



Bhante Cakkapala
Resident Monk
Mangala Vihara
(Buddhist Temple)



The Role of PRAYER in Buddhism

Prayer is a request or petition to an external being, be it the God or Gods or Goddesses, to solve their problems or to do something for them. It is a human nature to yearn for assistance when they are weak and in crisis. It provides psychological help for some people. Therefore, prayer plays an important role in almost all the religions.

Even in Buddhism which is said to be a non-theistic religion, prayer exists. Externally, the ways of Buddhists in front of the Buddha image are not different from that of other religions. Therefore, it is important to know the meaning and the role of prayer in Buddhism.

Most religions use "say the prayers" while worshipping to their God and Goddess. They talk to their divine beings to hear their prayers. In Buddhism, we do not use "say our prayers" to the Buddha. The Buddha will not hear our prayers. We just express our desire and wishes in front of the Buddha. Prayer (wishes/desire) alone is not enough. There has to be actions (*Kamma*). Without actions, our prayers will not work at all.

The purpose of chanting in Buddhism is different from that of other religions. When we chant in front of the Buddha image, we are not

asking for any help from the Buddha. We just pay respect and homage to the Buddha because we are grateful to Him for giving us the path to liberation from suffering and showing us the ways to good destinations. We recite and recollect the virtues of the Buddha in order to emulate his qualities so as to follow his footstep. While reciting, defilements in our mind subside. Therefore we use our chanting as '*Pūjā*' which means 'veneration and homage'.

The closest terms to prayer in *Pāli* are *āyācana* (verbal prayer) and *patthanā* (mental prayer). Prayer is a verbal expression (*āyācana*) and praying in the mind (*patthanā*) to express our desires and wishes. It is not a request or petition to the Buddha to give what we want. The Buddha will not answer our prayers and will not give us anything. You have to make an effort on our own in order to make our prayers come true.

Bodhisatta Sumedha wanted to become the Buddha and expressed his desire (said the prayers) in front of the *Dīpaṅkarā* Buddha. The *Dīpaṅkarā* Buddha examined the possibility and uttered the prediction that hermit Sumedha will become Gotama Buddha in the future. Even though Sumedha obtained the

to be continued

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The Role of Prayer in Buddhism

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prophecy from a *Buddha*, he has to work hard to fulfil the Ten Perfections (*Pāramī*) throughout the four incalculables (*asaṅkhyeyyas*) and one hundred thousand aeons (*kappas*). The literal meaning of the word '*Pāramī*' is "the action (*Kamma*) of noble people". Fulfilling perfection means performing meritorious actions based on compassion and wisdom.

If we observe the following Buddhist teachings, we will realise that the role of prayers in Buddhism is negligible. The *Buddha* often urge his disciples to strive for one's own liberation and to rely on oneself.

(1) You yourselves should make the effort; The *Buddha* are the Ones who only show the way (*tumhehi kiccamātappaṃ; akkhātāro tathāgatā.*). (Dhp Verse 276)

(2) One indeed is one's own refuge; how can others be a refuge to one (*attāhi attano nātho, ko hi nātho paro siyā?*) (Dhp verse 160)

(3) *Bhikkhus*, dwell yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge; with the *Dhamma* as an island, with the *Dhamma* as a refuge, with no other refuge. (SN 22:43) (DN 16:2.26)

If we study the *Pathamapatthanā Sutta* (AN 5:135) carefully, we will have a clear picture of the role of prayers in Buddhism.

"*Bhikkhus*, possessing five factors, the eldest son of a head-anointed king yearns for (pray for) kingship. What five? (1) He is well born on both sides. (2) He is handsome and graceful. (3) He is pleasing to his parents. (4) He is pleasing to citizens. (5) He is proficient in the arts of head-anointed kings."

"So too, *bhikkhus*, possessing five qualities, a *bhikkhu* yearns for the destruction of the taints (becoming an *arahant*). What five? (1) Faith in the Enlightenment of the *Buddha* (2) a good health (3) Honesty and openness to his teachers and *Dhamma* brothers (4) mental energy (5) Wisdom to know arising and passing away of mind and matter."

As mentioned in this *Sutta*, after we have acquired the necessary qualifications, we can expect and desire what we want to be. In other words, this *Sutta* clearly shows that the manifestation of our prayers is due to our own

actions. Prayers alone will not work. We have to make an effort to make them into reality.

The following two *Suttas* perfectly explain that prayers without actions will not come true. In *Itṭha Sutta* (AN 5:43), the *Buddha* explained it to *Anāthapiṇḍika*, the donor of *Jetavana* monastery.

"Householder, there are these five things that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and rarely gained in the world. What five? Long life, Beauty, Happiness, Fame, and the Heavens. These five things, householder, I say, are not obtained by means of prayers (*āyācana*) or aspirations (*patthanā*). If these five things could be obtained by means of prayers or aspirations, who here would be lacking in anything?" (i.e. If the prayers without actions are fulfilled, everyone will live in a utopian society.)

"Householder, the noble disciple who desires long life ought not to pray for long life or delight in it or [passively] yearn for it. A noble disciple who desires long life should practice the way conducive to long life. For when he practices the way conducive to long life, it leads to obtaining long life, and he gains long life either celestial or human."

The *Buddha* continues to explain that beauty, happiness, fame and heavens will not be obtained by means of mere prayers and it requires practical actions (*Kamma*) conducive to them.

Asibandhakaputta Sutta (SN 42:6) beautifully depicts a clear statement on the role of prayers in Buddhism. While the *Buddha* was staying in *Nalanda*, a headman named *Asibandhakaputta* approached the *Buddha* and made the following request.

"Venerable sir, the *brahmins* of the western region are said to direct a dead person upwards, to guide him along, and conduct him to heaven. [Commentary says: "They stand around him saying, 'Go, sir, to the *brahma* world; go, sir, to the *brahma* world,' and thus make him enter heaven."] But the Blessed One is able to bring it about that with the breakup of the body, after death, the entire world might be reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world."

to be continued



The Role of Prayer in Buddhism

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The *Buddha* replied it with a counter question. "Suppose, headman, a person would hurl a huge boulder into a deep pool of water. Then a great crowd of people would assemble around it, and they would send up prayers, saying: 'Emerge, good boulder! Rise up, good boulder! Come up on to high ground, good boulder!' What do you think, headman? Because of the prayers of the great crowd of people, would that boulder emerge, rise up, and come up on to high ground?"

"No, venerable sir."

"So, too, headman, if a person is one who destroys life, takes what is not given, engages in sexual misconduct, speaks falsely, speaks divisively, speaks harshly, uses destructive talks, one who is covetous, full of ill will, and holds wrong view, even though a great crowd of people would assemble around him and they would send up prayers ... still, with the breakup of the body, after death, that person will be reborn in a state of misery, in a bad destination, in the nether world, in hell.

"Suppose, headman, a man submerges a pot of ghee or a pot of oil in a deep pool of water and

breaks it. Any of its shards or fragments there would sink downwards, but the ghee or oil would rise upwards. Then a great crowd of people would assemble around it, and they would send up prayers, saying: 'Sink down, good ghee or oil! Settle, good ghee or oil! Go downwards, good ghee or oil!' What do you think, headman? Because of the prayers of the great crowd of people, would that ghee or oil sink down or settle or go downwards?"

"No, venerable sir."

"So, too, headman, if a person is one who abstains from the destruction of life ... one who holds right view, even though a great crowd of people would assemble around him and they would send up prayers ... still, with the breakup of the body, after death, that person will be reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world."

If we study all these *suttas*, we can conclude categorically that empty prayers will not generate any outcomes. Only prayers followed by actions (*Kamma*) will produce the desired results. This is the role of prayer in Buddhism.





佛法开示

明圆法师是新加坡的出家人，
在斯里兰卡锡兰大学佛学硕士毕业，教第
七年。
2003年到台湾临济宗佛学研究所，接着就
在锡兰大学佛学硕士毕业，而后再在台湾弘法
三年。



明圆法师
(Bhante Punnaaji)

日常生活与解脱

Daily Life & Liberation

2024年9月2日
星期一
晚上7点45分至 9点15分

祝福寺
Mangala Vihara
(Buddhist Temple)
30 Jin Eunos, S419495
Level 2, (二楼)
Chuan Quan Hwa Hall

A series of Dharma talks organized by
Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple)
Mangala Vihara Dhamma Fellowship (MVDF)
Buddhist & Poly College Alumni (BPCL)

From January to October for the past years, *Dhamma* Talks held were in English by either a Sangha member or a layperson. However, on 2 Sep 2024, we had the privilege to have Bhante Punnaaji (明圆法师), a monk from Sri Lanka, to conduct a *Dhamma* Talk in Mandarin. The response to this first Chinese *Dhamma* Talk was very good with encouraging feedback. We hope to have more Talks in Chinese in the near future. Stay tuned!



Vassāvāsa Invitation 2024

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Bro Wee Lian Teck and Bro Allan Soon offered under-robe to each of the *Bhante*.



Maha Sangha comprising (L) to (R):
Bhante Cakkapala, Bhante Sagara and Bhante Yassasi with Bhante Suneetha at lectern, leading the chanting of *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*.

Vassāvāsa refers to the observation of Rainy Retreat by the monastic community. This was initiated by the *Buddha* more than 2500 years ago. As the name implies, it was held during the rainy season and it is customary for the monks to stay at one place. It is recorded that many monks made significant spiritual progress during this three-month period as the regularity of staying at one place, instead of wandering, allowed them more time to devote themselves to the study and practice of the *Buddha's* teachings. This tradition of observing *Vassāvāsa* continues unbroken to this day. On the *Esala* full-moon day of July, which fell on 21st, MV invited four monks to observe the Rainy Retreat by staying at our temple. This observation is also beneficial to the lay-community as it allows them to support and attend to the needs of the monks thereby allowing lay people to accrue wholesome merits. This year, the four monks observing *Vassāvāsa* at MV are:

- Bhante Cakkapala, Resident monk of Mangala Vihara
- Bhante Y Sagara, Chief Venerable of Sri Viyaya Sundararamaya Gampaha
- Bhante Dr P Yassasi, Founder and Director of International Buddhist Research Centre of Sri Lanka
- Bhante Suneetha, Resident monk of Mangala Vihara

Bro Wee Lian Teck and Bro Allan Soon represented Mangala Vihara in inviting the above monks to observe the Rainy Retreat by offering the *Maha Sangha* a tray of sireh and each *Bhante* a piece of under-robe. The monks individually accepted the invitation. After the completion of this ancient rites, Bhante Suneetha led the *Maha Sangha* in the chanting of the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*, the first discourse taught by the *Buddha* to the first Five Disciples at Sarnath.

The *pūja* ended with blessings from the *Maha Sangha*.



Piṇḍapāta 2024

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With Loving Kindness

I'll be upright happy
Gentle, honest words
Content and humble
Do not be proud

Unburdened with duties
Frugal in my life
Calm, skillful and wise
Try to be nice

Pure of heart, seeing clearly
No fixed views
With loving kindness
Yes, I'm doing all I can
To be a better man

Don't do the things
The wise will disagree
May all be happy
May they be safe

I won't cheat or hate
Beings anywhere
Wish harm upon them
In my anger

Pure of heart, seeing clearly
No fixed views
With loving kindness
Yes, I'm doing all I can
To be a better man

Whatever living beings
There may be
May they be at peace
May they be happy

Tall, short, weak or strong
Seen or unseen
May all be happy

Like a mother loves her child
Protect her only child
Cherish all beings
With boundless heart

Spread kindness everywhere
Shoot past clouds and skies
Down the deepest holes
In every nook

Pure of heart, seeing clearly
No fixed views
With loving kindness
Yes, I'm doing all I can
To be a better man



Following the traditions of past years, MV held this event on the public holiday of 9th August 2024 – Singapore's 59th National Day. The day started wet but the weather cleared and by 9.30am we could hold the event out-doors. For this year, we had a *Maha Sangha* of 14 monks who participated.

Though the temple had provided cooked boiled rice for the members and devotees to offer to the *Sangha*, many came with additional provisions of canned and dried foods, toiletries etc. With *kapiyas* in attendance, the 14 monks made their rounds collecting the allowable requisites from the crowds who were lined orderly. All items given to the monks were immediately placed into big canvas bags, which had their names tagged to the bag, facilitating smooth transfers to the visiting monks.

After the 10.30am *puja*, the *Sangha* was invited for a lunch *dana*. Members and devotees too were served steamed rice with curry vegetables and a drink. Many have expressed their joy at being able to participate at this *Piṇḍapata* event organized by the MV Management Committee. MV is also grateful to the many volunteers who had come forward to offer their services to support and make this event a successful one.



Photos are courtesy of various members and volunteers of MV
Jasmine Tan 22082024

Written and Contributed by
Bro Yee Peng Fee
Teacher – YMBA@MV



Mangala Vihara's One-Day Meditation Retreat

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Concluding the retreat with a group photo

Bhante Cakkapala guiding the practitioners on Metta Meditation



Sitting meditation



Walking meditation



Observing Noble Silence while having lunch



Dhamma talk by Bhante Suneetha and Q&A session with Bhante, facilitated by Sister Sock Cheng

On 3 August, Saturday, Mangala Vihara hosted a one-day meditation retreat, guided by Bhante Cakkapala and Bhante Suneetha. This retreat marked the conclusion of six weekly sessions of meditation classes held in June/July. The series included an Introduction to Meditation taught by Bhante Cakkapala every Wednesday from 26 Jun to 31 Jul and Mindfulness Meditation led by Bhante Suneetha every Thursday during the same period. The full-day mindfulness event, attended by over 50 practitioners, provided a valuable opportunity for participants to apply what they had learned over the previous six weeks.

The retreat began at 8 a.m. Participants, dressed in white attire, registered outside the Shrine Hall and donned white sashes over their left shoulders to signify their observance to the Eight Precepts and Noble Silence. The day commenced with a serene 30-minute *Metta* Meditation, guided by Bhante Cakkapala, focusing on extending loving-kindness to oneself and others. This was followed by intervals of hourly sessions of sitting meditation led by Bhante Cakkapala, and mindful walking meditation.

Bhante Suneetha delivered an insightful *Dhamma* talk on the "Five Hindrances to Meditation" - Sensual Desire, Ill Will, Sloth & Torpor, Restlessness, and Doubts. *Bhante* referenced the *Saṅgārava Sutta* (SN 46.55), where the *Buddha* likened a mind tainted by sensual desire to a bowl of water mixed with dye, obscuring the clarity of one's reflection. "If a man with normal eye sight looks at the reflection of his own face in that bowl of water he will not know or see his own face as clearly as it should be". Similarly, ill-will is compared to boiling water, sloth and torpor to water covered with slimy moss, restlessness to water ruffled by wind, and doubt to agitated and muddied water in a dark place.

This is followed by an engaging question-and-answer session where practitioners clarified their uncertainties about meditation practises and the observance of 8-precept. The retreat concluded at 5pm with a sitting meditation led by Bhante Suneetha.

Several uplifting and noteworthy events during the retreat were particularly appreciated:

- Thanks to the generosity of the meditators, Mangala Vihara successfully raised the necessary funds to replace meditation mats and cushions.
- Volunteers from the Mangala Vihara kitchen came forth to prepare a vegetarian lunch for the retreatants despite the short notice.
- Practitioners expressed their gratitude by washing dishes, cleaning Mangala Hall and sweeping the *Bodhi* Tree area after lunch, applying mindfulness to their daily activities.

The June-August programme is part of Mangala Vihara's quarterly meditation series. Participants included regular practitioners from previous programmes, as well as members, devotees, and students from various sub-groups. The next meditation course will commence in September.



Spreading Dhamma in Digital Age

The volunteers behind the video team

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During the time of the *Buddha*, the fully Enlightened One and his disciples travelled on foot for months, journeying from town to town to spread the *Dhamma*. For 45 years, his missionary treaded on with pure compassion to ensure that the doctrine reached out to as many lay devotees as possible.

Fast forward to today's modern world, technology allows us to access the *Dhamma* with just a click. For this edition, we want to pay tribute to the dedicated video teams who support our *Bhantes* by video documenting and sharing their teachings beyond the classroom.

Bhante Cakkapala, resident monk of MV, has been sharing videos of his teachings from *Sutta Study Class* (Thursday evenings) and *Abhidhamma Class* (Saturday afternoons) on YouTube @suttastudyclass7162. Since the first video was uploaded in 2018, the channel now features 165 videos. *Bhante* is currently supported by two groups of volunteers from these classes. From the *Sutta Study Class*, Sister Kelly, Brother Halim and Brother Alex assist *Bhante* by managing the onsite video recording and editing the clips after the lesson. The dedicated team also help with the video documentation of MV's monthly *Dhamma Talks*.



Before each class, they set up the camera and, thanks to advanced video software, *Bhante* can self-record his presentations using his laptop connected to the video camera. In the event of technical issues, video editing is required, depending on the quality of the recordings. It may be just simple stitching of the recordings to a complete video or manually synchronising and superimposing *Bhante's* slides into the relevant frames. The latter is a meticulous process that can take up to four hours or more.

Given the volume of content to manage, the video team is eager to recruit more volunteers to support this worthy work. On 15 August, Brother Halim and Brother Alex, conducted a training class for the new volunteers, sharing their expertise on the recording and editing process. With additional help, they hope to accelerate the dissemination of these videos, making the *Dhamma* accessible to more students of Buddhism at 'deva speed'.

If you wish to volunteer and support the video team, please contact Brother Alex at 91178331 (WhatsApp only) to express your interest.

Written by Gladys Ng



Video editing training class conducted by Brother Halim



From Left: Brother Halim, Brother Alex

October 2024

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Upcoming Events

Dhamma Talks

Dhamma Talks Series
by
Bhante Prof. P. Yasassi

- Professor in Buddhist Civilization at the Department of Pali & Buddhist Studies, University of Sri Jayawardenepura, Sri Lanka.
- Bachelor of Arts (Old Class Honours), Sri Lanka.
- Founder & Director of International Buddhist Research Centre & Co-Secretary of Sri Lanka Association of Buddhist Studies.
- Two Masters of Arts in Buddhist Studies degrees from University of Kelaniya and Buddhist & Pali University, Sri Lanka.
- Has authored several books and editions.
- Currently conducting lectures, dhamma talks & public sessions locally and internationally.

3 Aug 2024	LEADING A BLISSFUL LIFE	17 Aug 2024	HOW TO UTILIZE OUR WEALTH WISELY
31 Aug 2024	MAINTAINING A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE & LONG TERM FRIENDSHIP	14 Sep 2024	BLESSINGS AND DEDICATION OF MERITS
28 Sep 2024	WHY WE ARE JOURNEYING THE SAMSAARA	5 Oct 2024	HOW TO BALANCE MUNDANE AND SUPRA-MUNDANE LIFE
12 Oct 2024	REMOVING OUR BAD KAMMA THROUGH POSITIVITY		

Organized by Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple),
Mangala Vihara Dhamma Fellowship (MVDF) and Buddhist & Pali College (BPC)



Dhamma Talk

Lecturer at Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore.
Currently engaging in the Master of Guidance and Counseling program at James Cook University's Singapore Campus.
Graduated from Buddhist College of Singapore in Bachelor of Buddhist Studies and the University of Hong Kong in Master of Buddhist Studies and Master of Buddhist Counselling.

Bhante M. Suneetha
Resident Monk,
Religious Adviser,
Mangala Vihara
(Buddhist Temple)

Why Me?

14 October 2024,
Monday
7.45pm - 9.15pm

Mangala Vihara
(Buddhist Temple)
30 Jln Eunus, S419495
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)



11 Dec 2024
Memorial
Day of late
Mdm Chew
Quee Neo



Upcoming events

Buddhist Courses

Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore
(Affiliated to the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka)

Diploma in Buddhism

Curriculum

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南传上座部佛学课程
Theravada Buddhism Studies in Chinese

佛学班

开课: 每年一月
日期: 每逢星期五
时间: 晚上7点至9点30分
学费: 随缘乐捐
欲知详情, 请致电 6744 4285
或电邮至 secretary@mv.sg

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没有年龄限制
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• Lessons are conducted in Chinese
• Yearly intake in January
• Every Friday from 7pm to 9:30pm, from January to November
• Course fee by donation
• No age limit. No examinations
For further enquiry, contact 6744 4285 or email secretary@mv.sg

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