



# Buddhist Publication Society

## Newsletter

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### Purification of Mind

An ancient maxim found in the Dhammapada sums up the practice of the Buddha's teaching in three simple guidelines to training: to abstain from all evil, to cultivate good, and to purify one's mind. These three principles form a graded sequence of steps progressing from the outward and preparatory to the inward and essential. Each step leads naturally into the one that follows it, and the culmination of the three in purification of mind makes it plain that the heart of Buddhist practice is to be found here. Purification of mind as understood in the Buddha's teaching is the sustained endeavour to cleanse the mind of defilements, those dark unwholesome mental forces which run beneath the surface stream of consciousness vitiating our thinking, values, attitudes, and actions. The chief among the defilements are the three that the Buddha has termed the "roots of evil" —greed, hatred, and delusion—from which emerge their numerous offshoots and variants: anger and cruelty, avarice and envy, conceit and arrogance, hypocrisy and vanity, the multitude of erroneous views.

Contemporary attitudes do not look favourably upon such notions as defilement and purity, and on first encounter they may strike us as throwbacks to an outdated moralism, valid perhaps in an era when prudery and taboo were dominant, but having no claims upon us emancipated torchbearers of modernity. Admittedly, we do not all wallow in the mire of gross materialism and many among us seek our enlightenments and spiritual highs, but we want them on our own terms, and as heirs of the new freedom we believe they are to be won through an unbridled quest for experience without any special need for introspection, personal change, or self-control. However, in the Buddha's teaching the criterion of genuine enlightenment lies precisely in purity of mind. The purpose of all insight and enlightened understanding is to liberate the mind from the defilements, and Nibbāna itself, the goal of the teaching, is defined quite clearly as freedom from greed, hatred, and delusion. From the perspective of the Dhamma, defilement and purity are not mere postulates of a rigid authoritarian moralism but real and solid facts essential to a correct understanding of the human situation in the world.

As facts of lived experience, defilement and purity pose a vital distinction having a crucial significance for those who seek deliverance from suffering. They represent the two points between which the path to liberation unfolds—the former its problematic and starting point, the latter its resolution and end. The defilements, the Buddha declares, lie at the bottom of all human suffering. Burning within as lust and craving, as rage and resentment, they lay to waste hearts, lives, hopes, and civilisations, and drive us blind and thirsty through the round of birth and death. The Buddha describes the defilements as bonds, fetters, hindrances, and knots; thence the path to unbonding, release, and liberation, to untying the knots, is at the same time a discipline aimed at inward cleansing. The work of purification must be undertaken in the same place where the defilements arise, in the mind itself, and the main method the Dhamma offers for purifying the mind is meditation. Meditation, in the Buddhist training, is neither a quest for self-effusive ecstasies nor a technique of home-applied psychotherapy, but a carefully devised method of mental development —theoretically precise and practically efficient— for attaining inner purity and spiritual freedom. The principal tools of Buddhist meditation are the core wholesome mental factors of energy, mindfulness, concentration, and understanding. But in the

systematic practice of meditation, these are strengthened and yoked together in a programme of self-purification which aims at extirpating the defilements root and branch so that not even the subtlest unwholesome stirrings remain.

Since all defiled states of consciousness are born from ignorance, the most deeply embedded defilement, the final and ultimate purification of mind is to be accomplished through the instrumentality of wisdom, the knowledge and vision of things as they really are. Wisdom, however, does not arise through chance or random good intentions, but only in a purified mind. Thus in order for wisdom to come forth and accomplish the ultimate purification through the eradication of defilements, we first have to create a space for it by developing a provisional purification of mind—a purification which, though temporary and vulnerable, is still indispensable as a foundation for the emergence of all liberative insight.

The achievement of this preparatory purification of mind begins with the challenge of self-understanding. To eliminate defilements we must first learn to know them, to detect them at work infiltrating and dominating our everyday thoughts and lives. For countless aeons we have acted on the spur of greed, hatred, and delusion, and thus the work of self-purification cannot be executed hastily, in obedience to our demand for quick results. The task requires patience, care, and persistence—and the Buddha’s crystal clear instructions. For every defilement the Buddha in his compassion has given us the antidote, the method to emerge from it and vanquish it. By learning these principles and applying them properly, we can gradually wear away the most stubborn inner stains and reach the end of suffering, the “taintless liberation of the mind.”

—Bhikkhu Bodhi

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## Exploring the Wheels

The Buddha is our primary and original teacher on purification of mind, and because such purification is so integral a part of his Teaching, he has expounded a great number of suttas dealing with the subject. The most important of these suttas from the Pali Canon are available in translation in WHEEL editions. Each of these works presents the words of the Buddha with practical advice on how to proceed with the work of inward purification and how to deal with the problems that arise in the course of practice.

*The Removal of Distracting Thoughts* (WHEEL 21) is a translation by Soma Thera of the Vitakka-Sañḥāna Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 20, with Commentary and marginal notes. This sutta outlines the five means by which thoughts connected with desire, hatred, and delusion can be controlled: through reflection on a different object, through understanding the disadvantages of such thoughts, through not giving attention to them, through the removal of their source, and through subduing such thoughts with a strong exertion of will.

*The Five Mental Hindrances and Their Conquest* (WHEEL 26), compiled and translated by Nyanaponika Thera, opens with a short essay by the compiler on the “five hindrances” to the development of inner calm and wisdom: sense-desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and scruples, and sceptical doubt. Next comes a selection of shorter pieces from the suttas illustrating the hindrances and the ways of tackling them. This is followed by “The Five Hindrances and Their Conquest,” a long passage from the *Discourse on the Fruits of Monkhood* (Sāmaññaphala Sutta), Dīgha Nikāya 2, with extracts from the Commentary.

*Taming the Mind* (WHEEL 51) is a collection of verse and prose passages from Aṅguttara Nikāya, Majjhima Nikāya, Theragāthā, and Dhammapada, covering a wide range of topics pertinent to purification of mind, presented in a diversity of styles.

“The Removal of the Unwholesome Roots” in *The Roots of Good and Evil* (WHEEL 251–253) by Nyanaponika Thera includes translations of “The Triple Gem and the Abandoning of the Evil Roots,” “It Can Be Done,” “The Arising and Non-Arising of the Roots,” “Five Methods for Removing Unwholesome Thoughts,” and “The Noble Power.” Each translation is followed by a modern commentary by Nyanaponika Thera, explaining the implications of the passage and indicating how the earnest meditator can apply the Buddha’s advice to his own regular practice of mental training.

—Ayya Nyanasiri

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## Recent Reprints

*Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought*. Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda. 160 pp. U.S.\$ 5.50, SL Rs. 50

In this book the venerable author draws upon his broad knowledge of the Buddha’s teachings to shed new light on a perennial problem of philosophy, as indicated in the book’s title. His essay deals primarily with two important but controversial doctrinal terms found in the Pali Canon — *papañca*, which he interprets as conceptual proliferation, “the tendency of the worldling’s imagination to break loose and run riot”; and *papañcasaññā-sankhā*, which he explains as concepts and designations characterised by the mind’s prolific conceptualising tendency.

He shows the distinctive Buddhist doctrine of ‘non-self’ (*anattā*) in new dimensions of significance having far-reaching implications not only in the context of Buddhism but also for the student of philosophy, psychology, and ethics. His observations on concepts and conceptualisation find special importance in the context of modern semantic philosophy. Copious quotations from the Buddhist texts provide increased knowledge and new interpretations of obscure passages, and also render the work a substantial source-book for early Buddhist philosophy.

*The Magic of the Mind: An Exposition of the Kālakārāma Sutta*. Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda. 92 pp. U.S. \$3.50, SL Rs. 45

This book presents an exposition of the Kālakārāma Sutta—a canonical discourse with a hallowed tradition which has presently fallen into neglect. The terse discourse of the Buddha is given in an annotated translation, followed by a humorously conceived parable of a magic show. The parable serves as the basis for a detailed and penetrative study of the discourse, which draws out its psychological and philosophical implications. As the title indicates, the main theme of the author’s essay is the illusory nature of consciousness. The discussion centres on the law of dependent arising (*paticca samuppāda*) as a golden mean that freely transcends the dualities of existence and non-existence, of mind and matter. As in the author’s *Concept and Reality*, here too the nature of concepts forms an important subject. Observations on the relation between word and meaning are likely to be of relevance to linguistics and semantic philosophy. The author ends with an attempt to reconcile the negative and positive definitions of Nibbāna—the highest goal which holds the prospect of inward peace through the stilling of all mental formations.

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## Book Notes

*Discipline: The Canonical Buddhism of the Vinayapitaka.* John C. Holt. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi. 157 pp. Indian Rs. 50.

This book offers a penetrating analysis of the Vinayapitaka, "The Book of Discipline," a centrally important portion of the Pāli Canon. In identifying the pivotal role of discipline in the bhikkhu's quest for Nibbāna, Professor Holt finds that Vinaya rules represent a practical implementation of the Buddha's Dhamma. Specifically, adherence to this monastic code theoretically facilitates an overcoming of those mental dispositions that foster attachment to the "self" and thus perpetuate the process of samsāra. The author has also examined the significance of the principal rituals of Buddhist monasticism as they are prescribed within the Vinaya texts.

*Buddhist Shrines in India.* D.C. Ahir. B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 110052, 132 pp. with maps and 22 plates. Indian Rs. 95.

This work presents a comprehensive study of the sacred Buddhist shrines of India, covering the history of their development, discovery, decline, restoration, and revival. It discusses sixteen Buddhist shrines and provides maps and information on transportation which make the book useful for both the researcher and the tourist.

Note: These books are not to be ordered from BPS. Please contact the publishers or retail book dealers.

### *The Buddha and His Teaching*

The BPS has been honoured to publish the latest edition (the 4th) of the late Ven. Nārada Mahāthera's major work, *The Buddha and His Teaching*, a veritable treasury of information on Theravāda Buddhism. Published by us in 1980, our stock on this popular book is now running low and it is almost due for a reprint. We intend to have the next edition printed by photo offset, using a master copy from a limited library edition printed in Singapore. By using a smaller type and larger page than the BPS's 1980 edition, this neatly printed master copy contains the entire text in 420 pages (versus the 720 pages in our edition.)

The reprinting of this large work will involve a considerable expenditure for our Society, but in recognition of its enduring value we wish to keep it available. We understand that the Ven. Nārada has many pupils and devotees in various parts of the world who would like to share in the merit of reprinting this monumental work of their teacher. Those who wish to help BPS reprint *The Buddha and His Teaching* are welcome to make donations. Please make cheques, bank drafts or money orders payable to The Buddhist Publication Society and earmark them "Nārada Reprint." (Please mark all cheques, etc.: A/C Payee Only, Commercial Bank of Ceylon Ltd., Kandy, Sri Lanka.)

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## From the Mailbag

The Buddhist teaching and especially vipassanā practice is beautiful in its simplicity and I find that practice has made a big difference in my life and how I function in the world. I had tried many practices over the last ten years but my endeavours at Buddhist meditation have been the

most fruitful. I had resolved to find a way where the practice was solely dependent upon my intention to practise and not upon the “grace” of another being. It is a relief.

Mark T. A., USA

Since I joined your Society during a visit to Sri Lanka, I have derived great benefit from your publications, THE WHEEL and BODHI LEAVES. In fact, since I “discovered” Buddhism, and learned to apply the teachings of Buddha—the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, mindfulness and meditation—my life has changed for the better in the way I think and the way I live.

Paula L. Wolf, USA

It was a pleasure to receive the new BPS Newsletter. I think it’s a terrific idea to help tie together the world-wide interest in Buddhism that the BPS has helped to foster.

Jack Kornfield, USA

I like your Newsletter..... I agree with its editorial. We have to avoid party politics, as far as Buddhism is concerned, but we do need to take an interest in public affairs. As the Newsletter says, we need to get our values right. It seems to me that whatever the political situation anywhere, it is only by a right sense of values that matters can be improved.

Rev. Jack Austin, Shin Buddhist Association Great Britain

The BPS has done a meritorious and gigantic service in the dissemination of the Dhamma, which is a gift that supersedes all gifts. The Society has further helped students of Buddhism in all parts of the globe and guided them through the wondrous mazes of Buddhism with the treasured WHEEL publications and BODHI LEAVES and the more recent Newsletter.

Dr. S. Goonesinghe  
Dehiwala, Sri Lanka

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## **Meditation in Sri Lanka**

### ***Nilambe Meditation Centre***

Founded in 1980 by the Friends of the Dhamma (Sadharm Mithura Samithiya) on a tea estate sixteen miles from Kandy, Nilambe Meditation Centre is the only meditation centre in Sri Lanka intended entirely for lay meditators. Accordingly, the emphasis falls on combining meditation and the lay life.

Courses of 10–14 day duration are given six to seven times a year. These courses have been conducted by Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Sister Ayya Khema, Ven. Kondañña, Ven. Rāhula, Ven. Asokananda and Ven. Anandasiri. Instruction is given primarily in English, but instruction is available in German as well as Sinhala.

The centre can provide dormitory accommodations for fifty people. Individuals are welcome to make personal retreats whenever no group course is in progress. Godwin Samaratne, a Sri

Lankan lay meditator known for his warmth and compassion, will give meditation instruction to visitors and guidance to resident meditators.

Henri van Zeyst, the noted writer on Buddhism, is always available for discussions on aspects of the Dhamma. The cost for each retreat is Rs.60 per day. Only vegetarian meals are served.

For further information please contact:

Mr. Godwin Samaratna, Manager,  
Nilambe Meditation Centre,  
Nilambe (Galaha Road),  
Sri Lanka.

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## Looking to the Future

WHEEL issues on line for future publication include the following:

*The Tragic, The Comic and The Personal: Selected Letters of Ñāṇavīra Thera.* In 1949 two young Englishmen arrived in Sri Lanka intent on entering the Order of Buddhist monks. One became known after ordination as Ven. Ñāṇamoli, the skilful translator of so many important Pali Buddhist texts. His friend, who became known as Ven. Nāṇavīra, was more solitary and less prolific, but his keen intelligence and earnestness enabled him to gain a deep understanding of the Dhamma, which he shared with others in an extensive correspondence. This selection from his letters deals with such topics as Buddhism and Existentialism, the problem of death, humour and fear, and the need to take the Dhamma personally and inwardly. A stimulating issue that will deserve re-reading and reflection.

*Buddhist Stories from the Dhammapada Commentary - Part III.* This issue continues our series of Buddhist stories selected from Burlingame's classic translation of the commentary to the Dhammapada. These stories give us a close-up view of the day to day activities in the life of the Buddha and his great disciples, and provide an inexhaustible store of entertainment, instruction, and inspiration.

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We are hungry — hungry for feedback. We would like to hear your comments about our publications and other aspects of our work. Not only your appreciations, but your criticisms and suggestions on ways we might improve. So please put all diffidence and shyness behind, and let us hear from you. (Ed.)

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# The Buddhist Publication Society

The BPS is an approved charity dedicated to making known the Teaching of the Buddha, which has a vital message for all people.

Founded in 1958, the BPS has published a wide variety of books and booklets covering a great range of topics. Its publications include accurate annotated translations of the Buddha's discourses, standard reference works, as well as original contemporary expositions of Buddhist thought and practice. These works present Buddhism as it truly is—a dynamic force which has influenced receptive minds for the past 2500 years and is still as relevant today as it was when it first arose.

For more information about the BPS and our publications, please visit our website, or contact:

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