Insight Knowledges. Venerable Matara Sri Nānārāma Mahathera. 82 pp. U.S. \$5.00, SL Rs 40.

This is a book born of wide and deep meditative experience, a guide to the progressive stages of Buddhist meditation for those who have taken up the practice in full earnestness. The author is one of the most respected meditation masters of present day

Sri Lanka, the teacher and chief incumbent of Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya, a rigorous meditation monastery set on a forested hillside. The seven stages of purification provide the framework for the practising disciple's gradual progress from the cultivation of virtue up to the final attainment of the goal. The book treats these stages, and the sixteen types of insight knowledge, not only with the author's great erudition, but with the clarifying light of actual meditative experience.

The Great Discourse on Causation: The Mahānidāna Sutta and Its Commentaries. Translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Bodhi. 150 pp. U.S. \$6.00, SL Rs. 90.

The Mahānidāna Sutta is the longest and most detailed of the Buddha's discourses dealing with dependent arising (paticca samuppāda), a doctrine generally regarded as the key to his entire teaching. The sutta unfolds in three main divisions. In the first the Buddha traces the sequence of conditions that sustains the round of birth and death to reveal the "hidden vortex" at the base of all existence; in the second he demonstrates the flaws inherent in all conceptions of selfhood; and in the third he reveals the true freedom of mind gained through meditation and realization of the Dhamma. This book offers a translation of the Mahānidāna Sutta together with all the doctrinally important passages from its commentary and subcommentary. A long introductory essay discusses the deep philosophical implications of the sutta, and an appendix explains the treatment of dependent arising according to the Abhidhamma system of conditional relations. Recommended for those with a serious interest in the Buddha's teaching.

NEWS FROM THE OFFICE

Some time ago one of our foreign members visited us. For a few minutes he did not speak - just sat, looked up and down and about. Finally he asked, "is this all the BPS?" "Yes," I replied. "Incredible," he said, "incredible that this is the headquarters of the WHEEL and

BODHI LEAVES. I expected to see a large publishing house with scores of workers busy printing and despatching books. Not this indeed."

Looking back I can now understand his surprise. Our beginnings were small and we did keep a low profile. For the first three years Ven. Nyanaponika, our founder and President, shared a room with us in his small Forest Hermitage. For the next quarter century we occupied a former dental office just a few hundred square feet in area. Our storage was in a rented room half a mile away. The bookshop, library, and reading room as well as the office were all one. Every inch of space was crammed with books, files, registers, desks ...There was no room for undisturbed reading, but nevertheless we served our friends as best as we could.

We have now moved to our new headquarters building which has space for our activities. In the salesroom books can be displayed, and there is room for more books; books from other publishers too - local and foreign - will be available. Information on these will be published in these columns from time to time.

Our library is comprised primarily of books on Theravada Buddhism. Presently we have almost 1500 volumes, but we hope that in time it will grow to be an outstanding reference library. We invite our members, both those who live in Sri Lanka and those who come here to study, to make use of it.

The upper floor of the headquarters has a hall for lectures, discussions, meditation classes, exhibitions, which can accommodate about 200 people. In the Shrine Room which adjoins the assembly hall there is an inspiring Buddha Statue in Samadhi posture, a replica of a statue from the Anuradhapura District, dating from the 4th-6th century. It is an excellent example of the stone carving of the ancient Sinhala sculptures.

Albert Witanachchi

FROM THE MAILBAG:

My heartfelt thanks and admiration to those who have taken on their shoulders the task of spreading the Teaching of the Great Lord Buddha. Your Society is doing a very great service towards the welfare of mankind by means of your publications. What greater gift than the gift of Buddha Vacana...

M.G. Suriarachchi Baddegama,

Sri Lanka

I am 25 years old and I am not satisfied with present human conditions. I find an answer to my questions. This is the reason for my interest in the Buddha's message.

Edmundo Morell

Soneti Spiritus, Cuba

It is good to know that societies such as yours do indeed follow the Buddha's advice and 'proclaim the Dhamma, lovely in its beginning, lovely in its middle, and lovely in its end.'

Tony Page London,

England

Some of the booklets I have had bound. These small volumes are now my companions wherever I go. I would like to express my gratitude to the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, and the BPS.

Helmut Ziebell

QUOTEWORTHY

Buddhism aims at creating a society where the ruinous struggle for power is renounced; where calm and peace prevail away from conquest and defeat; where the persecution of the innocent is vehemently denounced; where one who conquers oneself is more respected than those who conquer millions by military and economic warfare; where hatred is conquered by kindness and evil by goodness; where enmity, jealousy, ill-will and greed do not infect men's minds; where compassion is the driving force of action; where all, including the least of living things are treated with fairness, consideration and love; where life is peaceful and directed towards the highest and noblest aim, the realization of the Ultimate Truth, Nirvana.

Walpole Rahula, in *What the Buddha Taught*

On the cab of a battered and overloaded Toyota van waiting at the border between Nigeria and neighbouring Benin was the unintentionally ironic sign **No Condition Is Permanent.**

Time, February 14, 1983

Modern Buddhists have a special obligation to establish priorities in their good work. And many of the most pressing priorities concern Buddhist work and Buddhists. There is so much to be done for Buddhism and for Buddhists today, and Buddhists must build this awareness into their priorities. It is good and right to work on world problems with others, but Buddhists must ask themselves whether they have done enough for Buddhist problems... Whether or not Buddhism is to be preserved and enhanced for the future is the challenge for all Buddhists today.

Ralph Buultjens in *Dharma World*, Tokyo

FOR GERMAN STUDENTS OF THE DHAMMA

We have available a short introduction to the Dhamma, **Buddhismus: Weg zur Leid-Freiheit**, von Nyanaponika Mahathera. A good handout for friends and relatives. Sent free on request, but please include an International Reply Coupon to cover the cost of postage.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In issuing this newsletter, we hope communications will flow in the other direction as well, for we would like to hear from you in turn. If we are to respond appropriately to the needs and interests of our readers, it is important for us to receive feedback. We welcome your questions, comments and suggestions, including your constructive criticisms too.

We would also like to receive reports on Buddhist activities, particularly those in countries where Buddhism has only recently begun to make its impact. News articles of general interest can be printed in these pages, and perhaps this newsletter can serve as a means for linking together isolated Buddhists or for answering your questions on the Dhamma.

Most BPS publications can be obtained from the following places:

London Buddhist Vihara 5, Heathfield Gardens London, W4 4JU England

Vihara Book Service 5017 -16th Street N.W. Washington D.C. 20011 U.S.A.

Wat Buddha Dhamma Ten Mile Hollow Wisemans Ferry N.S. W. 2255 Australia

Buddhist Missionary Society Jalan Berhala

Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

Evergreen Buddhist Cultural Service Ltd. Pearls Centre

Unit 215, 2nd Floor Eu Jong Sen Street Singapore 0105

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