

The First Buddhist Vihara in History and our garden

Hi everyone, this is Nancy. Today is June 2ed, 2021. I am back to Michigan to visit this week and right now I am in the organization's garden. The weather here is very nice. Plants are growing prosperously, and flowers are blooming heartily. Today, I would like to share with you the first Buddhist Vihara in History while showing you around our garden.

The first buddhist vihara in history is Venuvana Vihara or Kalandaka Venuvana Vihara. It's located between the old and new city of Rajagrha, the capital city of ancient Magadha Kingdom. There are two ways of saying about this first Vihara.

One is that this Vihara was offered to the Buddha by King Bimbisara of Magadha, Ever since the King Bimbisara met Siddhartha, he was fascinated by him, and he would like to offer Siddhartha half of his country, but Siddhartha refused because the only thing he was pursuing was liberation, and for that he gave up his own country. So the king pleaded Siddhartha to come back to instruct him after he realized the Great Way, and Siddhartha did. After Siddhartha was enlightened, he remembered Bimbisara, the King who he felt connected and came to help him. Bimbisara respected the Buddha so very much and offered the Venuvana Vihara to the Buddha. King Bimbisara was one of the Buddha's early lay disciples and life long friends. Not only him, his queen, his son and his many other family members all became the Buddha's disciples. The other saying is that the Vihara was offered to the Buddha by the Elder Kalandaka, and actually the pond in the Vihara was named Kalandaka pond.

No matter who offered the place and who helped build the Vihara, it was very important at that time because it's the first time that the cultivators, disciples of the Buddha had buildings to reside, especially during the raining seasons.

It's said that the Vihara had 16 big residential areas, and each residential area had 60 rooms. There were also 500 pavilions, 72 lecture halls, and it's one of the important sacred places in Buddhism.

And there, in the Venuvana Vihara, the Buddha earned many good disciples including Sariputra and Maudgalyayana who were like his left and right hands, and proclaimed many sutras. It's also said that the Buddha would got up early in the morning, bathed himself in the pond, and walked to the Vulture Peak to give teachings. King Bimbisara frequently went to the Vihara and asked the Buddha to proclaim Dharma. According to the sutras, the Buddha explained to the king that all five Skandhas were empty, all the three realms were illusive and everything was impermanent.

This is today's Dharma share, and this is our garden. Our organization was first registered in 2013 and it was located in Trenton here in Michigan. It was a small and residential place. In 2017, we moved here and had this building which is big enough to open to the public, and made efforts to build this beautiful garden. Last year, we registered our Charlotte organization, and welcome everyone who is interested in Buddha Dharma to join us.

Next time, I would like to share with you how to cultivate during pandemic. Thank you everyone for being here. I will see you next time. Stay safe, stay sober, and have a joyful day.