

## A Year of Thankfulness

You have helped us selflessly to make 2019 a good year. Now, together, we welcome a new promising year, 2020. There are no good or bad years: we make them so. Together, we will make 2020 the best so far. Sadhu and thanks again for being with us in the Buddha Dhamma.

## Vision 2020

The year to be clearly free

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### Clear vision

When we say or hear the sound “2020,” we often associate it with clear vision. “**20/20 vision**” refers to normal visual acuity (the clarity or sharpness of vision) measured at a distance of 20 feet. If we have 20/100 vision, it means that we must be as close as 20 feet to see what a person with normal vision can see at 100 feet. If we have 20/20 vision, we can see clearly at 20 feet what should normally be seen at that distance.

Having 20/20 vision does not necessarily mean you have perfect vision. 20/20 vision only indicates the sharpness or clarity of vision at a distance. Other important vision skills, including peripheral awareness or side vision, eye coordination, depth perception, focusing ability and color vision, contribute to our overall visual ability.

### Free vision

Why is a clear vision so vital for us? With it, we see clearly where we are, what is behind us, and what is before us. More importantly, we are better aware **what** we really are. We are better prepared to know where to go or not. We are **free** to move around, to act in a way that is beneficial and joyful for us, for the sake of what we care about, for those we care about. In short, we can grow as an **individual** and be truly and joyfully **free**.

As the new year 2020 starts, this is an auspicious time for us to reflect on **what** we are. We are part of a **Buddhist** community that is a part of a larger society. To be a wholesome community of Buddhists, keeping to the Buddha Dhamma, we should work to be free of greed, hate, delusion—the 3 roots of negative motivation.

When we are free from them, or at least cut down thoughts related to them, we are free to **do** good, **be** the best in the true sense of the word.

### The good society

The greatest that we can be as a community is to **be** well and good together: to live life fully and wholesomely, to be happy, to be free, to see all this as true, and to have a healthy mind in a healthy body. Indeed, this is the essence, the values, that the **5 precepts** are rooted in and bless us as **individuals**, as a community, a society, as a world.

We are blessed to be living at a time when we have access to the **Buddha Dhamma** in all its purity, the Dhamma and the Vinaya. The Buddha's teaching has only one purpose: to **free** us from the effects of pain and darkness, from repeating our mistakes and sufferings—to be truly happy.

### **To have, to do, to be**

The historical Buddha's life story begins with his **renunciation**: he leaves the world of power, plenty and pleasure which are all impermanent and really a burden. We can only **have** these "things." This means that they are never really "ours," we can never truly own them.

On the positive side, we can say that when we have something **good**, it is **better** when we share it. This means that we appreciate others: we are not alone. For, without others, or being with the wrong others, we cannot really enjoy the 5 wonderful **values** of the precepts (which are about self and others).

The Buddha then leaves home to **do** what any other good renunciant in his days will do: to seek the truth that will free us from whatever limits us: to see **true reality** and be free with clear vision and bright happiness. What the Buddha **does**—teaching the path of truth and beauty, joy and freedom—is to clear the way of awakening for us so that we, too, can **see** true reality, be free and live to our full potential as individuals and as a community.

### **Awakening**

Most often when we visualize the Buddha in our mind, we can see him sitting radiantly ALONE under the Bodhi tree. He has done the best possible that any human, god or being can do: He is **awakened**, clearly knowing the true nature of life and fully free.

The Buddha does not have to **do** anything, but he chooses to spend the 45 years of his life to reach out to us, so that we, too, are free like him, so that this world is a better place where we be free and happy individuals and community.

We are only truly free by not merely **having** things, but knowing what best to **do** with them. Ironically, what we have is never really ours, we cannot really take it with us. We must act on the blessings that we have, that we are. We have a **human body**, but we must act and do good, speak good, think good, to BE truly human.

### **The Assaji Effect**

Our birth as a **human** is the 1<sup>st</sup> true blessing. When we live and **act** human by joyfully keeping the precepts--this is our 2<sup>nd</sup> true blessing. The 3<sup>rd</sup> true blessing is to **be** at peace with ourself and the world. This means that whether we have something or nothing, whether we do or do not what others do, we **are** naturally happy. Then, we are radiantly happy like the Buddha sitting triumphant under the Bodhi tree.

We are never free when we are burdened with **bad** and ignorance. We only begin to be free when we start doing **good** wisely—what brings us true **joy** and makes others feel the peace.

Above all, when we **are** joyfully happy, others, seeing it, want to be joyfully happy, too. This is called the **Assaji Effect**. By our own inner peace, we inspire others to have good, do good, be good.

There is no good year: we make it so, we must. Make 2020 a better year by bettering ourself. The true purpose of Buddha Dhamma, then, is for us to be truly good, truly free, truly happy. This is, this should be, our 2020 vision.

Blessings! Blessings! Blessings!

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