

Satipanya

Autumn Newsletter 2011

Dear Friends

I hope this eReminder finds you all well and happy!

Click here if you want to download a PDF file of the Calendar 2011

[Calendar 2012](#)

The Trust: We have some changes this year. Seetha (Siriwardene), our chair from the start, decided that the Blessing of the Stupa was an auspicious day to resign from the Trust. Seetha has supported me almost from the first year I returned to the UK from Sri Lanka in 1998. She was instrumental in setting up the Vihara in north London . That didn't take off, but it was a learning process without which Satipanya may not have arisen. The Stupa Blessing marked the end of the beginning. We can truly say that Satipanya is grounded. Many thanks for all your support, Seetha. May you continue to live a healthy and active life!

In her place, Ernie (Gunsekera) accepted his election. Ernie joined the Trust soon after it was established. He was instrumental in buying the property. Many thanks.

I have been hoping to bring the Trust closer to Satipanya. So Nick (Costaras) who has been the treasurer these past three years, was willing to hand on the work to Rob (Polykett) who lives in Shrewsbury and joined the Trust last year. His first **Note** is below.

Finally, we welcome a new trustee, Dea (Paradisos). I've known Dea since my early days as monk at the Birmingham Vihara. She is the person we now rely upon to prepare the meals should a facilitator fail to materialise or need to leave. It's made me feel more at ease about running long courses.

Extensions: You will have received the good news about extensions. If not, here's the link again.

[Extensions](#)

Email broke down last week so some will not have received this goonews about extensions.

Martin, our facilitator, has decided to stay another year. This is quite a gift and a sure relief for me. As I am sure all of you who have been here, Martin has really taken to the work. Greatly appreciated by everyone who comes here.

Essays: Instead of the usual tip, this is an opportunity for Noirin and myself to write some longer piece. I am hoping to collect a few essays around the Dhamma over the next few years. If you do not have the time to read them now, you will be able to read them in Essay link on website.

Towards the End of Forgiveness: As with *Encouragements towards Awakening*, there is now also available from Wisdom Books *Towards the End of Forgiveness and the Story an Angulimala*, a CD. It can be downloaded, but if you would prefer a hard copy, just order from Wisdom Books which offers a generous free service for dana books. These are publications already paid for by donations. You pay only the postage. Here's the link: [Wisdom Books](#)

I trust you have had a good summer. Here, it has been – hard to believe – exceptionally sunny.
Wishing you 'mellow fruitfulness' in your spiritual life.

Metta
Onward
Bodhidhamma

Treasurer's Note

First, may I introduce myself as the new treasurer, and thank Nick for all his work, time and effort over recent years. I am very pleased to take on this small burden for the benefit of Satipanya – and at these exciting times. The finances are in good health and we look forward to a period of development. The property and buildings are in good order having been spruced up for the Stupa Blessing Ceremony, and a new kuti provides additional room. We can now also look forward to the long-planned building work which will provide not only wheelchair access, but also an enhanced experience for everyone.

Planned Developments: Good News! We now have planning permission to proceed with extensions to the centre. We sent out our primary appeal. The plans and the appeal for funds are shown on the website. We hope work on the extension to the dining area will start in the New Year.

I am aware this is not the best of times to start an appeal, but hopefully you will be able to support us since these extensions will greatly enhance the property.

Running Costs : income from the courses held at the centre covers basic day-to-day running costs. It is now estimated that a contribution of £30 per day is required to cover those costs and ensure that courses remain available for all. It is very important to give proper notice if you sign up for a course but then have to cancel as we do need enough time to fill the space from a waiting list. Remember that although we don't have the overheads of running a large centre, we do restrict the intake to eight people as Bhante considers this an optimum number. It costs about £23,500 a year to fund the centre.

For more details in relation to running costs please see the website.

Financial Approach: the mortgage outstanding has now been reduced to £30,000. We have no plans to reduce the mortgage further as we focus on the building development. We remain very much dependent on your bank mandates as we use these to pay the mortgage and manage the financial obligations of running the Trust. It is vitally important that we retain that regular, guaranteed stream of funds to enable forward planning. Many thanks to all who continue to donate regularly. One-off donations also remain a great help in funding the running costs and the planned improvements. If you are not currently offering a mandate, but could afford to do so, please reflect that even a small monthly contribution of £2.00 adds up to a really worthy gift.

You can donate directly through the website: www.satipanya.org.uk by following the links from Support.

As the centre enters its fifth year may we invite you to visit the property and see how your contributions have helped to make all this work possible and to see how the centre operates.

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Dependent Origination : Paticca-samuppada

The Radical Psychology of the Buddha that Brings All Suffering to an End

Before we begin to explore this teaching of Dependent Origination, we need to remind ourselves of the warning the Buddha gave to Ananda. Ananda was the Buddha's companion and helper for the last twenty years of his life. He had made an agreement with the Buddha that he would serve him so long as he could listen to every talk. Those he missed, the Buddha would have to relate. Ananda did not become fully awakened to the truth of the Dhamma until after the Buddha died. Yet such was his meditation practice and such was his understanding of the Dhamma that while walking together one day, he said to the Buddha:

'How amazing ... This principle of Dependent Origination, although profound and hard to see, yet appears to me to be so simple!'

'Say not so, Ananda, say not so. This principle of Dependent Origination is profound and hard to see. It is through not knowing, not understanding and thoroughly realising this teaching that beings are confused like a tangled thread, thrown together like bundles of threads, caught as in a net, and cannot escape hell, the nether worlds and the wheel of samsara' (S.II.92)

There are two interpretations of this teaching: the first stretches the sequence over three lifetimes; and the second brings the sequence into daily life as a repetitive cycle – a here-and-now doctrine. This second understanding is more important to those who want to experience how this sequence works. Once this is understood the 'many lifetimes' understanding may become clearer.

The sequence of psychological events for the unawakened is grounded in avijja which literally means 'not knowing'. Perhaps unfortunately, this is translated as 'ignorance' – unfortunate because this 'not knowing' is not a culpable ignorance: we did not know nor could we have known any better. Yet this ignorance draws us into a delusion – the delusion of 'becoming' a human being. Conventionally, of course, that's what we are. We are not apes. In the fourfold medieval 'kingdoms' of mineral, plant, animal and human, we can see that we are set apart from but nevertheless embedded in the rest of nature. In the Dhamma, the essence of this apartness is an awareness which crucially puts us into an ethical relationship with the world. And it takes a special level of intuitive intelligence to become awakened – something which the animal kingdom does not possess.

Consider our birth. What did we know? Is it not understandable that we should presume ourselves to be what we experience? And as our experience grows with age, supplemented by input of parents and society, this identity has been consistently reinforced. We know 'who we are'. This 'who we are' experiences the world from moment to moment, constantly reinforcing, reforming, introducing or

undermining understandings and attitudes which find expression in our thought, our speech and our actions. These are our sankhara – Volitional Conditionings. We shall come back to this a little later.

Every moment, then, has these underlying unconscious attitudes which are based on a misunderstanding. Throughout each day a multitude of moments draws on this potential of conditions to produce our reactions. And these are what we are conscious of. For without the external or internal stimuli, Consciousness, viññana, cannot arise. When I hear a harsh word, anger arises. When I remember a present I was given, gratitude arises.

Dependent on this Consciousness, Mind and Matter (the body), nama-rupa, arise. Now, of course, the stimuli have come through the body and mind so it is understood that these two factors are actually co-existent – one depends on the other ‘like two mutually leaning sheaves of hay’. Yet consciousness is first in the sequence, since it is also dependent on Volitional Conditionings.

A man who was born blind became sighted. A psychiatrist helped him to accommodate this new sense. Once, he was taken to a zoo, but he could not ‘see’ the ape. The psychiatrist took him to a statue of an ape which he ‘felt’. On returning to the cage he ‘saw’ the ape. Consciousness of the ape could not arise, even though his eyes saw it, because there was no previous condition to perceive it by. Once some plastic perception had been established, the man was able to form a visual percept. He saw the ape.

In a less dramatic way, when I was in Sri Lanka someone pointed to green parrots in a green tree. For the life of me, I could not see them. I kept looking and suddenly there they were. After that, seeing green parrots in green trees became automatic.

The body and mind blend into each other as milk and water and this becomes obvious with the next link – the salayatana, the Six Senses. Again the body and mind are coterminous with the senses, though the body and mind need not have all the senses. They are called Doors, dvara, since it is through them that information comes. The first five are our physical senses, but the sixth is mental. This is where the initial perceptions that allow us to discriminate are formed. At the basic sensual level we know a circle from a square, birdsong from barking, and so on. But this inner sense is part of a greater facility, sañña, Perception. This allows us to maintain more and more complex perceptions and concepts.

So now we have arrived at an experience of a moment. The next link is Contact, phasa. This conscious moment connects all the links so far to bring us a moment of simple reception. For contact to happen, there must be an object, something outside ourselves – cooking aromas for instance – or something within such as a memory of chocolate biscuits. These ‘objects’ have arisen into a sense base, here smelling and tasting. And, of course, a consciousness of an object arises simultaneously.

Once Contact is made, the world is experienced as a duality. It is either pleasant or unpleasant. A myriad neutral feelings exist but when we really experience them, we find them also to be ever so slightly pleasant or ever so slightly unpleasant. The Buddha uses the word vedana which fairly translates as Feeling. Feelings arise from the body itself: 'I'm feeling pain in the back.' But often the word sensation would be more appropriate. A feeling also covers emotions and moods as they are felt in the body: 'I'm feeling anxious'; 'I'm feeling happy' – and so on.

These moments of Contact could not have happened without the Six Sense Bases, the Body and Mind, Consciousness, our past Volitional Conditionings and the underlying delusion born of Ignorance that set our basic relationship to what it is we are experiencing.

At this point comes reaction, also conditioned by past behaviour, our sankhara, the underlying Volitional Conditionings. We either want to indulge the pleasant feeling or get rid of the unpleasant feeling. And if the feeling is too painful, we flee from it. At this point the world's natural duality of pleasant-unpleasant is aggravated by a further duality: the two reactions of wanting and not wanting. Craving is the common translation of tanha, but it is too gross. For here it refers to any desire, from a simple thirst to gross addiction; from a mild irritation to implacable hatred; from a little fright to panic,

So here we experience the Three Roots, hetu, of suffering, dukkha. They are Delusion, moha, Greed lobha and Aversion dosa. The first underlying the other two is that of Delusion born of Ignorance. From this spawn Greed and Aversion. Although lobha is often translated as Greed, this word is too confined. The better word is Indulgence. We want to indulge ourselves in anything that makes us 'feel good'. Aversion is also too restrictive for dosa includes fear. We either want to rid ourselves of the unpleasant or if that is not possible, to get away from it. In all its forms from subtle to gross it manifests as 'fight or flight'.

The next step cements this reactive process: Grasping, upadana. There are four upadana but the one that concerns us here is identity. This is where the 'I' appears. What was simply a desire, now becomes 'my' desire, or worse, 'I' want. Up to this point everything that has arisen has been experienced as pleasant or unpleasant, save Thirst which, unrequited, is always unpleasant. But this point of identity makes everything a 'personal' experience. We become the Thirst. This is where we feel the suffering, dukkha. Up until now we can call our experience as either pleasure or pain. We can make this distinction plain to ourselves through the practice of Insight meditation, vipassana. For when we access the observation post within so that we can see and feel objectively, the process of Dependent Origination stops at Desire. The interior space may be uncomfortable, even painful, but we are equanimous, for we are not suffering.

It is all but impossible to maintain this position of identity without the shift into Willing, cetana. 'cetana kamma vandami bhikkave' (It is the will that I call action, oh monks). The Buddha is clear

that will is action, kamma. We commit to an action. We indulge or we resist; we turn away or we ignore. In so doing, we develop the sense of Self, atta, and this is the link called Becoming, bhava. So in this way, by acts of will, thought, word and deed manifest. And because this comes with the identity of a self, they become: I think; I speak; I act.

Contact by way of the eye door is made with ice-cream. A pleasant feeling determined by our past experience with ice-cream arises. The desire to have that feeling again arises. The identity substantiates the desire: 'I want an ice cream.' The desire is willed. The ice cream is bought.

Now we are at Birth, jati, a beginning which naturally progresses towards an ending, Ageing, jara and eventual finishing, Death, marana. We have completed the process of eating an ice-cream.

Such is life, though not always vanilla!

The purpose of vipassana, insight meditation, is to see this process since in seeing it clearly we also perceive how we create suffering for ourselves. Seeing is not enough, however. The insights need to be carried into an attitudinal change and then exercised in ordinary daily life in what we think, say and do. In this way these unwholesome Volitional Conditionings are enervated and finally rooted out. In their place arise wholesome, virtuous conditionings – generosity, love, compassion and so on.

But knowing all this has little point if it does not also indicate how to put an end to it. So now the Buddha recounts the process but not with the word dependent on, paccaya, but cease, nirodha. It is the ceasing of the links that brings all the unsatisfactoriness nature, dukkha, of our lives to an end.

The point of escape lies between the links of Feeling and Desire. So long as we are aloof to this desire, Grasping, identity and possession, cannot arise. Should we wait till the desire begins to fade and disappear, nirodha, some of the energy in that wanting has been spent. The next time it arises it will have less force. Less force, easier not to get caught up in the desire.

Such desires are arising out of the Volitional Conditionings and so these conditionings are being enervated. And the more we see this, the wiser we become. The wiser we are, the less we are deluded. The less we are behaving out of Ignorance. The less Ignorance, the less potential for delusion and so less unwholesome Volitional Conditionings. Fewer delusions, the less Desire, the easier not to identify. In this way the whole edifice constructed on a mistake is undermined and eventually completely destroyed.

The Buddha expresses this in his victory verse where he says, 'I have seen you, oh House Builder (the Self). I have broken your ridge pole (desire) and pulled the house asunder.' Such is the uprooting of Ignorance, that it is not possible for the self to build another house.

So the whole of the spiritual life is concerned with investigating desire. That's why the Buddha calls Desire the cause of suffering in the second of the Four Noble Truths. This desire is the one based on a wrong understanding and must not be confused with those desires based on a right understanding, such as the desire to be free of suffering.

Bhante Bodhidhamma

Temporary Ordination

When the opportunity came to take temporary ordination with Ayya Ariyañani at the retreat in Passadhi earlier this year I took it almost unquestioningly. Not that I was overjoyed, or even terribly enthusiastic. To some extent it was the urge to do my duty, to pay respect to the people and to the tradition that makes sense of life for me. Underneath this weight of obligation trickled the trust that something good always comes of taking every opportunity to deepen my commitment to the Dhamma.

My mind didn't dwell long on the challenge before me, but some instinct drew me to a wig shop so that I could conceal my bald head after the retreat! Once I had the wig in place I found the courage to tell my mum of my plans. To my surprise she took it fairly easily – I had been anticipating massive grief because my mum and her generation were, like me, brought up as Roman Catholics. Although this issue is still unresolved for me, it was very encouraging that my first disclosure was gently received.

All in all, then, I approached the retreat with a fairly light heart. Having my head shaved didn't disturb me much - apart from the bitter cold of the first night bald as a baby! I found the peachy-pink robes quite attractive and easy to wear. To my utter surprise it was my new name which upset me. When I heard Ayya Ariyañani say the name 'Puññanadi' the sound sank into my psyche and echoed back 'Poo' and 'Puny' and 'Punitive'! I vaguely heard the translation as 'Rejoicing in Merit' but my heart was too busy with misery and anger to be consoled.

The following meditation was a turmoil of rejection – how could I own such a horrid name? What on earth had I taken on here? Who would want to know someone called Puññanadi? But mindfulness did its quiet work and even before the meditation had finished my thoughts were converging towards acceptance of this stranger, Puññanadi, who had just come to live within me, and a determination to do my best to befriend her.

The battle re-ignited time and again over the next few days, until it came to me that, if I could have the courage to tell people that my name was Puññanadi, then I could also tell them all kinds of other unwelcome news – including news of old age, sickness and impending death. I reflected that concealing bad news was an automatic habit of mine and often very unhelpful. This aversion towards my new name would give me exactly the opportunities I needed to undermine this habit. The name,

Puññanadi, now seemed like a net I could cast around me to catch all unwanted thoughts rejected out into the world around me. Once caught I could draw them into my heart and learn to live with them. I felt stronger and happier now that I had this new tool to help me live my life, and so myself and Puññanadi began to make our peace.

The retreat allowed for silent meditation and also for discussions and DVDs illustrating the life of nuns in Burma and elsewhere. This mixture allowed us to take in the meaning and implications of ordination and let it sink deep. On reflection, the retreat provided a powerful opportunity to make a symbolic new start in life – this time with the wisdom and support to make more skilful choices.

My thanks to Ayya Ariyañani, to Ayya Aggañani (Marjo Oosterhoff) for organising the retreat and all my 'sisters' in temporary ordination.

Now the question is, could I do take on the robes again – this time without a time-limit?
CanPuññanadi take long-term residence in this body, this life?

Noirin