



UGANDA BUDDHIST CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



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VESAK CELEBRATIONS

Building Trust and Solidarity in Today's World

On Sunday, May 19, 2024, we gathered to celebrate Vesak, a significant day that commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and passing away of the Buddha. This year, we embraced the United Nations Vesak theme, "The Buddhist Way of Building Trust and Solidarity." The celebrations were led by Bhante Pandicca and Venerable Sangharakkhita, who guided us through a series of meaningful activities and teachings. The celebrations were joined by members from the surrounding villages, our Buddhist community and children from neighboring villages.

Bhante Pandicca, in his insightful speech, elaborated on the reasons behind celebrating Vesak. He explained that this day is not just a reminder of the historical events of the Buddha's life but also an opportunity to reflect on his universal teachings. He also emphasized the practice

and embodiment of ethical behavior as the basis of building trust in the world. When we embody the five precepts, we establish the foundation for a good quality of life, fostering trust among each other and create a harmonious and just world.



Another highlight of the celebration was the watering ceremony of the Bodhi tree, led by Bhante Pandicca. He shared that the act of watering the Bodhi tree symbolizes nurturing our spiritual growth and connection to the Buddha's enlightenment. Just as the tree needs water to thrive, we need the Buddha's teachings to cultivate inner peace and wisdom.

Today, though the technological and scientific innovations have connected people, it is also true that there is a big divide among people. There is mistrust with not only information, but also other dealings. Trust and solidarity are more crucial than ever. The challenges we face, from social inequalities to global crises, require collective action and mutual support. Trust is the glue that holds societies together, enabling cooperation and understanding across diverse groups. While solidarity, on the other hand, is about standing together in the face of adversity. It means recognizing our shared humanity and working together to overcome obstacles. In this fragmented world, fostering a spirit of solidarity will build bridges, heal wounds, and create inclusive communities.

Bhante Pandicca encouraged the practice of the five precepts as the foundation of building trust and solidarity. Upholding ethical principles, such as honesty, non-violence, and respect for others, builds trust within the community. Ethical conduct ensures that our actions contribute to the well-being of all, fostering a sense of safety and solidarity.

1. Refrain from taking life (protect life and non-violence)—Imagine living in a world where everyone commits to not hurting each other. It would feel really safe, right? When we know that no one is going to harm us, it creates a strong sense of trust. We all want to feel secure, and observing this precept helps build that feeling. Moreover, when everyone is caring and compassionate, it brings us closer together, like a big,



supportive family.

2. Refrain from taking what is not given (respect for property)—Think about how nice it is to know your belongings are safe, whether it's your phone, car, or even just your food in the fridge. When we don't steal, trust naturally grows. We don't have to worry about our stuff going missing. This fairness makes everyone feel respected and helps us work together more smoothly because there's less friction and conflict over resources. We instead share the scarce resources available to us.

3. Refrain from sexual misconduct (respect for relationships)—Relationships are built on trust and respect. If everyone respects each other's boundaries and commitments, it means fewer betrayals and heartaches. Knowing that people will honor our relationships helps everyone feel secure and respected. This mutual respect strengthens the bonds between people, creating a more supportive and understanding community.

4. Refrain from false speech (uphold truth)—Honesty really is the best practice when it comes to building trust. When people are truthful, you know you can rely on what they say. This reliability makes interactions smoother, safer and more meaningful. Clear and honest communication means fewer misunderstandings and

conflicts, helping everyone feel more connected and valued. This means avoiding gossiping, lying, divisive speech, slander and so on.

5. Refrain from intoxicants that cloud the mind (consuming wisely)—Being clear in our mind means we are more in control of our actions and decisions. If everyone around us is sober, we can predict their behavior better and trust them more. Additionally, being clear in our mind helps you make better choices and be a more reliable friend or family member. This creates a community where people can depend on each other, strengthening the overall sense of unity and solidarity.

As we celebrated Vesak this year, we were reminded of the Buddha's timeless teachings and their relevance in building trust and solidarity. Through compassion, ethical conduct, and mindful living, we can create a world where trust and solidarity are the norms, not the exceptions. In doing so, we contribute to a more peaceful, just, and harmonious world, healing divisions and fostering unity.

May the spirit of Vesak inspire us all to live in accordance with these noble ideals and work together for the greater good of humanity.





UNDERSTANDING NIBBANA THROUGH BHIKKHU BODHI'S INSIGHTS

Over the past two weeks, we have been listening to Bhikkhu Bodhi's insightful talks on Nibbana (Nirvana), part of his series of lectures recorded in 1981 at the Buddhist Vihara Society. This topic is one of the most intricate and intriguing areas in Buddhism, captivating an inquisitive mind not merely out of curiosity but with the profound purpose of awakening. Our exploration of Nibbana goes beyond mere curiosity. The Buddha awakens in us the aspiration to attain Nibbana.

We all agree that certain experiences transcend the realm of speech and language, as these experiences have to be lived and realized. Bhikkhu Bodhi's explanation of Nibbana, approached from various perspectives, is nothing short of enlightening. He explains that Nibbana is not only the cessation of suffering—marked by the eradication of craving and defilements—but also an existing reality, the supreme noble truth.

Bhikkhu Bodhi emphasized that Nibbana is an unconditional dhamma or truth—it has no origination, nor does it arise, transform, or pass away like conditioned dhammas, which are characterized by arising, transformation, and fading away. This makes it fundamentally different from anything experienced within the confines of samsara.

To illustrate this profound concept, Bhikkhu Bodhi employs the classic Buddhist parable of the turtle and the fish.

Once upon a time, a fish, who had only ever lived in water, met a turtle who had just returned from an expedition on dry land. The fish, curious about the turtle's whereabouts, asked where he had been. The turtle explained that he had been on dry land. The fish, having never experienced anything but water, couldn't understand what dry land was and insisted it must be nothing. Despite the turtle's explanations that dry land was

neither wet, cool, clear, nor soft, the fish remained convinced that if land did not possess any of the qualities of water, it must not exist. The turtle, realizing the fish's limited perspective, left, knowing that understanding would come only through direct experience.

This story vividly conveys the essence of Nibbana, illustrating its nature in a way that words alone might fail to capture. Just as the fish cannot understand dry land due to its limited experience confined to water, people immersed in the cycle of birth and death (samsara) struggle to understand Nibbana because it lies beyond their current experiences and conceptual backgrounds.

The fish's inability to understand the turtle's descriptions of land parallels how people often perceive Nibbana as nothingness because it lacks the familiar attributes of samsaric existence. However, Nibbana is not "nothing"; rather, it is a state of being that transcends the conditions and limitations of the known world. Like the turtle who knows both water and land, those who attain enlightenment understand both samsara and Nibbana. This broader perspective enables them to see beyond the limited view that binds others, much like the fish, to the familiar but incomplete reality of samsara.

Another striking point presented by Bhikkhu Bodhi is that Nibbana is not something created by the path; rather, it is akin to a destination, such as New York city, in his analogy. Here, Nibbana is compared to New York city itself, while the path represents the journey we undertake to reach there. The path, with its practices and disciplines, leads us towards the ultimate destination, but Nibbana exists independently of the path.

Imagine planning a trip to New York city. The city, vibrant and full of life, exists regardless of whether or not you make the journey. Your preparations, the roads you take, and the experiences along the way constitute your path. Similarly, Nibbana is an ever-present reality; our spiritual practices and efforts are the means by which we reach this sublime state.

Bhikkhu Bodhi invite us to consider Nibbana not as an abstract concept but as a tangible reality to be experienced. His interpretation encourages us to engage deeply with our practice, understanding that our efforts on the path are guiding us towards an ultimate truth that is both timeless and transcendent.





(L-R) Andrew Mukomazi (UBC Delegate), Ven. Dr. Phramaha Somchat Suvichano (Thong Bon Temple, Suvarnabhumi, Thailand), and Steven Malokweza (UBC Delegate)

TWO UBC MEMBERS ATTEND THE 19TH UNDV CELEBRATIONS IN THAILAND

It was an honor for me to represent our beloved teacher, Most Venerable Bhante Buddharakkhita, at the 19th United Nations Day of Vesak (UNDV) Celebrations in Bangkok, Thailand, held on the 19th and 20th of May 2024.

Vesak, or Buddha Day, is a time for reflection and celebration for Buddhists globally. It is a sacred day that marks the three pivotal events in the life of the Buddha: His birth, enlightenment, and his passing away. These moments are celebrated with great reverence and joy, bringing together the global Buddhist community in unity and peace.

This year's theme of the celebrations was "The Buddhist Way of Building Trust and Solidarity." Buddhist leaders from various countries shared their perspectives on this theme, emphasizing the importance of trust and solidarity in today's

world. In a time when distrust and division are prevalent, the teachings of the Buddha offer a pathway to reconciliation and harmony.

In his message to the 19th UNDV, which I had the honor to read at the celebrations, Most Venerable Bhante Buddharakkhita highlighted the crucial role of building trust and solidarity in a world fragmented by divisions. He stressed the importance of practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, which includes Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

Furthermore, Bhante Buddharakkhita emphasized that through these teachings, we can cultivate peace, trust, harmony, and solidarity. He reminded us that when we practice

these principles, all sentient beings feel valued, respected, and supported. The teachings of the Buddha provide a timeless framework for creating a world where mutual respect and support are the norms, not the exceptions. The 19th United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations was not just a commemoration of the Buddha's life but also a call to action. It reminded us that the principles taught by the Buddha are more relevant than ever. By embracing his teachings, we can work towards a world where trust and solidarity are foundational values, paving the way for lasting peace and harmony. As we returned to the Uganda Buddhist Centre, we brought back not only memories of the event but also a renewed commitment to practicing and spreading the Buddha's teachings. We are inspired to continue our efforts in building a community where every individual feel valued and supported, following the path laid out by the Buddha.

Participating in the 19th United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations in Bangkok was a profound experience. It was an opportunity for me and the other delegate from the Uganda Buddhist Centre to connect with the global Buddhist community and to reaffirm our dedication to the teachings of the Buddha.

May we all strive to embody the teachings of the Buddha, building a world where peace, trust, and harmony prevail.

Article by Andrew Mukomazi



SUPPORTING UGANDA BUDDHIST CENTRE

UBC activities are made possible by many supporters from around the world. Therefore, we are eternally grateful Buddhist Global Relief of USA, Huang Tu Lovingkindness Foundation USA, Buddhist Fellowship of Singapore, Tan Teo Charitable Foundation, and all our beloved donors from around the world.

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