



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

September 2022 Newsletter



Dhamma is Teacher, Spiritual Friends are Companions

The disciple of the Buddha needs to understand The Four Noble Truths. The Fourth Noble Truth is The Noble Eightfold Path. The Four Noble Truths and The Noble Eightfold Path are central and fundamental teachings in Dhamma that are to be studied, understood and practiced in order to stay on the Path that leads to the Noble Fruits: sotāpanna (streamwinner), sakadāgāmi (once returner), anāgāmi (non-returner), and arahat (the liberated one). Mastery of The Four Noble Truths and The Noble Eightfold Path are sufficient for liberation from suffering and the realization of Nibbāna.

The Buddha said that when his physical body is gone then the Dhamma will be your teacher. The Buddha did not assign any person to be the teacher or to lead the Saṅgha.

The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikaya

a translation by Maurice O'C Walshe

Sutta 16 Mahāparinibbāna Sutta: The Great Passing - The Buddha's Last Days

6.1. And the Lord said to Ānanda: 'Ānanda, it may be that you will think: "The Teacher's instruction has ceased, now we have no teacher!" It should not be seen like this, Ānanda, for what I have taught and explained to you as Dhamma and discipline will, at my passing, be your teacher.'

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya

a translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi

Sutta 108 Gopakamoggallāna Sutta: With Gopaka Moggallāna

7. "Is there, Master Ānanda, any single bhikkhu who was appointed by Master Gotama thus: 'He will be your refuge when I am gone,' and whom you now have recourse to?"

"There is no single bhikkhu, brahmin, who was appointed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened, thus: 'He will be your refuge when I am gone,' and whom we now have recourse to."

8. "But is there, Master Ānanda, any single bhikkhu who has been chosen by the Saṅgha and appointed by a number of elder bhikkhus thus: 'He will be our refuge after the Blessed One has gone,' and whom you now have recourse to?"

"There is no single bhikkhu, brahmin, who has been chosen by the Saṅgha and appointed by a number of elder bhikkhus thus: 'He will be our refuge after the Blessed One has gone,' and whom we now have recourse to."

9. "But if you have no refuge, Master Ānanda, what is the cause for your concord?"

"We are not without a refuge, brahmin. We have a refuge; we have the Dhamma as our refuge."

The Buddha also taught that spiritual friendships (kalyāṇamitta) are important to help reinforce our commitment and understanding of the Dhamma. Kalyāṇamitta means a good friend, i.e., a spiritual friend who gives advice, guidance, and encouragement.

The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya

a translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi

Part V, Chapter 1, 45:2 Half the Holy Life

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Sakyans where there was a town of the Sakyans named Nagaraka. Then the Venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One. Having approached, he paid homage to the Blessed One, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Venerable sir, this is half of the holy life, that is, good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship.”

“Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! This is the entire holy life, Ānanda, that is, good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship. When a bhikkhu has a good friend, a good companion, a good comrade, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.

“And how, Ānanda, does a bhikkhu who has a good friend, a good companion, a good comrade, develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path? Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu develops right view, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. He develops right intention ... right speech ... right action ... right livelihood ... right effort ... right mindfulness ... right concentration, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. It is in this way, Ānanda, that a bhikkhu who has a good friend, a good companion, a good comrade, develops and cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya

a translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi

The Book of Nines, 1 Enlightenment

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvaththī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus: “Bhikkhus!”

“Venerable sir!” those bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

“Bhikkhus, wanderers of other sects may ask you: ‘What, friends, is the proximate cause for the development of the aids to enlightenment?’ If you are asked thus, how would you answer them?”

“Bhante, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, take recourse in the Blessed One. It would be good if the Blessed One would clear up the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from him, the bhikkhus will retain it in mind.”

“Then listen, bhikkhus, and attend closely. I will speak.”

“Yes, Bhante,” those bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

“Bhikkhus, if wanderers of other sects should ask you: ‘What, friends, is the proximate cause for the development of the aids to enlightenment?’ you should answer them as follows.

(1) “Here, friends, a bhikkhu has good friends, good companions, good comrades. This is the first proximate cause for the development of the aids to enlightenment.

(2) “Again, friends, a bhikkhu is virtuous; he dwells restrained by the Pātimokkha, possessed of good conduct and resort, seeing danger in minute faults. Having undertaken the training rules, he trains in them. This is the second proximate cause....

(3) “Again, friends, a bhikkhu gets to hear at will, without trouble or difficulty, talk concerned with the austere life that is conducive to opening up the heart, that is, talk on fewness of desires, on contentment, on solitude, on not getting bound up [with others], on arousing energy, on virtuous behavior, on concentration, on wisdom, on liberation, on the knowledge and vision of liberation. This is the third proximate cause....

(4) “Again, friends, a bhikkhu has aroused energy for abandoning unwholesome qualities and acquiring wholesome qualities; he is strong, firm in exertion, not casting off the duty of cultivating wholesome qualities. This is the fourth proximate cause....

(5) “Again, friends, a bhikkhu is wise; he possesses the wisdom that discerns arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of suffering. This is the fifth proximate cause for the development of the aids to enlightenment.’ “

When, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu has good friends, good companions, good comrades, it can be expected of him that he will be virtuous, one who dwells restrained by the Pātimokkha ... will train in them.

“When a bhikkhu has good friends, good companions, good comrades, it can be expected of him that he will get to hear at will, without trouble or difficulty, talk concerned with the austere life that is conducive to opening up the heart, that is, talk on fewness of desires ... on the knowledge and vision of liberation.

“When a bhikkhu has good friends, good companions, good comrades, it can be expected of him that he will arouse energy for abandoning unwholesome qualities ... not casting off the duty of cultivating wholesome qualities.

“When a bhikkhu has good friends, good companions, good comrades, it can be expected of him that he will be wise, possessing the wisdom that discerns arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of suffering.

“Having based himself on these five things, the bhikkhu should develop further [another] four things. (6) [The perception of] unattractiveness should be developed to abandon lust. (7) Loving-kindness should be developed to abandon ill will. (8) Mindfulness of breathing should be developed to cut off thoughts. (9) The perception of impermanence should be developed to eradicate the conceit ‘I am.’ When one perceives impermanence, the perception of non-self is stabilized. One who perceives non-self eradicates the conceit ‘I am,’ [which is] nibbāna in this very life.”

Do not be mistaken that a spiritual friend is your teacher. The teacher is the Dhamma and spiritual friends are companions that support each other in understanding and practicing the Dhamma.

Spiritual friends in most cases still have defilements (ignorance, greed and ill will) that distorts their understanding and practice of the Dhamma. Therefore, the behavior (speech and actions) of spiritual friends must be investigated to determine if they are in line with your understanding of the Dhamma. Sometimes the behavior of spiritual friends will be in line with the Dhamma and at other times they will not reflect the Dhamma. Cherish the behavior of spiritual friends that are in line with the Dhamma and ignore the behavior which is not true to the Dhamma.

The study and reflection on The Four Noble Truths and The Noble Eightfold Path will determine what behavior is in line with the Dhamma and the behavior which is not in line with the Dhamma. If after study and reflection of the Dhamma you are still confused about your own behavior or that of a spiritual friend then consult with numerous spiritual friends, compare what each has to say, and do your best to determine if the behavior in question is in line with the Dhamma or not.

Announcements

- Make merit by helping to clean the Meditation Center every three weeks or so, an email will be distributed that will provide the date and time.
- Our website www.mitameditation.com had a makeover and is a work in progress. There are additional web pages, beautiful pictures and layout.

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. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com on the days and time you would like to participate.
- The days of the full moon, new moon and the two half moons are called in Pāli: The Uposatha, and is a Buddhist day of observance. A lunar calendar is available at <https://cal.forestsangha.org>. Ajahn Kumāro will perform the ceremony of giving the eight precepts on the full and new moon days

after the 5:30PM meditation. You may elect to take the five precepts instead of the eight and may determine to keep the precepts as long as you see fit (one night, a week, a lifetime, etc).

- Meditation Workshop on the first Sunday of each month between 11:00AM and 1:00PM. The workshop will provide instruction and practice for sitting and walking meditation. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com on the days and time you would like to participate.
- Question and Answer Tea on the third Sunday of each month at 3:00PM. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com on the days and time you would like to participate.
- Everyday at 8:40AM Ajahn Kumāro leaves for alms-round in order to give residents of Asheville the opportunity to earn 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.
- For more information please send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com. We also have a presence on Facebook and Meet-Up social media.

Covid Prevention Policy

- Please do not go to the Meditation Center if you have Covid symptoms and send an email or telephone letting us know of the details of your situation.
- We follow North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) recommendation that face masks should be worn when you are unvaccinated or not up-to-date on your vaccines.
- Face masks are optional if you are vaccinated against Covid and have no symptoms.

Request for Support

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 support 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. 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. Financial contributions may be made on the support page of the website: www.mittameditation.com and additional means for making financial donations may be discussed with Elisha Buhler at (910) 922-1549.