



Message from Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva Maha Thero

When we first discussed designing a web site for Nissaranavanaya (www.nissarana.lk) our primary aim was to enable new comers to apply for meditation retreats. We also wanted to disseminate related information through the new website. Most of our objectives have been achieved during these past few years. Yet we found that there were some shortcomings related to dissemination of current news connected to Nissaranavanaya meditation programs. Hence this new initiative of launching a quarterly e-newsletter, so that yogis, lay supporters and other members of the Nissaranavanaya Dhamma community will be updated with current news.

Meanwhile we have taken some additional steps to share more information to the members of our dhamma family, both local and foreign. Accordingly features like archives, PDF books, e-books are being incorporated into the website.

As we proceed we hope to refine and improve the quality of this e-news letter. Having that in mind I wish to thank all those who took pain to bring the web site up to this level as well as to those who worked towards the introduction of this new initiative – the first Nissaranavanaya e-newsletter.

With metta,
U Dhammajiva
20.12.2014.



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Tidying up the mental household

Dhamma message from the ‘Power of Mindfulness’

by: Venerable Nyanaponika

If anyone whose mind is not harmonized and controlled through methodical mental training should take a closer look at his own everyday thoughts and activities, he will meet with a rather disconcerting sight. Apart from a few main channels of his purposeful thoughts and activities he will everywhere be faced with a tangled mass of perceptions, thoughts, feelings and casual bodily movements showing a disorderliness and confusion which he would not tolerate in his living room. Yet this is the state of affairs that we take for granted within a considerable portion of our waking life and our normal mental activity. Let us now take a look at the details of that rather untidy picture.

First we meet a vast number of casual sense-impressions such as sights and sounds, passing constantly through our mind. Most of them remain vague and fragmentary; some are even based on faulty perceptions and misjudgments. Carrying these inherent weaknesses, they often for the untested basis for judgments and decisions at a higher level of consciousness. True, all these casual sense-impressions need not and cannot be objects of focused attention. A stone on the road that happens to meet our glance will have a claim on our attention only if it obstructs our progress or is of interest to us for some other reason. Yet, if we neglect these casual impressions too often we may stumble over many stones lying on our road and also overlook many gems.

Besides the casual sense-impressions there are those more significant and definite perceptions, thoughts, feelings and volitions which have a closer connection with our purposeful life. Here too, we find that a very high proportion of them are in a state of utter confusion. Hundreds of cross-currents flash through the mind, and everywhere there are bits and ends of unfinished thoughts, stifled emotions and passing moods. Many meet a premature death. Owing to their innately feeble nature our lack of concentration or suppression by new and stronger impressions, they do not persist and develop. If we observe our own mind, we shall notice how easily diverted our thoughts are, how often they behave like undisciplined disputants constantly interrupting each other and refusing to listen to the other side's arguments. Again, many lines of thought remain rudimentary or are left untranslated into will and action because courage is lacking to accept their practical, moral or intellectual consequences. If we continue to examine more closely our average perceptions, thoughts and judgments we shall have to admit that many of them are unreliable.

They are just products of habit led by prejudices of intellect or emotion, by our pet preferences or aversion, by laziness or selfishness, by faulty or superficial observations.

Such a look into the long neglected quarters of the mind will come as a wholesome shock to the observer. It will convince him of the urgent need for methodical mental culture extending below the thin surface layer of the mind to the vast twilight regions of consciousness we have just visited. The observer will then become aware that the relatively small sector of the mind that stands in the intense light of purposeful will and thought is not a reliable standard of inner strength and lucidity of consciousness in its totality. He will also see that the quality of individual consciousness cannot be judged by a few optimal results of mental activity achieved in brief and intermittent periods. The decisive factor in determining the quality of consciousness is self-understanding and self-control : whether that dim awareness characteristic of our everyday mind and uncontrolled portion of everyday activity tend to increase or decrease.

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Building Construction in Progress

Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya came to being in 1967. Its founding father was Mr Asoka Weeraratne (later, Venerable Dhammanisanthi Thero) and its pioneering meditation master was Venerable Matara Nanarama MahaThero. Their combined efforts paved the way to the establishment of this world famous monastery in the strict forest tradition. Over the years the forest hermitage became home to many monks who renounced their worldly possessions to pursue the Buddha's teachings of liberation. Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva Maha Thero became the meditation master and chief preceptor in 2006. With the commencement of formal meditation retreats conducted by Venerable Dhammajiva Thero, the doors of Nissaranavanaya opened to a large number lay practitioners who flocked to listen to this inspiring Master and to practice meditation according to his instructions. Located at the foot hills of the forest hermitage, today, the Mitirigala Nissaranavanaya Retreat Centre has become an exceptionally popular meditation centre where women and men from all walks of life participate in meditation retreats of ten, seven and fourteen days duration.

Construction of the new Meditation Retreat Centre at Nissaranavanaya began in 2006 and was planned in several Phases. Consequent to the successful completion of Phase one, the spacious meditation hall can presently accommodate 60 yogis, the ladies dormitory accommodation has capacity for 35 yoginis and male yogis accommodation presently has a capacity for 15. Phase two of the construction is on-going, and on completion will result in an expanded meditation hall with capacity for about 100 yogis. Shaped as an 'L', the hall when completed will allow the monks and yogis to sit in separate wings, with the meditation master seated in the centre and thereby he will be visible to all. There will be an additional dormitory with toilet facilities and a new pantry for females, as well as improved facilities for male yogis. A modernized kitchen, a new administration unit, accommodation facilities for staff of the retreat centre and accommodation for lay supporters who provide daily dana, have been all included within Phase 2. Recent introduction of solar power generation will facilitate many improvements including air conditioning and consequently sound-proofing the meditation hall.

During the past five years Venerable Dhammajiva has conducted 85 meditation retreats for over 2000 yogis. The entire building construction is being supported by Sri Lankan donors (residing overseas as well as in Sri Lanka) who have benefitted from these teachings on meditation.

Facilities for monks residing within the hermitage are being simultaneously upgraded. Improving conditions and space of the monks' danasala, monks' kutis, pindapathasala have already been completed. Certain other improvements are ear-marked for completion together with the completion of the building construction, in April 2015.

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Excerpt from DhammaDesana

by Most Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva Thero
on Achchanti Sutta - Retreat No. 52

A deity (dēvatha), having approached the Blessed One, recited the verse: “Time flies by relentlessly, nights pass by swiftly, moment by moment lifetime erodes away and death approaches. Seeing this danger, one should do merits that can bring comforts and happiness.”

The Blessed One replied: “Time flies by relentlessly, nights pass by swiftly, moment by moment lifetime erodes away and death approaches. Seeing this danger, one who seeks peace (shānti) should abandon worldly pleasures (lokāmisa).”

Initially, one becomes diligent (appamāda) on ‘doing what should be done’ i.e. doing merits. A yogi, however, goes beyond by being diligent on ‘not doing what should not be done’ as clarified by the Blesses One.

One who gives prominence to lokāmisa (kamaccanda) is in danger just as when a child is allowed to play near a fire or serpent - generates causes for endless births (jāti) and suffering that follows.

Every moment with mindfulness (sathi) established on breath (ānapāna), or on touch of the foot when walking, or on day-to-day activities, one relinquishes lokāmisa. By abandoning lokāmisa, one transcends to experience immaterial pleasure (nirāmisasukha), which surpasses all worldly (material) pleasures (āmisasukha) and opens the doorway for deepened practice towards shān্থi (avēdhaithasukha).

Chandrika Jayatileka

Link to Audio File: <https://archive.org/details/NissaranaRET52>

Joining the ‘Mindful Families’ network

Creating a platform for families practicing meditation and mindfulness, to exchange ideas and share literature on the subject, is a recent initiative of the Nissaranavanaya meditators community.

In the forthcoming book 'For Meditating Moms and Dads', Venerable Dhammajiva says :

'Even though I am a bachelor I feel like a member of a big family. The human family! My own aim is basically the children. The best way to address them is through their own family and I hope their parents are ready to appreciate this mindfulness. We could first start the mindfulness process with the already existing mindful families and we need to find ways to expand it to all the other families who are ready to exchange views with our mindful families. We have to define the term ‘Mindful family’; if all the members of the family are accepting mindfulness even while not being regular practitioners, we are still ready to recognise them under this definition.'

Families interested to join this forum could email nvmindfulfamilies@yahoo.com

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