

# *Dharma Realm Buddhist University News*

## *Thera-vado Pali Buddhism Course Offered at Dharma Realm Buddhist University*

Despite his fondness for living the silent life of a hermit monk, the Venerable Ñāṇajīvako has compassionately begun to share his scholarly expertise in traditional Eastern philosophies by teaching a course on Therāvādan texts at Dharma Realm Buddhist University.

A year ago, the Ven. Ñāṇajīvako and his daughter, Snježana Akpinar, arrived to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Although a native of Yugoslavia, the path to the City led the Ven. Ñāṇajīvako through Sri Lankan Buddhist Hermitages, where he spent the last twenty-five years or so as a monk, and where he had hoped to stay for the rest of his life. The civil war, weak health, and old age made his stay in that part of the world impossible, forcing him to become a refugee for the fourth time in his life.

Soon after his arrival at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the Vajra Bodhi Sea published an article (Issue#235, December 1989, "Bodhi Mirror") on the Ven. Ñāṇajīvako and his life describing the various circumstances which made him virtually a perpetual refugee. During this past year he quietly gathered strength, steadily recovering his health in these peaceful surroundings while watching the steady increase of inhabitants at the City and getting used, once again, to a colder winter climate after having spent so many years in the tropics.

In the meantime, his daughter also tried to adjust her life to the needs of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, as she says, "not knowing exactly how it all works, but somehow sensing [her] way. "Upon their arrival they both tried to help establish the Center for World Religions, a task both the Ven. Ñāṇajīvako—a monk from the Therāvāda Pāli tradition as well as a former professor of philosophy, and his daughter who is a scholar of Middle Eastern Studies and comparative religion, seemed suited to perform.

For Mrs. Akpinar there was plenty of work in the City apart from this goal. Her father, on the other hand, needed time to recover and helped her in the attempts to portray the religions as well as the civilizations of the Middle East in a Buddhist light by offering valuable insights and drawing from Buddhist texts, mostly from his Pāli tradition; texts on which he had worked for many years and which brought out concepts existent in the Western world that were neglected and misunderstood by many scholars used to observing and analyzing in a completely different manner.

Now, after a year, both feel very much at home and are definitely not new-comers any longer. As Mrs. Akpinar points out: "We were made aware of this fact when one morning the Venerable Master Hua came to pay us a visit and asked my father to start lecturing one night a week." The Master's request came around the time when another, younger monk, also from the Therāvāda tradition, Bhikkhu Yanesara, an American ordained in

Burma who had also spent some time in Sri Lanka, came to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

Bhikkhu Yanesara, who was also asked to lecture, began his lectures by talking about the meditation centers in Burma and his experiences there with a renowned teacher of meditation, the Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw, describing Pali Buddhism as it is now practiced in that part of the world.

The Venerable Ñāṇajīvako decided to start his lectures on Pali Buddhism by pointing out that Therāvāda Buddhism belongs to an ancient monastic tradition that rests upon the concept of "elders". The word "thera" being cognate with the Russian "stara(tz)," which means "elder." The parallel, he pointed out, goes beyond mere words; thus in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, such a monastic tradition of hermitages and sanghas honoring an "elder" has been kept alive and fostered particularly in those areas of the Soviet Union where Christianity and Buddhism live side by side.

Then he went on to specify those seven points on which Buddhist monks may not disagree under any circumstances. They are listed in the Sāmagāma sutta (no.104) of the Majjhima Nikāyo, or Middle Length Discourses. He also listed the basic texts of the Pāli Canon, known as the Sutta Pitakam—Collection of Discourses:

1. *The Dīgha-nikāyo* (long discourses)
2. *Majjhima-nikāyo* (middle length discourses)
3. *Samyutta-nikāyo* (groups according to subjects)
4. *Anguttara-nikāyo* (groups according to number of subjects)
5. *Khuddaka-nikāyo* (shorter texts) which, in turn, consist of
  - a. *Dhammapadam* (*Sansk. Udānavarga*)—Path of Righteousness,
  - b. *Sutta-nipāto*—Woven Cadences
  - c. *Jātaka*—rebirth tales, and
  - d. *Thera-Therī gāthā*—songs of the Eldest Bhikshus and Bhikshunis.

After this introduction which was intertwined with experiences in Araññas and places in India where one can see life-styles as well as customs similar to those that must have existed in the days of the Buddha, the Venerable Ñāṇajīvako began his lectures on the first of the seven points of no contention, known as the "Four Applications of Mindfulness (*cattāro sati-pat-tānā*)" discussing the manner in which mindfulness should be established by contemplating the body (*kāyo*). In the ensuing lectures he will describe all of the seven points on which Buddhist monks may not disagree, these are:

1. The four applications of mindfulness: *cattāro sati-patthana*
  - a. *kāyo*—body
  - b. *vedanā*—sensation
  - c. *cittam*—mind
  - d. *dhammo*—object of mind, *phenomenon*

2. The four right efforts: *cattāro samma-ppadhānā*

- a. to avoid
- b. to overcome
- c. to develop
- d. to maintain

3. The four bases of psychic power: *cattāro iddhi-pādā*

- a. concentration of Intention (accomplished by effort of will)
- b. concentration of Energy
- c. concentration of Consciousness
- d. concentration of Investigation

4. The five controlling faculties: *pañc'indriyāni* the five sensory organs

5. The five powers: *pañca balāni*

- a. faith
- b. energy
- c. mindfulness
- d. concentration
- e. wisdom

6. The seven links in awakening: *satta bojjanga*

- a. mindfulness
- b. investigation of dhamma
- c. energy
- d. rapture (pīti)
- e. tranquility
- f. concentration (samādhi)
- g. equanimity (*upekkhā*)

7. The Aryan eightfold way: *ariyo atthangiko maggo*

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|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Right View          | } | III. Wisdom (pañña)         |
| 2. Right Thought       |   |                             |
| 3. Right Speech        | } | I. Morality (sīla)          |
| 4. Right Action        |   |                             |
| 5. Right Livelihood    | } | II. Concentration (samādhi) |
| 6. Right Effort        |   |                             |
| 7. Right Mindfulness   |   |                             |
| 8. Right Concentration | } |                             |

The Ven. Ñāṇajīvako will continue lecturing on these seven points throughout the summer.