



IS IT SCARY *to die?*

By Dr. Pe Thet Tun



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Editor's Note: This article was originally in the Burmese language. With permissions from the writer/author, medical doctor, Dr. Pe Thet Tun, Bhante Cakkapala translated the article into the English language. The purpose of which is to clarify wrong views on the dying process and that death is not as frightening as we think.

Throughout my medical career, I have encountered many patients in severe pain and many on the verge of death. As the nature of my profession, I had the chance to associate with them closely. Among all of them, I'd like to mention two remarkable persons who were truly unafraid of death.

One of them was an elderly woman, around 90 years old. As far as I know, throughout her many years of life, she never blamed or caused trouble to anyone. About two years before she passed away, she asked me to confirm her death and arrange her funeral immediately after her passing.

As she was in a critical condition, I went to check on her as she had requested. Despite her weakened state, she gave me a faint smile and gently asked, "Doctor, I suppose my time has come, hasn't it?" About an hour later, she passed away peacefully and calmly, showing no sign of agony. Although she hadn't practiced *Samatha* or *Vipassanā* meditation, she maintained pure morality for many years and had a kind heart. With just these two qualities (morality + kindness), she was able to face death calmly and without any fear.

The other was a friend who had practiced meditation diligently and in the right way. As death approached, he simply said, "It seems the time is near," and then passed away peacefully and mindfully, with full awareness. Neither of them experienced any distress or turmoil at the time of death.

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On another occasion, I was called to the home of a patient who lived near my house. She was 78 years old, had no major illness, and had spent her final days as usual, talking with her children. Her daughter, nearby at that time, only realised something was wrong after noticing she had stopped breathing. When I arrived, she was sitting in her chair, appearing to be asleep. Upon examination, I found she had already passed away. Her death was gentle and natural. Though she hadn't practiced meditation, she had lived a simple and wholesome life grounded in Buddhist values.

In my 25 years as a general practitioner, I've seen many such peaceful passings, particularly among elderly patients who required no treatment at the time of death. Just like these examples, some people pass away with remarkable ease—so gently that even the blanket covering them remain undisturbed. But others, especially those with diseases like cancer, may endure significant pain before death. Regardless of their condition, most people fear death. Some are so frightened that they can't even bear to hear the words, "You are going to die."

In my experience, people fear final moments of death because of the following reasons:

1. They think that the moment of death will bring unbearable pain, based on what they've heard.
2. They are deeply attached to the people and possessions they must leave behind.
3. They fear what might come after death—especially being reborn in woeful planes.

In truth, death is not some terrifying thing that comes to us. Death is just the expiration of our time in this life. The people who came before us also reached the end of their stay in this world. They, too, faced death in this way. So why should we be afraid of death? When the time comes and we no longer have permission to remain in this life, we simply just leave this world. That's all.

Just like the patients I mentioned earlier who passed away without much sufferings, I'm sure we've all come across such cases. It's true that death occurs when something critical in the body breaks down. But I don't want people to assume that this breakdown must always be unbearably painful. Even if one has an illness like cancer and experiences pain, it's natural to feel that pain. But appropriate pain-relief medication can help ease it. However, in reality, at the actual moment of death, the pain usually fades away.

As death approaches, the body-sensitivity (*kāyapasāda*) is the first to cease functioning. Gradually, the remaining faculties also shut down one by one. Eventually, everything becomes still, and only the mind-consciousness (*manoviññāṇa*) remains. From the moment the body-sensitivity stops, there is no more physical pain and no awareness of bodily contact as well. This nature is explained in detail by the Blessed One in the *Phagguna Sutta*. This means that, contrary to what most of us fear, there is actually no pain at all at the moment of



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death. Instead, it becomes a precious opportunity for us to reflect deeply on the Dhamma with a calm and clear mind. Sayadaw U Jotika has also spoken about this. If, during those final moments, we can make effort and pass away with wholesome thoughts, then there is truly nothing to worry about.

In real life, many patients who cry out or struggle in pain early on often become still and calm as death nears. I believe many doctors and caregivers have noticed this. The pain we fear so intensely is often entirely absent at the actual moment of dying. Instead, it becomes a golden opportunity for us to practice the Dhamma. We should prepare to face death by watching our own mind with mindfulness.

If we make effort during this time and die with wholesome thoughts, there is nothing to fear. I once witnessed a stomach cancer patient with a blood pressure of 40/0 who showed no signs of pain for nine full hours. We have sufficient time to use final hours to meditate and pass away peacefully.

If we've trained our minds by practicing the teachings of the Buddha, these good deeds will naturally guide us when death comes. Even if we don't attain the Dhamma in this very life, the Buddha assured us that we will in a future existence. If one can pass away with such a wholesome and clear state of mind, what is there left to cling to in this world? There's no need to worry about the next life. The fear of a bad destination won't even arise in our mind.

What matters most is that, while we are still healthy and capable, we make the right effort to diligently cultivate morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) in the correct way. If, while we are still alive, we train our bodily, verbal, and mental actions to be better than merely good, then at the time of death, these very habits and practices will naturally carry out their function on their own.

For one who has truly trained and developed unwavering faith and understanding of the Dhamma, death is just a gentle release—no different from a deep breath out.

I want you to fully trust in the Buddha's teaching:

"Dhammo have rakkhati dhammassārī" —

The Dhamma protects the one who practices it.

So then ... is it really scary to die?



Kalyāṇamitta of MV

(Noble, Good Friend)

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This group of volunteers has always been counted upon to chant at funeral wakes of MV's members and devotees. Maranasati meaning "Recollections of Death" is chanted for the living relatives of the deceased, reminding everyone, of the fragility and impermanency of human life.

(Left) On 15 March, MV Maranasati Group conducted Maranasati puja in memory of the late Venerable Luang Phor Chao Khun Phratriep Siddhivises who was the Chief Abbot of Wat Ananda Temple. Unbeknown to many, the late Luang Phor was a great Kalyāṇamitta of our late founder, Bhante Mahaweera.



(Top) MV's representatives at the United Nations Day of Wesak held this year in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam from 6-8 May with the conference theme of: "Solidarity and Tolerance for Human Dignity: Buddhist Wisdom for World Peace and Sustainable Development". As part of Wesak celebrations, 108 bodhi saplings were planted by participants from different countries. Our "ambassadors" from Singapore is seen in this historic moment after planting the bodhi sapling at the Da Ben Mountain.



(Top) At the kind invitation of our neighbor, Masjid Darul Aman, our Management Committee members represented MV, in breaking fast (Buka Puasa) on 23rd March 2025 at the mosque.



Bhante Seelananda with our "Fried Bee Hoon" Team cooks



Bhante Seelananda with our Bento Packing Team



(Top) Our organizing Committee behind the successful completion of this year's Sila Samādāna held on 1st May. Participants of this program spent a day in MV observing 8-Precepts, practising meditations and listening to Dhamma Talks. Sadhu! to all Bhantes, Organising Team and Volunteers!



Bento Packing Team



Rojak Team



Fried Popiah Team



Bhante Seelananda with Volunteer Service Counter

(Top) Vesak Day volunteers at their various "stations" in the basement kitchen



Dhamma Kaki @ MV

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27 Mar 2025 - At CON Great Hall of Learning with Bhante Indasara, arranged by Sis Nancy Lim



Dhamma Kaki or Friends of the Dhamma is a proactive group of positive-thinking adults who help each other along the Noble Eightfold Path. They meet every Thursdays between the hours of 1.30pm and 4.30pm for a variety of activities including Dhamma Talks, Meditations, Exercises, Group outings and Inspirational Talks. Led by Bro Bernard Chia, this sub-group of MV will soon celebrate their 10th year. Despite the break during the Covid-years, they have re-grouped and along the way improved and upgraded their activities. We wish them a happy and successful new decade as DK continues to mature gracefully and forges ahead.

*In unity we stand,
In harmony we strive
The Cause shall never end
as long as we're alive
We're one, we're one.
Always, always.
We're one always.
One cause, one cause enfolding us.
Along Dhamma Kaki's way.*

(A part borrowed from Buddhist Hymns
by The Wayfarers)



25 Mar 2025 - A walk in the nature with Bhante Nyanika. Organized by Bro Yong and Sis Florence



03 Apr 2025 - Meditation session with Bhante Seelananda & Bhante Nyanika



Outdoor Activities with Sis Subha

HAPPY TOGETHER

- GROUP SHARING
- LEARNING
- TALKS
- CONVERSATIONS
- CHAIR ZUMBA
- JALAN-JALAN @ PARKS
- MANY OTHER ACTIVITIES





Solar New Year @ MV

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Happy Solar New Year!
Subha Aluth Awruddak Wewa!
Nhait U Thin Gian Mhar Pwar Shwin Par Say!

Sri Lanka: Surya Mangalya (Solar Festival), Aluth Avurudda (New Year)

Myanmar: Thingyan

Thailand: Songkran (transition)

Cambodia: Choul Chnam Thmey

Laos: Pi Mai Lao

India: Mesha Sankranti



Anopama
April 13, 2025 12:14 PM

This solar new year, which often falls on April 13-14, is based on the lunisolar calendars used in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal, Cambodia, Laos, some parts of India as well as Yunnan, China. Lunisolar calendars used in these regions combines monthly lunar cycles with the solar year.

This new year has astrological significance. Accordingly, it marks the transition (sankranti) from the zodiac sign of Pisces (meena) to Aries (mesha). As a consequence, this new year is often known as Sankranti. Agriculturally, this event marks the end of a harvest season, making it a natural time of celebration and renewal.

Interestingly, this new year is celebrated in countries where Theravada Buddhism is established. It is probably due to the adaptation of Indian astrological calendars to establish the Buddhist calendar. In the Nepal traditional calendar, Vikram Samvat,



Anopama
April 13, 2025 11:18 AM

this new year marks the beginning of their first month Vaiśākha or Baisakh (Vesak), in which Vesak full moon day occurs. Vesak is named as the first month of Buddhist calendars and Buddhists celebrates the birth, enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha on the Vesak full moon day. However, in the Buddhist calendar, Vesak month does not begin on this new year day. Here, the months are calculated based on lunar cycles, in which new moon marks the beginning of a month and full moon marks the middle of a month.

Regardless of its origin, this solar new year is associated with Buddhist practices. During the solar transition, Buddhist practitioners participate in spiritual cultivations and conduct themselves purely. It allows them to reflect on their past actions and motivate themselves for advancements. New year is seen as a reminder to have fresh beginnings.



Solar New Year @ MV

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The spilling of milk (kiri ithirawīma) Ceremony

The spilling of milk is a traditional Sri Lankan ritual performed during the dawn of the new year. Fresh milk is boiled in a new clay pot until it overflows. It signifies prosperity, abundance, and good fortune in the coming year. From the Buddhist perspective, it signifies the cultivation of the mind to overflow with purity. To celebrate the start of this New Year, MV also had a gathering with our devotees to perform this “spill milk” ritual on 13th April 2025. MV wishes our Sri Lankan and Myanmar devotees a great and happy year ahead.

To the chorus of chanting from the Maha Sangha, representatives from MV lit the fire to boil the pot of milk and only stopped when the milk had spilled over.



After puja, youths & children from our Sunday Dhamma School got together to wish the congregation a Happy Solar New Year in Sinhala and in Myanmar



The Sri Lankan families with the Pot of Milk they had set up

A group of Myanmar friends who came in early to worship at the Bodhi Tree Shrine on the Solar New Year



Upcoming Events

- 9 Jul 2025 Vassāvāsa Invitation
- 16 Jul-3 Sept 2025 Basic Meditation Course (2nd Batch), every Wed, Shrine Hall (8.00pm - 9.30pm)
- 17 Jul-4 Sept 2025 Mindfulness Meditation Course (2nd Batch), every Thurs, Shrine Hall (8.00pm - 9.30pm)
- 9 Aug 2025 Piṇḍapāta Day @ MV
- 6 Sept 2025 7th Lunar Month Transferring of Merits
One Day Meditation Retreat @ MV BT

Upcoming Dhamma talks

- Monday 7.45pm - 9.15pm Dhamma Talk
 - 1 Bhante Siriisumana 19 July 2025 The True Miracle of the Buddha
 - 2 Bhante Rathanasara 18 Aug 2025 Why should we practice Metta?
 - 3 Bhante Punno 29 Sep 2025 幸福人生
 - 4 Bhante Anoma 6 Oct 2025 Conquering Inner Conflict
 - 5 Bhante Cakkapala 27 Oct 2025 The Unshakable Mind: Exploring the Mind of the Buddha and Arahants
- Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple)
30 Jin Eunoh, 5419495
Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall
- A series of Dhamma talks organized by
Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple)
Mangala Vihara Dhamma Fellowship (MVDF)
Buddhist & Pali College Alumni (BPCA)



Contentment

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A Buddhist perspective for lay people

One day, the father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the express purpose of showing how poor people live. They spend a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be on their return from their trip. The father asked his son, "How was the trip?" "It was great, Dad." "Did you see how poor people live?" The father asked. "Oh yeah," said the son. "So, tell me, what you learned from the trip?" asked the father.

The son answered: "I saw that we have one dog and they have four. We have a pool that reached to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon. We have a small piece of land to live on and they have field that go beyond our sight. We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us; they have friends to protect them." The boy's father was speechless. Then his son added: "Thanks Dad for showing me how poor we are?" (Source: Unknown)

Perspective is a wonderful thing. It makes us wonder what would happen if we all give thanks for everything that we have, instead of worrying about what we don't have. Is it not better to be contented but poor, or rich with craving and attachment?

A Buddhist Perspective

Contentment is the ability to be happy and fulfilled in one's present state. The Buddha said that contentment is the highest wealth, [1] meaning that when we are contented, we do not need to get anything, go anywhere or be anything to be happy, because we already are. Thus, contentment is more valuable than any possession or accomplishment. The Buddha describes a monk's contentment as he is satisfied with a robe to cover his body and alms food to satisfy his stomach. Having accepted no more than is sufficient he goes his way, just like a bird flies here and there, taking with it no more than its wings. [2]

The Buddha often emphasised contentment as the highest treasure when a monk is content with any kind of robes, alms food, lodgings, and medicines and provision for the sick. [3] This Dhamma is for one who is contented, not for one who is discontent. [4] This is a principle of cordiality that creates affection and respect and conduces to cohesiveness to unity. [5] If he does not get a robe, alms food or lodging he is not agitated, and if he gets one, he uses it without being tied to it, infatuated with it, and blindly absorbed in it, seeing the danger in it and understanding the escape from it. Yet he does not extol himself or disparage others because of this. [6]

Monks while going on alms round mindfully observe noble silence not to engage in talking or chatting or to endear themselves to the lay followers with the intention of improving their intake during alms rounds, not to ask for anything directly except in an emergency, not to express thanks for donations received, and to receive without establishing eye contact. Then again, monks content with any sort of alms-food and speak in praise of such content. For the sake of getting alms-food he resorts not to what is unseemly and unbecoming. If he gets not alms-food he is not dismayed and if he does get it, he is free from the bond of selfishness, of greed, of craving for it. [7]



Contentment

The monks observed strict meal time and do not eat after noon and just two meals a day without dinner. This allows them to have time to practice as they consume food neither for amusement nor for intoxication nor for the sake of physical beauty and attractiveness, but only for the support and maintenance of the body, for avoiding harm, and for assisting the spiritual life. [8] The Buddha himself proclaimed that: “I, monks, do not eat a meal at night in the evening and thus I am free from illness and affliction and enjoy health, strength and ease.” [9]



... a bhikkhu remains contented with robes just sufficient to protect his body and with food just sufficient to sustain him. Wherever he goes, he carries with him all his requisites, just like a winged bird flies, it flies only with its burden of wings.

The commentary elaborates: “In this body, which exists in dependence on requisites, I shall, by moderate eating, have health called ‘long endurance’ since there will be no danger severing the life faculty or interrupting the (continuity of the) postures.” Reflecting in this way, he makes use (of alms food) as sufferer from chronic disease does of his medicine.” (Vism.1.94). In order to stay in good health Lord Buddha maintained the stance.

How does one live in contentment?

When food is consumed for survival, we always take delight in food, both devas and human beings. [10] We remained mindful and consumed food in moderation reflecting carefully as we consume the food not for amusement, intoxication, physical beauty and attractiveness, but only for the support and maintenance of the body to practise avoiding harm and for assisting the spiritual life. [11] More importantly, moderate

eating is also a healthy habit to cultivate as, when a man is always mindful, knowing moderation in the food he eats, his ailments then diminish; he ages slowly, guarding his life. [12]

The story of King Pasenadi of Kosala

Once King Pasenadi of Kosala, went to the Jetavana monastery after having his full morning meal. It was said that the king had eaten one quarter basket (about half a bush) of rice with meat curry. So while listening to the Buddha’s discourse he felt very sleepy and was nodding most of the time. Seeing him nodding, the Buddha advised him to take a little less rice every day and to decrease the amount on a sliding scale to the minimum of one-sixteenth part of the original amount he was taking. The king did as he was told and found that by eating less he became thin, but he felt very much lighter and enjoyed much better health. When he told the Buddha about this, the Buddha said to him “O King, health is a great boon; contentment is the greatest wealth; a closed and trusted friend is the best relative; Nibbana is the greatest bliss.” [13]

When one has no self-control as regards the stomach will destroy living creatures, take possession of what has not been given to him, be unchaste, speak lies, drink strong drink, put his mother or his father to death, slay an Arahata, create a schism in the Order, even with malice aforethought wound a Tathagata. Was it not when without restraint to his stomach that Devadatta by breaking up the Order heaped up for himself kamma that would endure for a kalpa? [14]

Needless to say, here are benefits of being content like having good friends when need arises, good is contentment with just what one has, good is merit done well, when life is at the end. Good is the elimination of all suffering. [15] Living in solitude is happiness for one who is content, who has heard and clearly understands The Dhamma. [16]



Contentment

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In meditative practice, contentment is one of the five ascetic practices that lead to ascetic state that go with the volition of an ascetic practice, that is to say, fewness of wishes, contentment, effacement, seclusion, and that specific quality, ... herein, fewness of wishes and contentment are non-greed. Effacement and seclusion belong to the two states, non-greed and non-delusion. That specific quality is knowledge. [17]

Conclusion

As an ethical virtue the benefit of contentment in our day to day life is quite obvious. Absent of contentment leads to the arising of many defilements such as jealousy, hatred, pride, hypocrisy and various vices. A discontented man is always impatient. He is a grumbler everywhere. Even if he were to obtain the whole world, he would not be happy. This desire may take many forms such as desire for money and material gains, for fame and supremacy and so on. Whatever form it would take, such a person is a danger to himself as well as to others. Any kind of craving be it desire for political power or desire for material gains, when taken to extreme is bound to bring about serious consequences for the community at large.

Now, a question might arise whether this kind of contentment means leading to a life of inactivity, lethargy and complacency? To answer this, it can be pointed out that the Buddha's teaching never encourage that kind of inactivity or being resign to one's fate. Buddhism is a teaching that encourages true living. A life of true activity just as Gotama himself led. In explaining and practising contentment, Buddhist texts very often praise a monk who is content with the four requisites of his life, viz, robe, food, lodgings and medicines. Obviously, these are the four basic necessities of one's life and therefore is applicable to the layperson as well. [18]

Therefore, be capable, upright, and straight, easy to instruct, gentle, and not proud, content and easy to support with little, with few duties, living

simply and lightly, with peaceful abilities, mastering all, modest, and with no greed for support. Do not do even a minor thing that the wise and noble would later criticize. [19]

Is it not a blessing to live a peaceful life happily in content? "Happily indeed we live, content amidst the greedy. Amidst those who are greedy, we live in contentment." [20]

Contributor: Chin Kee Thou



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- [1] (Dhp.204)
 - [2] (DN.i.71); (MN.i.180)
 - [3] (MN.iii.11)
 - [4] (AN.VIII.30.10.2)
 - [5] (AN.X.50.10.8)
 - [6] (AN.IV.28.8)
 - [7] (AN. IV, III, 28(2)
 - [8] (AN. 4:159)
 - [9] (M.I.473)
 - [10] (SN.1.43)
 - [11] (AN. 4:159)
 - [12] (AN. 1:402)
 - [13] (Dhp. 204)
 - [14] (Mil.IV.5.4)
 - [15] (Dhp. 331)
 - [16] (Ud. 10)
 - [17] (Vism. II 83 & 84)
 - [18] (Encyclopaedia of Buddhism)
 - [19] (Sn.144)
 - [20] (Dhp.199)

July 2025



Vesak Day Celebration

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Photo credits to Sister Lee Mee Yin

Vesak 2025 Photo Exhibition & Sales

A preview was held 4 May on the 3rd level, exclusively for SDS teachers and students, for them to appreciate and also place orders for the photos.



Enlightened Lotus

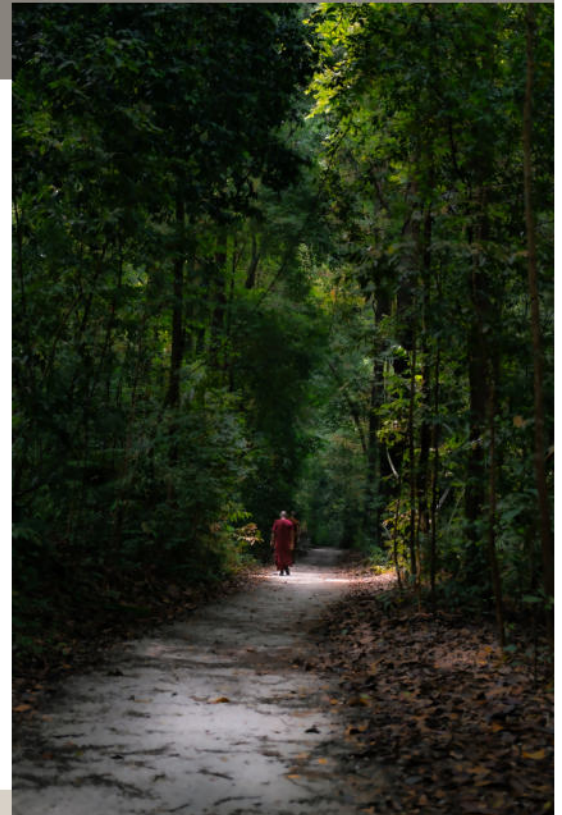
**Born from the mud, yet never stained,
Embraced by water, yet unchained.
The lotus blooms—calm, undisturbed.**

Chinese Garden, Singapore

A Blissful Walk

**Body in motion,
Mind full of joy.
A good friend beside me,
The path lies open.
The wind is gentle,
The walk—pure bliss.**

MacRitchie, Singapore



Reflect & Discover

Bhante Suneetha initiated the idea of having a photo exhibition and sales for Vesak celebration with the theme Reflect & Discover. Brother Low, with the help of all members of the Senior Two Class (and Sister Melanie, ex-classmate), decided to make it our class project. Brother Jim Lim, from Junior One, kindly helped us to put up the photos on the 3rd floor and the exhibit area for Vesak. It was decided to have the photos displayed on the 3rd level from 4th May, to give both teachers and students more time to appreciate them, as they would be busy during Vesak, undertaking various activities.

Bhante Suneetha and Brother Low each contributed 10 photos from their collection, and also wrote a short note to express the story behind each photo. We thought that the pictures would come up very well in canvas, and we decided on 40 x 60 cm, as an ideal size for today's home.

As a class project, we wanted to fund the whole exercise ourselves, and have 100% of the proceeds from the sales go directly to Mangala Vihara.

We are very happy to report that the project was very successful. We were able to generate sales of 33 photos. This was made possible as buyers from SDS kindly allowed us to display the photos throughout Vesak. We have since made reprints and the SDS members collected their purchases on 25 May. It was a wonderful experience engaging with members of the public and Mangala Vihara, who showed such generosity in supporting this effort.

Miscellaneous Exhibits

Other members of SDS and BPC also participated in this exhibition. Brother Bryan Law, Masters degree graduate from BPC contributed 2 pieces of artwork from his collection. You may want to visit his Facebook page on Siha's Adventures to see more of his work.

Sister Qwee Siang, Junior One teacher, contributed 2 pieces of Burmese artwork. She offered to match the contribution from buyers, as Dana. We are pleased to report that one of the artwork was sold twice. This is because the first buyer donated the art piece for resale. Such generosity! Sadhu, sadhu sadhu!

We also had 5 pieces of Chinese artwork in the form of scrolls. The donor wanted to remain anonymous.

Sharing the photos

We will be sharing more photos from the exhibition in the subsequent issues of newsletter. As a start, we have decided to share the most popular photo, which was purchased 7 times: **Enlightened Lotus**.

A Blissful Walk was also a multiple purchased photo. Both photos were taken by Bhante Suneetha.

Look out for more photos in the next newsletter.