

Satipaṭṭhāna Opening Ceremony 30th June 2007

Bhante Bodhidhamma · YouTube Talks · 56:55

Hello and welcome. Welcome to Satipanya Buddhist Meditation Centre. This is our opening day and what we hope the film will catch is the blessing of the shrine, the blessing of the stupa and we're going to put something into the ground and then finally the talks given by some of the monks. It's a lovely rainy Welsh day and I'm sure you'll enjoy it.

Welcome everybody. What we're going to do is some chanting, taking refuges and precepts. And then we're going to do the Vandana, just praising the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha. And then some special chanting to bless this water. And then we're going to make our way up to the top field, which is where the small stupa will be. And on the way, it'd be good if you could chant *Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa*. Don't worry if you can't remember it, just mumble. And then when we get up there, there'll be some more chanting and I'm going to put this special pot here beneath the ground which is, as it were, the foundation for the stupa. And then after that we make our way back to this marquee.

The ground's fairly firm. It'll take a good shoe. You won't sink. But if you've got an umbrella, I'll bring that with you.

[Extended Pali chanting including taking refuges, precepts, and traditional Buddhist ceremonies]

Thank you. He has brought his business knowledge to the trust. Lastly, but not least, our ever cheerful and efficient Secretary, Sharon Hammond, whose aid is supported by Keith, who brings a wealth of experience as he is the treasurer at Amaravati. He has guided us through various difficult phases to the point where we are today.

I would like to mention one or two persons who were past office bearers and I thank them for the help given. They are Ramani Samarasinha, Anne Ashton and Sarah Quinn. My sincere thanks to all of them.

On behalf of the entire Satipanya Trust, I would like to thank the following people. I must tell you, Bhante has made a nice list but as usual he has lost the list. If I have left out any person, please forgive me.

I would like to end this by reminding all of you what happened at Buddha's last moment before Parinibbāna. All his disciples went to pay homage. They all came excepting one monk whose absence was conspicuous. When the Buddha asked where Dhamma Rama was, they sent a monk to fetch him. And when he came, Buddha said to Dhamma Rama, these monks said that you had not come. Dhamma Rama replied, O Bhante, it is true. I did not come. I thought that if I sit down in my kuti and meditate and achieve some mental attainment, it would be the best way to pay homage to my teacher. So that is why I did not come. The Buddha said, Sādhu, Sādhu, Sādhu, all follow Dhamma Rama. From this we can see the place he

gave to meditation. It really is the heart of Buddhist practice.

May all of you make use of this beautiful Satipanya meditation retreat and attain liberation. As I mentioned earlier, we would be very grateful for your help and support towards the payment of the loan. We took the retreat managers all the necessary forms. And if you are a taxpayer, please feel free to give the info.

Venerable Premasiri is the abbot of one of the meditation centres in Sri Lanka and he has a special relationship with me because he was the one who ordained me into this particular chapter of the order. Next to him is Venerable Ñānamala who lives in London and is an ardent Mahāsi follower like myself. This is an old friend of mine, Venerable Piyadassi. And that's it. An equal old friend is Venerable Subodha.

When he was a layperson and I was in London, I consider to be my training college. It was there that I really learned how to teach the Dhamma. And I don't think there'd be anywhere else in the world where I could have got such a wide experience and the opportunity to teach the courses that I personally wanted to. So it's with a great sense of gratitude that I find that she's come along for this meeting.

Neva is an Anāgārikā who lives, and I'm very happy that she's come along as the Buddhist token nun. Hopefully one day there will be many of them. Father Sylvan is an Orthodox monk and to my joy just lives over there on the Glyph Stones. So I've got a brother. Sister Karen, who is a student of Father Sylvan and is also living as a hermit close by. And Sister Ruth, who is a Church of England hermit and lives at the moment down in Wales. And he's also an old friend. We've attended each other's courses.

So these are the people you look at, and there's me of course. So now I'm going to pass over to Brian, who will invite two or three people to give a little talk. Before I do this, I have a new umbrella here, so if anyone would like to claim this.

Well, first of all, I have great pleasure in inviting on behalf of the Satipanya Trust.

I would like to talk a little about *Satipaṭṭhāna*. The first beginning of meditation centre is the development of attention. In the morning we have two ideas in our mind. At the same time, we think of something else. By that time, the toothbrush has... That is one reason why we should train.

When we are training our attention, it's like teaching a little child to walk and take a few tentative steps. Gradually, he learns to walk more and more steadily. After a little while, he can walk on his own without any. When that happens, the mind starts.

At this stage, in *samatha*, we do not get attached or develop aversion to whatever objects that come to the mind. This is one of the most important things that has to arise in your mind, that is not having attachment or aversion to whatever objects that arise in the mind.

To develop mindfulness, there are five factors. First thing is that you have to stop either getting attached to or having aversion or pushing away whatever arises in your mind. We let go of the past and the future.

We do not start thinking or we do not have expectations. We don't try to be too fast or too slow.

We go through the five again. We do not get attached to or develop aversion to any object. We do not think of the future or the past. We have no thinking and we have no expectations. As mindfulness develops, gradually your wisdom starts to develop. At this stage, it is not really wisdom, it is just... wisdom or knowledge develops, you develop *sampajañña* or clear comprehension.

There are five factors that help in the development of clear comprehension. *Vitakka*, applied thought, *vicāra* or sustained thought, *manasikāra* or attention, *ekaggatā* or one-pointedness of mind. *Viriya* or energy. These are the five factors that help us to develop our wisdom.

One thing is that you reduce the amount you talk. And therefore, I think it is time for me to stop. I would like to ask Venerable to answer.

We are very happy that we have been able to come and participate at a ceremony for the establishment of a centre for the propagation of the Buddha Dhamma in the Welsh-English border. We had always thought of the West as a place where it was mainly materialistic prosperity. People in the developing world are beginning to understand that whatever material wealth we have, that it does not give us ultimate satisfaction. People living in these developed countries are getting gradually attracted towards Buddhism.

The developed world has made vast strides in technology and also in military. In Asia or in the Asian culture, we do not regard arms as something good. Therefore, one of the best things that we can give to the West is the message of the Lord Buddha.

Who is a citizen of this country is a monk who has been in a number of countries around this area. He has been doing this noble task for the last twenty years or so. He had the idea to further propagate the message of the Buddha. It is the fruition of his endeavours that has resulted in what we are doing today, the establishment of this centre and also the laying of a foundation stone for a stupa.

We Sri Lankan people always bless him. As monks from Burma and other countries, we all give our blessing to him and wish his work all success. Because of this function organized by Bhikkhu Bodhidhamma, myself, as well as Venerable Premasiri and Venerable Dhammarakkhita, we all were able to come to this country.

The very name of this center reminds us of one of the most important messages that the Buddha gave us. The Venerable Premasiri placed before you a very clear and short description of what *sati* and *pañña* mean. We hope and we invite everybody, both who have come from Sri Lanka to live here, as well as all of you, to make maximum use of this center and develop your mind.

May the blessings of the Triple Gem and may our greetings to Venerable Bodhidhamma and to the Satipanya Center.

Venerable Mahāsaṅgha, dear friends in the Dhamma, it is indeed a great pleasure to be here participating

in this inaugural ceremony of Satipanya Center. The founder, Venerable Bodhidhamma, he is a very good friend of the monks and devotees of the London Buddhist Vihara. I am standing to represent the London Buddhist Vihara.

London Buddhist Vihara is the oldest Theravāda monastery in this country. It was founded in 1926 by Anāgārika Dharmapāla, a Sri Lankan philanthropist. Now, eighty-first anniversary we celebrate this year. At the very beginning of this wonderful career, the founder Venerable Bodhidhamma is a very good friend of the monks of the dayakas of the LBV. At the very beginning of his wonderful career in this country, as a meditation teacher, he used to live at the London Buddhist Vihara. After that, temporarily, he started a centre in North London. And then he moved to Gaia House as a meditation teacher. Finally, he has been able to establish his own center here.

Venerable Bodhidhamma is a very experienced teacher. He has been trained at Kanduboda in Sri Lanka and Mahāsi meditation center in Myanmar. His skill in meditation especially in Mahāsi technique. According to my understanding he is one of the most experienced teachers of this technique in this country.

Here it seems to me all the factors for a meditation center are completed. A teacher or *kammaṭṭhāna* ācārya we need. So Venerable Bodhidhamma is here, a very qualified monk, in a quiet place, or what we call *suññāgāra*. It's a very quiet place. In the morning, I had to walk for one and a half hours. Nobody met me in my work, so it's a very quiet area. So his environmental factor is okay. And the supporters are dāyakas, so he is very fortunate. He has so many supporters, it seems to me.

Certainly this center, under his guidance, will be able to cater to many people, those who need support and guide for spiritual development and inner peace. On this occasion, I, on behalf of the Sangha of the London Buddhist Vihara, would like to convey our heartiest congratulations and blessings to Venerable Bodhidhamma, and to the center.

Somebody said the reason I'm here is because until I met Bodhidhamma I had received many many teachings and they all made some sense but they were all pieced here and there from different traditions and different teachers. He said, when I met Bodhidhamma, I really got it. I really understood the heart of the Dhamma, of where all those pieces came together, and that really allowed me to go deeper in my practice. So the quality of the teacher as well.

Many, many other things probably people could come up with. A sense of humor, a great sense of humor that he brings that quality of lightness, incredible lightness with the dedication and the seriousness of his commitment. It's a really lovely combination.

As we were walking over to the ceremony, as he was encouraging us to chant behind him, he turned around to us and with this twinkle in his eye, started the chanting which has both a freedom in the way he can be with his form and an incredible dedication to holding his precepts and his lineage in those five

years that he was with us at Gaia House. It's a tremendous commendation.

And we're very familiar with being impersonal and pointing in that direction, but really just to honour the fruits of his practice. The great warmth and always coming through the Gaia House corridors that he would be, with great clarity, with a great heart, peace and joy he'd say, every time, peace and joy Catherine, peace and joy, wherever it was he was passing by.

So, with these great qualities that we come to celebrate, and in this wonderful centre on behalf of Gaia House. I'll read you just a little bit that was put in the Gaia House newsletter. The teachers, trustees, managers and staff of Gaia House extend our congratulations to Bhante Bodhidhamma, who was a Gaia House resident teacher from 2001 to 2005, and the Satipanya Buddhist Trust on the opening of their new centre. We wish them all the best in their new home at the Satipanya, flow deep and clear at White Grit for the welfare and liberation of all beings.

I just want to take this last opportunity because I missed out on introducing somebody who was meant to sit here but she's hiding in the back. And she is my spiritual mother.

She is the one who told me to sit facing the wall and watch whatever arises and passes away. And I don't think I've missed a day. That's the effect it had on me.

So finally, many thanks for coming.

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