

The Life of a Monk



Bhikshu Ashvaghosh

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**Edited and translated from Nepal Bhasa
into English**

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H. L. Singh**

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From the Author

I was thinking of writing a book on the life of the Buddhist monk. I somehow fulfilled this wish by writing *Bhikshu Jiban* (The life of a monk) in Nepal Bhasha in 1984 A.D. It was published by the Dharmakirti Vihar. Tremendous changes have taken place in the life of the Bhikshu since the time of the Buddha to the present time. It is necessary for us to understand this matter. Various individuals may have their own views about the monks. Some people feel their mind filled with joy at the sight of a monk as if their mind has been freed from all sorts of burdens. Some feel they are having the sight of a god. The monks having renounced their home, parents and other members of the family live on one meal a day without taking anything in the afternoon. They spend a celibate's life. They have to be satisfied with whatever food is offered by others. Such is a monk's life.

It is said that a king of Myanmar (Burma) named Mindon treated monks with great respect and honour. The reasons for Mindon's great regard for the monks is their abstention from food at evening and their celibate life. That king was not only unable to sleep without taking food at night but was also unable to spend a single night without the company of his queens. Thus, though the king indulged in licentious living involving himself in *Panchakama* (five sensuous pleasures), he had great regard for the monks who turned away from *Panchakama*. But some people get angry even at the sight

of monks, as if they are an eyesore. They think of monks as pretentious and indolent who put on yellow robes simply to enjoy life without doing any work. It is alleged that some people have become monks to live comfortably, eating delicious foods offered as alms, and to make money.

Speaking at a function organized at the Dhyanakuti Vihara at Banepa on November 26, 1984, Bhikshu Piyadassi Mahasthavir of Sri Lanka said, "Even though the life of a monk is a free life, it is a collective life with everybody's common share. Even though the monks stay at the vihara away from home, the vihara is not definitely a private home. The vihara is a collective home. It is a common property. It is a holy place where the devoted people visit to acquire knowledge. Though outwardly the life of a monk looks fairly good and comfortable, but in reality, it is painful and critical. It is a life to be lived depending on others. When the *Upasakas* offer donations to the monks sitting in a row in a religious programme, a monk's body trembles with fear when accepting the Dana (offering) with hands raised. Now-a-days, however, in some places, the number of monks and nuns outweigh the Dana offerers. Whatever one may say, the life of a monk is a dependent life. There are people who offer Dana out of faith thinking that it is meritorious to offer Dana with pure devotion. There are others who offer Dana to show that they are generous and religious and to win popularity. There are also people who make offerings out of fear of losing honour and prestige. There are yet another class of people who feel that their profit has soared because of the offering made. In a similar manner, there are people who make

themselves miserable thinking that their property has dwindled because of offerings made to the monks.

"Sometimes, it seems to me that the life lived merely on offerings is not definitely an easy one. Therefore, there is a fear among the monks that eating the food offered without giving worthwhile sermons in return cannot be digested. For, the Buddha had once said to the monks, "Offerings (*Rastrapinda*) made by the devotees cannot easily be digested. If your character is not pure and your mind not clean, you cannot digest the food offered by others". Similarly, the Buddha had reprimanded the insolent and illiterate monks by saying, "You are living like an ox, eating only and doing nothing."

The monk's life is not an easy one. For, he is compelled to lie on the cold floor, eat cold or stale food or face similar unfavourable circumstances. He must tolerate and lie in bed silently. The most difficult thing, of course, is to maintain livelihood in the present age in accordance with the rules made 2,500 years ago. With the passage of time, the rules became impracticable. Although it is not impossible to observe these rules, they are not easy to follow. Most people have the view that once a person becomes a monk, he must behave like a wise man as if he is a statue. Although these rules are not impracticable, they are not reasonable. Taking the present situation into consideration, it appears that even monks must please householders and fulfill their wishes. They must extend helping hands to them. They must give loan to those who come to beg. They are obliged to do other works not at all concerned with Buddhist activities. They have to meet officials and campus chiefs for getting

jobs to job seekers or to call the District Judge for settling criminal cases. Besides this, some people do not hesitate to beg money from the monks. They also have to arrange pilgrimages for pleasing the householders. They have to do works not connected with their religious activities.

Therefore, it is true that nowadays it is not enough that the monks give sermons and give discourses. They have to do the work of the priests. They have to visit the press for printing books, edit magazines and run organizations. They have to handle money matters in the monastery construction works.

To be involved in construction works shouldering the financial responsibility is not suitable for a monk. For, even if he becomes corrupt due to a small amount of more than Rs. 75, his fall is imminent and he becomes a parasite simply by involving in an immoral act with a woman. The Buddha had said avarice is a heinous sin. To pretend that one is virtuous and to publicize that one is skilled and accomplished is also becoming a parasite. Therefore, the financial transactions must be done only by *upsakas* and *upasikas*. But, it is sad that *upasakas* and *upasikas* have not paid attention to this matter. It is easy to spread the rumour that the character of monks is not spotless. It is also heard that the gap of mutual trust between the *upasakas* and monks regarding money matters is widening these days. This is a case of misunderstanding, definitely not a pleasant matter. Those who indulge in misappropriation, due to avarice, jealousy, fear and illusion, whether he is a *upasaka* or a monk, cannot be immune from damnation. Those are hindrances to the successful life of monks. It is

imperative that upasakas and upasikas must be honest in financial dealing.

When a monk reaches an advanced age, he needs someone to look after him. Some monks wish early death in such a condition. An aged monk is fed up with his life whenever he washes his *chivara* (the monk's yellow robe). One of the rules made 2,500 years ago enjoins that a monk must not live in close contact with women. That rule has now become uneasy. The reason is nowadays monks have to travel in bus, tempo and taxi to go anywhere. The buses and tempos are usually crowded with women. No matter how much care they take, they have to travel with women. In order to avoid such uneasy situations, separate transport facilities have to be provided for the monks. That is impracticable and impossible.

Speaking at a talk programme held at the Buddha Vihara, Bhrikuti Mandap, organized by Nepal Buddhist Women's Association on November 23, 1984, Piyadassi Mahasthavir of Sri Lanka said, "Monks and women have taken the responsibility of preserving the places and viharas and providing services. It appears that monks are likely to disappear soon had there been no women. It is necessary to think about this impartially and without prejudice. Nowadays, women constitute a large number of people who provide services and assistance with great reverence to the monks. Women are in the forefront as far as providing active service to the diseased people is concerned.

Monks of Nepal are facing a big problem. They have no capacity to make adequate arrangements for fellow monks and Upasakas of Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand during their visit to Nepal. Providing the facilities of boarding, lodging and transportation to the visiting monks and Upasakas and Upasikas has remained a big problem. On the contrary, the monks of Nepal are provided these facilities while visiting these countries. But, in Nepal, the monks have to be victims of humiliation sometimes while requesting the well-to-do Upasakas to provide the vehicles for the sight-seeing of the visiting monks and Upasakas.

In Buddhist countries (especially in Myanmar) Upasakas and Upasikas ask the visiting monks if they need any help. Once a team of 40 monks of Myanmar visited Nepal. At that time, provision was made to accommodate them in a big hall of Dharmakirti Vihara. They were provided meals in the same hall. I thought it a matter of pride to be able to arrange lodging and boarding facilities at a critical time, not to speak of other facilities. Thus, the pilgrims coming from Myanmar may be accommodated in the Dharmakirti Vihara. For, this Vihara has close a contact with Myanmar. There is no dearth of monks and Upasakas in this Vihara who speak the Burmese language. At present a new building of the Vihara is under construction. Now, the problem of bathroom and latrine will be solved. For this, Mr Bhairaja Tuladhar has donated Rs 12,500,000 and earned much religious merit.

The well- to- do monks of Thailand who visit Nepal stay in hotels. During the Buddhist conference held at the Anandakuti Vihara, the visiting monks have been accommodated at the Anandakuti Vidyapeeth. Due to the inability to provide boarding and lodging facilities, foods were served by the Thai Embassy. Nowadays, some Nepalese say that the huge building of Dharmakirti Vihara under construction is like a three star hotel. I do not understand what they mean. Prior to departing for home, His Holiness Dhammadhir Rajmahamuni of Thailand who was here to take part in the Buddhist conference held at Anandakuti from December 3 to 7, 1984, said at the Tribhuvan International Airport, "that the number of monks need not be increased in Nepal. The life of a monk is not easy in Nepal." Why His Holiness has made this remark should be the concern of everybody.

Whatever I have written in this book about the rules for monks may not hold true. I admit that I could not write it after a thorough study of *Vinayapitaka*. Therefore, I shall be grateful if the readers point out the errors in the book. Matters mentioned in this book are based on the book *Bhikshu Paratimoksha* written by Dr. Bhagchandra Jain, *Bhagwan Buddha* by Dhammamanda Kausambi, *Kathina Vamsha* by Bhikshu Prajnasagar of Sri Lanka and *Buddhasharan*, a weekly Buddhist magazine of Sri Lanka. This book is simply an attempt to give a general picture of the monk's life and to solve the problems of monks.

I have simply given vent to the feelings confined in my mind for many years. While recollecting the rules made for the monks in course of writing this book, I felt depressed. I must thank Bhikshu Sangharakshita a great deal for translating this book in Nepal Bhasha into Nepali. I am proud that my own disciple has done this for me.

Author

Dhyanakuti, Banepa

Fullmoon, 27 February, 2002.





*A brief life sketch
of
Krishna Prasad Shrestha*

The late Krishna Prasad Shrestha was born in 1921 AD in Kathmandu. His father was a compounder who worked for the Rana family. The death of his mother when he was 15 years old brought a tremendous change in his life and the responsibility of looking after brothers and sisters.

After finishing school, he took up the career of his father becoming an assistant of Dr. Prakash Bahadur, the surgeon then at Bir Hospital. He served in various places before moving to Banepa where he settled along with his family permanently.

He was a self-less health worker dedicated to the service of the poor and the sick, sufferings of the sick, accepting whatever remuneration was given to him in return for his service. The sick people wherever he served looked to him with love and respect.

He did not know much about Buddhism, but, he was attracted by it and collected books on Buddhism as well as on other subjects.

He passed away peacefully in 2003.

The late Krishna Prasad Shrestha was not only a person with a great faith in Buddhism but he also

believed in charity. It was his wish to publish my book entitled Bhikshu Jivan (The Life of a Monk) in English and distribute the same for the benefit of all those interested in monastic Buddhism.

I am sad to say that he did not live to see his wish fulfilled. I would like to thank his wife and sons for fulfilling his wish. I also wish them good health and long life.

-Bhikshu Ashwaghosh

The Translator's Note

The translation of Bhikshu Ashwaghosh's book *Bhikshu Jivan* (The life of a monk) has become a rewarding experience for me. The book was written in a natural, unaffected and conversational style to make a difficult subject like monastic Buddhism understandable to literates and semi-literates of the Nepalese Buddhist community. But, as the translation of the same into English is an exacting work, the natural flow has to be broken here and there to make the translation useful to the English readers for the understanding of the ideas of monastic Buddhism as well as the sweet as well as sour feelings of the author's experience for nearly six decades.

H. L. Singh

Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur.

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The Life of a Monk

The life of a monk began with Gautam Buddha. Prior to his becoming the Buddha, when Prince Siddhartha went to the city of Rajagriha wearing the yellow *chivara* robe after renouncing the entire wealth, royal pleasures and the Crown, the people were surprised. They did not think of him as a man. Some people called him a 'god' while others called him a superman. It is clear that at that time there was no monk at all.

King Bimbisara recognized him not only as a man at a first glance but also knew him as the prince of Kapilvastu. Prince Siddhartha acquired a great deal of knowledge with great difficulty under highly renowned wise men like Allar and Kalama for six years. But, still, he could not attain the knowledge he had wished to get. He still continued the search for knowledge. It was only in Bodhgaya that he attained the Bodhi Knowledge or Supreme Enlightenment. After becoming the Buddha, he gave a sermon to the five monks staying in Sarnath at that time. He said, "All things in the world are perishable. Craving is the origin of suffering. The path that eradicates craving is the Eightfold Path. Hearing Dhammachakrapravartana (turning the wheel of the doctrine) containing the above message, Kaudinya, the seniormost of the five monks acquired the merit of *Dharmachachhyu* (eye of knowledge). He learnt the Four Noble Truths and the Eight Noble Paths. After this, the

remaining four monks Bappa, Bhaddiya, Mahanama and Assajita acquired the merit of *Dharmachachhyu*.

Then, all the five enlightened men underwent *pravajya* and prayed to Gautam Buddha to confer the title of *upasampada* (higher ordination). Gautam Buddha said, "Monks, come here! You have understood the dhamma (religion). Observe the rule of *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), practise good conduct in order to eliminate suffering completely." He, then, made them monks and formed the Buddhist Sangha. This very formation of the Bhikshu Sangha marks the beginning of monkhood. At that time, there were no rules for the Bhikshu Sangha. The only rule was to improve conduct and make the character spotless. This was the only education for the monks.

Organization of the Bhikshu Sangha

After the conversion of the five disciples, 55 learned householders including Yasha, the son of a merchant of Varanasi (now Benares) became monks by entering the Buddhist Sangha. Thus, the number of monks in the Buddhist Sangha increased to 60. The main reason for becoming monks is to completely eliminate suffering as admonished by Gautam Buddha to the first five disciples. Up to that time, the fundamental basis of monkhood was not clear. Thinking that the monks should not stay idle but should be sent to rural areas for the propagation of the *dharma*, the Buddha gathered the monks and addressed them, "We have not become free from divine and human chains.

Monks! Let us go out for the welfare as well as happiness of many people. Let not two monks go to the same place. Let us propagate the dharma that does good in the beginning, in the middle and in the end. Let us tell the people about the beneficial, sweet and perfect conduct. The people of the world are not guilty nor foolish hopelessly. They may suffer for want of religious discourses. Given religious discourses and good sermons they may improve.

Gautam Buddha also granted them the right to convert anybody to Buddhism. He sent them to villages and towns in all directions to propagate the dharma. It means that the aim of monkhood is not simply to destroy the suffering of individual monks but also to eliminate the suffering of others as well as to seek their welfare. It means that the life of a monk is not a selfish one.

The rules changed in course of time. The propagation of the dharma by the first 60 monks has resulted in the increase of the number of monks.

Monks were asked to shave their moustache, beard and head. Then, they were asked to put on the yellow robe. After this they were asked to wear *chivara* with one hand exposed, to join two hands together and utter three times *Buddham Sharanam Gachhami*, *Dhammam Sharanam Gachhami* and *Sangham Sharanam Gachhami*. This was the second step in the evolution of the rules of the Bhikshu Sangha.

Gautam Buddha, too, didn't stay alone in the jungle. He moved to Uruvela enroute to Bodhgaya for

propagation of dharma. In the meantime, it so happened that 30 young men including an unmarried prince were in that jungle for entertainment along with a prostitute. The prostitute played a trick and made away with the ornaments and other valuable objects of all of them. All went to the Buddha and asked, "Venerable! Did you see a woman pass this way?"

The Buddha replied, "Oh! Young men, tell me whether it is worthwhile to search for a woman and be disillusioned or whether it is worthwhile to search for knowledge for spiritual peace? Think for a while, where are you heading for and what is happening?"

Hearing the words of the Buddha, the young men sat down to listen to his sermon. Then, they came to their senses. They changed completely and became monks.

Conversion of the Kashyap group of men

When Gautam Buddha reached Uruvela, there were three brothers : Kashyap, Nadi Kashyap and Gaya Kashyap performing *yajna homa* (fire sacrifices) in the presence of their 500, 300 and 200 disciples respectively. Impressed by the personality of the Buddha and hearing his sermons, all of them became monks. Gautam Buddha then went on to Rajagriha.

Sariputra and Maudgalyayana

Near Rajagriha there lived a famous Paribrajaka (ascetic) named Sanjaya along with many disciples. Two of his disciples named Upatissa and Koliat were not

satisfied with the teachings of their preceptor. They had no peace of mind. They were not getting the knowledge they were seeking. Two of them had an exchange of words saying, "If any one of us meet an individual who can tell us about the dhamma in a convincing manner, we will share our views with him. One day, Upatissa met Bhikshu Assajita on a begging round. Seeing his quiet composure and peaceful and shining face, Upatissa said to himself, "This person must be a wise man and a recluse taking the right path and he must know about *nirvana*." In course of an exchange of words, he came to know that he was a disciple of Gautam Buddha. Bhikshu Assajita introduced the Buddha, his preceptor, as follows:

There is a cause for everything.
The Buddha knows it.
He also knows that

There is a way to end
The cause.
He has found the way

To end the cause
If there is no cause,
There is no result

Hearing this, Upatissa acquired the merit of *Dharmachachhyu*. He became enlightened. Being happy and pleased, he told this to his friend Kolit. Then, both of them joined the Buddhist Sangha and became famous by the names of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana. They were the principal disciples of the Buddha.

By then the number of monks in the Buddhist Sangha had reached 1500. Wise men and members of distinguished families who were living happily joined the Buddhist Sangha with reverence to the Buddha. The Buddha had in the beginning converted highly dignified and qualified people. Maybe, the Buddha did this in consideration of the mind of the general people. This might have been done in order to enhance the prestige of the Sangha. It is difficult to convince the illiterate and to keep them under control. The poor and suffering people cannot easily cultivate the nature of sacrifice. They are generally inclined to avarice. Up to this time, monks observed the rule of staying separately. Later, the people who were ignorant of the practice became monks. In the absence of control, instruction and supervision, discipline among the monks continued to decline. Peaceful nature, too, declined. The rules became loose. Then Gautam Buddha made a rule that a new disciple must have a preceptor and obey his instructions.

As mentioned in the Mahabagga text, a disciple must have the following five virtues:

1. Great affection towards the preceptor.
2. Great reverence for the preceptor.
3. The disciple must be modest and gentle.
4. Great respect and honour for the preceptor.
5. The disciple must control his mind.

Similarly, rules regarding duties of the preceptor towards his disciple are as follows:

1. The preceptor must give sermons and instructions.
2. He must provide the begging bowl.
3. He must provide chivara.
4. He must look after the sick and handicapped disciple.

Here, a teacher or preceptor is defined as a person who wishes the welfare of the disciple. This rule must be taken as a third stage in the evolution of Vinaya.

The simple life of a monk

In those days, the life of a monk was very simple and peaceful. There was no pretension or ostentation. In fact, the Buddha did not like other religions that prescribed penance and physical torture to the body. He did not like showiness among monks. The Buddha was much sensitive towards the need of caution against showiness and ostentation. The Buddha was in favour of a simple life for a monk. If the monks are accustomed to ostentation and are greedy, they cannot do their religious work properly.

A study of Samanja Phala Sutta reveals that the Buddha had spoken of the life of a monk to Ajatashatru in the following words:

"Oh! King, wherever a bird goes, its wings go with it. In a similar manner, a monk is satisfied with chivara to cover his body and the alms required for filling the stomach."

In those days, according to the prevailing rules, a monk can carry eight things with him as follows:

Three chivara clothes (*Antarabasaka*, *Uttarasangha* and *Sanghati*), a begging bowl, needle, thread, a blade to shave the head, cloth to filter water and *Kaya bandhan* (rope to tie the cloth). These goods are essential for recluses and monks.

The Buddha laid emphasis on the need for monks to live a simple and pure life, free from ostentation and avarice. Accordingly, Rule No. 1 was not to own more objects than absolutely essential. The householders did not know that monks should not amass more objects. Therefore in their faith they donated more chivaras to the monks. A few monks did not accept more chivaras according to the rule that it was not right to keep more than 3 chivaras. Those who were greedy accepted whatever they were offered. The householders accused the law-abiding monks of depriving them the merit of offering donations. They said "What kind of rule is this that forbids acceptance of gifts offered in faith. The faith of donors towards Dana must not be shaken." The Buddha came to know about the charges levelled against the monks by householders and the amassing of goods by monks. Then, the Buddha made another rule, according to which, more chivaras could be accepted in the name of the Bhikshu Sangha but the monks should not take these in order to keep them for personal use.

If one's chivara was old, the chivara offered may be taken with the permission of the Sangha. Later, it so happened that better chivaras offered to the Sangha were

taken for personal use out of greed once the chivara already worn became a little old. There was no place to store Chivaras; those kept piled up on the floor were damaged by termites and rats. Monks also grabbed them anytime. Then, it was realised that a place to store the Chivaras was necessary. And, a monk was appointed to distribute the chivaras to monks after checking whether the chivaras used were old and worn-out. Later, the same monk was accused that he distributed good chivaras to the persons he liked most.

In course of time, greedy and indolent people without any sense of asceticism became monks. Laxity was noticed in the observation of the rules for the monks. The charge that the people became monks simply to live in pleasure became true. This laxity compelled the Sangha to formulate a code of 227 rules. Scholars believe that out of the total of 227 rules, 150 had been added at the time of Emperor Ashoka. There is enough food for thought in this regard. The Buddha had told Sariputra Mahasthvira that rules should not be made beforehand. Just as no medicine should be taken or applied without the diagnosis of the disease or wound, no rule should be made without any cause or incident.

Prior to the *Mahaparinirvana*, the Buddha called Bhikshu Ananda, his personal attendant, and said, "The Bhikshu Sangha may make some minor changes in the rules after my nirvana if it finds reasonable. For, the rules of the life style of the people change due to changes in circumstances and situations. According to the Buddha, rules are made for man and man is not made for rules. This is mentioned in the *Vinayapitaka*. There are

proofs of changes made in the rules formulated by the Buddha himself according to places and situations.

Four things required for a monk

The Buddha had said that monks should be strict in discipline and observation of rules. He had also said that the monks could not be strict to the rules if they did not have four things regularly. These four things were chivara, begging bowl, bed and medicine. Considering this matter, some people say that it appears that Buddhism is not completely spiritual and that it has a great deal to do with materialism. The Buddha had also stressed that monks should make use of goods with a sense of austerity and caution. The Buddha had urged the monks to wear chivara in a careful as well as disciplined manner.

While wearing the chivara, a monk must think, "I am wearing this chivara consciously. Wearing the chivara means keeping away from the cold and hot temperature, from mosquitoes, flies, wind, dust, snakes and also protecting the naked body."

While taking the food, a monk must think, "I am taking food very consciously. Taking the food does not mean becoming fat, be able to play, be strong like a wrestler and be good-looking. Taking the food means to protect the body, and be able to live a celibate life. It also means to remove the old disease of being hungry and to remove the new trouble of being hungry. Eating the food

helps to smoothen the journey of my life. It keeps me safe from public criticism and makes my life happy."

While using the bed, a monk must think, "I am using this bed very consciously. By using this bed, I am keeping away from the cold and hot temperature, mosquitoes, flies, wind, sun, snakes and harmful animals. I am doing this to keep my life solitary and safe."

While taking the medicine or *sarbat* (juice) in the evening, a monk must think, " I am taking this medicine very consciously. This medicine is merely to eliminate the disease of my body and it does good to my health."

Rules of Pravajya (ordination)

In the beginning, while converting people, the Buddha had not made rules of ordination. Later, with the increase in the number of monks, they began to stay in their own rooms. They became restless and insolent, too. Everybody was allowed to wear chivara. Many people wore the chivara by themselves. As a result, Pravajya, the rule for becoming monks by wearing chivara (the yellow robe), was introduced. In Nepal, too, the people who were ignorant of the rules of monkhood, were made monks. Here I am mentioning the rule or method of Pravajya or ordination given in the Pali language.

Those who wish to spend the life of a selfless monk must first of all pray to the preceptor with knees down and hands folded uttering the following words :

I pray to you, Oh! Venerable monk,. I beg for ordination for the second time----- for the third time-----

Then, the preceptor shaves the head of the disciple by repeating the following words in Pali:

Hair, nails, teeth & skin

Skin, teeth, nails, & hair

Hair, nails, teeth & skin.

Then, the head of the person undergoing ordination is completely shaven. This follows the prayer in the following manner.

The first time: Let me retire, Venerable monk ! I beg *Dashashila* of Pravajya pledging to take refuge in Tri Sharanam, Venerable monk! Be compassionate and offer me *Shila*.

For the second time: Let me retire, Venerable monk! I beg *Dashashila* of Pravajya pledging to take refuge in Tri Sharanam, Venerable monk! Be compassionate and offer me *Shila*.

For the third time: Let me retire, Venerable monk! I beg *Dashashila* of Pravajya pledging to take refuge in Tri Sharanam, Venerable monk! Be compassionate and offer me *Shila*.

Then, the preceptor says:

Repeat what I say:

Then, the disciple says:

All right, I will do so

Then, the disciple repeats three times the words spoken by the preceptor.

Salutation to Gautam Arhat Samyak Sambuddha.

Makarant Sharanagaman

(Early vow of dedication)

Buddham Sharanam Gacchhami

Dhammam Sharanam Gacchhami

Sangham Sharanam Gacchhami

For the second time..., for the third time.....

Bindu Anta Sharanagaman

(Ending vow of dedication)

Buddham Sharanam Gacchhami

Dhammam Sharanam Gacchhami

Sangham Sharanam Gacchhami

Preceptor : The act of taking refuge is complete.

Disciple : All right, Venerable monk.

Acceptance of Shila (code of conduct)

1. I will strictly observe the teaching not to kill animals.
2. I will strictly observe the teaching not to steal.
3. I will strictly observe the teaching not to indulge in immoral acts.
4. I will strictly observe the teaching not to lie.
5. I will strictly observe the teaching not to take intoxicating drinks like beer and wine.

6. I will strictly observe the teaching not to take food at the wrong time.
7. I will strictly observe the teaching not to see dancing, listen to songs, and see fearful scenes.
8. I will strictly observe the teaching not to use scented garlands, perfume, etc.
9. I will strictly observe the teaching not to sit on tall and high luxurious seats.
10. I will strictly observe the teaching not to accept the offering of silver, gold and other valuable ornaments.

Repeat three times

I accept these ten shilas of Pravajya.

Preceptor: Protect the ten shilas of Pravajya strictly along with the pledge to take refuge in *Tri Ratna Sharanam* and observe them carefully.

Disciple: All right, Venerable monk.

Then, the disciple must perform *Panchanga Vandana* (the act of bowing on knees and elbows on the floor) three times.

Dhamma.Digital **Acceptance of Preceptorship**

Disciple : Be my preceptor, Venerable monk.

(This must be repeated three times.)

Preceptor : All right, you are eligible.

A friend who had welfare in mind and action all the time was called *Kalyanmitra* and he was addressed as Upadhyaya or preceptor. Later, with the passage of time,

the monk to whom the parents had entrusted their son who had been ordained, and the monk who took the responsibility of guidance was called the main preceptor. Such a rule was deemed necessary at that time. In the absence of the provision of the preceptor and the delivery of sermons and instructions, *Navappravajits* (novices) acted arbitrarily. They became just like stray cows and oxen. Rules became loose. Now-a-days in Nepal, too, children, who were ordained but not given proper education, went astray. There was no provision of proper education for novices. If they are not well-educated and well-informed, what can they teach? Therefore, the novices must study under the preceptor at least for 3 to 5 years. In the absence of this provision, there is a greater possibility of the decline of Buddhism.

***Upasampada* Initiation**

Twenty years after becoming the novice, he was given the initiation of *Upasampada*, i.e, higher ordination or full membership of Bhikshu Sangha. But, in course of time, the rule of the procedure of conferring *Upasampada* changed. Thus, the practice of conferring *Upasampada* was introduced on the basis of the information given first during the meeting of Bhiskhu Sangha and on the basis of the sacred tradition. This can be understood from the following matters.

Jnapati (Informer) : "Venerable monks, Sangha, listen to me. One venerable person so and so is wishing to be conferred *Upasampada*. If the Sangha thinks it reasonable, please confer initiation of *Upasampada* to that person under the preceptorship of the monk so and

so". Thus, one monk on knees provides information. Before doing this, the name of the monk acting as preceptor must have been already decided.

Anushrawan (supporter) : Venerable monks Sangha, listen to me. The monk so and so is wishing to be conferred *Upasampada*. The Sangha is conferring *Upasampada* to the monk so and so. If any monk approves the conferment of *Upasampada* to the monk so and so, please keep quiet. If any monk does not approve, please express your opinion."

Thus, this statement is repeated three times before the Bhikshu Sangha

Approval : The Sangha accepted this. So, everybody is silent.

Unless and until the monk does not request for *Upasampada*, it is not conferred. At the time of conferring *Upasampada*, he is asked to observe four rules of livelihood.

1. He must go out to beg for alms. Bhojan offered may be either Sangha Bhojan or *Uddhist Bhojan* of fixed items, Bhojan by turns, invitational *Bhojan*. *Bhojan* must be digestive.
2. He must be ready to wear the chivara made of old cloth thrown at the graveyard. He may use soft and silk blanket.

3. He must be able to sleep under the tree. He must be able to stay at the vihara, palace or cave.
4. He must be able to take medicine made of cow's urine. He may accept ghee, butter, oil, honey, molasses, etc.

In the beginning, these were the four means of Bhikshu's livelihood. Later, other rules were added. So far, this is the fourth stage of the Buddhist Vinaya.

Restriction to armyemen, slaves, debtors, etc. to become monks

Slowly and gradually, the rules as well as the constitution of *Upasampada* changed. Some incidents or others were responsible for those changes. In spite of the concept not to make armyemen, slaves and debtors the monks, they were made monks. Some became monks because they did not want to work. Some thieves became monks to escape punishment. Slaves, too, became monks to escape from hard labor. Merchants and traders complained that slaves also became monks. Preceptors who converted armyemen and thieves to monkhood were punished heavily by the order of kings. Lepers and other diseased people also became monks because Jivaka, the physician who attended the Buddha and King Bimbisara, had no time to provide medical treatment to them. It was a royal order to Jivaka to provide medical treatment free of cost only to monks. Therefore, patients of all sorts of disease became monks. This inevitably led to the increase

of the rules regarding monkhood. The disabled people, too, became monks. Later, it became difficult to separate Buddhists from non-Buddhists, making it necessary for strict rules to strengthen Buddhism.

Thus, those who did not deserve to wear chivara were identified. Those who had no hands and feet, ears, nose and those who were crooked, too short, dumb or deaf were disqualified to become monks. The rule was also made not to convert to monkhood without the permission of guardians or parents. Similarly, rules were also made to enlist the presence of ten monks to confer *Upasampada*. In outlying areas where there were fewer number of monks, the rule was made to ensure at least the presence of 5 monks to confer *Upasampada*. This was the fifth stage in the evolution of Buddhist Vinaya.

The life of a monk is not comfortable

Some people tend to think that the life of a monk may be comfortable for lazy and selfish people. But, really speaking, it is not so. It is very hard. The life of a monk is comparable to the life of a soldier who has to observe a set of rules and disciplines. How difficult is the life of a monk is explained by a question put by Sariputra to a person who wished to be a monk.

Tissa, a seven-year old boy of a benefactor of Sariputra Mahasthavir requested his parents to make him a monk. He did not listen to any advice not to become a monk. Then, the parents took him to Sariputra and said, "Venerable monk! We have brought this boy to

you to make him a monk. This boy is earnestly asking to be made a monk".

Sariputra said, " Tissa, you want to wear a yellow robe. It is not easy to become a monk. It is a very difficult life. When you want to eat hot food, you are compelled to take cold food. When you want to eat cold food, you are compelled to take hot food. Monks live a miserable life. They have to obey their preceptors. They have to listen to what their seniors say. They must be humble. Even though they might have been rich, but once they wear chivara, they must not be proud. They must be submissive. Domestic life is quite the opposite of a monk's life. There are many restrictions for a monk. There are also many things that a monk must do. A monk must be indifferent to pains and pleasures. He must respect the seniors. He must not wear chivara like a shawl covering both shoulders. He must not sit with the legs stretched. He must not spit or cough. He must not crack the fingers of his hands or feet. He must not shave the head keeping the beard and moustache. He must not shave the beard and moustache by keeping the hair in the head. He must not undertake business for accumulating money. He must not act as a vaidya simply for earning money. He must not cultivate land. He must not go to the market at the wrong time. He must not mix up with householders. He must not carry the message for householders. He must not practice witchcraft or dancing. There are so many do's and don'ts. You are now happy. Don't try to be a monk."

Hearing this, Tissa said, "Venerable monk! I will observe all the rules of do's and don'ts without any

deviation. You don't need to worry at all. Please initiate me."

The boy, thus, entreated with great humility and proved that he had a strong determination. Sariputra Mahasthavir initiated him as a monk. Tissa became a novice and went out to beg alms with his preceptor. The boy looked calm, learned and good-natured. Many people came to offer alms and many others came to see him in the vihara. He was not content in this atmosphere nor liked to stay in the vihara. He was afraid of being pampered. He went to the Buddha and expressed his desire to go to the jungle. He learnt the art of discipline and went from the vihara to the jungle. From then onward he was called the 'forest dweller' Tissa. In the jungle, too, he had to go for alms. People were very much pleased to see him calm and quiet. Therefore, he was respected by all.

The objective of the monk's life is to satisfy those who are dissatisfied and to make the satisfied still more satisfied (In other words, the objective of the monk's life is to give satisfaction in dharma to those who do not believe in it and to those who believe in it have a greater satisfaction in it). Bhikshu Tissa followed the *Sramandharma* well and made his life meaningful. He paid much attention to eliminate craving and greed and spent his life in doing good to others.

We have heard the story of the change of heart of Emperor Ashoka while he was looking at the calm and quiet composure of a 7- year old novice named Nigrodha at a time when thousands of people were dying at Kalinga

due to the massacre by the Emperor's army. Emperor Ashoka's mind was changed upon hearing the teaching of the Buddha from Sramanera Nigrodha to the effect that self-conquest is the greater triumph than the victory in the battle by killing thousands of people. Emperor Ashoka took to non-violence abandoning the weapons. The path of Buddhism came to exist for the benefit and welfare of the majority of the people.

Impressed by the calm and quiet nature of the monks at the time of the Buddha, many people developed good character and improved their lives. Peace reigned in the society. The quiet composure and gentleness of monks inspired the people to improve their lives.

Let me relate an incident in the life of Sariputra Mahasthvir. A Brahmin heard everywhere that Sariputra Mahasthvir was an embodiment of toleration. In order to test whether Sariputra was really very tolerant, the Brahmin followed him while he was going out for alms. Then, at an opportune moment, the Brahmin slapped him on his back. In spite of the blow, Sariputra continued to walk as if nothing had happened. He did not look back nor did he mind the blow. On the contrary, it became a headache for the Brahmin. He was sad that he gave a blow to such a patient and great person. He regretted his wicked act and begged Sariputra to pardon him.

Sariputra Mahasthvir asked him, "Why do you beg pardon? What wrong did you do? What harm have you done?"

The Brahmin said, "I am the person who gave you a big blow just now. Therefore, I beg pardon."

Sariputra Mahasthavir replied, "Upasaka! While striking me, did you see me like a potter who strikes at a pot he is making? Your wish was fulfilled, isn't it? You are pardoned".

The Brahmin said, "Bhante! Please accept food at my home. Then only I will consider I am pardoned."

Sariputra went to the Brahmin's house for food. Sariputra Mahasthavir's upasakas heard that the Brahmin had striken their teacher. They wanted to take revenge by beating the Brahmin.

The Brahmin was very much frightened. Then, Sariputra came out of the house with the Brahmin holding the begging bowl. The upasakas were utterly surprised. They asked Sariputra if he had accepted the food of the Brahmin who had beaten him. Sariputra replied that he accepted the food offered to him out of mercy and compassion as the Brahmin had begged pardon. He said to them, "Why you are angry? He has beaten me. Why do you take trouble? I am not hurt, but you are. Go to your place."

This is a unique incident. This is an example of the strength of mind and strong compassion of the Bhikshu. This is also an example of a change of mind. This is a rare case because nowadays the mind of enemies and opponents does not change, no matter how tolerant we are. It may be because we lack the quality and virtue of

true compassion. We are selfish. We do not have the virtue of toleration. Therefore, we do not get the fruit of toleration, no matter how tolerant we are.

Just as we find great monks like Sariputra, Mahakashyap, Ananda and others at the time of the Buddha, we also find monks and novices who were not gifted with virtues. Even when the monks say that the reason for wearing the chivara was to attain nirvana that ensures liberation from suffering, they forget the goal very soon.

Devadatta was ambitious and hungry for high posts. Some monks turned out to be villainous. The Buddha could not control them. Sariputra became desperately unsuccessful to control some monks. Monks did not get food, nor the provision to sleep at the places occupied by these licentious monks. Some people liked those boisterous monks because they helped in domestic and field works. These monks helped the householders in different works like harvesting, carrying messages, searching for brides, etc. Virtuous monks like Sariputra were neglected. Now-a-days, monks who visit householders are respected. They help the householders in one way or other. Upasakas expect some cooperation from them. Extending cooperation is not bad but they may be maltreated in course of time. Care must be taken against this possibility.

Since the time of the Buddha, there were monks who became monks simply to live in pleasure. There was one rich man who became a monk. He bought a plot of land and constructed a well-furnished vihara there. He

stored all the goods in the kitchen and store-house and lived merrily. He had many beddings and chivaras dried in the sun openly.

Monks came to the vihara and saw the beddings and chivaras. The visitors asked, "How many monks live here?"

The monk replied, "I am alone here. There is one person to cook the food."

They said, "It is not good to keep all these things. Don't you know that monks must not wish for many things."

The monk said, "I have constructed this vihara out of my own earning. The property you find here is all mine. I have not borrowed anything from others, nor have I taken anything from anyone. Why are you worried about this?"

The visitors took this monk to the Buddha. Hearing about the rich monk, the Buddha said, "Householders need many things, monks do not. Monks should live like birds that fly here and there without anxiety. Monks must not accumulate goods."

Hearing the words of the Buddha, the monk was angry. He put off the chivara and sat down naked. There were such monks even at the time of the Buddha.

There were greedy and selfish monks even in ancient times. There are also incidents of pampering the sacrificing monks with the shower of gifts and donations

by Upasakas and Upasikas. Incidents like this are abundantly found in the *Vinayapitaka*.

Hearing the story of the construction of Jetavanaram and Purvaram Viharas by Anathapindika and Visakha Mahaupasika costing 54 crores and 27 crores of rupees respectively for the Buddha, it appears to me that in the present time such viharas are possible only in Thailand and Japan. The modern viharas of Japan and Thailand are furnished with big dining rooms, bathrooms with hot and cold water facilities, waiting rooms, etc. Even then, Jetavanaram and Purvaram viharas lacked spacious rooms.

Once a woman wanted to donate a carpet costing Rs. 5000 to Purvaram Vihara constructed by Upasika Visakha. But the carpet was too big to be accommodated in the vihara. The woman was sad that she could not find a place to spread the carpet.

Bhikshu Ananda saw the woman crying and said, "Upasika! What is wrong?" Ananda heard the story and said, "Don't worry. I will show you the place to spread the carpet." Ananda spread the carpet near the door where the Buddha always washed his feet. The woman was then satisfied.

Since the time of the Buddha, there was a custom of constructing a palatial vihara and donating it to the Bhikshu Sangha. But, the Buddha and his main disciples such as Sariputra and Ananda, were not tempted to luxurious living. The donations offered were

shared collectively. But, it is likely that some monks become greedy out of temptation for attractive donations.

Some donors are not much concerned with the fulfilment of the requirements of monks. This is not the general case. Most monks are respected by the Upasakas and Upasikas and the general people because the monks help them to make mental progress and give them mental peace by giving them sermons. Monks must not be selfish nor accumulate wealth by pleasing the sycophants. Monks must have good character. If they simply complain that the people do not pay respect to them, who will respect them? They must be qualified, first of all.

Life changes according to time and circumstance

Some ancient monastic rules may be unpractical. This must be understood. It may not be practical to expect that monks must eat less and live a simple life as at the time of the Buddha. Life changes and rules must be changed according to places and situation. I want to relate some incidents to make this point clear.

Monks did not put on shoes at the time of the Buddha. One day, a monk had to go to rocky hills in course of propagation of dharma. It became very difficult for him to walk. His feet were hurt. This matter was brought to the attention of the Buddha. Then, the Buddha made a rule that a monk could put on a wooden sandal while walking far. Similarly, another rule was made allowing monks to put on shoes lined with skin.

There was a rule in the past that monks must not sleep in a bed made of skin. At one time, monks went to a place when they found the mattress made of silk only. They did not accept the silk mattress. Communicated to the Buddha, he made a rule that monks could accept the silk mattress. Thus, new rules continued to be formulated. There is no hard and fast rule that one rule or constitution must be observed forever. This is not practical as time and situation continue to change. Therefore, the Buddha made changes in the rules in accordance with the change of place and circumstance. This flexibility reflects the dynamism of Buddhism.

Buddhism is a crusade against orthodoxy. This may be the reason why the Buddha said to Ananda prior to *Mahaparinirvana*, "Ananda! After my departure, small or minor rules may be given up if the Bhikshu Sangha agrees." In spite of the Buddha's instruction, fortunately or unfortunately, Arhant Bhikshus, during *Sanghayana* (the meeting of monks), could not identify minor rules. The meeting decided not to make changes in the existing rules. Those in favour of changes became separated from the Bhikshu Sangha and they formed a separate school called Mahasanghika. The adherents of the Mahasanghika School were later called the followers of Mahayana.

The followers of Mahayana made changes in rules one after another until they lost their own identity because of the lack of uniformity in rules. Although the rules of Theravada Buddhism also became loose, there is uniformity in the life of monks of Theravada countries such as Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Kampuchea, Laos, etc., except in the matter of wearing chivara and life style.

There is a difference of opinion regarding the use of milk by the monks. In Thailand, monks drink milk in the afternoon. In Burma, even tea with milk is not taken.

Rain retreat

The monk's life is bound by rules. For this, the Buddha had to make changes in the rules in order to save monks from people's criticism and for their progress. The Buddha also made new rules. One of the rules made was that of the rain retreat. The term retreat means staying at one place for three consecutive months, i.e. from the Full Moon Day of Asadha and to the Full Moon Day of Kartik. There was no rule about the rain retreat in the beginning. It was made only to free the monks from the criticism of the people.

At the time of the Buddha, Jainism was a popular as well as a powerful religion. The saints of Jainism lived naked, the way they came out of mother's womb. Later, they were divided into two sects, *Digambar* and *Swetambar*. The Jaina ascetics who put on white clothes and who covered their mouth were called *Swetambar*. They also had rules requiring them retreat to one place for three months. They believed that grass has life. They strictly followed non-violence and refrained from killing ants and germs by trampling. During the retreat, the Jaina ascetics stayed in one place for fear of killing insects, earthworms, etc that came out to the surface.

Buddhism does not consider grass, trees, etc, as living beings. It was the Buddha's instruction to the monks to travel from place to place in order to teach the

people how to improve their lives. Therefore, monks travelled far and wide even during the rainy season. One day, some people commented, "Look! What has happened to the disciples of the Buddha! They are walking in the rain trampling on the green grass, destroying paddy crops on the ridges and killing insects. Even birds rest in their nests in the rain. What is wrong with these monks?"

The Buddha was informed of this comment. The Buddha said to himself, "It is difficult to walk in the rain. Some monks become sick. People also criticise. It is better they observe the rain retreat". There are some benefits from the rain retreat, as follows:

- Monks will not be drenched by rain and become sick.
- They will have time to learn from preceptors and experienced people.
- They will have time for meditation.
- They will have time to impart teachings to the Upasakas and Upasikas.
- They will be free from public criticism for going out in the rain.

Thus, the Buddha made the rule of rain retreat for the monks. The Buddha also fixed the time of the retreat from the Ashadh Purnima to Kartik Purnima. A pledge may be taken to remain in one or other vihara for three months. Some monks failed to reach the vihar at the appointed time. In this case, the Buddha made Srawan Purnima the next retreat. The custom of requesting monks for the retreat by donors was also established. In

this case, the donors provided chivara, food, bed and medicine for the monks.

There was no rule that one place of retreat could be vacated during the retreat. Once, thieves gave trouble in the place during the retreat and the people moved to a safe place. There was no provision of alms of food for the monks in the retreat. The Buddha came to know this and he made a rule that monks need not retreat where there was no arrangement for food or they may move along with the people to their new place.

Monks spent the retreat in a place for 3 months. They did not go out. People wanted to offer Dana to the Sangha and hear religious discourse. The programme of the religious discourse was organized and monks were invited but they replied that as they were in the retreat they could not come out for three months. Those who had a strong desire to listen to discourses and wanted to offer charities were frustrated. People then complained, "You are monks. It is your duty to give sermons and accept charity. Is it proper to say that you cannot come out? What is this? Is this rule good?" The dissatisfied charged the monks.

People further complained that it is the duty of monks to please the dissatisfied and to please those who are already satisfied. They also said that if the monks must depend on the charity of the Upasaka and Upasikas, they must fulfill the wishes of the latter. Hearing this criticism, the Buddha made rules and sub-rules regarding the retreat. Even during the retreat, monks might go out if they return to the retreat within

seven days. Before going out for the places where religious activities are going to take place or visiting parents who are sick, they must say to the wall in the room, "I will return to this place within 7 days if no obstacle hinders." Even if the monks failed to speak these words to the wall, it was decided that the rule of retreat was not broken if they did not stay beyond 7 days and 7 nights because they knew that they must not stay more than 7 days. Further, even if monks failed to pledge at the beginning of the retreat due to some reason or other, the rule was not supposed to be broken because the monks were determined to go for the retreat.

Pavarana

Pavarana is a ritual of penance or confession performed on the last day of the 3-month long retreat, i.e, the Full Moon Day of Kartik. On that day, the monks gather together on the Uposath Griha or a place near a stream and pray, "If I have committed any sin by eyesight, by hearing or thinking during the retreat for 3 months, I will do penance for the sin." This process is called Pavarana in Pali. Monks bow down in salutation to the seniormost monk and say, "Sangha Bhante! If you have seen, heard, have doubts that I have done wrong, please, I pray you to tell me so as a favour. If I have committed any mistake, I will improve and control myself." These words are repeated three times.

Pavarana does not mean the end of the retreat. It rather means a confession for mistakes committed. There is also a rule requiring the monks to spend the night at

the place of the retreat after the Pavarana ritual. Pavarana is simply a rule of good conduct to look back at the mistakes one has committed, think over them and examine oneself. Pavarana is also an occasion to pledge not to repeat those mistakes.

It is necessary to know why the rule of Pavarana was made. There were reasons behind the formulation of the rule of retreat. It was beneficial therefore that the Buddha had made the rule. In a similar manner, the Buddha also made the rule of begging forgiveness through the ritual of Pavarana.

Once the Buddha was staying at the Jetavana Mahavihara at Sravasti. At that time, a group of monks spent a retreat at a residence in the Koshala Janapada. Before starting the retreat, all the monks gathered together and discussed among themselves, "What must we do to spend the time happily and peacefully without indulging in arguments?" After discussion they came to a conclusion and said, "Whoever may be, we do not speak to one another. Those who return early after alms begging will sweep the room, spread the mat, and fetch water. Those who come belatedly will clean the pots, sweep the mat and keep it in the right place. If anything has to be said, we will use the sign language. Thus, we can maintain our friendship. This will not only ensure the observance of rules but will also avoid unnecessary gossip".

It was a custom to visit the Buddha after completing the retreat. Once, the monks who took part in the retreat went to see the Buddha. They saluted the

Buddha and sat down at one side. The Buddha asked them, "Are you alright? Did you undergo any trouble? I hope you lived together happily. Didn't you?"

They replied, "We planned to live happily without indulging in arguments. We spent our time without speaking to each other. Therefore, the question of quarrel did not arise. We passed the retreat happily without undergoing any trouble."

Hearing this, the Buddha said, "Oh! Monks, you are all big fools. You say you have lived happily while you lived uncomfortably in an uneasy manner. Religion is not meant to behave like a dumb man. That is the religion of Tirthankars (Jainas). not of Buddhists. You observed the religion of non-Buddhists. I cannot support your activity. What kind of *shila* and *dharma* is this, which restrains one from doing the necessary? To keep mum unnecessarily is not a religion. I have simply asked you to keep *aryamaun* (noble silence). I have simply asked you not to indulge in unnecessary matters. To keep mum without doing necessary works is an extremist path. It is not a path of the Buddhists."

The Buddha condemned the attitude of those Buddhists and made the rule of not keeping mum like a dumb man. Then, the Buddha made a rule of Pavarana asking the monks to beg for pardon. As an example of good conduct, the practice of asking for pardon for mistakes is still prevalent.

Aapatideshana (self-criticism)

Prior to performing Uposatha Vinayakarma and Pavarana rituals, the monks must perform the ritual of *Aapatideshana*. This is the ritual that enables the monks to see their own faults and criticise themselves. At first, Aapatideshana was held once every 15 days but it did not continue for long.

In some Buddhist countries this rule is still prevalent. Two monks stand on their feet. First, the junior monk salutes and says:

"Bhante! I shall tell you about my mistakes."

The senior monk : "Alright, alright."

The junior monk : "Bhante! I have committed mistakes knowingly and unknowingly. I am telling of these mistakes to you."

The senior monk : "Are you aware of these mistakes."

The junior monk : "Bhante! I am aware."

The senior monk : "From now on, control yourself and be careful."

The junior monk : "Bhante! I will control myself. (For the second time ... For the third time, too.....)"

Thus, the Buddha had made a provision for self-criticism by the monks themselves.

Kathin Chivara

The Buddha himself made the rule of offering chivara in Dana to monks after the rain retreat a long time after other rules were made. In Nepal, too, the rule was enforced due to practical necessity. Various sub-rules were also made under it.

Once when the monks went to pay obeisance to the Buddha after the retreat, it rained hard. They were drenched through and unable to walk further. There were no other chivaras to put on for a monk could possess only three chivaras and had already used all of them. They saluted the Buddha and sat down nearby.

The Buddha asked, "Are you all well? Was food served well? Did you stay happily?"

They replied, "Bhante! Everything is all right. But, it rained hard and we are wet through and suffered a lot. We are unable to move forward."

Out of compassion, the Buddha said to them, "It would have been better if *Sanghati* chivara is preserved by using only *Uttarasanga* and *Antarbasaka*. Then, the chivara could have been changed when it is wet. Now, you do not have chivaras to wear as all of them are wet." The Buddha called a meeting of the monks and said, "The monks who go out for retreat may accept an extra chivara." This is called *Kathin* chivara. It is not clear whether a single monk or all those who are in the retreat may be offered a chivara or *Kathin* chivara. Later, the rule was made allowing one monk to accept one chivara in

one place if the chivara was old. Later, a rule was made requiring the offer of Kathin chivara to the Bhikshu Sangha only and not to the monks individually who take part in the retreat. There are reasons that led to the formulation of this rule.

When the rule was made to offer *Kathin Chivaras* to the monks who take part in retreat, the monks frequently went for retreat out of the temptation of receiving *Kathin Chivaras*. A monk began to take two or three chivaras as offerings. A greedy and proud monk went out in search of a place for retreat. At one place he asked a person, "How many chivaras can I get if I spend the retreat here?" The person replied, "only one chivara is offered here." He said that he would leave a stick in his place.

Then, he went to another place and asked, "How many chivaras are offered here if a monk spends a retreat here?" The man replied that two chivaras would be given. He left a pair of old shoes at that place.

Then, he went to another place and asked how many chivaras would be given to a monk spending a retreat there. The man replied that three chivaras would be given. The greedy monk stayed there for the retreat.

That is why, the Buddha made a rule that a monk should accept only one *Kathin chivara* in one place. After this, the Buddha again made a rule that the chivara should first be offered to the Buddhist Sangha and the Buddhist Sangha would distribute the chivara to the monks.

The Sangha must not distribute chivara directly. The monks who take part in retreat are entitled to get the chivara as per the rule of the Sangha. If three monks take part in the retreat, the monk who does not have his chivara is first entitled to the chivara or one who requires it is given with the consent of all the three monks.

Notice of Kathin Dana

All monks of the Bhikshu Sangha either go to the *Uposathagriha* or the nearby stream and offer prayers thus:

"Bhante! Listen to what I have to say. I received this chivara in the name of the Sangha. The Sangha is giving this Kathin chivara to Tissa Bhikshu. If monks agree to this, please keep silent. If you do not agree, please tell the Sangha."

When all are silent, the following words are spoken:

"This Kathin chivara is hereby given to Bhikshu Tissa by the Sangha. As the Sangha agrees to it, everybody is silent. This is what I believe."

The continuous change of rules and regulations due to change of time and situation shows the liberality of the Buddha. Rules are made for the benefit of man. Therefore, rules can be changed whenever necessary. This plainly shows that even at the time of the Buddha many changes had taken place in the life of monks.

The monk's life and code of conduct

No matter whatever changes may have been made in rules and the life of the monks, and so long as the morale of the monks is not high, their lives will have no value. Only if their morale is high, they can command respect and honour. It is only the high qualities and virtues of monks that make their lives meaningful. The virtues as good conduct and character are not necessarily made for an outward show.

According to the Dhammapada, the qualities monks must possess for the success of their life are as follows:

It is good to control one's body. It is good to control one's speech. It is good to control all the senses. The monks who control their senses are free from suffering.

It is Shila which controls the body and speech. It is meditation which helps man to be free from the control of the mind. Almost all crimes and harmful works are the result of the uncontrolled mind and speech.

Therefore, specially those who lead the monk's life must control their mind. In spite of this, monks find it difficult to control themselves when their mind is restless. The Buddha always taught ten precepts contained in Dasadharmasutra to those willing to become monks. They are as follows :

1. Now I am undergoing a change.
2. I am dependent on others.
3. My work, behavior and mind have changed.

4. Doesn't my mind take me to task about my conduct?
5. Didn't other monks find fault in my work?
6. One must leave the near and dear ones.
7. One must face the consequences of one's work. One is the maker of one's destiny. The main cause of my life is my work. Work is our relative. Work is our refuge. I must face the consequences of my right or wrong doings.
8. How my life is passing day in and day out?
9. Am I willing to live far away from a noisy place?
10. Shall I be able to answer fearlessly when somebody asks if I have made progress in my life as a monk?

It is a practice in Buddhist countries to repeat this precept in the evening, but, in course of time, its significance has been lost.

With the passage of time, the monks became jealous and ambitious even during the lifetime of the Buddha. Devadatta even tried to kill the Buddha to be the success or of the Buddha himself. Sudhamma Bhikshu was full of jealousy and malice. The charitable person who took care of Sudhamma was a householder. As this Upasaka honoured Sariputra Mahasthavir, Sudhamma cut off relations with that householder in anger. Some monks drove away others from a comfortable vihara to find places for themselves by poisoning the ears of householder donors. Such monks existed even at the time of the Buddha. They still exist now.

Seeing this, some monks said to the Buddha, "Oh! Lord, how you are calm, unselfish and without greed! But, why your disciples are so unworthy?"

The Buddha replied, "In the beginning when they become monks, they are gentle, self-sacrificing and are quiet like statues. Some monks look like new brides. Some monks sit down too meekly like newly planted saplings waiting to take root. In my Bhikshu Sangha, too, monks stay calm and gentle until they stand on their feet. When they stand on their feet, they stand like pillars. They forget why they have become monks.

He further said, "When we show some pilgrims the way to their destination, some of them reach their destination, whereas some do not. They become confused. Monks share a similar fate. I am not to be blamed for this. If one tree bears sour fruit, it is not good to think that all the trees bear sour fruits." As there were many good and virtuous monks at the time of the Buddha, there are such monks also at the present time.

Let me now write about the ideal monks at the time of the Buddha. While the Buddha was staying at the Jetavana Vihara in Sravasti, there was a Brahmin woman named Rohini in the vicinity. She was devoted to the Buddha and served novices and monks with great regard. As she used to praise the monks all the time, her father did not like it and he was always angry. Even then, in her unshakable faith in the monks, she continued to visit the vihara and her respect for the monks did not decline even slightly.

The Brahmin became jealous and he attempted to divert Rohini's attention by telling her about the appreciable qualities of the Brahmins. But, there was very little effect on Rohini. One day, the Brahmin called Rohini and said, "Rohini! The Buddhist ascetics to whom you salute and offer Dana with respect are of no use. They are lazy people who do not do good either to themselves or to others. They do not work and are parasites depending on others. They look to others for sustenance. Why do you serve those Buddhist ascetics with so much devotion? Why do you have so much regard for them?"

Rohini replied, "The Buddhist ascetics are superior than the Brahmins in terms of conduct and character. The novices work for the progress of their religion. They are not a least lazy. They do not simply care for attaining Nirvana but work for eliminating anger, illusion, jealousy and other vices. That is why I like the Buddhist monks. They not only undertake blameless activities, but also live a blameless life. They are educated people. They are noble men and are unselfish. They live a religious life. They give sermons that are useful and helpful to improve men's lives. They act accordingly. They help to concentrate mind. They have given up conceited nature and takes the path that keeps the suffering away. That is why I honour them and continue offering *Dana*. That is why, I have faith in them and respect them."

She continued, "This is not all. When the Buddhist ascetics go from one village to another, they do not expect something. They go out with a sense of detachment, freed

from craving and selfish desire. They have no habit of hiding their property. They say that accumulated wealth is a burden to them. They run their livelihood by begging alms regularly. They do not accept valuable goods like gold, silver and jewels. They think that the present life is not a time to be engrossed in the past and the future. They act accordingly".

"Father! This is not all. Coming from different clans and castes, they live together like brothers. They do not care for caste. They behave in a very friendly manner".

Hearing about the monks described in various ways, the Brahmin's face brightened. He also took refuge in the Three Jewels - the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. He realised the real truth. He also offered charity and listened to the Buddhist religious discourses. He also acquired the intellectual vision of seeing beyond the temporal world. He then lived his life well, carefree and filled with joy. When one is free from anger, jealousy and greed, how can one's face be gloomy? And how can one's mind be heavy?

This is how the monks were looked upon at the time of the Buddha. Though rare nowadays, we still come across such monks in Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The late Mahasi Sayadaw Mahasthavir of Burma possessed all the good qualities of monk as described above by Rohini. Mahanayak Pannasiha Mahasthavir of Sri Lanka who came to Nepal some years back to attend the Buddhist conference was also gifted with such qualities.

It is difficult to find true monks in non-Buddhist countries. For, as in Nepal, upasakas and upasikas are not acquainted with the rules of monastic Buddhism that govern the life of monks. When the donors or upasakas do not know their own duties, it is not easy for the monks to live according to rule.

The present age has brought a tremendous change. In the beginning, people's needs were very few, nor was there a need for a lot of money. There was a barter system of exchanging goods without using money. There were no motor vehicles. People covered a long distance on foot. That time is gone.

According to rule, monks should not accept food offered in a raw form. In Nepal, there is a custom of offering *Gulpa*, a begging bowl, with money on it. There is no practice of giving cooked food. Some people suggest that the donors give cooked food. But, it is easy to say and difficult to do. Things do not happen as one wishes.

Fifty years ago, in 1943 A.D. when Narada Mahasthavir of Sri Lanka came to Nepal, he had stayed at Anandakuti Vihara, Swayambhu. He was accorded a warm welcome. He never touched money. He was offered uncooked rice and money. He did not accept. He said, "What practice is this?"

Somebody replied, "This is the practice in Nepal".

He said, "Can't you change this practice and offer cooked food? You have to convince them."

The Nepalese monks said to him, "In such matters it is better if you say this to them. Then, they will obey."

Then, Ven. Narada Mahasthavir gathered upasakas and upasikas and said, "I will visit you to beg alms. You give me cooked rice. I will not accept uncooked rice nor money."

Then, the upsaskas said, "Alright, Venerable! Come to us. We will offer cooked rice. But, do you accept cooked rice offered by anybody? Do you accept cooked rice offered by the lower caste people?"

He replied, "There is no caste discrimination and untouchability in Buddhism. All human beings are equal. I will take cooked rice offered by anybody."

Then, the upasakas said, "If that is so, we do not visit Anandakuti."

Hearing this, Narada Mahasthavir said, "In that case, I will not come to you to beg alms. The matter is over."

At the dawn of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal, it was very difficult for the monks. It was a troublesome life. The knowledge of monastic Buddhism had not spread then as in the present time. When a monk went for alms, he got barely one or two *manas* (pounds) of rice. The number of monks who begged for alms were very few and Narada Mahasthavir was surprised. He lamented, "Poor Nepal!"

Ven. Narada Mahasthvir used to go on world tours in the course of propagation of Buddhism. He did not touch money. He was invited to visit countries by sending air tickets. He was followed by people who carried money and arranged the visits. The accounts of the money offered to him were kept separate. As per the Vinaya, he did not carry money nor allowed others to do so.

Ven. Narada Mahasthvir came to Nepal several times. He had all he wanted. He was a foreigner, a scholar and a man of noble character. Therefore, all the people held him in high regard. Once, the air ticket to return to his country was not arranged in time. He suffered from insomnia and dyspepsia for two days. He was in great trouble because such a minor thing could not be arranged. At last, Ven. Amritananda Mahasthvir arranged a return ticket for him. He was pleased and returned to a normal self. This is one of the incidents in a monk's life.

Money

In recent times, the power of money is overwhelming. If one has money, one has friends, relatives and admirers. If one has no money, there is nobody. Householders suffer more from this problem than the monks. Monks also need money but they are not given enough to accumulate. For the monks, to accumulate money is to make enemies. The Buddha had said that to keep money is to hold a poisonous snake.

It is true that the accumulation of money leads to the increase of enemies. If a rich man knows how to use money and if he donates it, it is a blessing. Otherwise, it is a curse. In the case of monks who accumulate money, the case is different. Even though the people outwardly show respect to them, they do not look to those monks with sincere respect. Pointing to the wealth of the monk, they say that this monk does not need anything. Thus, the accumulation of wealth demoralizes a monk's life. If that is so, the question arises if the monks really do not need the money.

From the traditional viewpoint and belief it is not definitely wise to say that monks do not require money. To say this is not practical at all. Money plays a big role in the life of everybody. People who abandon the society and live in the jungle may live without money. Otherwise, it is nearly impossible to live without money.

Nowadays the main reason for accumulating the money by monks is the fear of illness. It takes at least Rs. 200 to get examined by a doctor and to buy medicine. Thousands of rupees is required to get treatment at the hospital. Some monks may have to stretch their hands to beg for money desperately. I was once a patient of tuberculosis. I was advised to go to the People's Republic of China for treatment but I had no money. I had never begged for donations nor did I like to do so. Everybody likes to live. I went to a upasaka and well-wisher and said, "The doctor advised me to go to China for medical treatment. I have no money to travel. Therefore, I have come for help."

The upasaka gave financial help but also advised me in pinching words. "Bhante! It is not good to raise fund by visiting door to door. This leads to the decline of your morale." What I felt then cannot be explained in words. But what the upasaka said was right. I liked his suggestion. There is a proverb in Sanskrit which says that it is a bitter experience to stretch begging hands. Similarly, it is also bitter to say 'no'. The habit of begging is bad. It keeps friends away.

There was a big merchant in Nepal. He not only respected the monks but also helped them with money and in other matters. When Rana Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher exiled some monks, he helped them. He was a great upasaka as well as a respected individual. Some monks usually went to him for donations and for other help like a pair of shoes and an umbrella. Due to the monk's habit of begging, not only the merchant but other members of his family closed their door to keep away the monks. Even if the monks went to him for different purposes, they were misjudged.

Once with another colleague I went to the merchant with the relics of the Buddha along with the message of Ven. Narada Mahasthavir. One member of his family came to know that two monks were approaching them and the merchant was informed. Hearing it, he said, "I do not like to see the monks." We overheard the remark as we were just outside the room. We were sad. We said that we had come to show the Buddha's relics as directed by Ven. Narada Mahasthavir. Then he came to see us, paid us due respect and gave some donation. This

is just to explain that the tendency of begging indeed demoralizes a monk.

To be a monk is to be engaged in service, giving up the sense of pride and selfishness. It also means giving up laziness and being enthusiastic to work for others and be self-sacrificing.

The monk's life is not easy

Is the monk's life difficult? There are two answers. One answer is that it is easy but it is not strictly the truth. If one has become a monk to liberate oneself from worldly fears, it is not easy. If one has become a monk to live happily taking what others give and do nothing, it is easy. To put it shamelessly there is no option but to say that monk's life is easy. But to say very frankly it is very difficult.

In reality, the difficult thing is to observe the rules. A monk should not eat at his own sweet will. He should walk or move noiselessly. He must talk soberly, and carefully and work accordingly. Besides eating and drinking, he must be careful about the rituals and religious works early in the morning. He must not behave like householders haphazardly.

The rule that a monk must observe while eating has been mentioned in Sakkacha section of sekhiya. This rule has been included in a set of 227 rules for monks. A monk must not eat so long as somebody does not offer the food. In the act of receiving Dana and eating he must be temperate and austere. In order to lead a monk's life,

four things are required, *Pindapatra* being the most essential. It is given along with food by donors with great devotion.

The monk must be careful while eating. He must not eat carelessly like children. He must eat looking at the plate. He must not think of other things while eating.

He must not glance here and there while eating. Morsels should be taken from the sides of the plate without touching the middle portion. However, two or three varieties of vegetables may be taken from here and there. Vegetables must be taken according to the nature and quantity of the food. There is no harm if a sick monk takes more vegetables. It does not look nice to take morsels by kneading vegetables, pulse and rice completely. But, it does not look bad to knead a small quantity of food left in the plate. Vegetables must not be covered by food in greed while more are being added. It is not good to take additional vegetables if one is not sick.

It is not against the rule to beg parents and close devoted donors for food. It is not harmful to beg for anything with people who are very much familiar. There is no objection to beg for foods cooked in the vihar where the monk is living. While eating he must not laugh or tease others. Monks must not take a big morsel so as to fill the mouth. The food may stick in the throat or may cause indigestion. While eating there should not be any noise. Hands and fingers should not be licked. The faithful donors are delighted when the food is eaten in a restrained manner.

It has already been said that though the monks are like birds, they must depend on others. Those who do not understand how difficult their life is complain that the monks are not austere, selfless and free from greed.

It is true that the monks must not accumulate goods. They must not be showy. They must live a simple life. Those who donate or offer alms must continue giving with faith and devotion. There is no hard and fast rule in giving charity and donation. Giving rice is also meant for sustaining the monks' life. But, if the monks cannot finish the rice, what can they do? They must buy other things, too. If they have to buy a book, it costs at least Rs 50 to 100. They need money to travel by the motor vehicle. They need money to repair the damaged property. In ancient times, when money was not in circulation, goods were exchanged against goods. Now one cannot pay rice for the bills of water and electricity. Therefore, it is not proper to say that monks tried to accumulate money by selling rice. One of the most important rules in the life of monks is to live apart from women. That the monk should not marry is a different thing. At present, the fact that monks throughout the country are able to lead their lives is made possible because of the care as well as the faith of women in them. Proximity to women is indeed a big problem for monks because it generates conflict.

At the time of *Mahaparinirvana* of the Buddha, Bhikshu Ananda asked the Buddha, "Bhante! How are monks to behave with women?"

The Buddha replied, "Don't sit near women".

Ananda asked, "What to do if one is compelled to sit near a woman?"

The Buddha replied, "Sit down with caution. Sit down with a steadfast mind. Control your mind."

Although it is good to do so it is not easy. How to control the mind? Vipassana meditation is the means to control the mind. Even though it is a good remedy, the relation between male and female is surprisingly inconceivable. It is very difficult to understand.

It is said that Kamadeva visited the Buddha and asked, "Oh! Compassionate Gautam Buddha. Isn't it very difficult to live a monk's life."

The Buddha replied, "Oh! Kamadeva, the life of a monk whose mind is not restless but steadfast is not difficult. Such monks make Buddhism firm and lasting. Those monks with strong mind find it happy to stay away from *Grihasthashram*, the life of a householder".

Kamadeva said, "Lord! Even though you say this, it is not easy to be free from lust. Contentment from a monk's life is rare, indeed."

The Buddha said, "Kamadeva! If you meditate in the morning, evening and night with concentration, you can bring your restless mind under control. If you can strengthen your mind progressively, you will be contented. Through the path of meditation, you can win over the evil of lust."

Kamadeva said, "Lord! Even if you say so, it is not easy to be contented. It is really very difficult."

The Buddha said, "Kamadeva! You try meditation, then only you will understand. Even if you think so being lazy, Aryas, the worthy people, do not find it difficult to control their mind through meditation. They follow the path full of risks and obstacles."

It is obvious that the people who are not used to meditation, will find it difficult to live a monk's life. Meditation itself is not that easy. The practitioners of meditation may become sick. Females act as helpers. Males may help financially, but it is females who serve with compassion. This is not only true in the case of Nepal but also true in the case of Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka. I have seen this with my own eyes. If we are to keep the women away, the days of the monks in the world will be shortened and they will disappear. It is definite. What is worth attention is that the mind must be firm and resolute. There are a lot of things to be said about this.

About the services done by women to the monks I want to say one thing. Mahaprajna was the seniormost monk of Nepal. He was a monk absorbed in meditation most of the time and he was gifted with the power of speech. He was conferred the title of Karmasthanacharya at Chitagong, Bangladesh, for his prowess of meditation. He was also conferred the title of Arhat in Burma for his spiritual powers as a Buddhist. Once while he was staying in Kalimpong, he fell ill. There were no people to take care of him. One upasika took care of him well. His

mind melted like ghee before fire. He was entangled in love with her for a long time. If what I have heard is true, he became a householder as advised by the doctor and put off the chivara when the pregnancy advanced. Although most people knew it, I have mentioned it as it is relevant here. A monk's life is difficult because he has to live a celibate life and he has none to care him when he is sick. According to sociologists, an unmarried life is against nature.

A monk must teach what he has learnt to enlighten others. He must be detached and must abstain from greed. It is not easy to abandon pleasure, entertainment, etc. A monk expects respect from others once he puts on a yellow robe. He expects a higher status. A householder who used to be a sweeper hesitates to sweep once he becomes a monk. He stands straight like a pillar and expects respect from others.

Tremendous changes take place when a householder takes to the life of a monk. The giver becomes a receiver. Whenever a donor comes, the monk expects something from him. He becomes jealous when the donor goes to another vihara. Once he has become a monk, he nurses pride and vanity and expects the householders who had no respect for him to respect him. The fact that it is difficult to abstain from such vice and evil conduct explains that a monk's life is difficult.

It is not however justifiable to discredit a monk's life in the light of various vices and demerits. For, a monk does play different important roles as an individual as well as social reformer, mediator in personal and social

conflicts, advisor, pacifier, preceptor, etc for individual, social and national welfare. These roles cannot be called insignificant. Monks are a class by themselves, higher than householders. Not all monks are greedy. Not all monks are mean and wicked. Only a very few of them fall short of the required standard. Therefore, it would not be certainly wise to blame all of them.

The fish eating monk

I am trying to explain something by quoting an incident that took place in ancient times. Once upon a time there was a king who had a monk as preceptor. The monk gave a sermon to the king, which pleased him very much. The king, in return, constructed a vihara for the monk near the palace and arranged necessary services for him. The king provided the monk with food including meat and fish prepared to his royal taste. As the monk became accustomed to take the food including the fish, he got a craving, and was unable to take food without fish. He knew that on Ekadashi, the eleventh day of the lunar fortnight, meat would not be available. Therefore, on that day, he went to a nearby pond, caught some fish and ate them after cooking. According to the teaching of the Buddha, one must not kill nor allow others to kill. But one can eat the flesh of the animal already dead or sold in the shop.

One day, it so happened that when the men took the food from the royal kitchen, the monk was catching the fish. The men reproached the monk and brought the food back to the palace.

The king asked, "Why do you bring back the food? Isn't the monk in the vihara?"

They replied, "Is he a monk? We saw him catching fish. That is why we brought the food back."

The King asked, "Didn't the monk see you while he was catching the fish?"

They replied, "He saw us. He was ashamed and went to the vihara"

The king said, "If he has the sense of shame and fear, he is still a monk. He is much superior to us. We continue to do more harmful and selfish things. But the monk has done nothing of that kind. Go back and give him the food. Forget that he was catching fish and eating them."

The moral of the story is that householders do more sinful things than the monks. That is why, it is not good to keep away from monks even if they commit some mistakes. In reality, if monks are 'elephant' thieves, householders are 'diamond' thieves. Diamonds are very costly. You can steal diamonds and hide them. You can steal the elephant. But how can you hide it? It is seen by everybody. It means that the monk's trivial or small mistake looks big. The diamonds cannot be seen. The householders steal diamonds and blame the monks for stealing elephants. This is a big irony.

Problems

There is another reason that makes a monk's life difficult. A monk's life is dependent on others. In the past monks could not live long without four things, e.g., *chivara*, *pindapatra*, *sayanasana* and medicine. Nowadays, these four things are not sufficient for the monks. Time has tremendously changed. Nowadays, monks have to buy books, pens, shoes, umbrella, etc. They have to construct or renovate viharas. The management of the above with the help of donors alone has become an impossibility. The attention of upasakas and upasikas is simply confined to the worship of the Buddha, inviting monks to the ceremonies like *Annaprasanna*, birthday and reciting the *Paritrana* after a death in the family. The monks are simply entangled in priestly functions.

The monks are involved in activities that have nothing to do with their dharma-related works. For example, they are asked to take upasakas and upasikas to foreign countries on pilgrimages, bring foreign goods for them, get students admitted in schools and colleges, get jobs for their boys and girls, conduct negotiations, etc. They are even involved in the job of matchmaking. Some come to borrow money. Those monks who do not help them in such matters are neglected. Even if they are unable to give lectures due to illness or old age, they are neglected. Those upasakas and upasikas complain it was useless to go to the monks who do not impart knowledge.

The Buddhist saint Mahaprajna knew how to speak in an attractive and pleasant manner. He had oratory power. Later, he fell ill for years. A woman served him.

I asked some people who had abandoned him, "Don't you go to Mahaprajna nowadays?"

They replied, "Now, there is no opportunity of hearing words of wisdom from him. He is unable to give sermons. Therefore, we do not go."

After hearing so many words of wisdom, the people abandoned him when he was in bad health. Such is the fate of monks.

The late Ratnajyoti Mahasthvir fell ill for a long time. He was afflicted with leprosy. In his case, too, a woman provided life-long service to him with great care. The woman was a true Anagarika .

Vivekananda Mahasthvir, too, suffered from illness for a long time. In his case, too, a woman rendered dedicated service. Had it not been so, he would have passed away much earlier. Of course, men had also helped him. But, men cannot serve as women can do with compassion and care. Therefore, living away from women is a burning problem in a monk's life. During their illness monks have to seek help from one door to another.

With the change of time, the life style of the monks also changed. There are times when monks could not

spend their time to please the upasakas. It is not proper to expect that monks should live as strictly as at the time of the Buddha. Some monks have been living a very unnatural and unbecoming life. It is not reasonable to say that the change of time and circumstance is responsible for the change in their character and conduct. There are reasons for the same, too. Some persons did not become monks after having acquired a good knowledge of Buddhism. They also do not learn much from the Acharya with whom they stay a year or so, nor is there a practice of teaching the same. The Acharyas are also not strict in providing education and explaining the teachings.

They consider their job is done once they perform the rite of ordaining by giving the yellow robe. There are many people who became monks simply to get the facilities of a monk in expectation of foreign visits, respect and honour from the people, and education without spending money. There are a very few people who became monks out of dedication for the service of the people. It is still worse to become a monk in old age.

There were also fake monks at the time of the Buddha as there are at present. For 20 years after the attainment of Supreme Enlightenment by the Buddha, the number of monks were few. The number of rules were few, too. Later, the number of monks increased by leaps and bounds. The condition of the Bhikshu Sangha worsened once the uneducated, lazy, unrestrained and ignorant people became monks. The formulation of many rules became inevitable.

The monk's life in Sri Lanka

Let us now talk about the monk's life in Sri Lanka. Many changes have taken place in the life of a monk in Sri Lanka. If we look at the history of Sri Lanka, we find that the country's prosperity, civilization and development of education were rendered possible by Buddhism. Mahendra Mahasthvir, the son of Emperor Ashoka, introduced the Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the Buddhists were and are held in high esteem there. It is only the people of the present generation who undervalued the monks.

The life style of the monks also underwent a lot of change. Ascetic and restrained life is on the wane. There are three main causes. The duty that was expected to be followed by upasakas and upasikas in Sri Lanka was not followed. Former kings had donated hundreds of ropanis of land to the Bhikshu Sangha to prevent the disappearance of monasticism due to negligence by upasakas and upasikas. Since then the principle of monasticism has changed.

In order to destroy monasticism in British Ceylon, the Englishmen transferred the property of the Buddhist Sangha or vihara donated to serve the need of monks coming from four directions of the country in the name of individuals and households. During a century- long rule, the Englishmen transformed the Buddhist culture. The very mind was spoilt. As a monk was not the head of the vihara, legislation was made to transfer the rights of the viharas in the name of the seniormost disciple. Since then, the Bhikshu Sangha and charity in the name of the

Sangha became nominal. The entire activities in the vihara were personalized.

Still later, the practice of transferring the rights of the vihara, its property and land in the name of the junior disciple was evolved thereby neglecting the rightful disciple who could not be brought under control. As a result, legal cases increased. This was mainly due to the failure of the upasakas and upasikas to follow their duty and also due to their ignorance of rules and regulations of the country. They were simply satisfied in hearing discourses, worshipping the Buddha, getting the *paritran* sutra recited and giving donations. They did not understand the relation as well as responsibility of donors towards the monks. They simply complained that the monks accumulated money. But, they did not bother to know why they did so and take action against it. Their relation with the vihara became distant thereby causing the downfall of monasticism.

Four main things are responsible for the changes in the monastic life of Sri Lanka due to inefficiency and weaknesses of the monks. These are:

1. Belief in the prediction of astrologers. The practice of showing the horoscope of the boy to the astrologer and taking the boy whose future is not bright to a vihara and make him a monk.
2. Conversion of the boy to monkhood only due to the faith and wish of the parents. The boy did not become a monk by his own faith and wish.

3. Convert a boy to monkhood by force and due to the temptation that only the senior monks have the opportunity of studying.
4. Conversion to monkhood due to relatives. If a person is related to the monk of vihara, he is tempted to become a monk due to the property of the vihara.

In reality, a person who has become a monk being fed up as well as frustrated with the world and being inclined to dharma, is a true monk fulfilling the vinaya, the rules of discipline. We can come across persons who became monks being fed up with worldly anxieties. But, it is difficult to find persons who have become monks out of wisdom and understanding and out of faith in the service of mankind. They are rare, barely one in the thousand.

Buddhist periodicals of Sri Lanka most often comment that persons have become monks since childhood simply in pursuit of conventions and ritualistic Karma.

It is said that the monks of Sri Lanka borrow money from the banks to study in the University. They work as teachers in the schools to pay back the debt. Some newspapers have reported that some monks who have completed their studies give up monkhood, join the job and pay back the debt.

There is no practice of giving money as *Dana* in Sri Lanka. This makes the monastic life difficult in Sri

Lanka. Upasakas and Upasikas offer Dana in the form of soaps, towels, bed sheets, thermos, etc. Monks sell most of these goods for buying other requirements and for paying fee in the educational institutions. People buy these goods at half price. This sort of business is prohibited in monastic life. Thus, monastic life is undergoing changes and getting closer to materialism in Sri Lanka.

Social service of the monks of Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, monks are mostly entrusted with the work of rural development. The monks play a major role in the task of constructing schools, roads, wells, etc. At the call of the monks, the villagers are prepared to do any work and contribute voluntary labour. Monks have constructed many schools in villages. There is a school in every vihara. Preliminary education starts in viharas. Later, the students study in other schools.

Some monks have become rich like landlords. They own hundreds of ropanis of land. They earn easily Rs 50,000 a month selling coconut, tea, etc. every month. Such monks construct two or three school buildings. They provide scholarships to students. About 15 years ago, it was reported in a newspaper that a monk donated a ward in hospital for monks constructed at the cost of Rs. 5 lakhs.

Monks used to go to hospitals and recite *Paritran* text for the sick people. They also distribute biscuit and bread for poor patients. This is an exemplary work of the Sri Lankan monks.

Financial sources of the monks of Sri Lanka

It has already been said that in Sri Lanka money is not given to monks in the form of Dana. You may ask how the monks of Sri Lanka then maintain their lives. The financial source of the monks of Sri Lanka provides an interesting case. Monks sell the goods received by them in the form of Dana. This is one financial source. And another important source is to collect donations in the name of constructing viharas. There is another good method of collecting donation in Sri Lanka. Monks make a programme of discourse by a famous foreign Buddhist scholar. The programme is publicized through posters and loudspeakers announcing at the same time that there is a religious discourse and an auction programme. Devotees may put up anything at the auction site for sale.

Then, hundreds of devoted people put up goods for auction according to their capacity. The process of auction is quite interesting. Hundreds of men with faith put up their goods for auction. While auctioning one piece of goods worth Rs. 1 one man offers Rs. 1 and keeps Rs. 1. Another person immediately offers Rs. 2 for the same goods. If there is no other bidder, the last bidder keeps Rs. 2 and takes the goods. Thus, the goods worth Rs 1 fetches Rs 3. Suppose, a person puts up one piece of goods worth Rs 50, he pays Rs.100 for his own goods. Thus, money is collected by auctioning.

At the end of the programme, a tray full of flowers is kept for the worship of the Buddha. The bid for the tray begins from Rs. 5 to 10. One who offers 10 keeps Rs. 10. Another person offers 15 and keeps Rs.15 .The bid for the price of the tray goes upto Rs.150. Thus, thousands of rupees are collected. Finally, the monk who gives the discourse is given a bed-sheet or blanket and is worshipped. Money is given for this service, too. This is how the monks of Sri Lanka collect money.

The monk's life in Myanmar

The monastic life of Myanmar is different from that of Sri Lanka and Thailand. There is much more asceticism in the monastic life of Myanmar in comparison to that of Sri Lanka and Thailand. The structure of the vihara and lifestyle of the monks of Myanmar is very simple. Monks sleep on the floor. The floor there is not made of earth but wooden planks. There is no ostentation in the lifestyle of Myanmar in comparison to that of Sri Lanka and Thailand. In recent times, viharas were constructed in Myanmar by donors in a new style and donated to the Buddhist Sangha. I saw viharas at Mahasi Shashanhit Meditation Centre. There were bedsteads to sleep on because the floor was made of cement.

The education to be given to the monks in Myanmar was completely in conformity with Buddhism. However, there is no provision for the monks to get education in schools and colleges. They have to study English language stealthily. There are many monks in Myanmar subsisting on the alms. I do not know if there are monks in Myanmar who own a large plot of land as in

Sri Lanka. But the monks of Myanmar go to the cinemas and sports stadiums. Newspapers are not allowed to criticise the monks. If they do so, their fall is imminent.

A separate quarter is allocated for the monks in cinema halls. As the monks of Myanmar are rude and restless, the military government there has cleansed the monastic life under the leadership of the Bhikshu Sangha. Thousands of monks who violated the monastic rules, visited cinema halls, did business, earned money acting as Vaidyas, etc. were forced to give up the chivara. The monks were employed to spy on errant monks and those found corrupt were forced to quit the chivara. In course of investigation, it was found that some monks had been keeping many wives. They were forced to return to their households. As a result of this cleansing work, the life of the Burmese monks has improved. However, they must be cautious because someone keeps a watchful eye on them.

When the title of *Upasampada* is conferred in Myanmar, a benefactor takes the responsibility for the monk. The benefactor fulfils the needs of the monk throughout his life. He bears the financial responsibility of meeting the entire educational expenses of the monk. He meets the transportation cost. Monks are held in high esteem in Myanmar than in Sri Lanka. After the cleansing of the monastic life by President Newin, the morale went high and the prestige of the monks was upgraded. Monastic life improved a great deal. Otherwise, monks had become like stray cattle. In Myanmar, monks visit the hospitals to take care of the sick, recite Buddhist scriptures to them and also distribute food to the poor.

They make arrangement of water supply and construction of roads in rural areas. They collect donations for providing services to the society.

There is a statue in Rangoon installed in memory of the monk who attained martyrdom in the struggle for independence against the English. My head naturally bowed towards this statue. I have heard about the struggle by monks against the English for national independence in Sri Lanka but I have not heard of monks who became martyrs.

In Myanmar, the fish constitutes the main diet of monks. In Thailand, too, the main diet of monks is fish. Monks of Myanmar smoke cigarettes. This is not violation of the monastic rule. Although we, Nepalese, find that this is odd, this is not in contradiction to the tenets of Buddhism. According to the Vinaya made by the Buddha, monks should not eat the flesh of man, elephant, horse, dog, snake, tiger, bear, leopard, etc. The meat of other animals may be eaten by a monk on three conditions.

- 1. If he has not seen the killing of the animal.**
- 2. If he has not heard the news of the killing of the animals**
- 3. If he has not suspected the killing of the animal.**

Monks should not kill, nor should get someone to kill. Instead, as one has become a monk abstaining from all sorts of defilements and seeking liberation, it is better if he does not take meat at all.

Yagu (Gruel)

Yagu, a kind of gruel taken in the morning, is a popular diet of the monks since the time of the Buddha. The practice of eating *yagu* is still popular in Nepal and other Buddhist countries. Garlic and ginger are also used in *Yagu*. It is beneficial for ten reasons. 1. It gives a good look. 2. It gives pleasure. 3. It gives strength. 4. It makes the face bright. 5. It increases appetite. 6. It eliminates thirst. 7. It controls wind. 8. It keeps the stomach clean. 9. It removes indigestion. 10. This is a medicine for many diseases.

Sangha - Bhojan (Feast for the Sangha)

It is a general practice in Buddhist countries to invite four monks for the Bhojan (feast). While giving food to the monks in Nepal and Sri Lanka, there is a practice of praying that we are offering the food consisting of vegetables and pulse to the Bhikshu Sangha. There is no such practice in Myanmar. This practice was introduced to Nepal from Sri Lanka. Even though this practice is good, it does not look attractive. The act of giving Dana to the Bhikshu Sangha is good. But the belief that the presence of four monks is adequate for this act, does not sound nice.

In fact, the practice of offering Dana in the name of the Bhikshu Sangha in faith had evolved since the time of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana. Once this tradition of Sangha Bhojan has been established, the Bhojan given to one, two or three persons becomes Sangha Bhojan. There is no such rule that four monks must be present for the

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Sangha Bhojan.The number of 4, 5 or 10 monks may be required for performing Sangha Karma of monks. The belief that four monks are adequate for Sangha Bhojan points out to the narrow mind of the donors. In Sri Lanka, Sangha Dana is performed by inviting four monks. In places where there are not many monks, the number is completed by inviting novices.

In Myanmar, there is no requirement of four monks for the Sangha Bhojan. Instead of a fixed number of monks, it is said "We offered the Sangha Dana to the monks of four directions", no matter whether they have come or not. I have seen this myself. A vihara was donated by uttering a ritual prayer in the presence of two monks.

Nowadays even if Dana is taken for given to the monks coming from four directions in the name of Bhikshu Sangha, the Dana becomes the property of vihara. Monks coming from distant places or foreign countries are not allowed to stay in the vihara. Even if they are allowed to stay for a few days, they are eventually sent away.

There are two reasons for this.

1. The visiting monk intends to stay there permanently for accumulating the Dana offered there.
2. There is a problem of providing food to them. Even if there is no food problem, they are sent away. But there is no problem for those monks who have money. If the visiting monks are relatives, they can stay for months.

Sri Sumangal Vihar of Patan and Ananda Bhuwan Vihara at Bhuikhel, Swayambhu, are exceptions. Any monk who comes there is accommodated. There is no question of staying at Srigha vihara. There is neither boarding nor lodging facility. The electricity supply in the vihara is limited. Dana offered to the Bhikshu Sangha is nominal. Nobody cares if the vihara donated to the Bhikshu Sangha collapses. This is not only the case of Nepal but also of Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The *bahas* and *bahis* of Nepal have enough land as their income. There is a *guthi*, a trust, to manage the property of the *bahas* and *bahis*. But the *guthi* does not function as it should. The lands of the *bahas* and *bahis* have become the personal property of the occupants of these monastic settlements. The concerned people simply watch and do not show any concern about it.

In Sri Lanka and Myanmar, when monks visit other viharas, they are accommodated for some days. They may stay for as many days as the abbot permits. In Sri Lanka and Myanmar, too, people become monks for sustaining their livelihood. Such monks are not accommodated in viharas. Sri Lanka has an appreciable tradition of respecting the visiting monks. The facilities such as giving food and lodging are available there. In Thailand, there is no custom of giving food to the visiting monks. All the Thai monks go out for alms and solve their food problem. If they do not go out for alms, they must eat in the hotels, restaurants, etc.

The monk's life in Thailand

Unlike Sri Lanka and Myanmar, the monastic constitution in Thailand is well-planned and organized. According to this constitution, even the King must be a monk for some days or for some months. The present King of Thailand Adulyadej has become a monk for more than a month. The Crown Prince has also become a monk. Monks, once they put on chivara, must receive identity paper from either Bhikshu Sangha or Ministry of Religious Affairs confirming their vihara and preceptor. Sangharaja, the Supreme Patriarch, is responsible for conducting the religious affairs of Thailand. He is very powerful and is highly respected by the state. The title of Sangharaja is not conferred to the seniormost monks but to one who is qualified, learned and perfect in conduct and character.

Sangharaja is a highly powerful and prestigious post. I have heard that even demonstrations take place during the selection of Sangharaja.

Even though monastic constitution is well-planned in Sri Lanka, the life of a monk is showy and luxurious. Devotees have enough wealth and great faith in Buddhism. The Buddha has said that if a monk has too much faith in religion he may be a fool. As the monks of Thailand are offered Dana in the form of goods and money in big quantity, their life is not simple and austere. There are television sets in many viharas. They spend much time watching television and video films having little relevance to their monastic life.

Ninety percent of monks of Thailand spend their time in begging alms. They queue up in the city for alms since 6 A.M. lending a yellowish look to the whole city. Female devotees prepare food, put it in a carrier, and wait at the door for monks. The food taken in the morning is kept for a meal at 11 A.M. Some send the cooked food to monks in the vihara itself. There are attendants in the vihara to take care of food. Some order food from the hotels and restaurants. The food given in alms is already cooked unlike in Nepal. Some give money in envelopes. Some upasikas put love letters in begging bowls. Girls entrap those monks who know English in love. In Thailand, returning home for marriage after quitting chivara has become ordinary and a fashion. It is said that monks voluntarily quit the chivara if they cannot stick to monastic rules. There is no hue and cry about it. Upasikas visit the vihara quite often and ask the monks casually, "Bhante! When are you giving up the chivara? If you do so, I will present you a suit of good Kashmere cloth."

In Thailand and Myanmar a monk has a benefactor while receiving *Upasampada*. The benefactor meets the expenses of the monk for study, transportation and for other activities. That is why ordinary and economically weak people become monks in conformity with the tradition. They acquire education up to degree and masters levels and return to domestic life abandoning the chivara. The woman donors do not mind if the monks abandon the chivara. In Myanmar also there is a practice of giving up the chivara. This practice was non-existent in Sri Lanka in the past. But, now, it has

prevailed. In the past, those who abandoned chivara in Sri Lanka were neglected, humiliated and condemned. Now, this is not so. The abandonment of chivara has become a fashion in Myanmar and Thailand.

In Thailand, there is a practice of granting one month's leave with pay to government employees for spending monastic life. This is a unique practice as far as Buddhism is concerned.

In Thailand, those who become monks do not have to pay for education. They need not pay for travelling by bus or water boats. They pay half fare for travel by air. If monks of Nepal go to Bangkok by air they pay only half fare, subject to submission of a letter of recommendation.

In Myanmar monks do not drink tea with milk during unusual hours. In Thailand, milk is allowed but there are also monks who do not take milk. In Thailand, there is a group of monks who do not touch money. It is said that more money is offered to such monks and they are richer than others. This is but natural.

Recently, a Thai Buddhist couple donated one crore and ninety lakh rupees to a vihara. The vihara then constructed a school and a campus building. It not only provided lodging and boarding facilities to 300 monks and 200 Anagarikas but also employed 100 people.

Value of Monastic Life

It has been repeatedly mentioned that monastic life has undergone a great many changes since the time

of the Buddha to the present day. It is necessary to give a thought about the contribution the monastic life has made to the country and society. Superficially, it appears that monastic life is wasteful because monks do not work in the usual sense of the term. Monastic life has contributed in controlling the population problem. In Thailand there are 3 million monks. This is an automatic family planning system. The number of females outweigh that of males in Thailand and Myanmar. As monks do not eat at night, food is saved. In Lhasa, too, the population is small because the number of monks is high. This is not a matter of small importance but has to be counted as an important contribution to the country.

Another positive aspect of monastic life is that monks work hard for the welfare and happiness of a maximum number of people. It is difficult to explain this idea. People are not satisfied with wealth and the accumulation of property. They are not happy with material progress. They do not have peace of mind. How to get peace of mind is a very difficult question. It is said that they can get peace if they can control their mind. Monks give discourses on the teachings of the Buddha and tell stories which give them mental and spiritual peace and which help them improve their lives. They cannot live peacefully without spiritual peace. If one is not self-sacrificing at the time of partition of family property, one will lose peace at home. If one cannot be free from defilements, one cannot be peaceful. The teachings of the Buddha that call for living a blameless and selfless life give people their peace of mind. It is not that all men become contented, make spiritual progress and become good by hearing the teachings of the

Buddha. But, most of the people really benefit from those teachings. Those who listen to the teachings of the Buddha and those who try to practise them live peacefully without quarreling about their patrimony. Those inclined to Buddhism live peacefully with their brothers after separation. This is a fact. This is not meant to praise monastic life. Let me now tell a story of the benefit of hearing about the life of suffering monks.

Benefits of listening to discourses

Thirty monks went to a village called Matik, far from the city, for their spiritual progress. In that village there was an upasika named Matikmata who had great faith in Buddhism. She met the monks. She asked them to stay in that village. They agreed and stayed in the nearby jungle. She arranged lodging and boarding for them. She also observed *Panchashila* (five rules of moral conduct).

These thirty monks sat down together and talked, "We have given word to Tathagata the Buddha to carry on welfare activities in any place we stay. We must not idle away time. We must not talk of superfluous things". They began to spend their time thinking about defilements of the body (i.e. body is made of 32 things such as hair, nails, teeth, etc), impermanence of everything and suffering. They all stayed in separate cottages. They agreed to ring the bell if any of them needed anything, or wanted to meet or fell sick and they also agreed to cooperate with one another.

One day, Matikmata came to meet them bringing a sweet drink made of molasses. She found the place quite desolate and found that all the monks were meditating. She guessed that she should ring the bell in order to meet them.

The monks then came out one by one. They did not talk to one another and remained silent. Matikmata said to herself, "Why don't they talk? Did they quarrel." She was not happy and at last asked, "Bhantes! You are all silent. Did you quarrel?."

The monks said, "We have not quarreled. There is no cause for quarrel"

The upasika asked, "Then, why don't you talk? Why did you come out in an angry mood?"

The monks said, "We are committed not to have superfluous talks in order to improve ourselves, mindful of the defilements of the body and impermanence of things.

She asked, "Do monks only follow this practice or can householders also do it?"

The monks replied, "Upasakas and upasikas may do so. Too Everybody can practice the religion of the Buddha."

Thus, the monks gave her the sermon in a convincing manner. She listened to the sermon with concentration and faith. And she practised it in the same

spirit. Not many days had passed when her eyes of spiritual knowledge were opened. She attained realization and acquired the fruit of *Anagami* (freedom from rebirth). Then, she could understand the feelings of others.

The upasika said to herself, "Hearing the sermon I got the knowledge I have never known before. I got wisdom. I could see the temporal world. I was so benefited by their wise sermon. They were men of higher order." She thought that the *chitta* (mind) of the monks must be full of misery and suffering and that they were trying to remove the same. She contemplated that they could not attain realization like herself because of the unsuitability of their food. Then, she gave them fruits and different green vegetables as desired. Once, they had the proper diet, they were able to concentrate their mind. Then, their thinking power and vigour increased. A few days later, the monks also found the knowledge they were seeking.

They spent the retreat peacefully and went to pay obeisance to the Buddha. They reported the attainment of realization by an upasika due to their sermon and their own realization of the knowledge of higher truth..

The moral of this story is that even though the monks are not free from misery and suffering, their sermons do benefit the listeners. This will help them make mental progress and attain higher truths.

The monk who is afraid of rules

Once a devoted upasaka came to hear a religious discourse. He heard that the world is full of sufferings and that one cannot be free from suffering so long as one is a householder. He abandoned household life and became a monk.

After he became a monk, the preceptor informed him about a set of rules he should observe. He told him that a monk should not walk carelessly. He should not look at distant places in an unrestrained manner. He should not take food so long as it is not offered to him as Dana even if it is just before him. He should not cut branches of trees. He should not harvest crops. He should not pluck flowers. He should not plant saplings. He should not urinate standing. The Acharya thus instructed him to do this and that. The monk remembered all the rules that he had to observe. He was afraid of the rules. He thought he was in chains since he became a monk.

He thought that he had become a monk to be free from suffering but the result was quite the opposite. He said to himself, "I cannot observe so many rules. If I stay home and marry, I can pass an easy life doing some charitable works. Who can observe 227 rules? I am entangled in rules. I feel I am falling down to hell. I do not want this chivara." He then went to the Acharya and informed him that he was going home. The Acharya took the monk to the Buddha, although he was reluctant to go.

The Buddha said to the preceptor, "Why did you bring the reluctant monk to me?"

The preceptor said, "Bhante! It is only very recently that he became a monk. Now, he says he will not be a monk and that he will go home."

The Buddha asked the monk, "Oh! monk, "Do you really want to go home?"

He replied, "Yes! Bhante. I have become a Bhikshu to liberate myself from suffering. But I found it difficult to do so. Who can observe all the 227 rules? Why should one become a monk and go down to hell? If one stays home and marries, it is enough to observe *panchasila* the five rules of good conduct, along with charitable works. Now, by becoming a monk, I must observe 227 rules."

The Buddha said, "Oh! Monk, forget that you have to observe 227 rules. I will give you only one rule. Will you observe that?"

He readily replied, "Oh! Lord, if it is only one rule, I am sure I can observe it."

The Buddha said, "Oh! Monk, one rule that I ask you to follow is this. If many thoughts arise in your mind, discard all the unwholesome thoughts. Sort out the good ones and control the mind. Do this much only."

He was pleased and said, "If I have met an Acharya like you, I would not have nursed the idea of returning

home. I met the preceptor who ordered to do this and that. I am fortunate that at last I met the Acharya who asked me to observe only one rule. My mind became light. I am satisfied."

According to the Buddha's instruction, the new monk started controlling his mind as he wished and not as dictated by mind. Then, his mind did not become fickle. This helped him to realize the deeper knowledge. He got wisdom.

The moral of this anecdote is that many rules are burdensome.

Merit ensured in the act of Dana

According to the sermon given by the Buddha, as mentioned in *Dakshina Vibhang* sutra, the mind of the person who offers Dana must not be defiled. The money offered in Dana must not be earned by giving trouble or by offending others. The receivers of the Dana, i.e., the monks, must not be greedy, jealous and angry. Only then will the offering be a pure Dana.

The Dana is a pious act if the giver is pure in heart though the receiver is not. There is religious merit in it. If the receiver is greedy and miserable, he cannot earn the religious merit.

The receiver of the Dana gets its religious merit if he is pure in heart, even if the giver is not. For, at the time of receiving the Dana, the mind and thought is pure. Even though the receiver of the Dana is not free from

greed, the act of Dana or offering is not wasted because it is intended for removing greed, malice, hatred and attachment. But, it would be an act of great piety if the receiver is pure and qualified. Once the Dana is given, if the giver feels that the Dana is wasted, no merit is gained. One must give Dana whole-heartedly. It must not be given for show or by compulsion. The Dana given out of faith is the best Dana.

The rules of the monks

There are many rules for the monks. If householders salute or pay obeisance, monks do not return the salutation but bless them saying, "Be happy, be healthy". In Buddhist countries, even a king pays obeisance to the monk.

Monks do not participate in protests and demonstrations. In Nepal, Theravada monks do not take part in the processions on Democracy Day or the King's birthday or on such occasions. But Lamas do not observe this rule.

When the King of Laos visited the Anandakuti Vidyapeeth at Swayambhu, he shed tears at the sight of the monks and bowed his head in salutation to them.

There is also a rule of saluting or paying obeisance to the monks. One must not salute or pay obeisance to the monk who is not wearing the chivara. One must not salute the monk at the time of shaving his head and at the time of eating. Everybody must know this. Some monks pass their time without wearing chivara. Some

monks while working in the kitchen garden do not wear chivara. Some monks occupy seats without wearing chivara. I do not know this rule personally but remember something about this as told by the preceptors in Sri Lanka.

In Nepal, a monk salutes other monks while visiting homes. This is a plus point. In other Buddhist countries, there is no practice of salutation among monks when visiting homes.

The End



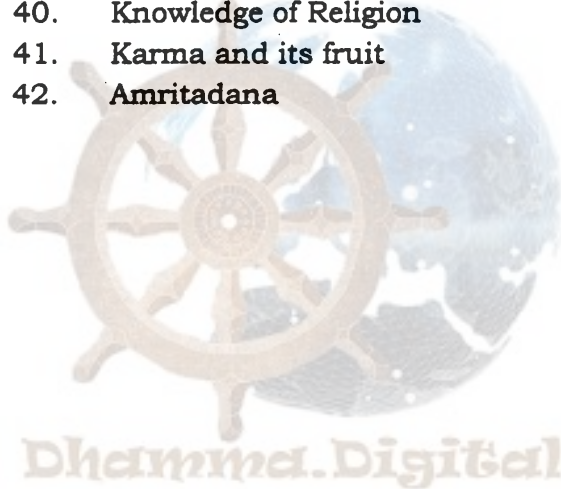
The author's publications in Nepali language (Titles translated into English)

1. Nepal-China Friendship
2. Buddhism as I understand it
3. Buddhist Philosophy
4. Women's heart
5. Practical religion of the Buddha
6. Panchashila
7. Peace
8. Buddhist Meditation
9. Peking Sanatorium
10. The Buddhist Rituals
11. The Buddha's Ideology
12. Health service in the Buddhist world
13. Freedom from Disease
14. Buddhist Moral Education, Part I
15. About the Buddha & Buddhism
16. Knowledge about Buddhism
17. Religious Thinking
18. Samyak Education, Part I, II & III
19. Arya culture
20. Arya Shila and Arya Marga
21. Women have also Wisdom
22. Ancient Buddhist Culture.
23. Nobody safe from censure
24. Forgiveness and friendship
25. Who is the first Teacher?
26. Buddhist Culture and its importance
27. Buddhist story and Buddhist character
28. In the 21st century
29. The life of a monk

The author's publications in Nepal Bhasha (Titles translated into English)

1. Gautam Buddha
2. Economic Policy of the Buddha (in collaboration)
3. Heart of the Tathagata
4. Sacrifice
5. Dasha Sanyojana (Ed.)
6. Letter of a monk, Part-I & II
7. Peking Sanatorium
8. Buddhist Education
9. Who is the first Teacher?
10. Remembering parents
11. Change of Heart
12. Buddhist Mediation -Part I & II
13. Stories- Part 1,2,3,4,5, &6
14. The life of a monk
15. A good boy
16. Dhammachakkpavatana sutta
17. Forgiveness and Friendship
18. Bodhisattva
19. Avoid a foolish friend
20. Sraman Narada (Trans.)
21. Jealousy and Suspicion
22. Galaxy of characters-Parts I & II
23. Letter of a Yogi
24. Introduction to Pali- Part I & II
25. Religion is not dead.
26. Sarbagyan (The Enlightened)- Parts I & II
27. Path to eliminate suffering
28. Education- Part 1, 2, 3 & 4

29. Dana
30. Miracle
31. The Buddha's Practical Religion
32. Practical knowledge
33. Blessing for long life
34. Path of Knowledge- Part I & II
35. Buddhist Moral Education
36. Ten Bondages
37. How to know Man?
38. Culture
39. The Buddha's Compassion
40. Knowledge of Religion
41. Karma and its fruit
42. Amritadana



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Glossary

Pali & Sanskrit words

- अतिरेक (Pali) चीवर - An extra chivara; more than three.
- अनागामी (Pali) - A man who is free from rebirth.
- अन्तरवासक (Pali) - A kind of loin cloth; one of the three kinds of chivara.
- अरहन्त (Pali)
अर्हत (Sans) - A Buddha; a Buddhist who has attained Nirvana or Enlightenment; the highest rank in Buddhist hierarchy.
- आयुष्मान (Pali) - Venerable; senior; a term of address to a senior monk.
- आर्य (Sans) - Worthy of an Aryan; worthy; a respectful mode of address.
- आर्यमौन (Sans) - Noble silence; complete silence.
- आपत्तिदेशना (Pali) - Sermon against violation of the rule of conduct.

- उतरासंग - Chivara with a single lining.
- उपसम्पदा (Pali) - Higher ordination; initiation given by the Bhikshu Sangha to a novice after completion of 20 years of monkhood.
- उपासक (Pali) - A lay Buddhist disciple; male householder following Buddhism.
- उपासिका (Pali) - A female lay Buddhist disciple; female householder following Buddhism.
- उपोसथ (Pali) - Days of fasting on two days of *Astami*, in a lunar month (*Aunsi* and *Purnima*)
- उपोसथगृह (Pali) - A hall or home where monks practise vinaya or disciplinary activities.
- एकादशी (Sans) - The eleventh day of every fortnight of a lunar month; a day of fasting.
- ओवाड (Pali) - A sermon; instruction.
- कठिन दान (Pali) - Chivara *Dana* offered only once a year; chivara offered at the end of the retreat.

कर्म (Sans)	-	Action; action having an effect on one's future; the principle of casualty in moral experience.
काम्म (Pali)	-	
कल्याणमित्र (Sans)	-	A friend in need; a well-wisher.
कामदेव (Sans)	-	The god of love.
गिलान (Pali)	-	A sick man; diseased person; medicine.
गुठी (Newari)	-	A trust; a social, religious or commercial association of the Newars.
गुल्वा (Newari)	-	A begging bowl
गुणधर्म (Sans)	-	The virtue incidental to the possession of certain virtues.
गृहस्थाश्रम (Sans)	-	The life of a householder; the second stage in the life of a Brahmin.
ज्ञानचक्षु (Sans)	-	The eye of intelligence, knowledge; intellectual vision.
चतुप्रत्यय (Pali)	-	Chivara, food, bed, medicine.

चर्या (Sans)	
चरिया (Pali)	- Behaviour; conduct; the duty of a Bodhisattva.
चीवर (Pali)	- Yellow robe of Buddhist monks and nuns
जनपद (Sans)	- A republic; a community; a nation.
तथागत (Sans)	- A title of the Buddha who has attained the highest perfection; one who by walking on the path of reality has reached the ultimate reality.
तीर्थंकर (Sans)	- A Jaina ascetic.
त्रिरत्नशरणम् (Sans)	
त्रिशरणम् (Sans)	- Refuge in Three Jewels (The Buddha, Dharma & Sangha)
दशशील (Sans)	- Ten precepts, ten rules of moral conduct.
दाता (Sans)	
दातु (Pali)	- Donor; giver of gifts; benefactor.
दान (Sans)	- Donation ; gift.
दानधर्म (Sans)	- Alms giving; charity.

दानपति (Sans)	- An exceedingly liberal man.
दायक (Pali)	- Donor
धम्मचक्रपवतन (Pali)	
धर्मचक्रप्रवर्तन(Sans)	- Turning the wheel of the doctrine.
धर्म (Sans)	
धम्म (Pali)	- The teachings of the Buddha; rule or duty or social obligation; system of spiritual culture.
निब्बान (Pali)	
निर्वाण (Sans)	- Extinction of desires; a state of Supreme Enlightenment; salvation.
निस्सय (Sans)	- Shelter; protection.
पञ्चशील (Sans)	- Five precepts which upasakas and upasikas observe.
परित्राण (Sans)	- A Buddhist ritual of religious discourse to wish peace to the departed soul; protection.
पवारणा (Pali)	- Ritual of penance after retreat; confession.

- पिण्डपात्र (Sans) - Food, alms.
- बहाल - A Buddhist settlement; a monastery.
- बहिल - A Buddhist settlement monastery outside the city area.
- ब्रह्मचर्य (Sans) - The life of celibacy lived by a Brahmin for studying the Vedas; the first stage of a Brahmin.
- भन्ते (Sans) - A term of address to a monk.
- महापरिनिर्वाण (Sans)
परिनिब्बान (Pali) - Freedom from rebirth; beyond Nirvana; final departure of Arhat.
- यागु (Pali) - Gruel taken by the Buddhist monks in the morning.
- योग (Sans) - Physical and mental exercise for spiritual development; path leading to the union with God.
- वर्षावास (Sans) - The monsoon or rain retreat.

- विनय (Sans) - The discipline; rules of conduct for monks and nuns.
- विनयपिटक (Sans) - A Buddhist text containing the rules of conduct pertaining to monks and nuns.
- विपश्यना (Sans)
विपस्सना (Pali) - Inner vision; a path of liberation; a kind of meditation.
- विहार (Pali) - A Buddhist monastery; a dwelling place for the Buddhist Sangha; a place for keeping Buddhist images.
- शील (Pali) - Rule of moral conduct; abstaining from harmful actions; morality.
- सुत (Pali)
सुत्र (Sans) - A thread on which the teachings of the Buddha were strung.
- संघाटी (Sans) - Chivara with two linings; one of three chivaras.



Bhikshu Ashwaghosh

(A short life sketch)



- Birth : May 18, 1926,
Okubahal, Lalitpur, NEPAL
- Household Name : Buddharatna Shakya
- Father : Chandrajyoti Shakya
- Mother : Laxmimaya Shakya
- Pravajya : 1944 A.D. in Kushinagar
- Upadhyaya Guru : Chandramani Mahasthvir,
Burma (Myanmar)
- Guardian Guru : Amritananda Mahasthvir
- Upasampada : May 1949, Sri Lanka
- Activities : Social Service &
participation in Buddhist
awakening programmes.
- Wrote over 80 books in
Nepali and Nepal Bhasha