



TI-SARANA BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION

# Ti-Sarana

## NEWS

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## A Lunar New Year Message: Bhavatu Sabbamangalam!

The Lunar New Year of the Ox or the Earth Cow as some astrologers say is around the corner. Everyone is preparing to welcome the New Year for a happy and prosperous life in the next twelve months of the year. From ancient times in agrarian societies, the ox signifies vigour, strength, usefulness and hard work. It is also a beast of burden, useful for transportation and farming, and it continues to serve humans faithfully from time immemorial. The Cow provides milk and a number of dairy products for human sustenance. Therefore, the ox and cow are related closely to human livelihood. Because of their usefulness, in some cultures, they are held in high regard and elevated even up to the point of being worshipped as sacred animals. With the dawn of the Lunar New Year of the Ox or the Earth Cow, we are reminded that it would be a year of happiness and fulfillment for all of us.

### Importance of Determination, Integrity and Perseverance

According to Chinese astrology, both males and females, who are born in the year of the Ox have mixed planetary effects of fortune and misfortune as predicted in previous years. What is needed is determination to tackle the obstacles and courage to challenge the adverse issues in each and everyone's path. In the Nakkhatta Jataka it is stated that rather than favourable constellations, integrity and perseverance are the factors that contribute to one's prosperity and happiness. Nevertheless, Buddhism has no objection to the performance of beneficial and harmless New Year traditions and rituals customary to any culture in the world.

### Buddhism as a Catalyst

It is always said that Buddhism is like a catalyst. In chemistry it denotes a substance that increases chemical reaction without itself undergoing any permanent chemical change. The catalytic converter in a motor vehicle converts pollutant gases into less harmful ones. In the same way, there are cultural practices absorbed into Buddhism without itself being changed in its fundamental tenets and practices. Since Buddhism allows the adherents of Buddhism to follow their age-old traditional practices within the framework of its doctrinal and practical boundary, Chinese Buddhists can practise their traditional New Year customs just as the Buddhists of other countries continued to practise theirs. Many of the Chinese New Year customs are harmless as well as affable and aim at creating a healthy mutual relationship between family members and society at large. Let us have a glance at these customs, which have been evolved over centuries and handed down from generation to generation up to the present day.

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### **Spring Cleaning and the Cleaning of the Family Altar**

Beginning from the Spring Cleaning before the eve of the New Year the cleaning of the Family Altar is considered as a prerequisite to greet the New Year. The altar being the most sacred and significant spot in a house, on the eve of the Lunar New Year it has to be cleaned respectfully. In the traditional Chinese astrology, specific dates and periods of time have been prescribed to commence the Spring Cleaning and Family Altar Cleaning. But in modern times due to our hectic lifestyle and numerous commitments, it is difficult to follow the astrological requirements strictly. But a convenient date and time can be allocated for the cleaning before the Lunar New Year. On the Altar there may be a Buddha statue or the statues of the numerous deities of the Chinese pantheon. Occupants of the house are obliged to clean those statues and surrounding by removing dust, dirt and ash of burnt joss sticks at least once a year before the Lunar New Year. After the Spring Cleaning, when the altar is cleaned, tidied and decorated afresh, the New Year atmosphere is already present in the house.

### **Receiving the God of Wealth, Reunion Dinner and the Gifts for Children**

Every body likes to live happily, for which sufficient wealth is needed. Buddhism has no objection to getting rich. One has to earn by rightful means. Buddhism runs down hoarding and miserliness and emphasizes correct use of wealth by sharing with the elderly family members and the needy. Since Buddhism speaks of numerous kinds of terrestrial as well as celestial deities, belief in God of Wealth would not be in conflict with Buddhist ideals. In the Chinese New Year customs, there is a special provision for the reception of God of Wealth. According to astrological calculations 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2009 is prescribed as the auspicious day to receive the God of Wealth.

The Re-union Dinner is another important event in the New Year. This brings the family members together and renews mutual relationship and understanding. Besides, bonds among the extended family are strengthened. Significantly, during the Lunar New Year children are not forgotten. Particularly, they are made happy and blessed with gifts of hong bao and sweets among other presents.

## **May All of You be Blessed with Happiness and Prosperity in the Year of the Ox!**

Ven. Dr. P. Gnanarama Maha Thero

## **Sunday Dhamma Classes**

Classes resumed on 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009 at 10am after a four-weeks' break. All the students turned up punctually and were keen to catch up with the teachers. There were also a number of new faces at the class for children aged 3 to 4 years old, all full of energy and laughter. There will no classes during the Lunar New Year, namely 25<sup>th</sup> Jan and 1<sup>st</sup> Feb.

A Speech Day will be held on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb (Sun.) at 10 am to present certificates to the students who sat for The Colombo Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) Dhamma Examination in June 2008. Do come to support and congratulate the students.

# Congratulations to Bhante Dr. R. Chandawimala

The Management Committee congratulates Bhante Dr. R. Chandawimala who was conferred his PhD Degree from the University of Kong Kong in Buddhist Studies. Bhante's convocation on 25 Nov 2008 was witnessed by his master, Ven. A. Gnanawimala Nayaka Thera.

The topic of his research work is *"The Impact of the Abhayagiri Practices on the Development of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka"*. Bhante's research work is already known to the Buddhist academic world through conferences and Journals. He attended three academic conferences, in Korea (2006), Sri Lanka (2006) and Paris (2007) to present papers related to his research. In the Conference in Buddhist Studies 2006 held in Korea, his paper was awarded the first prize among the three distinguished papers presented. Some parts of his thesis have already been published in the International Journal of Humanities, Vol. V, Commonground Publishers, Australia, 2007, and the Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies, Vol. 09, Varanasi, India 2008.

Another article taken from the thesis will be published in the Felicitation Volume of Ven. Dr. K. Anuruddha by the Centre of Buddhist Studies of the University of Hong Kong. The whole thesis itself is in the process of being revised for publication shortly.

Ven. Dr. R. Chandawimala: "I thank all teachers and students of TBA Sunday school for sending me a greeting card on my Convocation."

## Birthday Dana for Bhantes

Members and devotees gathered at TBA on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec. to perform the Morning Puja as well as offer Birthday Dāna and well wishes to both Bhante Gnanarama and Bhante Chandawimala. In the evening Bro. Hemasiri led the recitation of "Navaguna" to invoke blessings of good health, longevity and happiness on the Bhantes. This was followed by the offering of Gilanapaccaya for the Venerables. Both Bhantes were very touched and they emailed to the Management Committee to express their thanks to all members and devotees for their presence on that day. The following is an excerpt from Bhante Chandawimala's email:

"Chanting of Navaguna for 108 times was really a blessing and I am very touched. It was the first ever experience of my monastic life to listen to the chanting of lay devotees, which was exclusively chanted invoking blessing for Bhantes.

Everything was amazing but something was missing; I guess. That is the absence of Bhante Ratanasiri. Since he is rekindling the wisdom light of many youngsters in Sri Lanka, we have to appreciate his great effort at this moment.

I wish him courage and power in order to continue his service better."



*Cake cutting by Bhantes*



*Gilanapaccaya for Bhantes*



## Sunday Dhamma Talks

Every Sunday at 12.30 pm Dhamma talks on topics relating to “personal wealth”, “choosing the right career or job”, kamma and other thought provoking subjects will be discussed by our Bhantes as well as invited speakers.

## Pagoda Lamps of Blessing

There are two Pagoda Lamps Of Blessing at the Buddha Relic Chamber on the 3rd floor of Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association. On the Pagoda Lamps are niches for members and devotees to place the name of their family members, their relatives or their friends for blessings throughout the year.

With the current deepening economic crisis and uncertainties, it is timely to reaffirm our faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha to guide us in these trying times. By making an annual donation of \$40 per name for a niche, the donor performs a meritorious deed as an act of Dana and lodging for the Sangha, the Sunday Dhamma Classes and the upkeep of the Dhamma and Suttas from the “Great Book Of Protection” are recited every Tuesday evening. The blessings of the Triple Gem for peace, joy, confidence and well-being upon all the donors of the Pagoda Lamps Of Blessing.

Enclosed with this newsletter is the form for renewal/new application for placement of names on the niches of the Pagoda Lamps Of Blessing. All are welcome to participate in the recitation of Paritta and Sutta on every Tuesday evening.

The Inauguration of the Pagoda Lamps of Blessing will be held on 3rd Feb. 2009 (Tues.) Do come and participate in the Blessing Service. The programme is as follows

7.30 pm	Evening Buddha Puja
8.00 pm	Paritta & Sutta Recitation By Venerables At Relic Chamber
9.00 pm	Blessing By Venerables To Members & Devotees
9.15 pm	Distribution Of Blessed Rice Packets, Oranges, Yellow Thread & Holy Water
9.30 pm	Gilanapaccaya For Venerables
9.35 pm	Light Refreshment For Members & Devotees

# New Moon & Full Moon Poya Programme

10<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009 (Sat) - Full Moon

26<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009 (Mon) - Full Moon

9<sup>th</sup>