

1. Sister PG asked Bro Teoh to elaborate on **Asalha Puja Day** which falls on **27th July 2018**.

2. **Bro Teoh's answers:**

- a) This is a full moon day to **commemorate** the **Buddha's proclamation** of the **Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (1st Sermon) to the 5 ascetics**.
- b) According to Sister Padmasuri, since the time of the Buddha, monks has been observing this **Asalha day** as the **1st day of Vassa** or the **rains retreat**. During this 3-month **vassa period**, monks will reside in one particular place to develop their cultivation.
- c) The Buddha had fixed the 3 months vassa (monks' rains retreat) **to coincide** with the **raining session**. Under the Buddha's training, the monks were supposed to travel out, go for pindapata, to receive alms food and spread the teaching after their rains retreat or vassa. It was meant to be **a synergy between laity and monks**. While the *lay community* developed *wholesomeness through their supports and offerings*, the monks could in return **cultivate** during that period so that they are *worthy of such offerings and supports*. After Vassa, either a Kathina or a Papa would be held to mark the end of vassa.
- d) Most holy days are associated with the full moon. This is the time when the **gravitational pull of the moon** has a more severe effect on our planet's water masses thereby giving rise to tides causing certain nature's movements, affecting the human consciousness.
- e) Animals are more sensitive to these movements and vibration. Take for example during a tectonic plate's movement, the amount of energy released can cause tsunami (giant waves) to arise. Before the tsunami actually hit the shores, the animals and fishes can show signs of their impending arrival.
- f) As for humans, if we do not have the **proper sensitivity of mind training**, our *moods and emotions* can be **affected** by *all these planetary movements and nature's phenomena when they arise*.
- g) Besides **nature's 2 Scientific laws** (physical and biological laws of *utu niyama* and *bija niyama*), there are three other **spiritual laws** of nature, namely *karma niyama*, *citta niyama* and *dharma niyama*. All these **five universal laws of nature interact** with one another and together they **governs all of life and existence on this universe**. It is *very difficult for us to understand the correlation ship of all these five universal laws especially the three spiritual laws*. We **need wisdom** to understand these universal laws.
- h) Jhanas were widely practiced by devotees of the Hindu tradition at the time of the Buddha. They believed in self-mortification. They had this wrong view – thinking that by torturing this body long enough, they could become holy and enlightened. The Buddha knew this was not the way. He himself had tried such **austere practices** until his almost total **abstinence from food** reduced him to only bones and skeleton. Until he was too weak to cultivate. Finally, he decided to *leave his teachers and practice on his own*. He recalled when he was a young child, sitting under an apple tree, *observing the harvesting festival* while seated in meditation. His mind was calm and peaceful (with joy within) but He was not in **absorption concentration (appana Samadhi)**. So there was clarity in his mind. He was healthy and relaxed. When he recalled this incident, he decided to avoid the **2 extremes of sensual desire and self-mortification** and return to the *intake of food again* to **sustain** his **bodily health** needed for cultivation.
- i) His paramis were such *that everything fell into place*. His enlightenment enabled him to inherit his **past spiritual cultivations** from his **spiritual nature** thereby **giving rise to his spiritual body (Sambogaya Kaya)**. He then realized

that this body and mind of his was just a **vehicle and tool** for him to come to this **existential world**. His **physical body** which is the **nirmana kaya** or **functional body** is for him to *perform the function of the Buddha* and together with the **sambogaya kaya** or **spiritual body** connected, it **transformed** him into a **dharma kaya** (a **dharma body**, the **3rd body that speaks and teach the dharma**).

- j) After that He realized he had no more problems. He realized that the body was not him. He had awakened to this **profound truth** thus he had *no more problems with regards to old age, sickness and death*.
- k) Bro Teoh shared his own experience with near death encounters and how he overcome them and how he was 'cured miraculously' by Quan Yin and his own nature.
- l) In the Dhammacakapavatana Sutra, the **Buddha expounded the Four Noble Truths and its three turnings** (giving rise to the **12 modes**). He himself had to understand all these 3 turnings and its 12-modes in its entirety *before his can call himself the Samma Sambuddha*.
- m) The Buddha also expounded to the monks that *'whatever that is of the nature to arise, is of the nature to cease. Whatever that arises, there are causes and conditions behind and these are basically karma because according to the Buddha, 'We are born of our karma, heir to our karma, conditioned and supported by our karma and we are what we are because of our karma'. So, our entire life is dependent on karma. If we do not take care of karma, we will encounter problems and suffering in life.*
- n) It is important that we **see things as they are** and **not according to our views, opinions and conditioning**. *Reality has no words and concepts. When conditions are like this, things will be like that.* Everything in nature (including our form and mind) is in a *state of flux* where the *three universal characteristics of truth (impermanence, suffering state and non-self)* are always prevalent. *Only the wise can see this though this reality exists everywhere.*
- o) The conditioned world has its own reality (the 8 realities) and **we will suffer if we confront this realities without wisdom**. The cause behind is our **craving** borne of **self-delusion**. In short, it is the five **grasping aggregates of form and mind** that I called dukkha. Hence, we have to understand who we are and what we are? We will suffer when we attach and cling, to this body and mind thinking that it is real - clinging to it as the 'me' and the 'I'.
- p) When we **can understand what suffering is** and the **cause behind their arising**, we will know how to live our **life well** for *everything is just the way it is*. *The world is the world and people are just the way they are*. With this **acceptance**, we can be **at peace at all time**. How can we realize this? - Via the **Buddha's Four Noble Truth**, which is the **essence of his teaching**.
- q) With the proper understanding of *what meditation is*, we **train the mind to be ever mindful to cultivate the Noble 8-fold Path (4th Noble Truth)** leading to **heedfulness**. *The moment we are heedful, we are destined for enlightenment*. This is what the Dhammacakapavatana Sutra is all about. There is **no need** to run here and there **to seek for truth** and *shortcut methods* of meditation. The **only way to realized enlightenment** is *seek within the Four Noble Truths* which **encompasses the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Noble 8-fold Path, the Paticca Samupadda** and all the *other essential dharma*. They are all **inter-connected** and **inter-related**. With **understanding**, our **cultivation becomes very simple and direct** and we **won't be swayed** by what others tell us.
- r) We will train our minds to be **ever mindful to abstain from evil**. To do that we **must understand** what **constitutes evil** (the 3 evil roots of **Greed, Hatred and Delusion**), then we will **not violate** the **precepts** because **only evil people break these precepts**. And Precepts are also the **source of spiritual joy, spiritual wealth and spiritual peacefulness of mind**. We can then invoke power of merits too when we uphold the precepts. By **not breaking precepts**, we protect ourselves and others, we will have less problems; so there is more peace, calmness and well-being for us to develop the cultivation. So when we keep our precepts we are cultivating **merits** and we will have *less problem in life hence less fears and worries* and mind is **no longer restless**.
- s) So just **keeping precepts** can bring about **so many benefits**. As we keep on doing so, we are purifying our karma leading **to lesser and lesser negative karmic fruition**. To take care of our karma, it is **essential** for us **to follow**

the **advice of the Buddha**: to avoid all evil, do good and purify the mind (**Dhammapada verse 183**: *Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ kusalassa upasampadā, Sacittapariyodapanam etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ*).

- t) When we keep the precepts, we are training ourselves to be **more mindful** as we constantly watching over our thoughts, speeches and actions. Our **understanding deepens** as we begin to see the correlation ship of the **three spiritual laws** of Karma, law of Mind and law of Dharma that **govern all of life and existence**.
- u) These universal characteristics are everywhere – in the **midst of life and nature**. Nothing is **static** everything is always in **a state of flux**. So, the **wise ones** can be **aware of the stillness within** while in the **midst of noise, vibration** and **activities to live life**. It is **not a theory anymore** but has become an experiential understanding.

3. Question by Sister Tammy:

- Regarding precepts – the need to avoid evil; despite knowing it is bad for us, somehow we still want to do it. The **temptation is so strong**. Sometimes, **it feels like we don't have a choice**. I would like to know why some beings can have that deep understanding after only a few attempts while others need repeated attempts before they can understand.

4. Bro Teoh's answers:

- a) For those who approach it through knowledge, their so called 'understanding' is different. When we use thought-based practices to solve problems via knowledge, the outcome is **very different** from **awareness** and **wisdom-based** cultivation. *Knowledge cannot free the mind*. When the **silent mind awakens** it is **immediate** and it is **not gradual**. The **nature within** that is awakened will have the **wisdom connected** to the form and mind. *The moment you understand you are free*.
- b) Bro Teoh gave the analogy that, if something is burning hot, burning and tormenting us when we touch it then *we will never touch it again right?* Especially so **if we have experienced it with understanding**. But **suffering at the mental level** is very different because *in the case of mental there is no tactile pain or suffering involved*. If we are **not sensitive**, we are **not able to detect it**. To **detect suffering at mind or mental level** we **need a very strong and stable mindfulness** and **wisdom** to tackle such problems. When **we understand**, we **will never** return to the **old heedless ways again**.
- c) Bro Teoh also mentioned about Sister Alicia's experience. Once **she realized via wisdom** and **clear understanding**, how **she suffered via her own delusion in the past** (16 over years of depression), those defilements till now **cannot deceive** her anymore. Hence, **only wisdom frees the mind** and **not via the use of suppression** and **control** of thoughts and emotions. It cannot work because suppression and control of thoughts are **thought based knowledge** (not wisdom) and it will **not free us**.

(Above outline short notes draft were prepared by Puan Chee)