



Faith in Buddhism



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Faith (*saddhā / pasāda*) is fundamental in the journey of a Buddhist practitioner. Faith is seen as the seed of noble cultivation. Faith opens the door to enter the Buddhist path and guides the journey till the attainment of *nibbāna*. “Having placed faith, one approaches and associates with the teacher; having associated, one gives ear; having given ear, one listen to the teaching; having listened to the teaching, one bears it in the mind and examines its meaning; having examined, one gains a reflective acceptance of those teachings; having gained a reflective acceptance of those teachings; one applies his/her will; having applied his/her will, one scrutinises; having scrutinised, one strives; having resolutely strived, one realises the supreme truth.” (MN 95) Faith thus becomes the seed of noble cultivation when it is wisely placed. When faith is unwisely placed, it could be a hindrance in the spiritual path.

Mere faith hinders us from seeing the truth. Something accepted by faith alone contains the risk of either being a truth or falsity. “Something may be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false; but something else may not be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be factual, true, and

unmistaken.” (MN 95) Thus, mere faith should not be the ground to confirm the truth. In Buddhism, such faith is termed as blind faith or groundless faith (*amūlika saddhā*).

Buddhism encourages us to develop grounded faith (*ākāravati saddhā*). Faith should be established through investigation. Prior to establishing faith in a teacher, one should investigate the virtues and the doctrines of the teacher. “When one has investigated the teacher and has seen that the teacher is purified from states of greed, hatred and delusion, then one places faith in the teacher.” (MN 95)

Therefore, the invitation to practice Buddhism is phrased as come and see (*ehi passiko*), which is an invitation to inspect but not to blindly believe in it. Only through investigation, one can determine the praiseworthiness or blameworthiness of an individual or a doctrine. In Buddhism, investigation is to detect the presence or absence of unwholesome roots: greed, hatred and ignorance. Having thus investigated, one should develop faith in what is wholesome and harmless.

to be continued.....



Faith in Buddhism

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Individual-centred faith could be a barrier to one's spiritual cultivation. When one places complete faith in another individual to guide their spiritual path, it can be construed as a form of groundless faith. Unquestionable faith in a particular individual is not an act of seeking the truth. It is an act of allowing someone to take control over one's thinking and behaviours. One could become overly dependent on that particular individual and would feel lost when that particular individual is not there to guide him/her. It could be disastrous as one could be easily manipulated to think and behave in negative and destructive ways, as in the case of Āṅgulimāla, who became a ruthless serial killer for his garland of fingers at the behest of his teacher. Therefore, even though individual figures, i.e., teachers and friends are essential in one's spiritual path, placing complete faith in an individual is an unwise act.

Buddhism encourages us to investigate wisely and not to place faith in something due to the fame or competence of a speaker. It is important to be reflective and know for ourselves the blameworthiness or blamelessness of something prior to placing faith in it. "When you know for yourselves: 'These things are wholesome; these things are blameless; these things are praised by

the wise; these things, if accepted and undertaken, lead to welfare and happiness,' then you should live in accordance with them." (AN 3.65).

Buddhism encourages us to develop faith in the teachings, the *Dhamma* and not in the individual who preaches the *Dhamma*. The Buddha advised Bhikkhu Vakkali, who had developed enormous affection towards the physicality of the Buddha, to see the Buddha through *Dhamma*: "One who sees the *Dhamma* sees me; one who sees me sees the *Dhamma*." (SN 22.87) The *Dhamma*, which leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to *nibbāna*, is formless and present everywhere.

Therefore, we must place our faith wisely, with convictions and constantly reviewing through self-reflection and self-knowing. In this way, we shall build our trust and confidence in the *Dhamma*, in our mental cultivation and in our path to the attainment of *nibbāna*.

References:

AN 5.250 : *Puggalappasādasutta*
 AN 3.65 : *Kesamutti Sutta*
 SN 22.87 : *Vakkali Sutta*
 MN 95 : *Caṅkī Sutta*

Upcoming Events

Jan 1 - New Year Sanghika Dana

Jan 15 - Dhamma Talk (7.30-9.00pm @ Level 2 CQN Hall)

Feb 9 - Chinese New Year Eve Midnight Service

Mar31 - Mangala Vihara 64th Anniversary



Samanera/Samaneri Program

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The participants, with shaven heads and dressed in white. Behind the Sangha are the relatives and friends of the participants with ready robes to offer to the soon-to-be ordained *samanera* and *samaneri*. Sis Donna Tan, who undertook charge of this program with Sister Janet Tan (not in the photo), is standing to the left of Bhante Cakkapala.

Photo is courtesy of Linus Tan

The 4th edition of this novitiate program was held 1 Dec 2023 at MV with a total of 15 participants comprising 9 males and 6 females. Participants were interviewed, short listed and had to undergo pre-ordination training before the actual day. As this was the first time that we had females participating, MV invited 4 *Bhikkunis* (nuns) from Indonesia to help in the ordination of the female novices. Participants had their hair shaved at the Mangala Hall in full view of their relatives and friends. In the presence of 10 monks and 4 nuns, the novices took the Ten Precepts and requested for their *Sangha* robes in the shrine hall. The whole process was conducted with dignity according to procedural rules of the *Vinaya*. The newly ordained *samanera* and *samaneri* then participated in the morning *puja* as members of the *Maha Sangha*.

After lunch, the newly-minted *samanera* and *samaneri* travelled north to Pontain in Johor to do their residential training at the Samadhi Meditation Centre. This programme of temporary ordination ends on 12 Dec 2023 with the participants' return to Singapore.

Temporary ordination is a good way of learning to live a purposeful life with few wants while practising the ways of the *Dhamma*. It enhances and uplifts one spiritually, bringing bliss and happiness. If you have interest to join our next Noviciate Program, do stay connected with us. The experience can be life-changing!

Contributed by Sis Jasmine Tan



The *Maha Sangha* including the 9 *samanera* and 6 *samaneri*. Photo is courtesy of Leo Hwa Liang



MV Sunday Dhamma Classes

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Years On & Forging Forward

Our Sunday Classes - Past & Present

This year marks the 63rd year of the Mangala Vihara Sunday Dhamma Classes (MVSDC). The early years of success was in an entirely different era of 'kampong' spirit and succeeded very well with an extended network of communal fraternity with members and students bringing in friends and acquaintances.

In today's context, social media and the World Wide Web have made *Dhamma* learning much more accessible to the community. However, this is not the same as undergoing a structured *Dhamma* Program delivered by dedicated and knowledgeable teachers. The Mangala Vihara YMBA's (Young Men's Buddhist Association) five-year Programme has strived to serve this purpose for six decades and continues to do so.

Our Role & Improvements

MVSDC has been instrumental in teaching Buddhist studies to thousands, including producing *Dhamma* teachers for the MVSDC. Many graduates of the programme have progressed to propagate the teachings in other Buddhist Centres as well. We pride ourselves as a centre of Theravada Buddhist Studies in English as well as Theravada Buddhist Studies in Chinese (TBSC). Meditation classes are also opened to the students of both English and Chinese classes.

As part of the renewal plan for our teaching faculty, we have recruited three new teachers in the 2023 academic year. These graduates from our latest Diploma cohort are Michelle Song (Diploma class), Lim Mee Jee (Junior 1) and Nurhayanti Shia (Youth Class).

Important Annual Events

An important event observed in the MVSDC Calendar is the Teachers' Day celebrated on 3 September this year. This year's event showcased the immense creativity of our children, youth and adult classes. An interesting line-up of skits, songs, videos and hand-made gifts of dedication were presented to the teachers and helpers to show their appreciation and gratitude.

We also celebrated Children's Day on 8 October with a fun outing for the children. The event at SuperPark Indoor Playground was subsidised for the children, accompanied by a coordinating teacher and parents. We had a good turnout for this event.

to be continued.....



MV Sunday Dhamma Classes

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Teachers' Day - 3 Sep 2023
Lower Preliminary Class
performing a skit

Upcoming Changes to the Children & Youth Classes in 2024

In 2024, the Children and Youth classes shall be the main focus of change at MVSDC. Bearing in mind that our parents hope to reinforce the values of their children through our programmes, MVSDC will pivot the Sunday School program to inculcate life value learning so that our children can grow up as responsible and purpose-driven adults. MVSDC shall aim to achieve this expectation.

From January 2024, we shall restructure the Children and Youth classes to incorporate more activity-based curriculum. The aim is to make learning interesting so that we can actively engage the young minds to sustain their learning interest. In so doing, we hope the students would be eager to attend classes every Sunday.

The current 3 Lower Preliminary Classes (A, B & C) will be restructured into 2

classes according to their academic levels in Primary schools, namely Lower Primary Classes (LPC) for P1 to P3 and Upper Primary Classes (UPC) for P4 to P6.

There will be a new Youth 1 class for those in Secondary 1 and 2. The existing classes of Kindergarten (for Nursery 2, K1 and K2) and Youth (renamed to Youth 2; for Secondary 4 and above) will remain.

There will be a new 30-minutes programme every Sunday from 10am for all the children and Youth classes in a joint-assembly session. This session will start with a short chanting in English on the 3 Refuges and 5 Precepts followed by a guided meditation and short sharing by the Youth students. A *Bhante* will be present to foster rapport with the *Sangha*. Through the joint assembly, we hope to build inter-connectivity and group learning amongst students, reaching out to cohorts beyond the respective classes.



Young children of the Kindergarten class at a meditation session.



Children & Youth assembled with some parents at SuperPark on Children's Day - 8 Oct 2023

To pique and cultivate interest outside book learning, Art & Crafts for the children and Yoga for the Youth are already regular activities. In the pipelines are plans for regular visits to senior care homes, orphanage, animal shelters and other temples. The children and youth will also be involved in important temple events, such as *Vesak* preparation and Sunday activities to create a sense of duties and belonging.

Continuous Efforts

Dhamma learning and Buddhist ethics shall remain the foremost objectives of the MVSDC.

Parents are encouraged to register and send their children to the MVSDC when we reopen on 7 Jan 2024 to the many new exciting changes in the pipelines. We look forward to another vibrant and fulfilling year for MVSDC!

**Contributed by
Mr Leong Kum Seng**



Other Events

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Sanghamitta Day

Every year on the full-moon day of December, Mangala Vihara celebrates *Maha Bodhi Day*, also known as, Sanghamitta Day. This special day is dedicated to the memory of the nun, a daughter of King Asoka, who brought a sapling of the Bodhi Tree, under which Lord Buddha attained enlightenment, to Sri Lanka. On arrival, Sanghamitta and the Bodhi sapling were welcomed by the local king, Devanampiya Tissa. The sapling was planted at the Sri *Maha Bodhi* Temple in Anuradhapura. The ficus religiosa at MV is from this same lineage of Bodhi Tree.



Bhante Seelananda and Bhante Raja with a group of members and devotees visited the Sri Sangamitta Viharaya on 20 Nov 2023 as part of a 9-day tour of Sri Lanka organised by MV.



A statue of Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta stands at the Sri Sangamitta Viharaya. In the foreground is a replica of the boat that brought the nun and the sapling that landed at the ancient port of Dambakola Patuna in the northern peninsula of Sri Lanka 3rd century BCE.



Kathina Day is the second most important and celebrated Buddhist Festival after *Vesak*. On this day, robes are offered to the *Sangha* to commemorate their completion of the observance of *Vassa* or Rainy Retreat over a period of three months.

On 5th November 2023, devotees arrived as early as 5am to participate. With offering robes in arms, they circumambulated the temple before entering the shrine hall for the morning *puja*. Thereafter, robes and requisites were offered to the 25 monks who represented the *Maha Sangha*. *Dana* breakfast was then offered to the monks. In gratitude, the monks blessed the devotees for their offerings.

Please visit the photo gallery on MV's Facebook for more photo-stories of the event.





Other Events

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Buddhist & Pali College Symposium - Sammodana

30 Years Journey (1993 - 2023)

9 September was a happy occasion for Buddhist and Pali College (BPC) as it celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the College. The Symposium was initiated by Ven. Seelananda, the Principal of BPC, and held at the SingPost Auditorium to celebrate 30 years of the College's achievements as a recognized and certified provider of Buddhist education.

The Guest-of-Honour for the Symposium was Mr U Ahmed Razee, Acting Sri Lanka High Commissioner in Singapore, G.N. Hasintha, Minister Counsellor and S.A. Udara Premarathna, Attaché (Protocol). Other invited guests were Ven. Prof. Neluwe Sumanawansa Maha Thero, Vice-Chancellor of Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, Ven. Prof. Moragollagama Uparathana Thero, the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies of Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, Chairman of Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple), Ti-sarana Buddhist Association, Buddhist Fellowship, *sangha* and lay lecturers of BPC, past and current students of BPC and other devotees.

Four speakers, Sis Sylvia Bay, Dr Tony See, Ven. Tenzin Tsultrim and Ven. K. Rathanasara were invited to give Dhamma Talks at the Symposium. The students of Metta School were also invited to perform at the Symposium. The highlight was the launch of the Chinese Diploma in Buddhist Studies which will commence in January 2024.

At the end of the Symposium, Ven. Dr. Rangama Chandawimala Thero was invited to give his closing speech followed by the thanksgiving speech of Bro Jebsons Chia, Chairman of BPCA.

Contributed by Sis Lily Chan

Our Volunteers

MV's Polishing Team has been around for a very long time. Though we hardly see them or hear of them, yet the dedicated team meets once every two weeks, on the Sunday before New Moon Day and Full Moon Day. Over two-hours, between 11.30am and 1.30pm, they would dismantle and polish the oil lamps and candle stick holders. Once the glow and glint are achieved, the brass wares are assembled before placing them on the altar. *Sadhu* to this group of volunteers who add shine and sparkle to the temple. If you are interested to volunteer, and wish to add a sparkle to your life, do drop by.



(L) to (R) -Jimmy Tan Hong Seng, Chua Yang Ngee, Chua Suat Yen, Alice Kweh, Ang Cheng Yam, Tan Yam Kong, Meiny Lee and Chong Siew Chin

MV's Kitchen Team is indispensable! Not only do they provide our *Sangha*, staff and volunteers with the necessary nutriments but they are counted upon on festivals and full-moon days to provide food for our members and devotees. Working in teams, they start work from as early as 7am and do not finish till about 1pm. There are also many other volunteers who are counted upon to help on major celebrations like *Vesak* and *Kathina*. *Sadhu* to all these people who toil to fill our stomachs and to energize us!



(L) to (R) Chin Pee Lee, Ann Tiung Kum Yoke, Irene Fok and Diana Fok



Weekly Activities

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MONDAY

7.30pm – 9.00pm

BPC Alumni Taiji, Level 1 Mangala Hall

8.00pm – 9.30pm (July – November)

Path of Emancipation Chanting (for Beginners)

TUESDAY

7.30pm – 9.30pm

BPC Diploma/GAQ/BA1/BA2/MA/Chinese Diploma

Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall & Level 3 Room 3, 4, 5 & 6

7.30pm – 9.30pm, (July – October)

Big Sutta Chanting Class Part 1 & 2

Level 2 Meditation Hall

WEDNESDAY

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Yoga (Intermediate), Level 3 Savatthi Hall

7.30pm – 9.30pm, July – September

BPC Introduction to Buddhism Course (English)

Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall

7.30pm – 9.00pm, July – October

Big Sutta Chanting Class Part 3 & 4

Level 2 Meditation Room

7.30pm – 9.00pm (September – October)

Meditation Class (Beginner)

Level 1 Shrine Hall

THURSDAY

9.00am – 10.30am

Yoga (Morning Session), Level 3 Savatthi Hall

2.00pm – 5.00pm, January – October

Dhamma Kazi, Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall

7.00pm – 9.30pm

Regular Meditation Practice @Meditation Hall

7.30pm – 9.00pm

The Essence of Buddhist Teaching

Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall

7.30pm – 9.30pm

BPC GAQ/BA1/BA2 – Level 3 Room 3, 5 & 6

7.30pm – 9.30pm

Qigong (Beginners), Level 1 Mangala Hall

FRIDAY

7.00pm – 9.30pm, January – November

TBSC-Theravada Buddhist Studies in Chinese

上座部原始佛教课程

Classes at Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall & Level 3

7.30pm – 9.00pm, July – October

Big Sutta Revision Class Part 1, 2, 3 & 4

Level 2 Meditation Hall

7.30pm – 9.30pm

Qigong (Advance)

Level 1 Mangala Hall

SATURDAY

9.00am – 10.30am

Yoga (Morning Session)

Level 3 Savatthi Hall

2.30pm – 4.00pm

Abhidhamma In Daily Life (English) by Bhante Cakkapala

Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall

2.30pm – 4.00pm

Abhidhamma In Daily Life (English) by Sister Siang Cheng

Level 3 Subhadda Room

4.30pm – 6.30pm

DAY Society (Devotional Associates of Yogeshwar)

Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall & Level 3 Rooms 3 & 4

7.45pm – 8.30pm

Bojjhanga Recitation

Bodhi Tree Shrine

SUNDAY

9.30am – 12.00pm

Sunday Dhamma Class – YMBA Buddhist Studies Classes (English)

Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall & Level 3 Classrooms (Lunch provided at 12noon in Mangala Hall)

12.30pm – 2.00pm, July – October

Maranasati Chanting Class in English

Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall

2.00pm – 5.30pm

BPC Diploma/GAQ/BA1/BA2/MA/Chinese Diploma

Diploma Class, Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall

GAQ/BA1/BA2/MA, Level 3 Rooms 3, 4, 5 & 6

5.00pm – 8.00 pm

Burmese Dhamma Class

Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall and

Level 3 Subhadda Room

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