



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

Moving Away from Clouds

*He who once was heedless,
but turned to heedfulness,
lights up the world
like the moon freed from clouds.
One whose bad deeds
are supplanted by the good,
lights up the world,
like the moon freed from clouds.
(Dhammapada, 172-173)*

Purification of action (*kamma*) - mental, verbal and physical – is beneficial. It belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life. It leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, and to *nibbāna*.

Ordinary lives tend to be filled with transgressions. As ordinary minds lack confidence, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Defilements lead us to act unwholesomely. Consequently, our minds can be filled with remorse regarding our past actions, thinking “I could have done this differently; I wish I could go back and change what I did.” Moral shame (*hiri*), the sense of shame over moral transgression, is viewed as a positive mental quality that safeguards our morality. It keeps us away from transgressions by reminding us of our responsibility in what we do and their impact on ourselves and others. However, when we overly regret what we did, which is irreversible, we get trapped in remorse without allowing us to cultivate further, which is not beneficial. What can we do when we have acted unwholesomely in the past but wish to cultivate ourselves to be wholesome? The Buddha instructed us in three steps to confront our past transgressions skillfully, without drowning ourselves in remorse but cultivating ourselves to be wholesome individuals.

Firstly, we should learn to see a transgression as a transgression. After we have acted with body, speech or mind, we should check on that act thus: “Does this action that I have done lead to my own affliction or to the affliction of others or to the affliction of both? Is this an unwholesome action with painful consequences, with painful results?” Thus, we should learn to see and acknowledge our responsibility for our transgressions. We should cultivate open-mindedness to see ourselves as we are: “We, ordinary beings, tend to act unwholesomely when our mind is overtaken by defilements, though we are capable and do act wholesomely”. Then, when we have acted unwholesomely, we can see and acknowledge our unwholesome actions as unwholesome without attempting to deny our responsibility.

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Secondly, we should confess the transgression to a teacher or a sensible spiritual companion. When we know that we have committed a transgression, making a confession or revealing our unwholesome action to someone further strengthens our acknowledgement of the action as unwholesome and our determination to be a wholesome person. At the same time, it helps to lighten the remorse. One to whom we confess should be chosen carefully as that person highly influences how we confront our past actions. That person should be filled with compassion to care for our well-being, forgiveness to accept our confession, wisdom to understand our actions and skillfulness to guide us according to the Dhamma.

Thirdly, we should be determined to restrain ourselves in the future. Having confessed, we should have the determination to restrain ourselves from unwholesome actions and to cultivate wholesome actions now and going forward. We should learn to act with repeated reflection. Prior to the act and while doing the act, one should reflect thus: “Does this action - I wish to do or I am doing - lead to my own affliction or to the affliction of others or to the affliction of both? Is this an unwholesome action with painful consequences, with painful results?” Having thus reflected, when we know that this action, that we wish to do or we are doing, is an unwholesome action, we should restrain ourselves from engaging in that action.

Present actions do not purify our past actions, but we can choose to act skillfully and beneficially now and going forward. It helps to lessen the impact of negative results of our past actions and cultivate ourselves to be wholesome individuals.

The Buddha instructed Sāmaṇera Rāhula thus: “After you have acted, having reflected, if you know that you have done an unwholesome act, which has painful outcome, you should confess, reveal, and clarify such a deed to the Teacher or a sensible spiritual companion, and having revealed it you should restrain yourself in the future.”

King Ajātasattu, who imprisoned his father for the sake of kingship, could not realise his transgression until it caused the passing away of his father. Regretting his wrongdoing, the King confessed his transgression to the Buddha, requested acceptance of his apology and vowed to restrain in the future. Then, the Buddha replied thus: “Indeed, great king, a transgression overcame you. You were so foolish, so deluded, so unskillful that for the sake of rulership, you took the life of your father, a righteous man and a righteous king. But since you have seen your transgression as a transgression and make amends for it according to the Dhamma, we acknowledge it. For, great king, this is growth in the discipline of the Noble One: that a person sees his transgression as a transgression, makes amends for it according to the Dhamma, and achieves restraint in the future.”

Once, the Buddha addressed the Bhikkhus and stated thus: “Bhikkhus, one who possesses three qualities should be known as a fool: (1) One who does not see one’s own transgression as a transgression; (2) When one sees one’s own transgression as a transgression, one who does not make amends for it in accordance with the Dhamma; (3) When another confesses a transgression, one who does not accept it in accordance with the Dhamma. One who possesses three qualities should be known as a wise person. What three? (1) One sees a transgression as a transgression; (2) When one sees a transgression as a transgression, one who makes amends for it in accordance with the Dhamma; (3) When another confesses a transgression, one accepts it in accordance with the Dhamma”.

When we are able to move away from past transgressions rightly, we cultivate ourselves to be wholesome individuals, acting for the wellbeing of oneself and others. When we have acted unwholesomely, we should know it, we should acknowledge it, we should confess it, we should understand it and we should be determined to restrain ourselves in the future. When another acts unwholesomely and confesses it, we should likewise accept it, understand it and help the person skillfully to cultivate oneself to be a wholesome individual – a bright moon unclouded.

References

Accaya Sutta (AN 3.4); Accaya Sutta (SN 11.24); Ambalaṭṭhikarāhulovāda Sutta (MN 61); Sāmaññaphala Sutta (DN 2)



The Kathina Celebration: A time of robe offering

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Kathina Ceremony



Robe and requisite offering to the *Maha Sangha*

Kathina is a time-honoured event celebrated after the 3-month *Vassa* (rainy retreat) period by Theravada Buddhists worldwide. At Mangala Vihara, this highly regarded ceremony follows the Sri Lankan traditions established by the late founding Bhante, Venerable M.M. Mahaweera Maha Nayaka Thera. A symbolic ritual during *Kathina* is the offering of new robes to the monastic order (*Sangha*) by the laity. Mangala Vihara began the practice of ordering new robes for *Kathina* donation in the 1980s. The deep significance of *Kathina* robe offering is evident in the increasing demand.



Devotees and the *Kathina* offerings

This year, the temple committee and volunteers began preparations for the big event as early as June. The robes were ordered from a supplier in Myanmar. Devotees began placing their orders and making donations for requisites from August until a week before the *Kathina* Day. Over 1,100 robes were each labelled with the donors' names.

The annual revered *Kathina* ceremony was celebrated at Mangala Vihara (MV) on 20th October 2024. The devout community gathered at the Shrine Hall as early as 5:45 am, to collect the robes and joyously await the commencement of the event. At 6.30am, due to the wet weather, a core group of devotees carried out the procession going round the temple premises three times, while other devotees waited in the Shrine Hall for the commencement of *puja*.



Sharing of merits

During the ceremony, the two devotees, Bro Wee Lian Teck and Bro Alan Tan Hwa Ngee, who were appointed to carry out the traditional invitation to the resident monks to observe the rainy retreat during the *Vassavasa* Invitation Ceremony on 20th July, completed their duty on *Kathina* Day. They recited the traditional formula for the offering of the *Kathina* robes and requisites to the *Maha Sangha*. After the ceremony, all the robes were packed and shipped to designated temples and monasteries in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The practice of robe offering bears a deep significance in the *Kathina* traditions. In the *Dakkhina Vibhanga Sutta*, Lord Buddha explained to Venerable Ananda, “..in no way an offering to an individual will ever be more fruitful than an offering given to the order of the *Sangha*.” The robes are offered not to any individual monk but to the community of monks. The offering of robes during *Kathina* represents renewal and rejuvenation for the monks after three months of rigorous spiritual practice. It also signifies the bond between the monastic order and the lay community, highlighting the latter's respect, gratitude, support, and act of virtue (*dana*) to the *Sangha*.

.....to be continued



The Kathina Celebration: A time of robe offering

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Offering of *Kathina* robe is considered one of the greatest meritorious deeds by the Buddha. One of the stanzas chanted during the *Kathina* ceremony glorifies the greatness of merit performed during the occasion: *“Even this solid earth, rock or diamond could tremble, shake or break at times, but the merit obtained by offering Kathina robe could not be nullified* by anything until one achieves the ultimate goal of Nibbana”*. That is why it is called *Kathina* (unshakable).

*However, the great *Kathina* merits cannot help one who has committed the five heinous crimes from suffering the consequences — patricide, matricide, murder of an *Arahant*, wounding of a Buddha, or causing a schism in the *Sangha*.

Photo credit: Sister Mee Yin and Sister Jasmine



Kathina celebration with the Maha Sangha



Robes were packed and shipped out immediately after the ceremony

Upcoming Events

1st January - New Year Day *Sanghika Dana*

28th January - Eve of Chinese New Year - midnight *puja*

31st March - MV's 65th Anniversary

Corrigendum

Issue 7 Page 4 *Vassavasa Invitation 2024*

The devotees who represented MV to invite the monks for the Rain Retreats are as follows:

- (1) Bro Wee Lian Teck and
- (2) Bro Alan Tan Hwa Ngee

The Editor regrets the mistake and apologises for the error.



Buddhist Pāli Naming Ceremony

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On 20th October 2024, Mangala Vihara witnessed a significant and joyful day. The remarkable Sunday began with the annual grand *Kathina* celebration, graced by the presence of the *Maha Sangha*. As the evening unfolded, more than 40 lay devotees gathered at the Shrine Hall to receive their Buddhist *Pāli* names. The *Pāli* naming ceremony, held every two years at Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple), was conducted with a more intimate community than the morning session, yet it was no less formal.

Led by Chief Resident Monk, Bhante Seelananda, the occasion was officiated by Bhante Yassasi, Bhante Suneetha, Bhante Saddhatissa, Bhante Kolita, and Bhante Kotiyagala Uparathana. Each devotee was first sanctified with the Buddha relic, accompanied by blessings chanted by Bhante Seelananda. A certificate and a *Pāli* name card were then presented to the recipient as Bhante Yassasi recited the meaning of the new *Pāli* name. After the presentation, Bhante Yassasi delivered an inspiring elucidation on the significance of *Pāli* names. He emphasised that each name, carefully chosen by Bhante Seelananda and the management committee of Mangala Vihara, holds profound meaning and importance. These names, drawn from the *Pāli Tipitaka*, are those of notable *Bhikkhus*, *Bhikkhunis*, and lay benefactors of the Buddha.



Blessing Ceremony



Presentation of the Certificate and Pali name card



Group photo

Bhante Yassasi further explained that receiving a *Pāli* name marks a significant milestone in a devotee's life. Just as one's birth name is a milestone, the *Pāli* naming ceremony signifies a deeper dedication to the Buddha's *sāsana*. By concentrating on the meaning of the names and reading about the exemplary characters whom one is named after, Bhante encouraged the newly named devotees to live by the virtues and wholesome conduct associated with their names.

A noteworthy point highlighted by Bhante Yassasi was the endorsement of the new *Pāli* names by Mangala Vihara. This naming tradition bears the signature of the Chief Resident Monk and the Management Committee. The certification also signifies the inherent connection of the devotee's devotion to the temple, reflecting one's lifestyle, behaviour and dedication to the Buddhist path. Bhante wished the newly *Pāli*-named devotees all the best and a good life, by performing more meritorious deeds.

The event concluded on a high note with the presentation of a gift: a white Buddha Statue from the visiting Nepalese venerables, Bhante Saddhatissa and Bhante Kolita, to MV Chairman Dr Lim Ah Swan. This joyous occasion left all participants uplifted and inspired, reinforcing their dedication to the *Dhamma* and the Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple).



CHILDREN'S DAY OUTING AT SUPERPARK



The annual Children's Day activity on 6 October 2024 was organised at the indoor activity venue SuperPark, located at Suntec City. Thirty-seven children and youths from the Sunday *Dhamma* School were all decked in appropriate outdoor clothing, some looking very athletic and all ready for action in their sport shoes and grip socks. Parents of younger children were also eagerly in tow to enter at 10am, but not before posing for a group photograph.

The 2-hour adventure inside the SuperPark was actively explored by all at the Adventure Area, Game Arena and the challenging Freestyle Hall.

Outdoor activities like this are part of the curriculum of the Sunday *Dhamma* School to not only teach the *Dhamma* and practices to cultivate wholesomeness, but also to train them to integrate with others in physical and mental activities for completeness in growing up.

As the photographs show, nothing is too challenging even for those younger ones from the Kindergarten classes.

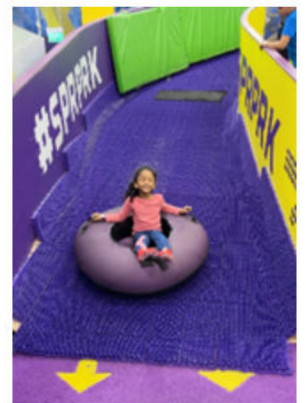
When the time came for departing the SuperPark, the smile on the faces could not hide how much everyone had enjoyed themselves.

There will be more good things to come!

Leong Kum Seng
Dhamma Supervisor



Our kindergarten student took the challenge at Ninja Track. She did it!



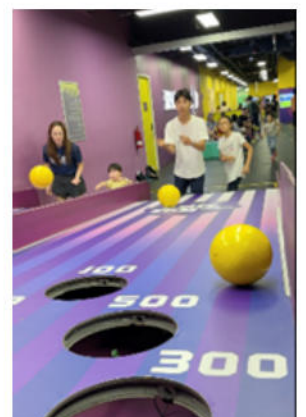
"Here I come!" The Tube-Tyre slide where many found that one ride was not enough.



One of the SDS student with her father and friends, happily taking turns to play at the Kid's Trampoline arena



NBA Players in the making at SuperHoop



"Watch that! I am going to get the ball into the high score!" – A family at the SuperBowling.



Embracing the Dhamma Path

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Group photo

A closer look at Mangala Vihara's 12-Day Sāmanera & Sāmaṇerī Programme

Mangala Vihara (MV) concluded the year with its signature 12-day *Sāmanera* & *Sāmaṇerī* Programme from December 1 to 12, 2024. This temporary ordination programme allowed laypeople to experience the initiation process that a novice monk and nun would undergo, including departure from home life, shaving of the head, donning the robes, taking refuge in the Triple Gem and ordination by the Preceptor (a senior monk or abbot). Under the guidance and mentorship of MV's resident *Bhantes* and invited *Sayalays*, the participants underwent rigorous training at Siriwan Pattipattaram Tangkak Temple in Malaysia, committed to the discipline and rigours of the monastic life. Here, they observed the Ten Precepts, studied the Dhamma, meditated, chanted, performed monastic chores and participated in religious services for the lay community.

The Novice Programme at Mangala Vihara was pioneered by then-Chief Resident Monk, Bhante Cittara in 2019. It started as a simple retreat conducted within the temple with five novice monks. Now in its fifth year, the course has grown in both participants and curriculum.

Programme Evolution:

- 2019-2020: Conducted at Mangala Vihara with novices staying within the temple.
- 2022: Expanded to Malaysia, allowing novices to experience monastic life away from familiar grounds.
- 2023: Opened to female novices (*Sāmaṇerī*) and introduced mandatory preparatory lessons.

The 2024 programme accepted five male and seven female applicants. Registration began in September. Applicants were required to meet specific criteria: approval from parents and spouses (if married), basic *Dhamma* knowledge, and willingness to follow the *Vinaya* rules. Applicants also underwent an interview to discuss their purpose and objectives. Following this, participants attended a mandatory eight-session pre-training orientation covering the ordination procedure, *Pāli* chants, proper ways of donning robes, the training schedule, and code of conduct. The preparatory course ensured that participants were mentally prepared for the ordination programme and the 12-day training in Malaysia.

The formal ordination ceremony took place on the morning of 1st December. During the solemn procession, the novices, dressed in white, first had their heads shaved and symbolically requested the robes from their families; the robes were then offered to and requested from the *Sangha*. After changing into the robes, the novices formally requested ordination from the monks, all in the presence of their loved ones and family members. The ceremony concluded with a *Puja* service, followed by lunch before the novices, accompanied by their Teachers, Committee Members and volunteers, set off to their training grounds in Malaysia.

Two participants from this program shared their thoughts on their 12-day retreat. Brother, in his early 50s and a counselling professional, is a first-time *Sāmanera* in Theravada practice. Sister, in her early 50s and a healthcare professional, is a third-time *Sāmaṇerī*.

Brother first learned about the programme from the temple's notice board. It was a timely opportunity for him as he appreciates the simplicity and practicality of Theravada Buddhism. He found the preparatory sessions highly informative and useful for clarifying his doubts and expectations. Brother had his initial concerns of the challenges of monastic life such as waking up at 4am. However, he was determined to overcome his reservations including calming his monkey mind, diet and unfamiliarity with *Pāli* chants. On reflection, post-program, Brother's initial concerns were largely unfounded. He learned more about his monkey-mind and discovered new subtleties in his meditation practice. Overall, it had been a good experience for him.

.....to be continued



Embracing the Dhamma Path

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Though she is no novice to the *Sāmaṇerī* programme, it was Sister's first time joining the Novice Program organised by MV. Sister was primarily motivated to accumulate *nekkhamma* (renunciation) *pāramī* (perfection) through the novice program. After her second novitiate experience in 2018, Sister resolved that her third time donning the robes would be her time to go forth. This determination kept her from joining any *Sāmaṇerī* programme since then. However, a piece of illuminating advice from a *Bhikkhunī*, relayed through her friend, dispelled her hesitation: *"It is the accumulation of nekkhamma pāramī; one should continue to practice renunciation (such as being a novice) during the current life and future lives until one attains fruition."* With renewed faith, Sister took the step forward to register for the MV Program. She aimed to cultivate right mindfulness by practicing the Brahmavihara and to be free from arising anger during her retreat. Her takeaway, post programme, is the continual cultivation of mindfulness, contentment, simplicity and the restraint of senses.

This MV Programme offers a unique opportunity for laypeople to break away from their daily routines to immerse themselves in a monastic life. It is a way for one to cultivate spiritual growth and deepen one's *Dhamma* understanding. It also gives a personal glimpse into the workings of the monastery, hence fostering a strong bond between the laity and the monastic community. At the same time, it promotes the *Dhamma* and help in preserving the cultural and religious fabric of the community.



Figure 1- Preparatory session conducted by Bhante Cakkapala



Figure 2 - Participants of the Novice Programme



Figure 3 - Hair cutting ceremony



Figure 4 - Novices having their head shaved by members of the *Sangha* in the presence of their families.



Figure 5 - Novices' shaven heads are wrapped with white cloth (crown), representing their intermediate status in the monastic community.



Figure 6 - Handing over the robe to the *Sangha*



Figure 7 - Receiving the robe from the *Sangha* after the formal request



Figure 8 - Novices donning the robes



Figure 9 - Novices requesting for formal ordination from the *Sangha*



Figure 10 - The *Samanerī* first *pindapata* after their ordination led by Sayalay Mettikā (on the extreme right)



Figure 11 - Lunch *Dana*

Figure 1 & 2 Photo courtesy of Gladys Ng
Figure 3 - 11 & Group photos are courtesy of Bro Leo