



Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

Ajahn Kumāro Bhikkhu, Resident Monastic
122 Arlington Street, Unit B, Asheville, NC 28801
Elisha Buhler's telephone #: (910) 922-1549
website: mittameditation.com
email: mittameditation@gmail.com

July 2022 Newsletter



The Practice of Metta (Loving-Kindness)

I. Preliminary Remarks

Be at peace by sitting at ease and keep the body as still as you can. A still and quiet body is conducive to a still and quiet mind. A still and quiet mind is a peaceful mind. To help in bringing the mind to stillness and quiet we use an object of meditation to focus on. The meditation object may be mindfulness of breathing, the sound of silence, a meditation word like 'buddho', or present moment awareness of being here and now that is free of thoughts of the past and future. Cultivating peace is healing, a pleasant occupation that opens the heart to take in the Dhamma.

The Buddha taught that the quality or state of mind is the primary cause for suffering and happiness. This teaching is found in the Dhammapada, a collection of sayings in verse form, and is part of the Khuddaka Nikaya, a division of the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism.

Dhammapada verses 1 - 2

Mind precedes experience, mind is foremost, [experience is] mind-made. If, with a corrupt mind one speaks or acts:

From this disappointment and suffering follow as the wheel, the foot of the ox.

Mind precedes experience, mind is foremost, [experience is] mind-made. If, with a clear mind one speaks or acts:

From this happiness and well-being follow like an inseparable shadow.

II. The Practice of Metta

We have free will to choose to listen to the Buddha or to the false self (the ego). These are the only two choices we have in who will be our teacher. We make this choice in each and every moment of our day. When we listen to the ego then mind will suffer from birth, sickness, aging and death; as well as the suffering inherent in conditional existence. When we listen to the Buddha, the Voice of Wisdom and Truth, then mind will stop wandering in the conditional realm and will realize Nibbāna.

- To listen to the Buddha means that we train the mind in the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The training liberates the mind of defilements (ignorance, hatred and greed) and thereby, allows clear sight into Pure Mind.¹ The Buddha called Pure Mind 'Nibbāna' and it is our reality and essence. Just like the vanishing of clouds reveals the brilliance of the sun, the removal of defilements reveals the Pure Mind, Nibbāna. Defilements arise through following the unwholesome thoughts of the false self.
 - Pure Mind that is Nibbāna experiences no suffering, no fear of harm, no separation from reality that is one unified whole, and no death. The mind does not arise or pass away; it is not born and does not die. It is beyond space and time; unconditioned; there is no duality of subject and object; its nature is knowing and pure awareness.
 - Pure Mind is impersonal, it is not my personal essence or your personal essence; it is universal, boundless and eternal. Pure Mind is the ground, reality and essence of life, the essence of sentient beings; it is the thread that joins all beings together and the foundation for the practice of loving-kindness.

- Pure Mind has qualities of perfect peace, perfect love, and wisdom. The Buddha taught that perfect peace is the greatest happiness.
- Listening to the ego is to adhere to the thought system that our identity is associated with a mind in a body. A being is then misperceived to be a combination of a physical body and a non-physical mind.
 - The misperception of the ego perceives beings separated from each other because bodies are located in space and time. The misperceived separation of beings prevents the experience of intimacy, love and happiness.
 - The misperceived separation of beings produces fear, the dominant emotion of the ego. Fear that our fragile identity will be diminished when our self identity is challenged. Fear of the physical body getting sick, growing old and death. Fear of being attacked and suffering pain and death. Fear of losing our material possessions from natural decay or from others that violently take them.
 - The misperceived separation of beings is the cause of ruthless competition and hatred. Striving to be superior is the goal of the ego's thought system.

III. Perceptions to Cultivate

- Perceive the essence of the other as a Pure Mind and not as a body. Bodies are separated in space. Minds are formless and their essence are identical. Love and happiness is the experience of clear sight into the reality of all beings interconnected and joined as one whole. We are not separated or apart from each other but are grounded in Pure Mind.
- A mind cannot be hurt because it is formless; we are invulnerable. In freedom from fear and we can love the other regardless what their body does by way of speech or physical action.
- Radiate the light of loving-kindness to the mind of the other, purifying the other's mind as well as your own due to minds being inseparable.
- Accepting the other in essence as the same as oneself is not to judge the other as different, inferior or superior to oneself. All beings are equal and share the common interests to receive love and give love. All beings seek peace and security; this also we have in common.
- Recognize that the mind that is spinning with the self thought system (ego) generates fear of being attacked and its self concept is diminished. The ego defends itself by attacking others. The hate and attack thoughts causes the mind to worry that others will judge it as unworthy or inferior. Therefore, the mind projects the hate and attack thoughts onto the other. Then the mind forgets it has projected the hate and attack thoughts, and misperceives that the other hates and attacks us. We forgive the other for what they have not done.
- The other who is under the influence of the false self does not know how to receive or give love, even though love and peace is what the other truly wants more than anything else. The other is a puppet and the ego is the puppeteer. The other attacks as a defense due to the ego's fear of being attacked. Perceive that the other is really calling for love but is confused by the ego.

IV. Practices

- Cultivate awareness by watching the thoughts, emotions and views that flow within the mind. Are they wholesome or unwholesome?
 - Wholesome states of mind are completely peaceful and loving. There is acceptance of the other because he is in essence the same as oneself. A wise and understanding mind is tolerant and patient of the egoic minds' confused state.
 - Unwholesome states of mind are negative; they are not peaceful or loving. Unpleasant emotions such as sadness, depression and irritation are symptoms of the egoic mind. Ill will, attack thoughts, fear, judgmental and critical thoughts are habits and defilements of the false self. Doubt and restlessness are also unwholesome states generated by the ego.
 - Wholesome states arise from listening to the Buddha; those that are unwholesome arise from listening to the false self, the ego.

- Develop energy, mindfulness and concentration so that we can choose the Buddha as our teacher. Whenever we chose the Buddha and not the ego as our teacher then energy, mindfulness and concentration becomes stronger.
- The ego has deep roots in the subtle layers of mind that developed over hundreds of thousands of lifetimes. Patience and endurance is necessary to dethrone the ego as master over the mind.
- When our imperfect mindfulness causes us to listen to the ego and we act unskillfully, forgive ourselves for not being perfect, and once again reestablish right mindfulness by following the teachings of the Buddha. Sitting in judgment of ourselves as bad or hopeless or inferior is to allow the ego to gain control over the mind because the ego feeds on negativity.

V. Closing Remarks

The practice of loving-kindness purifies the mind of the false-self thought system and the accompanying defilements. The practice strengthens our energy, mindfulness and concentration so that we consistently chose the Buddha as our Teacher and thereby realize Nibbāna, the Pure Mind as our true home and refuge. May you be well, happy, and peaceful. Evaṃ.

VI. Footnotes

1. Luangta Mahā Boowa taught the nature of mind that is related in this discussion.

History of How the Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center Came to Be

Temple Forest Monastery in New Hampshire has an annual three month Winter Retreat during January, February and March. During the Winter Retreat the Community stops working and engages in focused meditation and study; lay supporters come to live at the monastery at this time to take on the responsibilities of running the monastery. Ajahn Kumāro Bhikkhu was residing at Temple Forest Monastery during the 2022 Winter Retreat and Elisha Buhler was part of the lay support team.

Every Saturday a senior monk would meet with the lay support team for tea and again on another day with any interested members of the lay support team to speak on Dhamma and answer questions; this was to provide encouragement to the lay support team and to express appreciation that the Community has for their support. Ajahn Kumāro met every Thursday with interested members of the lay support team and occasionally on Saturday for tea. Elisha's interest in the Dhamma caused her to ask questions for clarification and frequently met with Ajahn Kumāro after the group dispersed for further discussions.

During one meeting between Ajahn Kumāro and Elisha, Elisha spoke of her friend Daniel who lived near Asheville and was thinking about monastic training. Ajahn had never been to Asheville or North Carolina but heard exciting things about Asheville; that the residents were friendly and many had spiritual interests, the weather was mild and there is much sunshine. In another conversation, Elisha mentioned that she was interested in starting a meditation center; Ajahn said that he would be interested in helping with the center; and simultaneously Ajahn and Elisha both agreed that Asheville might be a suitable place to start a meditation center. After agreeing in principle to give it a try to start a meditation center in Asheville, Elisha took the bull by the horns and proceeded to make the project happen.

Daniel came to Temple Forest Monastery after the Winter Retreat in April, stayed at the monastery for two weeks and then took Ajahn Kumāro to Asheville. Ajahn and Daniel arrived in Asheville on May 1, 2022.

Mission Statement and Vision for the Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

Spiritual friend is the translation of “kalyāṇa-mitta” in the Pali language. “Kalyāṇa” means lovely or beautiful and “mitta” means friend. The meaning of “kalyāṇa” refers to beautiful inner qualities, such as: faith, loving-kindness, compassion, virtue, generosity, and wisdom. A Spiritual Friend is one who radiates loving-kindness and thereby connects with all sentient beings.

The mission of Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center is to provide a refuge for anyone, regardless of religious affiliations, beliefs, faith or race. To be with spiritual friends, learn and practice the teachings of the Buddha, participate in group meditation and chanting. Our activities are based upon the fundamental belief in the dignity and sanctity of all sentient life, and the potential that we all share for happiness and freedom from suffering. We offer spiritual friendship, and the teachings and practices of the Buddha.

Board Members

The first board meeting was held on July 1, 2022 at which time officers were elected.

President: Bonnie Grace Gilday-Kennedy

Secretary: Ajahn Kumāro Bhikkhu

Treasurer: Elisha Buhler

Geoffrey Ravenhill is also on the board of directors.

Activities of the Meditation Center

- Sitting meditation is held everyday at 6:30AM and 5:30PM. After meditation, Ajahn Kumāro is available to answer questions and discuss the Dhamma.
- Everyday at 8:40AM Ajahn Kumāro leaves for alms-round in order to give residents of Asheville the opportunity to earn wholesome kamma or merit by practicing generosity of giving food and placing it into the alms bowl. Ajahn does not accept or handle money. Ajahn usually arrives at the Whole Foods Market, 70 Merrimon Ave. just before 9:00AM and stands in front of the store for alms.
- Ajahn is available at other times during the day to meet with individuals or groups when requested.
- Question and Answer Tea with Ajahn Kumāro is in the works. A possible time for the Q&A Tea is on Sunday at 3:00PM. We are open to suggestions for a more convenient day and time, please send an email with your suggestion.
- For more information please send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com. We also have a presence on Facebook and Meet-Up social media.

Request for Support

On June 22, 2022 Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center was recognized by the State of North Carolina as a nonprofit Corporation and was assigned an Employer Identification Number by the United States Internal Revenue Service. Kalyana-Mitta Meditation Center is recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS under section 501(c)(3). Donations are deductible in accordance with IRS regulations.

The Meditation Center is in need of support in order to accomplish its' mission and vision. The support may take various forms. You will support the Meditation Center by

- Being present at the Meditation Center for group meditation.
- Giving alms during alms-round.
- Bringing to the Meditation Center items that are listed on the dāna page of the website: www.mittameditation.com.
- Volunteering your skills, energy and time at the Meditation Center.
- Informing your family and friends about the Meditation Center and encouraging them to participate in the activities.
- Donating financial contributions for the Meditation Center's expenses. Financial contributions may be made on the dāna page of the website: www.mittameditation.com and additional means for making financial donations may be discussed with Elisha Buhler at (910) 922-1549.