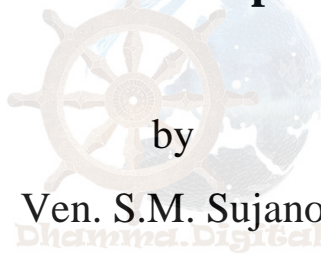
A Buddhist monk in orange robes is walking away from the viewer on a path covered in red petals. The path is flanked by large trees and dense foliage. The scene is bathed in soft, natural light, creating a serene and contemplative atmosphere. The monk is positioned in the lower center of the frame, walking towards the right. The path is a mix of dark rocks and a thick layer of red petals, some of which are still attached to the trees. The background is a lush forest with various shades of green and brown, suggesting a natural, outdoor setting. The overall composition is balanced and evokes a sense of peace and spiritual journey.

YOUR QUESTIONS,
MY ANSWERS
on
Buddhism & Experience

by Ven. S.M. Sujano

Your Questions, My Answers
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Preface

This book is a collection of questions and answers about Buddhism and my life as a Buddhist monk and how I deal with worldly matters. The first part is an interview about me and the work of the Varapunya Meditation Centre in the community. The personal incline reveals much of my life and how Buddhism has helped me. Simona, a student of journalism writes her intension of interview in her appointment message; 'We've met before, ...I came a few times to your house [Varapunya Meditation Centre] for a meditation session.... I am a Journalism student at RGU and as a coursework for university I have to write a feature interview. I thought about interviewing you, if you are interested, because I believe you are a person that would inspire people, that has something to say, or that simply people would be curious to read about.'

Later, I was given a copy of her work and distributed it to a few members to read. They liked it and suggested distributing it more widely. As a result, I have made some changes and edited for clarification but maintained her format of presentation.

Second section of this booklet is questions and answers, which are from two different sources. Recently, Patricia Findlay invited me to speak to pupils on 'Suffering in Buddhism' and 'The Earthquake in Nepal' at Albyn School. The pupils were divided into two groups but both topics were covered. After the talks, some very interesting questions were posed relating to my life as a monk and my experiences in Buddhism. I was amazed at the brilliant questions of them. I could not answer all of them on the day but agreed to answer the rest later, a task which took me almost a month to

complete! Having read the pupils' responses to my talk, I felt touched and grateful for the opportunity to speak to them. Re-reading my text prompted some mulling and inevitable expansion for clarity in contents and facts. I hope it will help students and other interested one to grasp some of the Buddhist principles and their application in daily life.

Secondly, I have also included few other questions and answers that I have encountered on different occasions. They are directly related to the teachings of the Buddha and the practice of meditation. I have answered these to the best of my knowledge and my limited understanding of Buddhist philosophy! I welcome any comments or suggestions. There are still many questions that yet to answer, which I intend to answer them in due future. I hope that this helps to deepen your understanding of the Buddha's teaching and guides you to use in your daily life for a happy life.

I would like to express my appreciation to the pupils of Albyn School and all other contributors for such valuable questions. I also would like to thank Andrew, Dave and Tony for linguistic support and valuable suggestions. My thanks also goes to David and Vilena for publication help. Meanwhile, I would like to pay my gratitude to everyone who have been supporting the Varapunya Meditation Centre. Without public support the centre would not be as successful.

Thank you

Ven. S.M. Sujano
Varapunya Meditation Centre

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The four ways people understand

- 1. One who learns by taking hints**
- 2. One who understands after learning the full details**
- 3. One who has to be led on by systematic instruction.**
- 4. One who just leans by rote.**

Dhamma.Digital

Journey to the West

By Simona

I make my way to Varapunya Meditation Centre to interview Venerable Sujano on a Tuesday evening. This is one of the times of the week when Venerable Sujano opens the door of his flat to all those who are interested in Buddhism and undertaking meditation. He lives in the ground floor flat of a two-storey grey Victorian house, which hosts three flats.

I leave my shoes outside the flat, before I enter. There is a smell of incense and spices. Venerable Sujano is not alone in the flat on this night. There is a woman, who has already arrived at the centre for meditation. She offers a very warm welcome to the centre and asks me if I want a tea, before heading to the kitchen. In the kitchen, I spot a table covered with big bags of rice, spices, and fruits of every kind.

We enter the living room, a shrine, and Venerable Sujano appears. He has smiley eyes behind his glasses. Venerable Sujano invites everybody to come in. The living room is wide but cosy, full of decorative objects belonging to Buddhist culture. The custard-cream walls are almost fully covered with pictures and sacred objects. Yet the room is empty: no telly; no sofa; and no table.

Running along the walls there is a row of chairs at the back of the room. In a corner there is a pile of sitting cushions; a pile of white towels; and a pile of green-covered identical books. These books are called: 'The Chanting Book'. In front of the window there is a sort of small altar. Here, there are a number of Buddha statues showing the

Buddha meditating in the traditional lotus posture. The Buddha statues are of every colour, and of every size. They are displayed in a sort of pyramid fashion; positioned on three different levels. The smallest Buddha Statues are at the front, and the biggest ones are at the back. Venerable Sujano wraps his orange '*Kasaya*' over his left shoulder. He sits next to the main Buddha statue. This Buddha statue is enshrined a little higher than the others so as to show respect to the Lord Buddha.

Venerable Sujano is now thirty six years old (2014). At the age of nineteen, he initially undertook four months of training at a monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal. After four months of training, he became a novice monk. Later, he took his full ordination at the age of twenty years old in Bangkok, Thailand. His formal monastic name in the Nepalese Buddhist community is: Sujankirti Bhante. However he is known more commonly as Venerable Sujano or Ajahn Sujan.

Venerable Sujano grew up in a family of Hindu farmers in a tiny village outside Kathmandu city. He was the fifth of seven children. One day, when he was eighteen years old, he was walking back home from college. He had to pass by a Buddhist temple, Pranidhi Purna Mahavihara. By coincidence, he went to visit the temple where he saw a group of Buddhists preparing a Buddhist flag out of paper to hang around the temple to celebrate the 'Vesak Puja'. 'Vesak Puja' is a commemoration day of the Buddha's: 'birth', 'enlightenment' and 'pari-nirvana' (or final day of rest). Venerable Sujano noticed that and decided to join the group to create Buddhist flags. The Buddhist community (Including a Buddhist Monk) were very grateful to him. They invited him to come back. And so he did, the next day; and the following one again. Venerable Sujano soon embarked upon

and embraced the life of a 'novice monk'. He led this novice life and undertook his novice training, for over a year.

Venerable Sujano states:

"It wasn't easy to follow my wish. I had to go against my family. My father had other plans for me; he was arranging a marriage with a beautiful Nepali girl.

He wanted me to stay. He gave me three reasons: first of all, he didn't want to lose a son working on the farm. The second motive was that in the Hindu culture sons living at home are meant to open the doors of heaven. Finally, in the Nepali culture there is the belief that once the son leaves the house he can't go back to it."

Venerable Sujano further expressed his 'test' to become a novice.

"I managed to get him [my Father] to sign, but I didn't see him again until the day I left Nepal to go to Thailand to complete my ordination. He came to the airport, with two boiled eggs in one hand and a few beans on the other, and wished me a good journey. I am so grateful for that gesture."

Venerable Sujano invites us to sit on a carpet or on a chair and to make ourselves comfortable with a pillow. We get one book each and he invites us to open it at page ninety three.

Venerable Sujano is sitting on a dais. This is covered in an orange cloth next to the altar of Buddha statues. He himself is wearing layers of orange robes. These robes constitute the 'civara', which was given the 'civara' the day he became a Buddhist monk. He adopts a comfortable

posture and chants the first mantra. Timidly, the people in the room start chanting with him, unsure of how to pronounce the unfamiliar Pali words.

Venerable Sujano's voice stands out. However this is not because he is louder than everyone else. It is because he is adopting an overtone chanting technique in order to chant: *“Namo Tassa Bagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa.”* Venerable Sujano chants in such a perfect and harmonic way that it seems as if his chant is made of a multitude of simultaneous voices singing together, forming a pure and complete melody.

The meditation session is organised into two sessions. These two sessions consist of chanting and meditation. The chanting lasts around fifteen minutes and the meditation session follows the chanting. Once the chanting is over, Venerable Sujano strikes a golden gong which is placed on the altar. The gong produces a sound that gathers everything: all the music; all the voices; all the noises and the vibrations of the world.

The Meditation Practice:

During the meditation everyone is trying to maintain the initial position and not to move. However Venerable Sujano is the only one that is actually motionless! He seems like just another one of those statues of the Buddha that is enshrined in, and decorates his living room.

Every now and then Venerable Sujano speaks, guiding you through the meditation. He begins with:

‘bring your attention to the room and to the body. Find a comfortable position. Relax the body and mind, release all tensions and worries. Leave all responsibilities aside and pay mindful attention to

the body. Relax the body find the primary object of concentration to unite the scattered mind.'

You understand the session is over by the song the gong makes when it is struck. Everyone opens their eyes and stretches their legs and arms. Their faces smile, and have a relaxed look as if they had just woken up at the end of a beautiful dream.

Discussion:

The meditation is then followed by a session of discussion on the topic of the day. Everyone is invited to share whatever they feel and experience. Venerable Sujano gives us his advice and his fairest opinion on any questions or issues of concern.

'Metta' Meditation:

At the end of the discussion, Venerable Sujano leads the meditation group to practice: 'loving kindness' or 'metta' meditation'. Metta Meditation consists of sharing positive thoughts to oneself and to every beings. At the end of the session, Venerable Sujano thanks everyone for coming and stands up from the dais. He shows no pain from the effort of maintaining the same position for over an hour.

The Varapunya Meditation Centre:

Venerable Sujano opened his free-cost Varapunya Meditation Centre a couple of years ago with the help of local people. With time he gathered devotees from all kinds of backgrounds.

"...I came to Aberdeen after a fellow monk offered me a position in the temple of the city. I worked almost a year alone. Later, I decided to leave the temple and began this centre."

He continues:

"...Initially, I wanted to have some quiet solitude but due to demand and support from people I opened this centre. My aim now is to engage with the community regardless of background, and share my wisdom and understanding. It doesn't really matter how much I can do it..."

Venerable Sujano shows me the most simple of smiles.

The centre offers classes on Tuesday evening for beginners, and meditation classes on Friday evening and Sunday morning. It also offers daily evening chanting. Venerable Sujano also visits: schools; hospitals; and homes on call. He wishes to establish a proper centre so people can turn to the centre when they are experiencing suffering in their life.

I ask Venerable Sujano: *"was it hard to integrate in such a different country?"*

Venerable Sujano replies:

"Not at all. It is easy for people to criticise customs, which are different from the ones they are used to, but I think that Buddhism helped me to avoid doing that. It shaped my views and made me realise we need to adjust ourselves to different 'realities, and accept things the way they are.'

Venerable Sujano further gives guidance to find happiness:

'I also understood that the key for happiness in life is to understand the emotional responses we get from things. If you know what they are and how they will

affect you, you can automatically be able to overcome them.”

At the end of my interview, I thank Venerable Sujano for giving me the opportunity to discover more about him and his background. He nods and his 'almond-shaped eyes' and the two thin lines of his mouth curve into a smile.

“May you be at peace! May you be happy!”



Question 1

What is Buddhism?



Buddhism, one of the oldest faiths/religions in the world, began some 2600 years ago in the Indian continent. The term 'Buddhism' is a western translation of '*Buddhadhamma*', which simply means the teachings of the Buddha. It is based on 45 years' teaching by the Buddha. 'Buddha' means an enlightened being, who possess three qualities; Purity, Compassion and Wisdom. It also means realizing the truth about the way things really are.

One of the most remarkable ideas in Buddhism is that of being 'open for criticism'. We are invited to test in our own experience its Truths, to find peace, to work toward Enlightenment. The Buddha's discussions with critics have been faithfully recorded and passed down. They reveal patient explanations of his discoveries and analysis of his critics' beliefs.

Some people say that Buddhism is not a religion, and some say it is a religion and in some ways it is a way of life. Buddhism encourages freethinking on the basis of universal truth. It is a religion of self-help, inspiring every individual to examine it before putting it into practice. Its ideas and views are compatible with modern science, valuable and robust.

Buddhism speaks about the problems and sufferings of life and encourages us to overcome them through individual effort and realization. It doesn't rely on superstition or an outside invisible power.

Buddhism believes that everything in the world as commonly perceived is imperfect, unsatisfactory. This can be overcome by following the teaching of the Buddha - by living

a moral life and practicing 'insight meditation'. The human mind has the ability to watch its own workings! It is called *kammattana*, a meditation. There are two kinds of meditation; concentration or calming mind (*samatha*) and insight meditation. Insight meditation, called *vipassana*, begins in the simplest way by sitting quietly, attending to a simple sensation such as the air we breathe passing the nostrils. Distracting thoughts arise spontaneously – bringing the attention back to the breathing has the effect of 'calming the mind'.

Today, Buddhism is practiced by about 500 million people around the world, mostly in China, Bhutan, Myanmar, Cambodia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Sikkim, Singapore, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Taiwan, Tibet, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. It is also rapidly growing in the West. In Britain alone there are over 130,000 Buddhists and about 400 Buddhist organizations. In Germany, Switzerland, USA and Australia also, Buddhism is rapidly growing.

Tiratana; Triple Gem

The main factors of the Buddhism are; the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, also known as the triple gem (*Tiratana*). The Buddha is the founder of this dispensation and his teachings are known Dhamma. All the teachings are collected in '*Tipitaka*', the three baskets of scriptures. It is a Buddhist scripture recorded in ancient language called '*Pali*'. The *Sangha* means a community of his followers, particularly ordained disciples, who are the heirs of the Dhamma.

Question 2

Who was the Buddha?

The Buddha means the enlightened one or fully awakened having realised the four Noble Truths (*ariya sacca*); truth of unsatisfactoriness or problem, truth of cause of it, truth that it can be end and the truth that there is a path to end it. One who knows things that should be known through his own tireless efforts, mind has absolutely purified free from passions and pleasures, clinging and attachment, and the purest quality of compassion towards all beings realising how helpless and vulnerable beings are in the ocean of cycle of birth and death, wise in guiding people to be liberated are the qualities of the Buddha.

The Buddha is not a proper name nor monopolised by any particular groups but a special title for one who has attained enlightenment, variously called 'one who knows what should be known' or 'fully liberated one'. It is said that every one of us has the 'Buddha nature' and are all working towards realising it in different ways. Furthermore, the Buddha was not a 'god' or a 'son of a God' or a 'messenger' but just a person who has by hard work by living a generous life, controlled mind and cultivation of true realisation discovered the way to enlightenment.

The historical Buddha lived originally as 'Prince *Siddhattha*' (Skt. *Siddhartha*), the son of the King Suddhodana, a chief, later the king, of the Sakka *Janapada*, the country was called *Kapilavatthu*. His birth is still debated but the widely accepted year is in 623 B.C. (died 543 BC) in Lumbini, near the city of Kapilavatthu present day Nepal (See Q.40). He was married with Princess Yosodhara and had a son, Rahula. Despite living a pleasurable royal life and

entertainments that he was provided, he went into deep isolation and tried to rationalise things. Simple popular questions that he tried to question himself were why do human have to be born, face sickness and finally death. Finally, in search for the truth He gave up the royal life at the age of 29 to study the realities of life. After 6 years of ascetic practice at the age of 35 He attained 'enlightenment' and was known as the Buddha, the 'awakened one' ever since. He lived for forty-five years, sharing and teaching his findings, which was later known as 'Buddhism', the teachings of the Buddha.

Question 3

Is there a Buddhist Scripture like - Bible?

The collection of Buddha's teaching is called Tipitaka (Skt Tripitaka), which is also known as Pali canon. The Tipitaka is exclusive to the Theravada Buddhist Schools but also corresponds with other schools of Buddhism.

The Buddha called his teachings '*dhammavinaya*', which means 'teachings and moral conduct'. The forty-five years of his teachings known as '*buddhadhamma*', the teachings of the Buddha, thus -ism of the enlightened one. His teachings were not written but memorised for few centuries. After his funeral at the age of eighty, in due course the five hundred well versed noble disciples assembled and collected his teachings and moral rules. They were collected and recited together by all monks as a form of acceptance and preserved with a consensus that 'what had been said will be included and preserved, and what had not been said will be

excluded' from the collection. This collection later known as the 'Tipitaka, which is the Buddhist Scripture.

Tipitaka means a set of three baskets of collections, which consists of Vinaya pitaka-the Basket of discipline, which contains monastic rules and regulations, Sutta pitaka-the Basket of discourses, a records of Buddha's sermons and discussions and Abhidhamma pitaka- the Basket of higher teachings, also known as Buddhist psychology or a Basket of systematised doctrine.

The *Tipitaka* is written in Pali language, a language that preserves the teachings of the Buddha. There are much scholarly discussion on whether the Buddha had spoken in this language but believed that the language was used by the people of Magadhi. This language is a scriptural language and has not got own alphabets, thus rely on other language. Almost all the scriptures are translated into English depending on their understanding of Pali language and their insight into the teachings of the Buddha. The Scripture, furthermore, is not there for veneration nor worship but to study, practice according to instructions and finally liberate. It is just a road map to walk on the path to liberation.

'Ananda, what does the order of the Sangha expect from me?

I have taught the dhamma (truth) without making any distinction as exoteric and esoteric. with regard to the truth, the Tathagata has nothing like the closed fist of a teacher.'
(D.II:100)

Question 4

What is the Buddha's teachings?

The Buddha's teaching is called the 'Dhamma' (Skt:dharma), which has multitude meanings but simply the natural principle of truth and the teachings of the Buddha. The beauty of his teachings is interlinks one to another up to the enlightenment. There is no conflict in his teachings but supports each other like a net.

The essence of the Buddha's teaching is the Four Noble Truth (Ariyasacca);

- a. Dukkha sacca: the truth of unsatisfactoriness
- b. Samudaya sacca: the truth of the origin
- c. Nirodha sacca: the truth of cessation
- d. Magga sacca: the truth of the path.

This four noble truth can be understood simply 'there is a suffering and the way to cease the sufferings'. The nature of suffering is inevitable. It is a natural phenomena. The way how to deal with the suffering is Buddhism. First three principles are natural existence. The Buddha just discovered the way to deal with it. The way is magga sacca, the truth of the path also known as 'middle path or Eight-fold Noble path.

The path classified into moral conduct, calming the mind and development of wisdom. The basic moral conduct according to Buddhism is five precepts (panca sila); not killing or harming other beings, not taking which is not given, avoiding sexual misconducts, wrong speech and not taking things that deludes mind. The calming the mind

section is the most important part of the Buddhism. This is the heart of Buddhist practice.

There are two kinds of practice; concentration (*samatha*) and insight meditation (*vipassana*) (see question no 34). Concentration leads to calmness of mind and free from worldly distractions; sensual pleasures, ill-will, laziness, sleepiness and doubts. *Vipassana* develops inner silent and ability to understand things as they really are, the wisdom to cut through cycle of birth and death by realising five aggregates; matter, feeling, perception, formation and consciousness (*rupanama*).

Kamma (Skt: Karma) plays big part of the teachings but not the part in Buddhist practice. Kamma does not mean simply an action but intentional action in Buddhism. Intentional action defines destiny; wholesome leads happy and unwholesome leads unhappy states. Buddha did not encourage hold your hands and wait for the results but change through your tireless, honest and determined effort from present moment. Present is a result of past and future will be effect of now. Liberation begins and realised here and now not in the future.

Therefore, the Buddha taught live a simple life avoiding any wrong doing but performing wholesome actions and realise the liberation through development of the wisdom.

'One is the path that leads to worldly gain;
and the path that leads to deathlessness-
eternal bliss, is the other'.'

Question 5

Which branch of Buddhism do you belong to?

The Buddha taught a way to free ourselves from *dukkha*, 'suffering'. This 'way' is known as 'middle path', which is fundamental. It consists of morality; right speech, right action and right livelihood, concentration; right effort, concentration and mindfulness, and wisdom; right view and thought (*Sila, Samadhi and Panna*). He did not teach any 'schools' or 'branches'. However, variations developed over time; his disciples developed different 'views' and 'ways of practice'. This divided the Buddha's teaching into different branches. The spread of Buddhism in the Far East in a variety of cultures gave it various flavours. Nowadays, there are three main Buddhist schools/branches:

(i.) Theravada.

The Theravada (or the Vehicle of the Elders) is believed to be the oldest and best preserved teaching of the Lord Buddha. The Theravada school scriptures are known collectively as the '*Tipitaka*', three baskets of scriptures.

(ii.) Mahayana

The Mahayana (or Great Vehicle) is believed to have developed as a result of the work of famous Buddhist monks, a few hundred years after the Lord Buddha passed away. There are many schools within this branch. Not all the schools interlink. One of the most famous Mahayana schools is Zen.

(iii.) Vajrayana

The Vajrayana is believed to have been part of, and developed out of Mahayana. It is believed that it developed

as a branch about five hundred years after the Lord Buddha passed away. It is dominant in Tibetan and the most famous present monk from this branch is the Dalai Lama.

All schools teach similar doctrines but their practices may be different. There is no conflict between these schools and they often work together. Indeed, where Buddhism has displaced local traditions, monks encourage their continuation.

I am ordained into the Theravada branch or tradition of the Buddha's teaching. I practice according to this branch. The Theravada is the dominant tradition in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Sri Lanka.

Question 6

Was the Buddha a God?

'The Buddha was not a God, so why is His teaching a religion and why do Buddhist worships Him like God? '

The question that often is asked from scholars and new students of Buddhist studies. According to terminological term Religion means any faith or method of worship or the belief in a god or gods who made the world and who could control everything which happens in the world. Buddhism is not religion in this respect but we can compromise with concept of religion as similar to other religions. Buddhism also places emphasis on the base of Faith. However, it should be understood that Buddhism does not stop on faith. Faith and wisdom is the base of Buddhism. Faith, Saddha, generally refers to the enlightenment of the Buddha and law of kamma not on a supreme being. On this basis, probably,

mostly present Buddhism can be regarded as a religion.

Then arises a question what is Buddhism? Buddhism is the name given to the Teaching of Gautama Buddha but usually called by his followers the Buddha Dhamma or Buddha Sasana (See Q.1 & 2). Whilst Western observers may debate whether Buddhism should be considered as a philosophy or as a psychology it may be noted that his teachings are not so different from the primary tenets of the world's main religions.

Originally Buddhism was an applied philosophy. It deals with the problems of life or suffering and how to solve them in the light of the law of cause and effect. After the passing away (*Parinibbana*) of the Buddha the Buddhists out of their reverence to him as a teacher who had shown the path of liberation began to deify him and Buddhism began to seem to have most characteristics of a religion. This may be the religious tendency of human nature. Human beings are weak and always look up to something supernatural for refuge. If there is nothing of the sort in their religion, they will conceive it and take refuge in it at times of emergency. Buddhism and Buddhists are not exception.

There seems to be no damage in believing in something supernatural as long as the believer get some benefit from it though the benefit may be only psychological. Man has both emotion and intelligence. A religion should have something supernatural to satisfy emotion and something intellectual or philosophical to satisfy reasoning. In conclusion, Buddhists pay respect to the Buddha statue to show gratitude and venerate him as the great teacher rather than the God or worship him as a god.

Question 7

How hard is a monk's life?

A life as a monk is very simple. They normally live in a temple, chanting, meditating and study. They do not go to work to earn money to live their life. These are some of the basic facts that is misunderstood partly. Monk's life is very hard. Once decided to become a monk, one has to go through proper procedures and systems. The applicant is required to have consensus from parents or dependants and put application of willing to ordain as a monk (*bhikkhu*) or novice (*samanera*); Fully ordained nun (*bhikkhuni*) or novice nun (*samaneri*).

Once the application is accepted candidate has to leave family life and home. Make a vow to overcome sensual pleasures and live on other's generosity. He trains to restrain from any unwholesome activities. He needs to train to control his senses, physical parts; hand moving, feet moving and body moving. He controls his speech and abides with the monastic rules and teachings. He learns not to despise nor envy other and live a contented life, cultivating mind and wisdom. Meanwhile, a monk need to work for the society, regardless of background and leading people to a path that cultivates happiness.

Responsibilities:

Therefore, there are three main responsibilities that a monk should consider regularly; personal development, service for relatives and responsibility for the society. A monk has to learn both moral values and teachings of the Buddha. He has to practice in accordance with that and develop wisdom to follow the right path for the liberation.

There are 227 rules that a monk should follow (311 rules for fully ordained nun, 10 rules for novice monk and nun). There is no meals after lunch (mid-day meal), no entertainments, wear robes at all the time, perform ceremonies and teachings etc.

He has also got a responsible to preserve and protect the teachings of the Buddha. A monk has a responsibility to lead his relatives to live a happy life too. He needs to guide them to live a life that is free from any unwholesome actions.

Lastly, service for the society is the most hard and difficult for a monk. There are many different kinds of people; attached to their existence, views, concepts, philosophies, cultures and mentalities. Monks have to treat equally to all and exercise loving-kindness and compassion towards them. As a monk we always have to consider the society before us and we rely on their generous support. Any support should be appreciated and highly respected.

Monks in the West

Buddhist monks' life in the West is different in many aspects; culture, religion and language. A monk has to learn to accept the existing culture, adapt into the society and learn their language. Learning other culture and language is not easy job nor understanding people from different background. It takes a lot of patience, open minded and ability to learn to blend into the community. Some of the monastic rules are compromised such as cloth, shows and foods; and new existing cultures adopted for example Sunday services, giving sermons in English or language of that country.

Benefit of a monk

A monk could receive these benefits. First of all, a monk does not go to work for earning but rely on people's

generous offering four requisites; food, accommodation, cloth and medicine. Secondly, a monk will have an opportunity to study teachings of the Buddha, practice in accordance with the teachings and attainment of *nibbana*, a state of freedom from greed, hatred and delusion.

Question 8

How do you know who is a novice or a monk?

A Novice monk is known as *Samanera* and *Bhikkhu* is a fully ordained Monk, generally known as 'monk'. They are very important body of Buddhist dispensation. Novice monk are training to be a fully ordained monk. There are two kinds of novices: any age and below 20 years of age. Someone who is over 20 years of age and have strong faith to ordain as a monk to pursue new life, he still need to ordain as a novice first. The novice-hood may last only for few minutes. Second type of novice is basically according to Buddhism 20 years of age is a mature age to make own decisions. Nevertheless, a child can not be a novice until the age of 10 and he requires full parental consensus.

A novice is an ordained man under twenty year of age. He tends to look smaller in size and boyish in look, but even the size and the look are not certain either. Some novices may look bigger and taller than monks because some novices may remain novices even after 20 years of age. If in activities, we can understand it better because monks lead and sit in front or head and novices follow or sit after monk.

A novice and a monk look exactly the same in physical appearance. So one cannot tell the difference on them. The best way to know an ordained man's status is to ask him.

Question 9

Why do monks wear robes of different colour? Is there any special meaning?

There are different kinds and colours of robes depending on schools of Buddhism. In Theravada Buddhism, one of the schools, alone there are different sects, but the robes which monks use to wear is almost the same. This is an important fact for the Buddhist and other.

Robes of monk according to Thai Buddhism there have mostly two colours: saffron colour and dark-brown colour. It does not mean there are not any other colours. There are monks who uses dark-pink colour as in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal and also some use brown colour.

In former days very difficult to get the cloths. So monks had to collect many different coloured pieces of cloths. It would not be appropriate to wear fashionable coloured piece of cloth. Therefore, the cloth need to dye to make a single colour. There were not readymade piece of cloth nor set of chemical dye system available for monastics. As a result, monks used to dye their robes with roots of plants for a colour on the robes. The colour usually came out as light saffron or greenish yellow; later on the bright saffron or greenish yellow; later on the bright saffron chemical or dye was imported from Europe and used until today.

The robes of dark-brown colour are dyed with the water obtained from boiling the hard wood of jackfruit tree. It is believed that this dye and method of dying practiced at the time of Buddha. But now a day's chemical dye of this colour is available.

Present time the two colours have become the identity marks of the two orders of monks in Thailand. The saffron is

for the Mahanikayas schools and the dark-brown is for the Dhammayuts School. This is not fixed rule. Many monks of Mahanikaya order wear dark-brown robes but it is the matter of personal preference. Later in order to bring unity and harmonious sights two coloured mixed which generated new coloured robe known as 'Royal Colour'. The colour is very close to dark-brown and expected to wear in Royal ceremonies and activities by both schools. For other countries like a Ceylon, Burma even in Nepal use dark-pink (Near Red) colour.

At the present time we can see three colours are known widely in the Buddhism that are Saffron, Dark-brown and Dark-pink colour.



Question 10

Why can't women be ordained as a monk in Buddhist?

The teachings of the Buddha is equal to all sexes. Both genders have similar qualities to attain the liberation depending their perfection and dedication. Men has not got special place but equal. It is a matter of tradition and recognition that appeared different. There were many females ordained into Buddha's dispensation. They were venerated and also liberated. Even in present day, every Buddhist countries, there are female ordained nuns. The status may different according to the society they are living. A female ordained woman on the same status with a monk is called a Bhikkhuni. This Buddhist term will be adopted throughout this writing.

During the Buddha's time there was the order of

Bhikkhuni and widely practiced. According to the disciplinary rule a Bhikkuni, there is a rule that one must attend in two ordination procedures; assembly of Bhikkhunis and assembly of monks or Bhikkhus. It is believed that since the order of Bhikkuni in Theravada school had been extinct for more than a thousand years, it is therefore not possible to have for a female candidate to be fully ordained in an assembly of Bhikkunis. Subsequently, it also difficult to ordain into assembly of monks. As a result, most of Theravada traditions do not accept nor ready to act on behalf of the Buddha to fully ordain women, yet. As a result, female devotees who want to practice Buddhism in Theravada Buddhist school by ordaining as a fully ordained still appeared to be difficult. Nevertheless, there is an option of becoming a Maechee (in Thailand), Silamata (in Sri Lanka), Thilase (in Myanmar) and Anagarika (In Nepal) etc.

There are, on the other hand, many Buddhist scholars; monks, nuns and lay people, believe and support the possibility to revive the ordination. One of the famous arguments is that there is an unbroken *Bhikkhuni* link still being practice in China. Secondly, there have been a lot of canonical debate possibilities of such revival. There are few organisations that fully support the concept and gradually on the progress. It will take time to be accepted fully or may not last for long in the future. It is matter of choice and support they will acquire. There are few ordinations on two above reasons. Another possible way out for a women aspirant is to go to Mahayana School to be ordained under that Buddhist order of Bhikkhunis, which is also believed to have come down along the continuous line of Bhikkhunis since the Buddha's time.

Question 11

What is a Buddhist temple like?

A Buddhist temple is normally called a *Vihara*, which means a place of rest or a place of learning. In Thai language it is called '*Wat*'. It is also known as a monastery because monks live at the temple. Normally, the Buddhist temples are divided into three sections; a shrine, the monks' residence and a place for learning and resting. Important things at the temple are; the Buddha image; a consecrated area; Buddha's relics or Pagoda, Bodhi tree and ordained monks. A lay Buddhist can have a Buddha statue in a separate place as a shrine for their daily devotions or Buddha's picture placed on a wall on which they pay their devotion or offerings. Buddhists would not treat Buddha statues as an ornament for living room nor garden decoration. They always give highest place to the Buddha and displays out of honour and respect. The Buddha image should be treated respectfully. It is a part of reverence and should not be neglected. It is also a part of individual training.

The Buddhist centres in the UK are small compared to Asia and America. It is also not easy to establish a proper temple in Scotland. So, Buddhist temples in the UK generally are residential houses which have been converted. Monks also live there and Buddhist activities take place such as chanting, meditation and classes. They normally have a small shrine room with the Buddha statue, which is also a place to perform ceremonies. Some of the basic etiquettes while visiting the temple are; in the shrine, no shoes are allowed and legs are not supposed to point at the statue. Mostly, people sit on the floor to chant, meditate or to participate in ceremonies. The rest is just as normal and

everyone can join in ceremonies.

Simply, Buddhist temple is a place where Buddhist monks live, who runs classes and provide free services to everyone regardless of background. We hope to establish a proper Buddhist Temple in the future around Aberdeen or Aberdeenshire, where people can enjoy Buddhist environment and attend classes; theory and practice.



I do not teach that long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in heaven are to be obtained by prayer or by vows. If one could be obtained by Prayer or by Vows, who would not do it. A noble one wishes to have them ...rather follow the path; generosity, moral life and cultivate wholesome cause, of life that conducive to them.

- the Buddha, AN:5;43

Question 12

What do Buddhists believe?

This is one of the hardest question to answer, partly because there is not such a belief system in Buddhism as other faith groups explain and holding on to. The Buddha encouraged people to study, reflect, think, apply in daily life and if beneficial to oneself and others then believe. He said 'do not believe merely because of tradition, hearsay, books etc.(see detail 'Kalama sutta; AN65)'

Saddha generally translated as 'believe or faith' in Buddhism does not mean dogmatic belief. To believe in Buddhism, however, one needs to develop an understanding of 'the enlightenment of the Buddha', the law of *kamma* and achievement of ultimate goal. *Saddha* is the first confidence developed through individual study, analysis and investigation. It is not just a superficial understanding of the teachings and gain faith nor just analysis or investigation but requires dedication and determination to put them into practice and realised by own practical application, which does not harm to one self and others.

Buddhists' fundamental belief is cause and effect 'what goes around comes around' and 'things are inter-connected'. Every things are conditioned and conditioned phenomenon are subject to change and vanish. Nothing last forever, everything changes.

Nature of change is called '*anicca*', a nature of impermanence. Inability to accept the changing nature causes dissatisfaction in life (*dukkha*). Changing thing cannot be a permanent entity (*atta*). Many people find hard to grasp 'non-self' due to clinging (*tanha*) on to sensual pleasure, views, perception and rites ritual cultures in which they brought up.

It takes thorough study, analysis and investigation before one absorbs the idea of non-self, a state of *nibbana*. The *nibbana* is like a sign post to the destination, a state of unborn, unconditioned and completely extinguished mind from greed, hatred and delusion. The state can only be achieved through inner realisation, a realisation from experiential level rather than just philosophical or speculation. Thus insight meditation, *vipassana*, is the important teachings of the Buddha that leads to the complete realisation and liberation.

Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda, in his book 'Food for the Thinking mind', gives three aims of practising Buddhism:

1. to gain peace and happiness in this life,
2. to have a contented and fortunate life hereafter, and
3. to achieve the ultimate aim of life; everlasting happiness and supreme bliss.

The Buddha, Bhikkhu Kantipalo writes in 'Buddhism explained', taught methods which one might apply to one's own life and speedily come to see the benefits of their practice here and now. In fact, the whole of Buddhist teaching is one mass of flexible methods appropriate severally for different times, places and most important, for different temperaments of persons.

Question 13

What was it like living in Nepal compared to Aberdeen?

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. It is a mountainous Himalayan agricultural country. Its currency is known as rupees. One pound is equivalent to about 150 rupees. 150 rupees is just over a half of the minimum standard wage for a day's labour. Nepal has not got electricity 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In winter and the rainy seasons even less than 12-14 hours of electricity a day. Nepal is a cold country but the people do not have a heating system in their houses. Social services are poor or in fact do not exist. There is also no good transport system.

Nevertheless, people are very friendly and there is a sense of real community. Education is valued as an opportunity and a chance in life. There is no child benefit and children may have to work in their early childhood due to family poverty. Teachers are highly respected for their hard work educating students.

Here in Aberdeen, social services are very good; electricity is not a problem. There is gas and electricity for heating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There is a good transport, communication and healthcare system. Education here in Aberdeen is compulsory. Children here in Aberdeen are very lucky to have good schools and receive a good education. Many children in Nepal have not got the chance to go to school.

In my case, it is also cold here in Aberdeen. Nevertheless, since I arrived I feel warm welcoming and felt this is a place I wanted to be. I was invited to visit Aberdeen for many times but I never made it. Once I visited fell in love

and lived here. I am a Buddhist monk and it is obvious to be stand out on the streets due to my colour of robe and design of wearing. As a result, there were few unwelcoming attitudes that I had to experience but now such attitude has changed. I feel more safe and comfortable to be here in Aberdeen now.

On 12th May 2013 at the Aberdeen City Councillor's interfaith service held at the St. Nicholas Kirk in Aberdeen Venerable Sujana said in his reading that;

It has been 2556 years since the Buddha passed away but his message of peace, compassion and loving kindness have spread around the world. It was introduced to Scotland almost a century ago. Today, Buddhism is not here in Aberdeen to convert anyone from one religion to another but definitely helping one to convert from misery to happiness, hate to love and compassion, enemies to friendships through individual mental clarity and understanding, and with a vision of helping each other to build better society both physically and mentally.

Question 14

Who introduced you to Buddhism?

I was born in Nepal, the country where the historical Buddha was born. The Buddha is also regarded as a national hero of Nepal, who taught the 'message of peace' and liberation. In reality, it could be argued that I, and also all Nepalese people automatically should be Buddhist by right of birth. This is not the case. Buddhism was not only suppressed, but was also politically neglected and overlooked in Nepal for many centuries. Buddhists were not allowed to perform Buddhist activities or celebrate until the restoration of the Kingship in the 1950s. At that time, the country reformed. It did not become a democratic nation until sometime later. Although Buddhists could perform their rites and celebrations, Buddhism was again repressed politically by announcing 'Nepal is a Hindu nation'. In primary school text books, as a result, there was only a chapter on the life of the Buddha as an exemplary person of Nepal, who had contributed for the benefit of the world. However, it was not a part of Religious Education. Therefore, I knew about the Buddha and his life since an early age, but did not know it as a religion. Hinduism, a 'belief system' is the official religion of Nepal, .

From 1950 AD, Nepal went through great political changes. People could freely choose to be Buddhist or any other religion. Buddhism was re-introduced, reviving age-old home-grown traditions. Buddhist monks began to establish temples, known as '*viharas*' in different villages. One of the viharas was established in our village under the leadership of first Theravada Buddhist monks who had entered Nepal in

the 19th century. I have vivid memories of visiting the vihara on different occasions since I was very young. In particular, I remember going to the vihara few times, with a close relative who believed in the Buddha's teaching. However, I was not attracted towards Buddhism at that time.

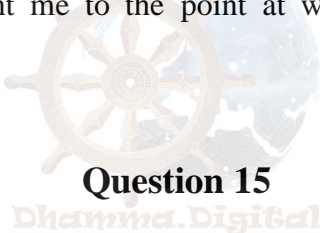
I encountered Buddhism seriously, much later, accidentally, during my college life. I am grateful for the great support from the many noble friends, monks and nuns who have assisted me on this path. They educated me about the Buddha and his teaching. My early visits to a Buddhist centre fascinated me and I am still over-awed by the vastness of Lord Buddha's teaching. My first Buddhist practice was the 'observation of the eight precepts' on the 'day of Vesak'. The Vesak day is a celebration of Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death in April/May. I first undertook this observation of the eight precepts when I was about 18 years old. The practice was introduced to me by a friend whom I met in the vihara on the second day of my visit. During the following days, I visited the vihara almost every single day and began to study Buddhism seriously. Gradually, I learned that Buddhism has a lot to offer and found that I had many things to learn!

I still remember thinking that I had been practising Hinduism since I was very young but it was just a matter of participating in rituals; going to the temple, paying respect, and so on. There was only a Hindu Book on 'The life history of the Lord Shiva', which was read out chapter a day to the family once a year for a whole month. I had been reading this life history since I was 10 years old. Meanwhile, the rest of the scriptures were kept for the priests. There seemed to be no access to these scriptures for anyone else.

Socially and politically Hinduism appeared to be imposed on Nepalese. There was no choice. Similarly, there was a time when I joined a Christian movement in the village; it did not satisfy me much.

When I began with Buddhism, I felt that there were so many things to study and learn. I wanted to master all of it. Buddhism is indeed open to everyone and one can ask unlimited questions. This enquiry (*Dhamma Vicaya*) still fascinates me today.

It is you yourself who is important in Buddhism, not an outside 'God' or creator. This quality of the Buddha's teaching inspired me and encouraged me to continue on this path. My enthusiasm to study about the Lord Buddha and his teachings brought me to the point at which I find myself today.



Question 15

Dhamma.Digital

Is the Buddhism forced on children or do they have a choice?

Buddhism never encourages force. It does not see itself in competition with other faiths. It encourages people to study, investigate and practice.

There are two kinds of Buddhists; ordained monks and lay people. Daily practices are different to both groups. Monks, Sangha, are simply people who seek a situation where they can work full-time toward enlightenment. No-one is ever forced to believe or follow Buddhism. On the other

hand, the Buddha's teachings are an invitation to 'come and see'. It encourages people to study what is being said, carefully investigate the teachings and experience it for themselves. After thorough investigation, if one feels it is right and helpful for oneself and for others, then one is encouraged to keep practicing. If one feels that it is not right then they should just leave it. Buddhism is open to everyone and it's the individual's choice.

Further, one can become a Buddhist at any time and also leave the religion at any time. Similarly, a man can become a monk or nun at any time with the help of a group of monks or nuns and can leave monkhood at any time. It is entirely an individual's choice. For example, I was not a born Buddhist but I have chosen this path. Meanwhile, I never tried to persuade my parents and relatives to become a Buddhists. It was my choice, although it was not easy to get permission from them, so their choice to follow as they feel comfortable. Later some of them practice Buddhism after they have seen good changes on me. Technically, anyone who observes the Five Precepts (Refraining from harming /taking thing that is not given/ sexual misconduct / bad speech / use of drink or drugs) can call herself or himself a Buddhist.

'Mindfulness is not only for Buddhists but for all who endeavour to master the mind that is so hard to control and who earnestly wish to develop its latest faculties of greater strength and greater happiness.'

Question 16

How do you become a Buddhist?

Buddhists are the followers of the Buddha. A Buddhist simply means 'one who has accepted the 'Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha' as their guiding or refuge. There are two kinds of Buddhists; ordained as a monk or nun (See question no:6) and lay people.

Buddhists, in general, are trying to live and practice in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha at least practicing five precepts. Becoming a Buddhist is very simply by taking refuge in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*. The traditional way of becoming a Buddhist is to approach a monk or monastic order and request for taking refuge and observation of five precepts. One would recite homage to the Buddha, take a refuge and observation of five precepts. So they recite;

Homage to the Buddha, noble and perfectly enlightened one.

I go for the Buddha as my guidance.

I go for the dhamma as my guidance.

I go for the sangha as my guidance.

For the Second time... For the third time...

Lastly observing a five precepts, which are observing a precept of training not to take life, not to take things which is not given to you, not to have a sexual misconducts, not to speak untruth, harsh words, gossips and not to take things that clouds mind.

In case of becoming a Buddhist by ordination in the dispensation than one requires to follow systematic procedure (see question no 6).

Furthermore, one is not required to be a Buddhist to study or practice Buddhism. There is no restriction that one cannot study or practice according to Buddhism if he/she does not convert to it.

Question 17

How old were you when you first believed in Buddhism?

I was not born Buddhist; I was born into a Hindu family. However, I knew the Buddha through the presence of his statue in the middle of the village and the Buddhist temple just outside the main village gate. I studied his short biography in primary school. I was about 18 or 19 years old when I began to believe in Buddhism.

In Nepal, normally, people do not believe in the Lord Buddha's teachings nor respect him. This is in spite of the fact that Buddha was born in Nepal. Since I first encountered Buddhism, I visited the temple almost every day and learnt chanting and meditation from the nuns at the temple. Its vastness of wisdom amazed me and I wanted to learn more about it.

My enthusiasm significantly increased, and my interest to study Buddhism also increased after I attended a ten-day silent meditation retreat. It was very hard at the beginning but as things went on, it became more and more beautiful. Later, I became a novice monk in the temple to learn more.

Buddhism is about learning rather than believing. The Buddha himself said, do not believe before making a clear investigation. It is an ocean of knowledge. The more I learned about it, the more I found how innocent I became. There is still a lot to learn. Put simply, I am a student of Buddhism and I am always learning new things and how to apply the teachings in my daily life. In conclusion, it is not believing but learning which is essential in Buddhism no matter when you start.

Question 18

How has Buddhism helped you in your life?

Buddhism has helped me in many different respects. It has changed my view and how I look at the world. I am very content with it. It has also taught me how to deal with different situations and issues.

I have found that the Buddha's teaching is about developing 'the path'; to deal with issues or problems, *the path out of suffering*. So, I like the concept of: 'it is not a problem with "that" which the issue is; but how to deal with it.' The way is the Buddha's teachings. The teachings of the Buddha has also helped me to value, accept and respect other people for who they are, their opinions and ideas. This is as opposed to *judging*; the business of approving what I am in favour of or rejecting what I dislike.

It has also helped me to learn to appreciate things 'as they are' and feel grateful to just 'be'. We are all inter-connected and inter-related. The Lord Buddha's teachings have taught me to be more humble, tolerant, and kind to other

people.

Similarly, the Lord Buddha's teachings, have taught me not to be 'over-involved' with achievement and happiness. They have also taught me not to give up easily, adequate effort should be implemented.

One of the main ideas or concept in the Buddha's teachings is to learn to know a problem at its root [*Hetu*] and to find every possible way to deal with it. Once we have 'right understanding', I am sure everything will be clear. Nevertheless if you cannot 'deal' with a problem or 'solve it', despite your best ability then just 'let it be'.

There are many things that are beyond our reach or abilities. Sometimes we just need to leave it as it is. Aim to come to terms with change and live with the change. I have found this very helpful in dealing with my life.



Reformed Buddhists.

Question 19

It is said that Buddhist monks have no possessions. Do you miss having possessions?

Once you become a monk, you have to leave everything behind; home and family. A monk in Buddhism is called '*Bhikkhu*' for male and '*Bhikkhuni*' for a female; both mean 'one who has seen a danger in this cycle of birth and death' and has given up living as a house-holder for the spiritual life. They rely on other's generosity. As a monk, always have to rely on others' generous offering of food and other necessary things. Similarly, as a monk we have to appreciate what has been given. We do not complain, though you do not like something. However, a monk can decline if something is not necessary or conducive.

Technically our possessions as a monk are three pieces of cloth and a begging bowl. (Monks do not in fact beg!). Monasteries are built by lay Buddhists and maintained by them. A Monk's job is to stay and teach people to live a moral life, having a controlled and pure mind, free from greed, hatred and ignorance.

It should be noted that there are four gifts or types of generosity that people can offer to a monk; food, robes, accommodation and medicine. These are basic needs that people offer to receive 'merit'. These requisites are only meant for the monks to use to further the spiritual life. They are not for personal enjoyment or indulgence. In return, monks will offer moral guidance and insight training in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha. Further, the monks are not 'beggars' but are 'alms-mendicants'.

Supporting monks is how lay Buddhists thank them for preserving and teaching the Buddha's doctrine. There is a mutually beneficial relationship between monks and lay people.

Their daily living has changed greatly since the Buddha's day. For simply practical reasons, monks do handle money, may have their own bank accounts, mobile phones, computers and so on. In the west there are not very many lay Buddhists to support monks and their culture. It would be very difficult for a monk to live according to the original manner. Therefore, there have been skilful adaptation.

I have been living in a west for ten years. Since the establishment of the Varapunya Meditation Centre in Aberdeen, I have accumulated many 'personal' possessions. The important factor is to avoid *attachment* to possessions. The centre depends entirely people's generous donations and support. Income from courses and other activities at the centre and donations are carefully used to run the centre.

Every artefact of the centre and the centre itself might appear to be mine. However, in reality I am just a caretaker. I maintain and use them appropriately, with gratitude.

In short, having possessions is not a problem, in my understanding. It is the *attachment* to the material possessions, which is the problem. - I remember, on behalf of my father I distributed his heritage to my brothers. According to Nepalese custom, daughters do not inherit once they are married. I did not take anything myself. That made me feel free and happy. I did not have any worries about possessions. Unfortunately, a year later, I had to claim a piece of heritage back to my name due to domestic reasons. So now I do have a possession but I do not feel happy about it. I will be free

once again when I give that possession away. Unfortunately, both my parents have quite recently passed away.

So, to return to the question; do I miss having possession? I do not miss them. I feel that things that I have given have always remained with me. Things that I possess, have not only created worries but also has been cause for misunderstandings. Thus, I like the saying ‘what you give, you have. What you keep, you lose.’

Question 20

What is the source of happiness for you?

Many people think having material possessions is the source of happiness. This material happiness does not last long. In reality, that is not a real happiness. Happiness is where there is no suffering. If there is no suffering, I am sure we do not know what happiness is.

Therefore, knowing that suffering correctly, understanding its nature, its origin and the characteristics of that, is a source of happiness. This happiness is born out of the path factor of 'right understanding of suffering'. Right understanding allows one to find a way out of suffering. Simply saying 'knowing one's own-self gives a real happiness. Living a moral and controlled life with purified mind brings a real happiness.

Further, being kind to one another, being generous and compassionate, also create happiness. According to the teachings of the Buddha, there is a highest happiness known as *Nibbana*, which is an ultimate states of real happiness that is not dependent on any conditions; free from greed, hatred and ignorance.

Question 21

Do you meditate?

Meditation is a part of my life and this is what I teach (see question no 39). Meditation in Buddhism called 'Bhavana', which means cultivation of good deeds and elimination of bad actions by body and speech that leads to cultivation of mind. There are two types of meditation; calming (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassana*). Calming meditation is to find calmness by sitting one place or paying attention to only one object for certain time. vipassana meditation is to learn to be mindful in everyday life. Knowing and seeing things as they truly are while it is happening and taking place but completely detached.

Meditation is not just sitting at the corner and forgetting everything. So, I try to be mindful at all times, wherever I am. Meditation is also known as mindfulness these days. The practice of mindfulness is not hard; just remember to do it at every level. 'Practice of Sitting meditation' is essential to begin with and gain insight but do cultivate the ability to be mindful and aware at all the time. Daily awareness is to realise natural law. Continuity of practice is the way to realisation. There is a saying that 'if you want to know the past, know the present. If you want to know the future, know the present action'. So, meditation is to live happily and shape a future destiny.

Question 22

How do you control your temper in tough situations?

The Buddha said, 'there never has been, there never will be, nor is there now, anyone who is always blamed or always praised'. Anger is a reaction to anything that: a) we do not get what wished for, and b) we got what we did not wish for. In both cases, this, according to the Buddha is 'pain' or 'suffering'. It is not the suffering which is the problem, but the way we react to it.

In particular, during a tough situation, our reaction can be either positive or negative. If it is negative, it will make it even harder to deal with. So, the first thing to do is: Take a deep breath! Take a couple more breaths in a mindful way. (Breathing changes from normal to fast when we are upset). Secondly, observe chemical changes in the body such as body heat, and be mindful as with the breath. Thirdly, spend some time alone and disconnect with the problem/situation until you feel more relaxed. It is important to understand that 'no one can make us angry without our permission.' Therefore, in any situation it is good to be mindful of our sensations. This will help us to understand the situation more clearly.

The Buddha said that 'give up anger, abandon conceit, overcome all fetters' and restrain anger as a skilful charioteer checks a speeding chariot. Meanwhile, we need to conquer the angry one by not getting angry, and return loving-kindness instead.

I do lose my calmness for certain reasons at certain times. In those situations, I normally try to be aware of the changes within, and learn to view them objectively. I will try to be aware of them, which helps me to disconnect from the

incident. Secondly, I learn to forgive people by realizing their ignorance and learn to share loving-kindness towards them. I learn to pay attention on my expectations and disappointments and rationalise mindfully to realise that everyone is different. Thus, I will not engage with the situation in a negative way. Instead I remain silent, observing my feelings until they change, or I feel relaxed inwardly. Only then will I participate or try to sort out the situation.

Question 23

Do you think people deserve to suffer?

Suffering is inevitable according to Buddhism but reaction to that suffering is our choice. Suffering, thus, is the nature of life. We are born with suffering, vulnerable to sickness, ageing and knowledge of our impermanence. The Buddha taught two things: ‘suffering’ (*dukkha*) and ‘the way out of suffering’. The ‘way out of suffering’ is the path to deal with suffering. We cannot avoid suffering, but we imagine that we can. There are many kinds of suffering in our life’s journey – obviously physical pain, but also failing an exam, being a victim of crime, down to wanting an ice-cream on a hot day! Don’t forget that pleasures are temporary, and are also *dukkha*!

Therefore, firstly, we have to accept that we suffer. Acceptance is the essential key to overcoming suffering. Once it has been fully understood and accepted path begins. Secondly, we are here not to be in suffering but when suffering arises, rather than complaining, find ways to deal with it. One of the ways that the Buddha taught us to deal with suffering is mindfulness. Through such mindfulness we can live comfortably and happily at any situation.

Question 24

Have you ever suffered yourself – how do you deal with it?

Recently, I lost my father. He died a year ago (December 2013). I lost my mother two months ago (March 2015). Further, due to the earthquake in Nepal, my family lost their house and became homeless. Meanwhile, I have chronic back pain and am on Thyroid and blood pressure medication. In these situations, particularly the loss of my parents, I suffered a lot. Both mentally in my mind and emotionally in my heart. I really miss them. I thought that I was fine and able to cope with this loss, but I was wrong. I suffered deeply, mentally, and found I was experiencing unusual behaviours.

From my observations, I realised that unknowingly my thinking process, was slow. There was a numbness in my mind and heart. Normally people thought of me as strong. There was a confusion and sadness within me. I felt tired, exhausted, and constantly recalled vivid events. I found difficulty in concentrating and making decisions.

I was in denial of my loss. This was in spite of the fact that I was constantly reminded of it by life. This denial persisted; even though as a Monk, I reflected constantly on the teachings of the Buddha; the nature of impermanence; and the inevitability of death and departure. There was a grief, and remorse which preoccupied my thought. These are the symptoms that I have had to face in the last few years.

Nevertheless, I would class myself as a lucky person. I have a chance to learn the Buddha's teachings and can dedicate myself to sufficient practice. My study and practice of meditation, has immensely assisted me during this period. It is, furthermore, important to understand the nature of

suffering itself before dealing with it. Observation of the suffering and acknowledgment of it is the initial practice that one should cultivate. It helps to recognise Suffering in its origin, at least objectively. It should be remembered however that it is easier said than done and is not easy to apply in painful situations.

Over the course of my very personal and tragic losses and sufferings, I was able to deal with the situations very mindfully. This has indirectly supported other people, particularly my family, who were surrounding me.

I was able to pay attention to all those feelings and emotions in those situations and maintain my balance. I was able to deal with it peacefully in a dignified way. I managed to pay attention to all those chemical changes in my body. I was able to pay mindful attention to those feelings objectively. So, I was able to express my feelings free from any emotional involvement.

I spend much of my time observing my sensations and being mindful of every action: speaking, doing, or thinking. These observations of expressions of emotion and sensation, did not help me alone, but also helped family members to process their painful feelings and accept and come to terms with their losses. However, it was not as though I was not deeply grieving myself.

Meditation is helping me even today, to pay mindful attention to my feelings, responding to the pain but not reacting to it. This helped me to deal with various sufferings.

Again, it is not the suffering which is important but how we deal with it. Our attitude to our suffering defines the way that we engage with it. We are all subject to suffer since we were born. It is our task to live a life free from suffering. Once the Buddha said that physical pain is a big problem but mental pain is even greater. So, let the physical body suffer, not the mind.

Question 25

Are you content and happy with your life?

I would classify myself as content and happy with my life. One of the teachings says that 'contentment is one of the greatest happiness'. Therefore, we have to learn to appreciate things that we have. That appreciation brings a real happiness. I learn to be contented with things that I have or have been given.

One of the teachings that we are encouraged to practice and recollect often is reflection of place of living, food that we eat, cloths that we wear and medicine that we use. One should use it for the protection from insects or weather, up keeping body and protection from any dangers rather than for pleasure and beauty. Mean time, one need to be truthful to own self and learn to restrains from emotional engagement or desire. Training mind to realise the desire, reduce it and finally eliminate it. In this process, learn patience and the ability to tolerate situations that we are in. Developing mental ability to be able enjoy things that one has and living a sustainable life.

I learn to practice to be content with the life I am living. I appreciate what I have and am given. Similarly, I intend to share things as I was given. We are all part of sharing system and need to learn to be content with it. I would say that any small acts that help other people to deal with their pain or suffering brings me happiness. I wish to help other people since life is short and I would like to enjoy it mindfully. We have limited moments of happiness but can have lots of moments of contentment in life. Life is short; be kind and generous to everyone.

Question 26

Can you still be happy with life even when disaster strikes e.g. an earthquake?

A natural disaster is one thing; happiness is another. Natural disasters are beyond our ability to explain or complain about. Happiness is within our control. So, while practicing Buddhism and Buddhist meditation I have learned that rather than wasting time analysing or questioning; accept what had happened. Acting mindfully, rather than emotionally engaging and reacting, is how to keep things moving.

According to Buddhism, nothing happens with just one cause. There are various causes and it happens for reason. One should not mourn any loss, but being aware of the situation act mindfully.

When I learned about the earthquake and the scale of destruction, I was traumatised and wanted to go back to Nepal and be with them, with my family. My heart was crying and wanted to be there but I decided to stay here to find ways to support them. If I had gone, I would not have helped as much as I have by raising funds here. This gave me appreciation and happiness. I feel that I did the right thing for my people by staying here.

It reminds me of a simile the Buddha once said in regards to dealing with problems: 'First of all pull the arrow out of the body rather than finding who fired the arrow.' Therefore, first of all, we have to accept the situation, then act appropriately. We need to spend much effort in order to succeed. And do not expect a hundred per cent success every time. Keep space for failure, so there is no shame being unable to achieve the target. Always be mindful of every action.

Question 27

Is happiness self-motivated or externally motivated i.e. – do you create your own happiness?

Happiness is a kind of feeling similar to suffering! It is neither self motivated nor externally motivated but it is a result of our reaction to the situation, environment and intention. One can be happy listening to a song, but it may not make you happy if the situation or environment is not comfortable. Nevertheless, one can be happy all the time if one learns to enjoy every moment. One who live free from hating anyone and do not strive for sensual pleasures lives happily. Live a life free from anxiety, greed, ill will and ignorance. The Buddha further says 'Conquest begets enmity, the conquered live in misery; the peaceful live happily having renounced conquest and defeat (Dh201)'.

There are two types of happiness; external and internal. External happiness is acquiring material things for convenient, comfortable and easy life. It is an externally conditional happiness that often causes confusion and hard life. Such happiness we create on the basis of that condition. Internal happiness is a contentment and satisfaction in life. living a moral and controlled life. It is said that 'without inner peace, there is no real happiness'. Inner happiness is dissolving of conditions. It is not hard; just learn to be oneself.

Initially, happiness is what we are grasping at and wishing to have more of, but ultimate happiness is complete realisation of being able to let things be. The realisation of reality as they truly are is the source of ultimate happiness, which we have to cultivate from creating conducive conditions to grow it.

Question 28

Do you think suffering is important? Why?

Suffering is very important. Without suffering no one knows happiness. Understanding suffering makes us happy. Happiness is where there is no suffering. Realising what suffering is leads us to find ways to be happy. Further, suffering makes one strong and perfect. Every challenge in life energises people to be creative and find different ways to fight it. So, without suffering we become lazy and bored. Suffering is one of the very important factors that drive us to find ways to be happy and find wisdom. When we have experienced suffering and discussed it with our parents, they would say 'we all have been there'. Learn suffering in its root and you will learn to enjoy life.

Dhamma Digital

Question 29

Would you forgive a murderer who feels remorse after what he/she has done?

Forgiveness is one thing and what he/she had done is another. According to Buddhism, every action has got a reaction or consequence. So, whatever that person has done, he/she should be punished and brought to justice accordance with common law.

We have nothing to do with what he/she has done. Our reaction to their action is important. If we harbour

hate/anger/ill-will towards someone's action, it does not affect them; it affects us. However, it does not mean that nothing should be done. Action should be taken to bring about justice. Every action that we take should be free from hatred or revenge; a compassionate act. Compassion towards a criminal is helping that person to realise the scale of the crime and its consequences, discouraging other crimes in future.

Forgiveness will release us from hate/anger/ill-will. Hate never ends by hate but by love. One motivational speaker from America says that a word 'forgive' means 'things that are for giving'. So, it is not just releasing a person who had done that crime, but also to oneself from those acts and releasing from emotional suffering.



NOTES OF APPRECIATION FROM UPPER 3 TO SUJAN

I liked the idea of not suffering and realizing that you have to get over it – that suffering is only temporary. (Bethany)

I don't know how you were so calm with all of the suffering you have been through. I know that if both of my parents had recently passed away and if my family home had been destroyed I would struggle to cope. I found that inspiring.

Very eye-opening and deep - I enjoyed it a lot. Thank you Sujan.

Your talk was very interesting as I did not know much about Buddhism before. It has made me think twice about suffering and pain. It also helps me to see things in a different way.

Dear Sujan, Thank you! I found your talk on suffering really interesting especially the start of the talk about what Buddhists think and view as suffering. It makes me want to learn more about Buddhism.

I really enjoyed your presentation. I was moved by the way you coped with the problems life throws at us such as the death of your parents and the horrific 7.9 magnitude earthquake that struck your home country of Nepal. Despite this, you presented the truth with a smile. I really enjoyed this talk and it has sparked an interest in the Buddhist religion (Ngoni)

I learned traits that will be helpful in life to keep me happy and for me not to suffer. I have learned to accept change and not to linger on things that have happened. (Mateus)

Everything you said made me think a lot, and your formula is certainly something to live by. Watching the clip reminded me of the devastation an earthquake has and it put my suffering into perspective.

I found your talk intriguing and thoughtful. You are a great orator who made the talk fascinating. The talk offered a new perspective to the idea of suffering and it taught me new values of the Buddhist religion. It has intrigued me to the extent that I would like to learn more about the Buddhist religion. (William)

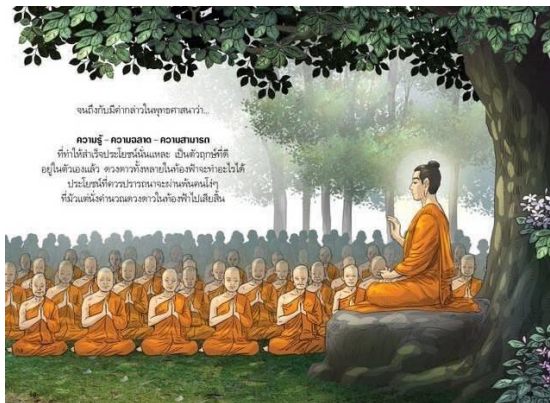
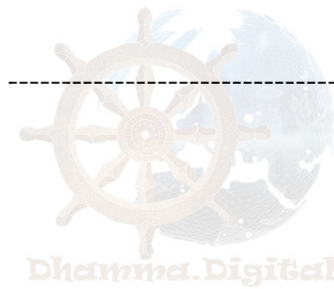
Thank you very much for visiting us. Your talk has made me look at suffering in a different way. I think you are a truly inspiring person. I think your story is very interesting. I also did not have a good knowledge of Buddhism and I find it interesting that you say it is a way of life rather than a religion. I hope I can visit you in your temple. (Miles)

After your interesting talk I now realize that suffering in life is inevitable but there are ways you can change your mindset in order to make this suffering more bearable. You are a very strong person and I hope you manage to raise enough money to do what you wish in Nepal after the devastating earthquake. (Olivia)

Thank you for visiting yesterday. I was really touched by your words and how you are able to cope with the recent

earthquake disaster in Nepal. I enjoyed how open you were with us and I was delighted by the way you're a monk who converted to Buddhism. Hope you continue preaching to others.

I can't believe how strong you are. You cope with suffering so well. You showed me that you can't get rid of suffering, but you can learn how to deal with it. Now when I am suffering I will think of how you suffer but how you are able to stay strong. When I suffer I always think there is a reason – every cloud has a silver lining. Thank you very much for coming. I really enjoyed it. PS I hope the fundraising for Nepal goes well. (Eilidh)



จนถึงกับมีคำกล่าวในพุทธศาสนาว่า...

ความดี - ความฉลาด - ความสามารถ
ที่นำไปสู่จริยประเพณีอันดีและ เป็นสิริมงคลที่ดี
อยู่ในตัวเองแล้ว ความรักที่หลายในท้องฟ้าจะหาไม่ได้
ประโยชน์ที่ควรปรารถนาจะหาที่อื่นมิได้
จึงมีความดีที่นำความดีความดีมาคือหัวใจไม่เปลี่ยน

Question 30

Meditation on its own is useless and may be dangerous to your wellbeing? (Dr. D Shakya, London)

The development in the practise of Meditation requires a great deal of self practice on a regular basis. It requires dedication, determination and more importantly confidence in their practice. Without personal practice it would not be possible to improve in meditation. Regularly join a group meditation, which supports immensely for the development and understanding of meditation practice. The group environment psychologically supports to build confidence in the practice and mentally encourages one to practice diligently. As a result, group sitting always gives a calm and peaceful moment after meditation.

Meditation according to Buddhism is not achieving just a calm and peaceful moment but observation and noticing every moment of every object objectively in order to realise its true nature; change and non-substance. In the practice, due to lack to guidance or knowledge of inner objects (*aarammana*) often generates different mental hindrances. Thus, we need a proper meditation guidance to deal with these hindrances. Although, we practice alone but often we have to consult with experienced teacher.

Meanwhile, we always have to refer to the *Satipatthana Sutta*, the discourse on the four foundations of mindfulness' and how is our meditation progressing. Learn to notice a mind that is observing body and feeling or the mind that is watching mental activities with feeling. At this first stage, you do not need to investigate as stated in *Satipatthana*, mind with hate, or no hate, delusion or non delusion etc. but just

observing your mental thought as it is taking place. There is a thought of positive, negative, useful, wasteful and neutral. One has to learn to observe and acknowledge then in its true reality. It is also part of a 'doubt'. Doubt is good in Buddhism, so does in the practice of meditation as long as it has wisdom of pure intention.

Meditating alone can be dangerous if no one to help to deal with *aarammana*/objects, in particularly inner objects (*upakilesas*). I remember when I was observing a silent retreat for ten days few years back in Kings Bromley. I was talking with my mind for a day or two without noticing its engagement. It was like I was having two minds at a same time. There was a war going on in my head. I was delusional and making fantasies. I was, however, in complete silence and peace. It took quite a while to realise that I was talking within myself. As a result, I had to use a different technique of noticing or establishing through mental note 'perceiving' 'perceiving' 'perceiving'. By perceiving that activities objectives helped me to remain at the present moment and fully present. If I was not mindful of that mental activities, certainly I will be mentally disturbed.

Therefore, it is important to reflect on what the Sutta says about the practice and often consult with an experienced teacher. Every so often whenever I have an opportunity, therefore, I speak with my teachers and well practiced fellow friends.

There are few stories even at the time of the Buddha that they some monks were unable to practice independently due to lack of understanding of practice. So, the Buddha had to instruct them further for their practice. Further, we have to remember that our mind can play very fine games within us due to our deluded mind. Meanwhile, we should not have any

desire while practicing. Desire never ceases any dissatisfactions. So, first part of *Ananpanasati*, a discourse of mindfulness on the breath is to relax just by knowing as it is taking place. There is not intension of making it long or short or noticing but simply observing it in order to relax the body.

To sum up, at the beginning of each discourses that directly relate to the practice of meditation says that one who wishes to practice meditation has to;

'go to the forest or under the tree or an empty place'. He sits comfortably, brings his attention to the face and pays mindful attention on the breath in and out. He cultivates ardently, full awareness and being mindful of it at its every moment, which leads to the attainment of unborn state, *Nibbana*.'

Therefore, individual practice will never be useless as long as they are on the right path and practising correctly. However, group meditation always supports for the progress. It can be dangerous if there is a lack of right understanding both theory and practice. Nevertheless, proper guidance is always essential.

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Question 31

Meditation without sound foundation of Sila (virtuous living) (Dr. D Shakya, London)

In general term, *Sila* is one of the important sections in Buddha's teaching. It is a foundation for a standard life, a basis for a good conduct. I normally explain, one who is practicing sila is a normal person, whereas one who is not practising according to sila is abnormal person. Abnormal in a sense that we are not free from guilt or remorse. When there is a guilt or remorse, it is impossible to get any progress in our practice. Therefore, in every retreat monks have to go through a confession ceremony to purify individual virtues. Meanwhile, other lay people are requested to observe sila, if possible eight precepts, diligently during meditation. On the ultimate level, sila is a foundation for the further training and progress. Although we are familiar with five precepts, according to the middle path, it is a right speech, right action and right livelihood.

In terms of Buddhist principle perspective, observation of *sila* does not limit to just five (8/10/227/311) precepts, which restraint with regards to conducts. Restraint of sense faculties, purification of livelihood and moderation of using material requisites also part of observation of sila. The ultimate purpose of observing and practicing Sila is to be free from any kinds of unwholesome actions that can be done by physical, verbal and mentally. Basically free from any remorse. Once we are free from any kinds of remorse, it brings joy, calm and happiness, which supports for the concentration.

Therefore, in the practice of insight meditation, *Sila visuddhi*; purification of sila, has been the first ladder to gain insight knowledge. Followed by *Citta Visuddhia*, purification of mind; and *Ditthi visuddhi*, purification of personal view. These are the initial requirements to understand mind and matter phenomena, which is another higher insight.

So, observation of five precept, at least, is very beneficial to gain progress in meditation practice. It is like a preparing a field for the cultivation. Sayadaw U Pandita gave a simile of planting tree and guarding it carefully is like fulfilling *sila, samadhi and panya* in his book 'In this very life', if I remember correctly. In short, one can practice meditation without *sila* but live a moral life. *Sila* is another kind of designed rules to control two door actions. However, it is necessary to gain insight, as it give a frame work, where we can evaluate our purity of conventional truth that supports as a bridge to ultimate. Violation of precepts brings troublesome mind that is not a conducive condition for the cultivation of mind.

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Question 32

Why Buddhist chant for? (Angela, England)

The purpose of Chanting in Theravada Buddhism, there are two ways of paying devotion; Pray and Chanting. 'Nature is impartial; it cannot be flattered by prayers. It doesn't grant any special favours on request,' said Late Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda, a great contemporary Buddhist scholar. His saying is absolutely true in Buddhism. Pray is simply a meditation method which has self-change as its object. It is just a way to calming mind down and understanding the true nature of calm and peace. Further, the Buddha clearly expressed that neither the recital of holy scripture, nor self-torture, nor the repetition of prayers can bring the real happiness.

Pray alone is not enough for the salvation. He or she must work hard in controlling his mind and up-root the impurities and defilements. Let me bring one poet concerning prayer,

'Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers,
But to be fearless in facing them.
Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain,
But for the heart to conquer it.
Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved
but for the patience to win my freedom.'

Secondly, chanting or *paritta* chanting is the recital of some of the sutras uttered by the Buddha in the pali language for the blessing and protection of the people. This is well-known to Theravada tradition. Paritta itself means shielding ourselves from various forms of evil spirits, misfortune,

sickness and influence of planetary systems as well as more importantly instilling confidence in the mind. Even though, Buddha emphasised on self-experience and realisation chanting also one part of daily practice for Buddhists. If we look at the background of every blessing chanting claim that Chanting was started during the time of the Buddha. Nevertheless, not only Buddhists chant, but also other religious believers do chanting. Buddhist chant for many reasons; for blessings, for kindness etc.

Further scientific explanation on chanting is simply the method of preserving Buddhist teaching through reciting it frequently and understanding its meaning. Memorising discourses is essential part of preservation. It is, however, not leading to realisation, but the understanding of it which is more useful and important in Theravada Buddhism. Every suttas have its uniqueness and have great deep meaning. It is applicable in our daily life.

For Buddhists, therefore, chanting is a basic type of concentration or calming meditation. It is easier than a sitting meditation method. Secondly, it's a meditation object to calming our mind down and also is the place for being one pointed-ness and free from defilements. So some teachers may use chanting as a tool to teach their students in order to achieve a certain level of concentration.

Does chanting give any fruitful results? Recently, I was reading research work by Masaru Emoto about the message from water; according to his findings, scientifically, sounds (including music and chanting) have an effect on water crystal. The amount of water in a matured human body is about 70%. If we have good beautiful water crystals in our body, it should be better. Further, from my own experience of

chanting before meditation effectively helps to be onepointedness and having good concentration. Simply listening a chanting from the heart rather than ears takes one to deep relax and ready for deeper meditation. It is a process of preparation of mind to be ready for further meditation.

Question 33

If we should respect all creatures and not kill them what do we do if a house is infested with rats ? Would a Buddhist kill them ? (Jane, France)

In absolute terms and from the moral point of view, the act of killing is always wrong as it is against the first of the five precepts *panatipati veramani* – to abstain from taking the lives of living beings. However, in terms of Karmic standpoint, it can be different in both the degree and the amount of evil committed. Therefore, there are three bases of judgment of killing; object, motive and effort both individually and collectively.

In case of killing human, killing is held to be a capital crime in both Buddhism and the state. The offense can be high and serious. In Buddhism, a monk who is guilty of killing will be expelled from the order or serious offence called *Parajika*, a defeated one. In the case of state, the offence can be deadly or life imprisonment too. However, according to Buddhism killing involves one's action which can be intentional and under the impulse of the moment or motive of killing. Any intentional killing would count as a serious offence. On the other hand, any unpremeditated killing such as impulsive killing, killing in self-defence and accidental killing are however, treat in different way. In these

cases the guilty person is usually granted some degree of leniency of their act of killing both the monastic life and in the law of the state.

In case of killing animals, although it is regarded as a lesser crime to the law of state or the county, the result of intentional action to kill would be there as a law of causality (*Kamma* and *vipaka*). So, as a standard scale, killing animals also will be judged by object, motive and effort too.

Once, a gentleman asked me that ‘how could one be a good Buddhist?’ That was very good question. I look at his face as well as a Thai lady who was preparing food for the monks. Suddenly, a fly flew over the food and she hit that fly swiftly. I told him that she is a perfect example for a good Buddhist. Therefore, good Buddhist or a Buddhist should act in sufficient reason not only hitting a fly but everything, which means she acted in terms of hygienic reason or self-defence. It does not mean he will be free from karmic results. Further, if someone performs act of killing with an overpowered by a strong evil desire or hatred, greed and delusion, it may not be regarded as a sufficient cause.

Nevertheless, the Buddha never taught us to kill any being, except the *samudaya*, the cause of the problem. Therefore, killing house infested rats are not the primary object. My first year living in the UK, I did not know about the consequence of giving food to birds in the garden, until I found some rats had seen by someone who visited temple. The visitor told me that if we see any rats around house we should inform city council immediately to get it killed. Ever since I avoid giving food putting on ground but put on high land out of reach of rats. Therefore, abolition of infested rats by killing won’t balance a nature. According to the balance of nature theory, if you kill the rats, some negative feedback will arise again and again. Therefore, keep clean house and keep any food out of reach or full cover would help to avoid

visiting and killing these rats. Killing house infested rats would be depends on which situation you are in and acceptance would be depend on degree of your own an act. The result of act of killing house infested rats will be judge on the basis of whether your act it overpowered by evil thought or of self-defence.

Overall, the purpose of the first precept of the five precepts is for developing the virtues of loving –kindness and compassion to all kinds of beings.

For the record; there is a rat temple in India simply dedicated to rats. Thousands of rats are living in temple and people visit to worship and feed rats. Further, I have heard that a Sri Lankan lady, medical doctor who looked after late Venerable Dr. Saddatissa in London, was a devoted Buddhist. She normally reads Buddhist books and a good practitioner. Later year, she feed lots of rats at her house, which made no one would like to visit her. She also did not allow others to kill those rats in her house. At the end, she got sick and was taken to hospital by social service and died in hospital. I would regard her as not a good Buddhist because Buddha never taught unwise but act wisely for good and happiness of all. According to Buddhism, one who thinks other but forgets oneself and one who is selfish neglects other and one who does not think of other nor oneself is not a good person. One you thinks own welfare and also welfare of others is a good person. Wish/will power is not acceptable but wisdom power in Buddhism.

Question 34

If a dangerous dog kill a child, should we kill the dog? (Jane, France)

If I am right beginning of last year 2008, there was an incident of a dog killed a child in the UK, which shocked people. I presume you have this question may caused from the above news. BBC news was highlighting on this topic whether should kill the dog or not, which I didn't followed to the end of the story. Similar stories within the UK happened different times in different cities.

In the end of December 2007 BBC broadcasted that a one year old boy was attacked by a pet at his grand parent's home and died. Later, dog was shot to ensure the safety of others. The news says that although dog was family pet for 6 months and friendly with family members as well as to other and there wasn't any signs of aggression, the dog without any warning snatched the baby from the youngster's arms and carried him into the yard. The 16 year old tried to rescue the baby but was unable.

I have found number of incidents around the world that dog killed children. Some of them caused killed the dog that caused death of child but there are some other examples in which stray dogs were captured and process of elimination of dogs such as in Bangalore, India killed over 200 dogs in March 2007, etc.

Here very interesting to think about killing dogs whether shall we kill those dangerous dogs or not. In Bangalore case, when authority took action to eliminate dogs 'Animal Rights Activists protested widely. They described it as exasperating and blame that Authority has not shown dignity to dogs even in their death.' Activists hung placards

on the necks of pets with slogans like ‘why should we be punished for someone else’s fault’ and live and let live.’

In return the authority replied saying that ‘if you have love stray dogs, you should take responsibility for ensuring that they do not bite people. There should be some consideration for the life of human beings.’

Similarly I found very interesting article on BBC website concerning ‘dog control and the law’ under the title of Rottweilers, dog control and the law. Although this law is only for the UK but debate on the legislation is very interesting (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5377262.stm>). Rottweilers dog is good for guarding but two Rottweiler dogs killed a five month old girl. Further it writes a four year old Anna needed hours of surgery after being attacked by their neighbor’s dog Akita in its own home. Health secretary Patricia Hewitt MP says that ... you are not allowed to keep guard dogs unless they are fully under control... and of course they should be tethered’.

Further to the article Ryan O’Meara, the editor of K9 magazine and owns a Rottweiler himself, said no dog was ‘perfectly safe’ and should always be kept under supervision when young children were around. He further said ‘They’re an animal and it is very hard to gauge how they will react while you are not there.’

Similar statements made on December 2007’s dog killing child article that ‘all breeds of dogs are animals. They do revert to animal instincts. If a dog is confronted with a situation they are not used to, they can react unexpectedly.’

Ryan O’Meara said to Five live ‘I don’t blame the breed, I blame anyone that leaves their child alone with any dog of any kind.’

Anyhow, dog will be shot and destroyed after the accidents in order to ensure the safety of others and the owner of dog also would be charged according to the circumstances.

Therefore, these news shows that both develop and under develop countries are having similar problem from breed or stray dogs killing children. They have different ways of dealing with it in different ways, which come under the Buddhist idea of action and result. Any intentional actions always bring a result. There is not any exception in Buddhist theory of action. However, although any killing is harmful according to Buddhism but should be considered value and quality of being, which should be killed. This comes under the sufficient reason.

Only one question may arise that killing dangerous dog does help or not? Since, there are many reasons why the dog is aggressive, because of the owners, because of the threatening approach of the child, because of his own psychological problem. If it is because of the owner, the owner has to change the way he takes care of the dog. If it is because of the gesture of the child, the parents have to teach their own children how to approach the dog. If it is because of the psychological problem of the dog, these take time and patience to cure the dog. Humans do not like to waste time, elimination is the fastest way. In many cases, the dogs that killed children, mostly because of the wrong way of taking care of them, leaving them hungry, cage them all day long. BBC news also emphasis on this by saying that dogs have big brain and that brain needs to be kept active. It cannot be indoors, 24 hours a day, doing anything which will go stir-crazy. Annie Colbourne from the Rottweiler Welfare Association says the cause of problem came from having not activating dog's mind in right direction. Further, it says 'They are very, very intelligent and very eager to learn, and if you don't channel that then you're going to have a problem.

In terms of *kammic* law in Buddhism, we know the general effects of kamma that some are avoidable and some are not. One of my friends had said concerning dog killed a

child that 'Child who has been attacked by dangerous dog must survive' if it is avoidable. If it is not avoidable child could be bitten by a different dog in other conditions. If it is avoidable child must survive again. For example, The Buddha was safe despite many attempt of killing him done by *Devadatta*, his own nephew. On the other hand, ven. Moggallana tried to escape from thugs but at the end got killed.

The effort of the dog is a new action but it could be its tendency toward child's life after life. The child died due to the size of injury and it seems the time had come for the child. It is not simply define that dog's effort but unawareness or unfriendly approach of child could be the reason of dog's aggression, which caused child's death.

If we take another example from the Dhammapada 5: Hatreds never cease through hatred in this world (see <http://web.singnet.com.sg/~lohpc/dmpd5.htm>). a story of Kali Yakkhini and process of killing. Killing the dog may create a loop of endless killing. Overall, any means of killing always not accepted in Buddhism but sufficient reasons are acceptable. However, it does not end the result of your action. On the other hand, killing dog alone may not be the case sorting dog killing child issue. Dog's kamma, victim's kamma as well as situation, surface and time have mutually arrived, which caused the death of child. In conclusion, all incidents do not arise from one cause.

Question 35

How one can practice detachment from family and how can we practice compassion towards human suffer? (Jane from France)

The concept of 'detachment', I have to admit that is one of the deepest doctrines in Buddhism. Therefore, it takes varied way of application to our day to day life in order to understand the true nature of it. Your feelings towards family are deep and strong which is common as being a mother of child, being a wife of husband etc. So, there is no question of asking why these feeling you have got. It's a natural law that every one possesses such feeling. However, that desire to possess is human willingness or wanting to cling or to be in that position. The second noble truths says where is desire there is suffering. craving for sensual satisfaction, craving for existence and craving for non existence.

Similarly, compassion is one of the great virtues which lead being to be noble one. Therefore, concept of Bodhisatva got fame. However, compassion alone doesn't work or can't be practiced. It should be practiced along side of wisdom. Compassion with wisdom only counts in Buddhist concept of compassion. You can't save others while you are in bed. There are hundreds and thousands of children or people in need. It could be because of war, natural disasters, domestic violence etc. we have sympathy to them all but we won't be able to help them all. On top of that we have to be qualified to look after ourselves first before offering hand to others. Compassion that hurts yourself is not true compassion according to Buddhism. However, it is good that you can

feel happy and joy after you have helped someone, which is direct result of your wholesome acts.

So, the concept of detachment in Buddhism developed from the concept of attachment, which means separation without any violence or damage. Buddha refers this saying that Sabbe dhamma naalam abhinivesaaya which means All dhammas should not be clung. It is called viraaga in Buddhism, which means extinction or cessation of defilements. Therefore, detachment' in Buddhism refers to detachment from defilements.

Attachment known as Upadana in Buddhism means grasping or clinging which is intensified form of craving. There are four kinds of it;

1. sensuous clinging which means sensuous desires and pleasures
2. Clinging to views : we cling on to our views as true and absolute
3. Clinging to rules and rituals: cling on to rules and rituals which is suits for us
4. Clinging to the notion of individual personality

On top of that all Dhamma here indicates our body and mind and we cling onto it as we and ours. In conventional reality you can say that there is I, me, my but in ultimate reality there isn't suchness. Therefore, in conventional practice you have to cling onto the concept of I-ness and possessed as my or myself, which applies to our family and friends as well as all sentient beings. The concept of I according to Buddhism combination of five aggregates which can be summed up in Mind and Matter. These Mind and Matter itself is conditioned and subject to change. Whatever things subject to change is according to Buddhism is suffering and whatever things that subject to suffering is not

self. So, how can we call our body as I, Me and Mine? How can we say that this is mine, this is myself and this is who I am?

However, it's not easy concept to be grasp as long as you haven't practice meditation. If you have practice meditation then you could see some of them already but if you haven't then it's time for you to start looking at yourself more than other. The more successful in cultivation of mind, the more detachment you achieve, the calmer your mind becomes the closer you are to the way to detachment.

Let me give you some hints before I close this writing; Detachment = Viraaga, which means Nirodha (extinction, cessation of defilements) In short, there are ten types of defilements; Greed, hatred, delusion, conceit, wrong view, doubt, sloth, restlessness, shamelessness, lack of moral dread. These are ten bad things that we should detach from. On the other hand, detachment means to let go, which Buddha says five ways of cessations (nirodha):

1. Vikkhambhana-nirodha - extinction by suppression (by way of concentration meditation)
2. Tadanga-nirodha - extinction by substitution of opposites
3. Samuccheda-nirodha - extinction by destruction
4. Patipassaddhi-nirodha - extinction by tranquillization
5. Nissarana-nirodha - extinction by getting freed (nibbana)

Furthermore, letting go is giving away, discarding, throwing away and completely detach with it. Simultaneously, only *Anagami*; non returner noble one only could detach all four attachments. While we are in this world our duty is to learn to acknowledge as they truly are and knowing them with no judgements. If we start judging on sensation that is beginning of new kamma formation, which leads to another existence. Therefore, learn to be here and

now and living among the hundreds but living alone is the key to learn detached.

I hope this may help you to understand what detachment means but again, it's just my understanding and as I gone through with it. As long as I am attached with my views and concept it may have some extra additions which may not true. Therefore, please read carefully and grasp the meaning of detachment. If you haven't answered you question don't hesitate to write to me.

May you be happy and peace and achieve great light

Question 36

Do you think Meditation without cultivation of Metta is useless. (Dr. D Shaky, London)

Metta or loving kindness is another positive intension that is very helpful and important for the progress of meditation. Metta is also known as a qualities of divine abode. In the practice of meditation, first of all we have to understand our intension or purpose. In my understanding, when we realise our true intension of practicing meditation that automatically generates Metta towards oneself and gradually towards other. Further, in my view, understanding of oneself makes you feel humble and gratitude towards fellow beings. Metta can be developed but not by force or not because someone has asked to do so.

Metta is an inner quality that comes or generates from inner understanding. It allows one to free from ill-will and hatred towards other. It is opposite of anger and jealousy. Gain complete calmness and acquires eleven kinds of benefits; sleep comfortable, wakes up happily, no bad

dreams, human and non-human beings will love, invisible forces help, no danger befall and there will be no confusion etc.

According to *Visuddhimagga*, it is one of the forty kinds of *Samatha* meditation. So, one can use this to develop concentration. However, one has to be fully stable mind and fully concentrated mind up to absorption before sharing that metta to someone else. When sharing that metta, first of all one has to start with near dear one or *pujaniya puggala*, respected person. Followed by intimate, neutral, dislike and *veri puggala*, hateful one. Further, it involves great amount of qualities of patience.

According to *Satipatthana*, there is a part saying 'knowing once body and other's body', as well 'feeling', 'mind', and 'mental phenomena'. According to my understanding, it is understanding other beings as similar to us. It is, 'metta, therefore, a part of *Satipatthana* practice. When one puts oneself on to other beings there will not be any harm done to other being from all three doors; physical, verbal and mental.

In practice of Metta *bhavana*, therefore, need greater understanding of mental state. It is also a very important tool to cut the defilement. It is a noble way to gain freedom from *Samsara*. One can practice on metta alone and achieve this freedom but it is also advisable to practice before or after any kinds of meditations; *samatha* or *vipassana*, since we cannot practice two at the same time. Therefore, meditation without developing Metta should not take as useless but another tool.

Normally, people wants to cultivate Metta immediately after they are become irritated by someone. That irritation is a cultivation of mental action to someone's reaction against person wish or view. At that moment, it is impossible to cultivate Metta because mind has full of negative tendencies. Metta is positive energy, which is opposite of negative

behaviours. So, fire cannot go with water. Firstly, if unable to observe at the very moment of the feeling, learn that you are holding that negative thought, accept that thought. Reduce its energy and extinguish from mind. Generate positive qualities and maintain that positive qualities. Once the positive qualities are maintained it will be easy to practice Metta.

In regards to your irritation towards other person and wish to practice Metta, first of all you have to differentiate your feeling, a person and your desire to cultivate Metta. First of all establish yourself; calm and collective. Free from any distractions. Once you realised that your mind is fully composed and collective; some sort of absorption, then cultivate Metta. Cultivation of Metta again does not start with other people but from yourself. Share it to yourself, feel it, taste it and follow towards other people gradually as I have mentioned above. When it comes to the point to share Metta towards irritated person, rather than thinking of his recent action think of his good qualities and gradually cultivate full Metta Bhavana.

Over the years of working in different communities and societies, I have faced various difficulties from fellow Buddhists and other denominations and I am sure it is not the end. I think I was able to overcome from those difficulties only because I was able to practice meditation on Metta. Again, it was not a direct practice of Metta towards other but myself. Contemplating on my feelings rather than other person who has caused. Once I was concentrating on my feelings, I was no longer engaging with that person but I was within my inner journey. Often those memories return to disturb my peace but every moment of its arising I learn to notice that feeling rather than that person. As a result, I do not harbour any ill-will or anger towards that person. It does not mean I do not have any anger but I have learn to observe that anger. My ability to observe it assists me to settle it down

has that helped me to share that goodness towards other people.

The practice of Metta Bhavana at the centre, normally begin with bringing individual attention to observe bodily sensation. Followed by bringing attention to observe sensation in the hands and gradually paying attention to the beating heart. Physically smiling will assist to feel the connection between heart and the mind. Then, generating loving kindness and compassion toward oneself. Sharing that Loving-kindness and compassion to other beings gradually as I have explained earlier.



Question 37

Why aren't you following the rules of your religion literally? (John, England)

'To be born as a human being is one of the hardest things in the world' says the Buddha. Therefore, first of all we need to learn 'how to be human and act like a human being' before anything else.

First of all I am a human being. So I have to respect human values. Secondly, I live in a society. So I have to respect and accept the existing society where I live. Lastly, Religion is my choice and I practice it to comfort me. Religion is there for me, not other way round.

Without humans there is no society and without society there is no religion. Religion is a creation of social inter-relation. If religion is without personal inter-relations, there is no religion.

When religion becomes more important than a person and society, the system is in trouble and that leads to dehumanised acts. Human values should come before religion, not the other way round. Therefore, although I am a Buddhist monk, a promoter, a defender and practitioner, first of all I have to respect other people in a place with different views. I am here in the west, not to convert anyone from one organised religion to another, but simply to share my knowledge and experience. It does not matter what religious doctrine they are practicing; my interest is of their way of achieving a happy life. It is their choice. The Buddha never taught Buddhism as other than a path to happiness.

Question 38

**She has been coming to the centre for a long time,
but - why can't she be a good person?** (Sarin, Scotland)

The question from a member hit me hard. I knew what this was about. It upset me and forced me even to reconsider my work as a teacher. Where am I going wrong? I wished I could avoid answering and stay silent but I had to attempt an answer. My considered response was that I teach everyone the same way. I teach how to live happily, be good and live in accordance with moral practice; not harming, not stealing, avoiding sexual misconduct, telling lies or drinking drugs and alcohol, gambling, gossip, and criticizing others in their absence. I encourage them to lead a moral life, develop self-control and of course to practice mindfulness.

My job is simply to present guidelines in accordance to the teaching of the Buddha. It is entirely up to each individual to reflect on what I teach and put it into practice, or not, as they wish. I can help people to tread the path Buddha set out leading to happiness, but I cannot take them on the path if they are not ready. If they practice in accordance with the teaching they will be happy here and hereafter. If not, it's entirely within their rights and they will have to accept the consequences. The Buddha, the awakened one, said a monk's job is simply to present the teaching. Those who have ears will listen. Those who have eyes will see it. We must not forget that a person's previous experiences are unknown to us and may govern their behaviour despite what we suggest now.

Question 39

How to practice Vipassana Meditation? (David, England)

Vipassana meditation is a scientific way to realise the truth about oneself. In particular, truth about misery that one faces time to time in life. The reality and eradication of that misery is the vipassana meditation, so that one can live happily rest of life.

Our life is combination of mental and physical structures, which is called psycho-phenomena. Vipassana meditation or Insight meditation is to learn to be aware of and observe our true nature of physical and mental phenomena. A physical phenomenon is called Rupa in Buddhist terminology; which we can see it, we can hear it, we can smell it, and we can touch it and also mentally can be noted. A mental phenomenon, on the other hand, is called Nama in Pali, a Buddhist terminology which means our intension. The purpose of intension is to know, aware and observe subjects. When we see, hear, taste, touch, smell and even mentally think these two phenomena will be co-existing all the time. However, it is not effortless, easy or simple to notice these phenomena in normal life.

Why can't we notice it?

Most of the time, our mind is tangled with either past or future, which is normal behaviour of mind. We love to plan for future and wish to be in happy memories. Almost all the time, we plan ahead but in fact planning on the basis of past memories means living in the past. So, we completely forget this present moment, which is the most important and precious for whole our life. Therefore, although these physical and mental phenomena occur along with our seeing,

hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and even thinking moment, we are unable to notice it as they are occurring each and every moment. So, to notice as they truly are or to know these physical and mental phenomena, one has to be aware of these times; seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and even during thought moments.

How can we do them?

This noticing time is very important and should be understood properly. It is simple in theory, practically, it is breathtaking too. Thus, when we are noticing or observing the moment, it is vital to bear in mind that we are ready to start from beginning every time it distracted. When we see any object, we have to mentally observe it as ‘seeing’. Once, the object has been observed, notice it or acknowledge it as ‘seeing, seeing, and seeing’. It should be done in diligently, attentively, carefully, conscientiously and continuously. Similarly, whenever other objects, like hearing sound, at first, observe that you are hearing sound and notice that hearing sound as ‘hearing, hearing, hearing’ as closely as you can. When you smell something, observe it and notice it as ‘smelling, smelling, and smelling’. When you taste something, observe it and notice it as ‘tasting, tasting, and tasting’. When thought arises, observe it and notice it as ‘thinking, thinking, and thinking’. Being aware of these object and observe it closely and notice it as they truly are. The process of this awareness is called the insight meditation.

However, it is not easy to observe and know these objects at the beginning. We won’t be able to see and know it all. It takes some time and depends on our practice. Therefore, at the beginning of practise, we need one object, which we can see and observe it clearly and make it as a primary object called *arammana* in Pali. It is our starting point of contemplation.

Any object that we define as a main object for contemplation is called the primary object or arammana. It can be anything; solid or liquefied, air or water. In our practice, we will take air movement through nose, which is certain and always with us. It is happening constantly, naturally.

How can we take it as our object?

When we take breath in our abdomen will rise and when we take breath out our abdomen will fall. This process of rising and falling of abdomen is naturally happening all the time, which can be easily noticed and observed. So, we will take this constant naturally moving of this abdomen as our primary or main object of practice. When abdomen is rising, you observe it as ‘rising, rising, rising’ and when abdomen is falling observe as ‘falling, falling, falling’. At the beginning, it may not be easy to notice this rising and falling movement. If you can observe it then there is no problem but in case of if you are unable to see the rising and falling movement use your hand to observe it by placing one of your hands on top of abdomen gently. Once you have placed your hand on abdomen then try to notice the rising and falling movement. However, be careful of your breathing in and out process. Try not to force and create or generate the system into long or short but let it be as naturally it flows. The reason behind it that if we are generating the breathing system as we wish then not only unnatural breath but that will make us tired quickly and bored. Further, we are not practising breathing exercise but mental calm. Therefore, let it flow naturally as it is with no any addition and observe it closely. Know it as they truly are diligently and patiently.

In insight meditation, in reality, the word ‘see or naming’ is not important, observation is only done by mental note. Awareness and being mindful is vital in the practice of meditation. When abdomen is rising, we have to see its

beginning, middle and an end of it as closely and carefully as we can. Being aware that process from the beginning till the end as similar as we see by our open eyes. Similarly, we have to be aware and mindful of falling process from the beginning till end closely and carefully. We have to try the process of rising and falling is followed by our mind constantly and continuously with no gaps between. The rising movement process and the observing mind should be happening together like arrow hits the destiny. Similarly, so does the falling movement process.

When we are concentrating on the rising and falling movement of abdomen our mind may wonder or thoughts arises, which is normal. Don't be disappointed and angry with it. In this case, be aware and gently observe it and notice it as 'thinking..., thinking..., thinking...'. Three to four times of mental note will help to know it and thoughts will stop generating. Once it has been stopped thinking, bring your mind back to primary object, which is rising and falling movement of abdomen. Therefore, while these thoughts arise observe it clearly and notice as 'thinking..., thinking..., thinking...' and come back to primary object, rising and falling of abdomen.

However, if you don't realise it earlier that your mind is wandering, don't worry, just relax yourself and observe the moment that you are aware of. When you are aware of that moment observe it closely and note it as thinking... thinking... thinking. If you see something or someone then note as seeing... seeing... seeing...

Whatever, situation is happening at that time being aware and mindful of the situation without losing the feeling. If you are having thoughts acknowledge it as thinking, if you are dreaming, planning hoping etc. acknowledge it at as they are. If you are feeling bored, happy or upset note them as they truly are and mentally noting it, which is called

contemplating on mind or *cittanupassana*. Most of the time at the beginning of practice, we tend to tangle or generate our thoughts after thoughts, which caused more misery and uneasiness. So, all the mental activities that arise in our mind and creation of our mind normally due lack of understanding we grasp and attach with it as we and our. We grasp that thinking process as I am, mine and me. There are only mind process and its activities. Therefore, we have to learn to see and know as they truly are. Our practice will help us to understand and observe the arising nature of these feelings. The purpose of learning to practice insight is to catch or acknowledge the arising moment of those feelings at the beginning. Once, we have recognised, noted and let it go, return back to the primary object, rising and falling of abdomen.



Question 41

Where is Lumbini; in India or Nepal?

Venerable sir, There has been a long standing debate going on regarding the birth place of the Buddha –Lumbini, that India has been trying to propagate it as an Indian territory where as we know it is in Nepal. Will you please give your view on this? Thank you. – Krishna Chakhun

Answer :

Few years ago one of the Thai scholars published a book claiming that Buddha was born in Thailand. Under the basis of Buddhist culture and some similarities in daily life, he suggested that the Buddha was born in Thailand. Similarly, Tharu, one of the ethnic groups of Nepal, scholar claims its lineage to the Buddha and its originality. I believe there are many more who is trying in different ways to claim their relation to the Buddha and his places. It is not a new and will not end either to hunt for identity and originality. Therefore, it would not be surprised to hear or proclamation of India, one of the main land where the Buddha's work place for 45 years, that the Buddha was born in India, not in Nepal. There are many research works and excavation investigations have already suggested clearly that the site is in Nepal. Nevertheless, the question is what is a reaction of Nepalese government and its people towards its claim?

Lumbini is one of the holiest Buddhist pilgrimages on the earth where the Buddha, it is believed that on the full moon day, Friday, Vaisakha of 623 B.C, was born 2600 years ago. However, this site was unknown until 1st December 1896, when Dr. Anton A Fuhrer discovered the Ashokan Pillar, nine feet above the ground and ten feet below

the surface and six feet above the base. The stone engraved edict pillar was established to commemorate King Ashoka's visit to the holy place. One of the sentences says; Hida Budhe Jateti Luminigamme – 'Buddha was born here in Lumbini Village'.

Although, the inscription definitely defines the place of Buddha's birth, controversy on the Buddha's birth place began when a news on Ashokan inscription was broke out in local newspaper the 'Daily Asha' on August 24, 1928 in Kapileswara, Orissa. Few scholars, in particular from Orissa, India, are presenting such controversy, which is their right of nationalistic view although academically, anthropologically and historically it appeared as 'not genuine' or spurious copy of the record' etc. such as Prof. Nabin K. Sahu, a historian from Orissa published a book in 1959 and wrote 'Buddha was born in Orissa', fun-reading category book 'the real birth place of Buddha is Kapileswara; not Lumbini of Nepal'. It appeared that on the basis of cultural similarity and probably misinterpretation of Alexander Cunningham's work, which was written before discovery of Ashokan Pillar in Lumbini.

"It is quite amazing to note that an inscription has been discovered from Kapileswar which contains the same subject matter as found in the Tarai Pillar inscription. The scripts of it belong to the time of Ashok and a script writer named "Chundraya" hadwritten them. He had signed his name in Kharostri script. From his inscription it is found that Buddha Dev was born in Orrisa"- [Buddhism in Orissa - 1959, pp 1-2].

On the basis of facts, Chinese Pilgrimage, Geographic structure, archeological facts, the Ashokan Pillar and Maya Devi Temple, and most recent discovery of Marker Stone in Lumbini Garden provide clear picture of the place where the Buddha was born. Further, on the pillar itself written that 'the Buddha was born here in Lumbini' perfectly provides a proof

that the Buddha was born in Lumbini, which lies in present Nepalese territory. Therefore, there is no doubt of his birth in Lumbini present day Nepal. It is sad to bring an attention here that Nepalese accept the Buddha as the icon of the country. It seems, nevertheless, Nepalese not only have neglected his birthplace but also hesitate to accept his teaching and his followers. "It was International Buddhist organizations and World bodies, in particular UNESCO, who initiated a master plan of the site"

Whereas in India, in particular Orissa, continue contributing immensely to the growth and development of Buddhist sites in Indian subcontinent. It should be learnt or take it as warning to the Nepalese government as well as general Nepalese concerning Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha. They collectively should consider deeply for its preservation, promotion as well as conservation.

Furthermore, the Buddha once said, 'one who sees the dhamma sees me'. So, debate on where he was born, nonetheless, could regard as irrelevant. Similarly, on the basis of the facts clearly presents evidence of his birth in Lumbini Present Nepal on the other hand. Therefore, rather than wasting time to find where the Buddha was born, which is already declared; geographically, historically and of course from inscription, better cultivate yourself into his teaching and know who we really are and fulfill the purpose of one's own birth.

Further reading:

Harihar Raj and Mrs Indu Joshi, Antiquities of Buddha Sakyamuni's Birth Place in the Nepalese Tarei, Published by The Nepal Studies: Past and Present (Kath: Printed at Nepal Press)

Bhikkhu Sudarshan Mahasthvir, Lumbiniya Kichalaya, (Kath : Pub. by Srikirti Vihar, Kirtipur)

B. K. Rana: Nepal's Lumbini: where the Buddha was born (The Himalayan Voice, 2010)

Varapunya Meditation Centre



Meditation is a special skill that helps how to use your limited time effectively for greater benefit and finding right balance in your daily life. The Centre was established with the support of pious devotees as a centre for learning and sharing personal direct experiences of practicing meditation for a better understanding of its concept and practice in order to apply in daily life and enhancement of spiritual journey. It is registered as a charity in 2013 (SC043989).

The Centre is supported entirely by voluntary donations and if you are in a position to offer anything it is most graciously accepted to support its ongoing activities. Every donation is highly valued.

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Venerable Sujana, a Nepalese born Buddhist monk, was ordained into the Theravada school of Buddhism in Nepal under the guidance of late Most venerable Sudarshan Mahasthavira at Nagar Mandap Srikirti Vihara. He studied Buddhism and Buddhist Meditation in Thailand where he took higher ordination at Wat Paknam Bhasichoroen, Bangkok under the preceptorship of the Most Venerable Somdet Phramaha Ratchamangalacharn, Current Acting Supreme Patriarch of Thailand and Abbott of Wat Paknam Temple. He has completed BA in Religion and MA in Buddhist Studies from Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University in Thailand. He has also gain MSc in Religion and Society from the University of Aberdeen.

Since his arrival to the UK in 2005 as a Minister of Religion, he has been working with different Buddhist organisations as a religious worker, teaching Buddhism and meditation. and also involving in different religious and social activities, such as 'Punjab Buddhist Society UK, Lumbini Nepalese Buddha Dharma Society, The Buddhavihara Temple Kings Bromley (Wamhathat UK), Interfaith Groups in different cities, School visit, and Hospital visits etc.

In 2012 with the help of pious devotees he founded the Varapunya Buddhist Society and Meditation Centre in Aberdeen as a centre for learning and practising Buddhism. Since the establishment of the Centre he lives and teaches at the centre and also hold the position of the abbot.

He has also published few books and number of articles in different languages on Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy.

The current book is a collection of questions and answers that often asked by people on Buddhism and how is it applicable in daily life. These are some of the main questions that venerable has collected on Buddhism and how he has applied Buddhism in daily life to deal with worldly matters.



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