



Newsletter

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Please contact us if you have any questions about this newsletter or would like to contribute an article for future editions

Our Teacher— talk delivered at the Parami Centre, Sydney

Sayadaw U Pandita visited the Burmese Buddhist community at the Parami Dhamma Centre in Villawood, Sydney, on January 30, where he delivered a Dhamma lecture titled "Our Teacher". The lecture, mentioned in the Mulapannasa Saccaka Sutta, was based on an episode while the Buddha was visiting Vesali.

Sayadaw gave us the chance not only to learn about the episode but also to teach us to apply the lecture's message, i.e. anatta (no self).

In Vesali the ascetic Saccaka was considered the most knowledgeable spiritual teacher largely because he had inherited knowledge from his parents, also well known ascetics. He was very proud of his spiritual reputation but worried about losing his knowledge, which he thought was collected in his belly. So he wore a metal belt around his waist, which made only more ridiculous his already not-so-good-looking appearance.

Saccaka met Ashin Assaji one morning in Vesali and asked about the teachings of the Buddha. Ashin Assaji answered in summary that:

1. five khanda, considered as physical and mental phenomena of the body, are anicca (not permanent) and
2. there is no such entity as atta (self) controlling the five khanda.

Sayadaw emphasized that dukkha was not mentioned in this summary of the Buddha's teachings because it's usually very subtle to understand the concept of

real dukkha, i.e. the oppressive nature of continuously fluctuating and passing moments.

Saccaka felt he could easily defeat the Buddha with his knowledge as he had defeated many masters and philosophers in the past. The Buddha was only 40 at that time so Saccaka, aged 60, imagined he would be wiser. Subsequently he boasted and publicly declared he would easily defeat the Buddha in an intellectual contest.



When Saccaka arrived with his supporters where the Buddha was staying, our teacher, the Buddha, had already foreseen that he was going to be challenged.

Saccaka started by claiming that: "Every tree relies on this earth in order to grow. So in a similar manner, one must rely on atta (self) in order to carry out good and bad deeds."

The Buddha eventually asked Saccaka: "You have said your body is your atta (self). If so can you order your body to take a form or change on demand. Why shouldn't you be able to order your atta (self) to do this and that?"

Saccaka was unable to answer the question. According to his followers, Saccaka was like a crab with its legs chopped off - unable to defend itself.



Above: Attentive audience at Parami Centre.

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Good News

We are happy to announce that DSMC has acquired a Forest Retreat in Plenty, north of Melbourne. We are in the process of completing the conveyancing process. It is a quiet location among forest and hills, serene and tranquil for good meditation practice.

RETREATS UPDATE

Planned 10-day retreats in February and March have had to be rescheduled because of the property purchase. We want the property to be ready the next meditation retreat.

The next retreat will be in April to be held at the new DSMC Forest Retreat.

For those who have expressed interest for the February and March retreats, we will keep you informed of the details by end- February.

CHINESE NEW YEAR

For those who are celebrating, DSMC wishes you a very Happy Chinese New Year.



Left: Sayadaw addresses young adults session at Parami Centre, Sydney.

“Honourable Gotama, I do not have the power,” Saccaka was forced to concede.

Although Saccaka was defeated and felt humiliated to his followers, he claimed this was only because the Buddha was like an intense fire or enraged elephant. Nevertheless Saccaka invited the Buddha to take lunch the following day to show his followers he remained an honourable man and on good terms with the Buddha.

Knowing that Saccaka was not going to fully accept the concept of anatta (no self) but was only paying lip service by offering the lunch dana, the Buddha blessed him at the end but added that Saccaka’s good deeds were still fuelled by his atta (self centred view).

In conclusion, Sayadaw mentioned how anatta (no self) could be realised during meditation by self investigation to

gain self understanding.

He gave the example of a long time meditation student who was recently able to understand anatta by slowing down her bodily movements and carefully noting and investigating each and every movement of the body during the meditation without the concept of “I” or atta involved.

Sayadaw finally recounted how the late Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw likened the mundane life to a derelict surrounded by a ring of fire (defilements).

Sayadaw reminded everyone that if we were well-grounded in mindfulness we could unflinchingly face reality. - *By Victor Aung*

Advice for young Sydneysiders

During Sayadaw’s weekend in Sydney he also conducted a class for children and young adults at the Parami Dhamma Centre. William Aung who is in year 11 said Sayadaw illustrated some useful points with the story of the emperor Asoka, considered one of India’s greatest emperors. His experiences in battle persuaded him to become a follower of the Buddha and he devoted his life to spreading the dhamma. India’s national emblem was adopted from Asoka’s empire. “From the story, I learnt that anyone can change their ways. The king was kind to his people after he learnt that nothing was permanent,” William said.

“I also learnt about the Buddha’s four animals and how they represented strength, speed, patience and courage, and how they can be applied in everyday life.

“For example sometimes I can be a bit unconcentrated and impatient and I know I need more patience with some situations.”

Monica Aung, in year-8 at high school, also appreciated the story of Asoka. “I learnt that even though a person may start off their life in a bad way, they have the power to change it. It just takes will power and determination. Also the smallest things in life can change the course of it. King Asoka’s life changed because of one little boy. After he had conquered all of India, he could not connect to one little boy. This made him realise that he had been going about life the wrong way, and it

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- *Dr Brian Tan, Dr Christine Tan and sons Oliver and Christopher for their extremely generous donation.*
- *Drs E and R Hoe for their most gratefully received donation.*
- *Daw Shu Lwan for her generous contribution towards the centre.*
- *Kyaw Kyaw is to thanked for his efforts in fabricating and erecting a door at the side of the centre into the back yard..*
- Plus the many others not mentioned. Our grateful thanks for all your contributions. ■

Library almost ready

The library extension at Glendale Rd is almost complete, with the roof and external cladding going on in recent days.

Wooden flooring has been delivered to the centre and will be installed next. This leaves only the electric wiring to be finished and the plumbing for a new hand basin before the room is lined and completed. ■

Bereavement

- *DSMC Secretary Chris Liew's mother passed away peacefully in Malaysia on January 25. ■*