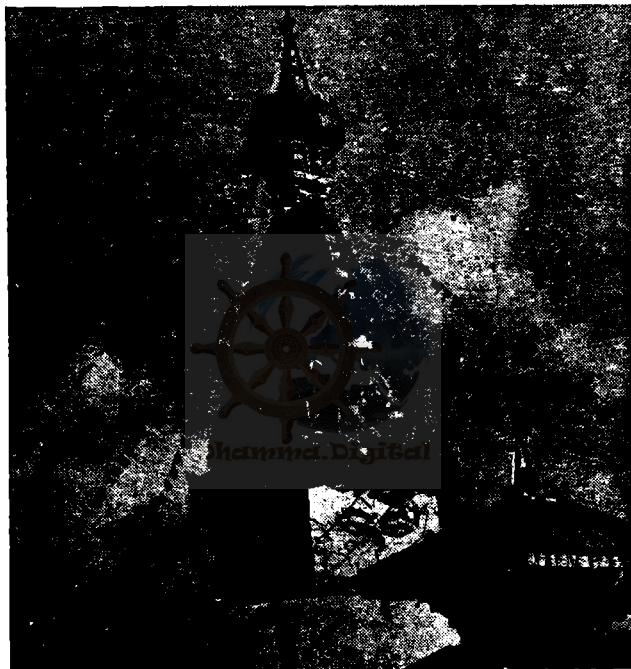


No. 41
3rd in English

BUDDHISM AT A GLANCE



BHIKKHU SUSHOBHAN M. A.

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By

Bhikkhu Sushobhan M. A.



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Publisher's Note

We are happy to publish “**Buddhism at a Glance**” written by Venerable Bhikkhu Sushobhan M. A., Chairman of Nepal Buddhist Society. This book will serve to those who wish to learn Buddhism at a glance.

The author has written it in very simple English and it contains some basic knowledge of Buddhism. This Book will give the knowledge of basic Buddhism to the readers.

The need of some simple English books on Buddhism has been felt in Nepal. The author has made some useful contribution in this field.

This is the 41st publication of Anandakuti Vihara Trust and 3rd in English.

Anandakuti Vihara
Swayambhu-Hill
Kathmandu
Nepal.
Tel: 214420

Bhikkhu Maitri
Hon. Secretary
Anandakuti Vihara Trust
August 4, 1985.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

“This small book has been written as requested by Upasika Beena Barua. Upasikas—lay women followers have always shown keen interest in how to lead a day-to-day good life. After all they are sisters, mothers and grandmothers in the society. They have to learn the art of running the family life, bringing up of children, looking after all members of the family, protecting household properties etc. They really need to be guided by some practical and sound principles. For Buddhist people, the Buddha’s teachings are the best principles to be followed for there is no other equal substitute.”

The above quotation is an extract taken from the first edition of this book-BUDDHISM AT A GLANCE. It’s second edition has been possible due to the wise consideration of Venerable Dr. Amritananda Mahanayaka Thera, the founder of Anandakuti Vidyapith and the author of Buddhist books relating to the Buddha’s Time.

This edition has been not only revised and reedited but also made suitable to read for the beginners of Buddhism.

I am highly indebted to the Anandakuti Vihara Trust for kindly publishing and making this book available in the market. The Trust has indeed served its second objective-**'to publish Buddhist literature.'**

My special thanks goes to Mr. Khasty Man Shakya, the Proprietor of Sharada Printing Press, for taking keen interest in printing this book and providing a Buddha's photo.

Lastly, I also thank to Dr. Bala Ram Joshi for going through the original book and giving few words of appreciation.

Padma Suganda Vihara
Majipat, Kathmandu
Nepal.

Bhikkhu Sushobhan
5th August, 1985

BUDDHISM

Buddhism is one of the three most important and popular religions of the world; the other two being Christianity and Islam. It was founded by the Lord Buddha, who lived in the 6th Century B.C. in the Northern India. By the 12th Century A. D. the Buddha's teachings had penetrated deeply in most of the Asian countries. Today, the Buddhism is professed by more than 600 million people all over the world.

There are two main schools of Buddhism. One is known as the Southern or Theravada School. This school is mostly popular in Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Laos. The other one is called the Northern or Mahayana School and is mainly prominent in Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan, Mongolia, Vietnam and Korea. The former shows the path of being a true disciple of the historical Gautama, the Buddha; whereas the latter insists on the path of becoming a Buddha. The ultimate aim of both the Schools of Buddhism is to secure welfare and happiness of the many.

In the modern age of science and technology, Buddhism has been labelled as “Do it Yourself religion”. Further, it has been a status symbol for a great number of Western people to consider themselves as Buddhist followers. For them as well as for traditional Buddhist people, Buddhism is a religion which shows a noble way of life. It is the true teaching discovered by man, the Buddha, taught for man and for that, suited to man. Besides, the Buddha’s admonition of not to do evil, to do all that is good and to purify one’s own mind is acceptable to all those who wish to grow in knowledge and conduct.

The Buddhist literature is so vast that a modern man could hardly get time to read all the voluminous scriptures. The need of the age, therefore, is to familiarise oneself rightly with the traditional Buddhist beliefs and practices.

This book— Buddhism at a Glance – is an attempt to give a short introduction to the life of the Buddha, his basic teachings and his noble Order with a special reference to the practical aspects of the Buddhist way of life.

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The Lord Buddha is giving the useful instructions to Sigala, a devoted householder of Rajgriha.

LIFE OF THE BUDDHA IN SHORT

The Birth

Buddha is the title achieved by those who have learnt, known, understood and awakened of 'things as they are'. Shakyamuni Gautama the Buddha was one of them who achieved this title 'Buddha' by dint of his knowledge and conduct. As a human being, he was born on the fullmoon day in the month of May at Lumbini Grove to the Queen Mahamaya. His father the Kshatriya King Suddhodana ruled over the land of Shakyans at Kapilavastu in the Nepalese frontier.

On the fifth day, the baby prince was ceremoniously named Siddhartha—meaning one whose purpose has been achieved. Royal astrologers prophesised that if he led a worldly life, he would be a peerless Emperor but if he renounced the world, he would be a Buddha,—Enlightened One.

On the seventh day Queen Mahamaya, mother of the prince, left for her heavenly abode, for she had already given what a noble lady could at the most give to the world. The prince was consequently nurtured to manhood by her youngest sister Queen Prajapati Gautami, who also gave birth to prince Nanda.

Prince Siddhartha grew up like the waxing moon completing all royal education on peace and war. Although from his childhood, he was given to serious contemplation, yet he did not fail to attend a wounded bird, watch life on the earth of killing and being killed and win various sports.

Marriage

Being grown up in the feudal society, at the age of sixteen, Siddhartha had an early marriage with the beautiful princess Yasodhara. To our astonishment, she did not give birth to a child till prince Siddhartha was twenty-nine years of age. How they managed this late child birth is yet a secret to be explored by the family planning authorities of our age.

The Visions

Prince Siddhartha had all material comforts

at his command and he lived a luxurious life as his father wished. But every thing has its own limitations. The charm of worldly life too has its own.

At four different occasions, while he went about with his charioteer Channa to the royal garden the Prince had four significant visions which brought a great change in his life.

An aged-man, a sick man and a dead body being carried away on the shoulders by lamenting kinsmen left deep impressions in the mind of the prince. For the first time, he began to ponder over what he had seen and came to the awful conclusion that those who were born were all subject to aging, disease and death. That experience moved him so deeply that he decided to find some way out. He found no refuge and cure in the royal life which, he felt, was mere a self-imposed illusion i. e. being unaware of persistent human sufferings. He began to seek the Truth of Life-Suffering and its cure-Liberation.

The fourth vision the prince experienced was that of a recluse walking serene and contented, leaving all worldly cares behind. He was

very much impressed by the way of life and thought that it might provide him with a clue. So he too determined to lead peaceful, simple and yet purposeful life of a recluse. Meanwhile, the news was brought to him that a son had been born to Yasodhara. "A fetter (Rahula) is set upon me", uttered the prince and returned to the palace.

The Great Renunciation

The urge to find out the state of agelessness, diseaselessness and deathlessness was so strong in the prince that nothing could stop him from giving up the worldly life. It was again on the fullmoon day in the month of July, at the age of twenty-nine, that Siddhartha renounced all that was near and dear to him including his beloved wife, newly born son, his father and the crown that held the promise of power and glory. He, then, led the life of an ascetic in search of Supreme Security from bondage-Nirbana for himself and the rest.

The Enlightenment

The ascetic Siddhartha who was to be the Buddha went to two renowned teachers of that

period namely Alara Kalam and Udaka Ramaputra and learnt from them all that they could teach but he was not satisfied. So he decided to test the validity of various forms of ascetic practices of self-mortification, exalted then. He practised these for six years which reduced him to a mere skeleton.

By that time Siddhartha had come to know for himself that the life of self-mortification was as futile as the life of luxury. Keeping aside those two extremes he followed the middle path of moderation on food and persistent effort in contemplation. This newly discovered way was conducive to the health and brightness of the mind.

On one fullmoon day in the month of May, after having taken milk-rice offered by the lady Sujata, he was sitting cross-legged under the famous Bodhi tree. At that time he was contemplating over the wheel of birth and death when he was able to dispel all latent ignorance and cravings—the root cause of all sufferings. Knowledge dawned upon Siddhartha and, thus, he achieved the Enlightenment. Thenceforth, he was known as Shakyamuni Gautama, the Bud-

dha. He usually addressed himself as 'Tathagata—meaning One who has arrived Thus.

The Foundation of Buddhism

The knowledge and conduct that the Buddha had achieved and followed are not only deep but also refined, suitable only to those who are willing to be trained towards the way of Truth and Non-Violence. The Truth is the supreme goal to be achieved by each individual. It is conducive to the welfare and happiness of many. Non-Violence is the means to the end. It is noble in the beginning, noble in the middle and noble at the end.

The Buddha laid down the foundation of Buddhashasana, Buddha's admonition to the first five disciples, namely, Kondannya, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji. They had closely followed the Buddha even before his Enlightenment. Prior to their formal initiation into discipleship, the Buddha was also visited by two merchants namely, Tapussa and Bhaluka. They were the first two merchants who offered the Teacher rice-cake and honey just after his Enlightenment. They became his first two lay disciples who took refuge in the Buddha and the Dharma.

The Buddha turned the Wheel of the Dharma at Saranath, in the deer park and initiated the first five disciples. This signified the appearance of the Triple Gems, namely, Buddha, the Enlightened Teacher, Dharma, the Path to Freedom and Sangha, the Noble Community. Later on Yasa, a prince of Banaras and his fifty four friends joined the noble Order. They also became worthy ones—Arhats. That brought the number of able disciples to sixty.

The Spread of the Dharma

The Buddha at the end of the first rainy retreat in the Banaras forest, addressed his disciple bhikkhus in these words:

“Released am I, monks, from all ties whether human or divine. You also are delivered from fetters whether human or divine. Go now and wander for the welfare and happiness of many. Out of compassion for the world, for the gain, welfare and happiness of gods and men. Let not two of you proceed in the same direction. Proclaim the Dharma that is noble in the beginning, noble in the middle and noble in the end, possessed of

meaning and the letter and utterly perfect. Proclaim the life of purity, and the holy life consummate and pure. There are beings with little dust in their eyes who will be lost through not hearing the Dharma, there are beings who will understand the Dharma, I also shall go to Uruvela, to Senanigama to teach the Dharma.”

The Buddha proceeded to Uruvela where he met and won the hearts of three chief ascetic Kassapas—Uruvela, Nadi and Gaya, along with their one thousand disciples. Accompanied with those new disciples, the Buddha went to meet the King Bimbisara of Rajgriha as he had promised to visit the King after he had found the Truth. The King Bimbisara took refuge in the Triple Gems and offered a royal grove, Veluvanaram for sheltering the holy congregation.

The sensational news of the appearance of the Triple Gems spread far and wide. King Suddhodana also heard the news and with great eagerness and respect invited the Buddha to visit his native people in Kapilvastu. The

Buddha accepted the invitation, went there and admonished the local people to follow the path of the Dharma properly so that they might live happily here and hereafter. During his short stay at Kapilvastu princes Nanda, Rahula and many other male members joined the Order. After staying for sometimes in Kapilvastu, the Buddha left to Rajagriha city.

The Pillars of Buddhhasana

In Buddhism there are four unshakable pillars, namely, bhikkhus (monks), bhikkhunis (nuns), Upasakas (laymen) and Upasikas (laywomen). The Buddha had many able monk disciples such as Venerable Sariputra, the foremost in wisdom and Venerable Mahamogallana, the possessor of great psychic power. He had male and female lay followers in great number too.

Anathapindika, the feeder of the poor, donated Jetavana, the great monastery in Sravasti where the Buddha spent nineteen of his rain retreats. Similarly, Lady Visakha built another big monastery—Purbarama in the same city where the Buddha stayed for six rain retreats. Anathapindika and Visakha were the two chief lay supporters of the Buddha.

The tradition of Bhikkhunis— nuns began only after the admission to the Order of Queen Prajapati Gautami, the Buddha's step-mother, who after the demise of the King Suddhodana, in the fifth year of the Buddha's ministry, left the palace and persisted on going forth like other monk disciples. Later on she was joined by princess Yasodhara, Janapad Kalyani and many other female royal members. They all secured the path to Deathlessness—Nirvana. That tradition continued for many centuries.

At present there is no full-fledged Bhikkhunis though there are similar female disciples—Anagarikas leading monastic life like a Bhikkhu.

The Buddha accepted as his followers, all those who were willing to take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. People found in his Norm and Discipline the absence of social discrimination like caste and race. Naturally, people from all walks of life came to take refuge in the Triple Gems and became the Buddha's followers. This tradition is practised even today.

The Daily Life of the Buddha

It is worth knowing how the Buddha made use of his daily life. No doubt, that was energetic and purposeful. The holy scripture 'Tripi-taka' is full of such instances. The Buddha being Awakened One neither encouraged to dwell on the past nor on the future. He himself lived to the present and taught his followers to do the same. It is obvious that the past is gone, the future is yet to come and only the present is at one's disposal. Working at the living present is the only way to make one's future bright.

In the Early Morning— The Buddha usually woke up at 4 A. M. After paying the nature's call, he either sat under a tree or in a quiet secluded place and began to spread his compassionate net in all four quarters, thinking about whom he should help that day. The story of **Angulimala** makes this clear.

At one time the Buddha saw in his vision a dangerous criminal Angulimala who was committed to collect one thousand human fingers for offering to his misguided teacher.

He had already killed hundreds of people and garlanded with nine-hundred ninety-nine fingers. He was looking for one more finger when his mother, in the early morning, went his way to request her son to give up his gruesome acts. The Buddha became aware of Angulimala going to kill his own mother. So he immediately went towards the forest where Angulimala was staying.

As soon as Angulimala saw a woman from afar, he brandished his sword and ran towards her. Before a great dark act of matricide could be committed, the Buddha intervened. He appeared before Angulimala who in turn tried to catch hold of him with all his effort but was unable to do so due to the weakness of the evil mind before the Compassionate One. The Buddha admonished Angulimala on what was to be done and what was not to be done. Angulimala changed his heart and became the Buddha's disciple. A criminal was thus transformed into a monk.

In the Late Morning— The Buddha, coming out of his early morning contemplation used to pace to and fro to keep his body physically

fit. When it was dawn, he wore upper robe properly, took a bowl in his hand and went out for alms-round. Local people, with great devotion, offered him food they had prepared. After returning from alms collection, he sat down at a quiet place and took his meal mindfully. He took only one meal a day and that too before noon.

In the Afternoon— After the meal, the Buddha usually took a little rest so that there could be no possible strain of food digestion. By 2.00 P. M he would assume his Dharma-seat. Local people would start coming to him to hear the Teachings from the mouth of the Enlightened One. The Buddha discoursed them according to their maturity in understanding and disposition. Most of the listeners would generally be established in the first, second, third or even fourth path as well as fruition of realization through cleaning their mind of greed, hatred and delusion in various degrees, thereby gaining in turn unshakable confidence, moral conduct, concentration and wisdom. They got rid of illusion about man-made sufferings. Some of them even went to the presence of the Teacher and re-

quested him for going forth in his well-proclaimed Teachings and Discipline. The story of the Bhikkhuni **Patachara** makes this more clear.

Patachara, the only daughter of a wealthy family fell in love with her own house servant and eloped with him, against the will of her parents. They went to lead a family life in a distant place. In due course, Patachara became pregnant and when the delivery time was near, she goaded her husband into taking her to her parents, but he refused because of his guilty conscience. So when he was out, she quietly left the house and headed towards her parents' house. Her husband followed and found her in the middle of the forest where she had given birth to a baby. Then both of them came back to their own place.

A similar incident happened during the birth of her second child in the mid-forest. But this time a great misfortune had befallen on Patachara. That night cold wind was blowing followed by heavy rains. While her husband was collecting some wood to make fire for warming themselves, he was bitten by a snake

and died instantly. With great anxiety, Patachara waited for him for the whole night. Next day she went in search of him and to her profound sorrow, she found him dead. She performed the last rites for her dead husband and then she headed towards her parents' house. She had with her elder and the newly born babies.

Due to the rain on the previous night, the forest river had swollen up and the current was swift. Patachara was helpless. Placing the newly born baby on this side of the river, she crossed the river with the elder baby and left him on the other side of the river. While she was crossing for the second time to bring the young baby to the other side of the river, a giant eagle suddenly came by and took away the newly born baby. Patachara desperately shouted clapping her hands but all in vain. Meanwhile, the elder baby seeing his mother shouting and clapping her hands thought that she was calling him. So the baby came down to the water and was carried away in the current.

With a heart stricken by grief, Patachara went towards her parents' house. On the way

she asked a passerby about her parents, who pointed out a burning charnel ground and told her with profound condolence that her parents and the only brother had died the other night due to the collapse of their house and the burning pyre was that of her own parents.

Patachara could hardly believe all that happened to her in such a short period. She could not control her sorrow and became mad. Eventually, she went around without any clothes on her murmuring to herself. She was discarded by the society. One afternoon the Buddha was sitting in the midst of his followers when Patachara came there in that condition.

The Buddha with great compassion addressed Patachara saying, "Sister, be aware." The pleasant voice of the Buddha and his assurance of giving a brother's affection helped regain her sanity. Some devotees nearby gave her a piece of cloth to cover herself. With deep reverence, she paid homage to the Buddha and requested to allow her to be a bhikkhuni. She was admitted in the female Order and before long Patachara attained the highest realization through contemplating on the law of Impermanence of all existing phenomena.

In the Evening — The Buddha usually spent his evening discoursing with monks on various subjects of current events with special reference to the previous births. The incident leading to the going-forth of the Venerable Angulimala mentioned above furnishes us with an excellent illustration.

On that evening, many monks had gathered in the preaching-hall and were talking about the incredible ability of the Buddha of transforming a criminal Angulimala into a monk. The Buddha came by and asked the monks about the subject they were discussing. On being told about the subject of discussion, the Buddha said to the monks that it was not only that time that he had subdued Angulimala but while the Buddha was yet a Bodhisatva, a Buddha to be, he had subdued him in his previous life as well. On being requested to clarify his statement, the Buddha told the **Previous Life Story** of Angulimala retold here in brief.

At one time the Bodhisatva was returning to his native place crossing through a dense forest, after completing his studies in Taxila, the famous institution of learning. He was accompanied by one hundred friends. In the

mid-forest they encountered a gang of cannibals whose leader was the then Angulimala. The gang made all of them captive. The Bodhisatva being the leader and the most clever was told to be killed last of all. But he boldly protested against that decision and asked to be killed first. The leader of the gang agreed with his proposal and also allowed the Bodhisatva to go to tell his parents about his success in studies, on the promise that he would come back at any cost.

The Bodhisatva having informed his parents about his success in studies returned to the cannibal gang, as he had promised. That was his practice of Truthfulness even at the risk of his life. The gang leader being satisfied with the Bodhisatva's sincerity and truthfulness announced that he would not be killed but be freed. Hearing this the Bodhisatva pleaded that his one hundred friends should also be spared which eventually was consented to. The leader of the gang was so impressed by the Bodhisatva's courage and leadership that he asked him to be admonished. The Bodhisatva accordingly admonished him and made him established in the Five Precepts. The monks listening

to the story were overjoyed by what the Buddha said.

The Late at Night—In the late night from 10 to 12 P.M. the Buddha was usually visited by Devatas, the heavenly beings. They used to come to the Buddha and request him to teach them about the Righteousness. There are many instances of such communion between the Buddha and Devatas found in the Tripitaka. The Discourse on the Blessedness is worthy of mentioning here.

The Discourse on the Blessedness, as it is seen in the present form, is being retold by Venerable Ananda, the closest associate of the Buddha. Here a certain devata approached the Buddha at the dead of night. Illuminating the whole Jetavana monastery built by the wealthy Anathapindika, the devata paid homage to the Blessed One and standing at one corner, addressed the Buddha in a verse of his desire to know about what is called the great Blessing. The Buddha then enumerated thirty-eight highest Blessings conducive to all-round bliss beginning from not to associate with fool and

ending with the blessedness of being secure in everything.

In the Midnight— At the middle watch of the night, from zero to four A.M., the Buddha used to take rest. His resting posture was like that of a lion—keeping his left hand and left leg on the top of the right side of his body. He did not change this position while resting. He used to rest mindfully, keeping in mind that he would rise in the beginning of the last watch of the night that is around four A.M.

This gives the general description of the energetic and useful daily life of the Awakened One, Buddha. *Dhamma.Digital*

The Buddha taught his teachings to the people and devatas for forty-five years. Wearing a pair of saffron robes and holding a bowl in his hand he walked up and down on bare feet and travelled throughout the northern States of India. He met all sorts of people, talked to them, and gladdened them with his lucid and reasonable Dharma talk. The Buddha was usually accompanied by many monks. He accepted all doctrines and principles which were reasonable and in accordance with the

Righteousness. He rejected those practices which went against human welfare and mind-development.

The Last Day of the Buddha

After a successful ministry of forty-five years, the Buddha passed away peacefully at the age of eighty at the Sala-grove of the Mallas at Kusinagar (in northern Utter Pradesh, about 120 miles north of Benaras).

Peculiar to the Buddha is that he declared the day of his passing away three months in advance. As the day drew nearer he emphasised the most essential parts of his teachings such as the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and the thirty-seven Dharmas leading to the Enlightenment.

The Buddha declared four holy places conducive to the great merit of those who visit them with devotion, namely, (i) Lumbini, where he was born, (ii) Buddhagaya, where he achieved Enlightenment, (iii) Saranath, where he turned the Wheel of Dharma for the first

time and (iv) Kusinagar, where he passed away on the fullmoon day in the month of May.

Even at his death-bed, the Buddha instructed Ananda about many important issues such as:

- (i) the disposal of the Buddha's senseless body;
- (ii) assurance of realization of truth to Ananda;
- (iii) appreciation of Cunda's offering the last meal to the Buddha;
- (iv) the true worship of the Buddha consisting of living in accordance with the Dharma or Norm;
- (v) the Dharma-Vinaya—Norm and Discipline, to be the teacher after his demise;
- (vi) addressing elder monks by the younger as "Your Venerable"—Bhante and the younger by elder as 'friend'; Avuso;
- (vii) abolishing lesser and minor rules if the Order so desires; and
- (viii) giving extreme penalty (Brahmadanda) to the bhikkhu Channa by not speaking

to him. This being for his own benefit to make him realise his obstinacy.

Subhadra, the Last Disciple

The Buddha's compassion was so great that although he was weary and was preparing for entering the Mahaparinirvana, passing utterly away, in the last watch of the same night, he allowed Subhadra, the wanderer to see him. Subhadra came to ask about his doubt of spiritual attainment of the contemporary six leading teachers of their faiths, like Purana-kassapa and Nigrantha Nathputra (Lord Mahabir).

The Buddha admonished Subhadra that in whatsoever norm-discipline the Noble Eight-fold Path was not found, therein also no recluse was to be found, either of the first, or the second or the third or the fourth degree. And in whatsoever norm-discipline the Noble Eight-fold Path was found therein also was found of recluse of those four degrees. He assured him that in his norm and discipline the Noble Eight-fold Path was found and therefore there were recluse of those four degrees to be found. He further said that if in his norm-discipline monks were to

live the perfect life, the world would not be void of Arahatas, the realised ones.

At those words Subhadra, the wanderer expressed his appreciation, and requested for admittance in the Order. Later on he too became one of the Arahatas, the released Ones.

The Exalted One, turning to the congregation of monks asked whether any one of them was having any doubt or perplexity with regard to the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha or the Path or the way to the Path. There was total silence, so Ananda assured the Buddha of their full confidence. The Buddha told him that in the Tathagata there was knowledge of the fact and said :

“There is not in any one monk a single doubt or perplexity as to this. Of these five hundred monks of mine, Ananda, even he who is the most backward is a stream-winner, One who is assured from the Downfall, assured of reaching the Supreme Deliverance.”

Finally, the Buddha admonished the monks thus: “Behold now, O monks, I exhort you:

Impermanent are all compounded things, strive on with heedfulness.”

**VAYA DHAMMA SANKHARA
APPAMADENA SAMPADETHA**

These are the last words of the Buddha.

The Buddha's unconscious body was cremated with royal dignity and honour. His remaining relics were distributed and taken to eight different states, namely, Kusinagar, Rajgriha, Vaishali, Kapilvastu, Allakappa, Ramgrama, Vethadipa and Pava. The famous Brahman Drona took the golden urn with which the relics were measured. The Mauryans of Pippalivan collected the ashes.

All of them built stupas and enshrined the relics. Thus, there were ten stupas built in the holy commemoration of the Great Teacher, Buddha.

It is meritorious for us to recollect that the Buddha was born under a tree, attained Enlightenment under the famous Bodhi-tree and also passed away lying down between two Salatrees. All these three great events also coinci-

dentally occurred on the fullmoon day in the month of May. The day is, therefore, regarded as the “Thrice Blessed Day.”

The Buddha did as he said and said as he did. He has gone physically from us leaving behind his knowledge and conduct. He had said more than once that those who would see the Dharma—Truth would see the Buddha. Everyone of us has the right and ability to see the Dharma, thereby see the Buddha even here and now.

Dhamma.Digital

The best of paths is the Eightfold Path;
 The Four Truths are the best of Truths;
 Non-attachment is the best of Virtues;
 The best of bipeds is the Seeing One-Buddha.

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- Dhammapada

THE WELL-PROCLAIMED DHARMA

The Gist of the Teaching

The Buddha taught his teachings actively to men and gods for forty-five years. It is because of this long ministry that the Buddhist sacred scripture 'Tripitaka' has been such a huge and voluminous work. Traditionally, 84,000 Dharma-aggregates have been attributed to the Buddha. They are grouped into nine major sections, namely, (1) Discourses, (2) Discourses mixed with verses, (3) Prose-expositions, (4) Verses, (5) Utterances, (6) "Thus said" discourses, (7) Birth stories, (8) Marvellous-Dharmas and (9) Catechetical discourses. Briefly, they come under three universal teachings, namely, (i) Avoiding all evil deeds, (ii) Cultivating all good deeds, and (iii) Purifying one's own mind.

The Buddha also said that he had taught two things: Suffering and the End of Suffering.

But occasionally, he epitomised his teachings into one fundamental principle, namely, 'Appamada dharma'—meaning to practise developing awareness or heedfulness. Awareness is the base from which all other wholesome states or good acts arise and unwholesome states dry out.

Besides the original words of the Buddha, there is a great number of Buddhist literary works covering commentaries, sub-commentaries as well as experiences of Buddhist mystics. In fact, all knowledge and conduct born of human insight and experience can be seen explained in the Buddhist scriptures. Thus any effort to present the Buddha's teachings in a few pages would be like taking a water-drop from the vast Ocean, but none the less equally salty. The same is true with the gist of the Buddha's Teaching—the taste of which is the ultimate Release.

An attempt has been made here to acquaint readers with some salient features of the Buddha's Teaching in the context of the popular 'Samanerapanha'—the Novice's Catechism.

The Novices' Catechism

1. What is 'the one' ?

All sentient beings subsist on food

—Attitude towards food is an important issue. All living beings cannot live without food. Its shortage becomes the most threatening problem to humanity. In this connection the Buddha had said that hunger is the greatest disease in the world.

Four types of food are recognized, namely, (i) solid food, (ii) sense – contact, (iii) Volition or 'thought-stuff' and (iv) Consciousness. The first one consists of material food of all sorts and the other three types of food help the mind continue to function. A person may equally die in absence of food for his mind and faculties. The Buddha's instruction in this regard is to practise moderation.

2. What is 'the two' ?

The two are mind and body

—A being consists of the mind and body. Mind is recognized first because in its

absence the question of life does not arise. In Buddhism mind is regarded as the forerunner of all states, and is their chief. They are all mind-made. Feeling, perception, thoughts and consciousness coming together make mind. Body, on the other hand, consists of four primary elements of earth, water, fire and air. The body is placed second in importance. Mind and body may exist separately and are subject to change. This changefulness of the mind and body indeed makes it possible to work out towards the ultimate Release.

3. What are 'the three' ?

The three feelings

—Feelings, generally are of three types, namely, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. People in their daily life do experience these feelings. In fact, they are often carried away by them. They feel pleasant when agreeable and desirable external objects come in contact with their senses, but they feel unpleasant when disagreeable and undesirable objects come to their senses. The pleasant feeling is prone to bring in greed whereas the unpleasant feeling hatred. The neutral feeling is experienced by a

person either in a state of delusion or when he is fully aware.

4. What are 'the four' ?

The Four Noble Truths

—The Four Noble Truths are the heart of the Buddha's Teaching. The Buddha has said that if a person were to say that the Buddha has realized the Four Noble Truths and has taught the same to the people he would be rightly representing the Buddha. His first declaration of attaining the Buddhahood as proclaimed in the first sermon on the Turning the Wheel of Dharma, mainly deals with the Four Noble Truths. These are the Four Noble Truths:

a. The Noble Truth of Suffering:—It is to understand that there is suffering in the world when there is (i) birth, (ii) old-age, (iii) death, (iv) sorrow, grief, lamentation, despair, (v) living with disliked ones, (vi) separation with beloved ones, (vii) not getting what one wants, and (viii) in short, the five grasping aggregates of form, feeling, perception, tendencies and consciousness are suffering.

b. The Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering:—It is to understand that there are causes of suffering, namely, (i) Craving for sensual-pleasure, (ii) Craving for existence—will to be and will to have, and (iii) Craving for non-existence—not willing to accept the situation as it is. These causes are to be removed.

c. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering:—It is to understand that the three cravings which are the causes of suffering are to be eradicated, thereby to realize the Coolness, Freedom, Nirbana.

d. The Noble Truth of the Eightfold Path:—This is also known as the Middle Way and is to be fully practised in one's daily life.

5. What are “the five” ?

The Five grasping aggregates

—A person is nothing but a composition of the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, thoughts and consciousness. These aggregates are also called subjects of Grasping or Attachment. When a person thinks saying ‘this is me and these are mine’, attachment grows in him.

Thus he gets entangled in the vicious circle of 'me' and 'mine', finding no way out. To come out of this circle, one has to practise detachment little by little.

6. What are 'the six' ?

The Six Sense Spheres

—The Buddha has recognized six sense organs. They are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. They are also called internal faculties. Their external objects are that of sight, sound, smell, taste, physical contact and mental objects like thoughts.

In the Discourse on Fire, the Buddha says that all these internal as well as external faculties, sense-contacts and feelings arising thereof are burning with the fire of lust, hatred, and delusion, burning of birth, old age, death etc. To cool down the fire one has to practise detachment which eventually enable him to be free from all bondage—human or divine.

7. What are 'the seven' ?

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

a. Mindfulness—A person aspiring for Enlightenment must begin to develop mindfulness

in his daily life. There are Four Foundations of Mindfulness, namely, contemplating body as body, feelings as feelings, mind as mind and mental objects as mental objects. The method is so simple and cost-free that one has just to consider one's own living body as the workshop for the arising of mindfulness. It is to reflect constantly on the bodily and mental activities and be aware of things as they are.

The practice of mindfulness helps get rid of five mental hindrances, namely, lust for sensual pleasure, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and finally the sceptical doubts about the existence of 'me' and 'mine'. The right mindfulness is always accompanied with awareness of what is right and what is wrong to do. The mindfulness and awareness are the gate way to the Supreme Security.

b. Investigation of the Truth—The investigation of the Truth is to examine all experiences a person has whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral and verify them with the Teaching. Here the human faculty of reasoning is to be properly utilized and nothing is to be left unexamined and uninvestigated as far as

the Path and the Fruition are concerned. This is a gradual process, of course. As understanding matures, the power of discerning things as they are becomes a part of one's daily life.

c. Effort—Effort is to be consciously made. Generally, people are prone to take things granted, but if a person wants to advance in his practice he has to make persistent effort. The cultivation of mindfulness and investigation of the Truth will help him to understand that effort is a must. Constant effort can free one from suffering.

d. Joy—The practising of Dharma is always rewarded. The development of mindfulness and investigation of the Truth bring in a person more and more confidence. His effort is not wasted, but rewarded sooner or later with inner feelings of joy. This feeling of joy makes him less tired and boost him to practise more. He experiences that his mind is less interested in the pleasures of the world for he knows that the inner joy is far more superior to that of the flitting pleasures of the world.

e. Calm:- Inner joy makes a person self-contented in the practice which in turn brings

calmness to his mind and body. At this stage sense organs are under one's control to some extent. The body is felt light and the mind bright. Senses become clear and undisturbed.

f. Concentration:— Concentration means deep involvement in what one is doing. Here it is to give whole-hearted effort to one's practice. Each change arising from the practice is to be closely looked at and be noted. The mind of such a person gradually becomes strong and not easily effected by the wordly conditions of gain and loss, fame and defame, praise and blame, and finally even by happiness and suffering. His understanding steadily increases and shows that what he is doing is right. It is commended by the wise and is also conducive to happiness for a long time to come. His mental power is strengthened. His body too is disciplined accordingly. Hunger, thirst, mosquito bites, heat and cold hardly bother him. He becomes ardent in his practice and comes to dwell in a state of one-pointedness which is accompanied by equanimity.

g. Equanimity— Equanimity accompanied by wisdom is the stage in which one comes to

see and know things as they are and thereby achieving realization. All above six factors of Enlightenment contribute to arrive at this stage. It makes him unshakable in his pursuit. Time and place become secondary to him and his only concern becomes the achievement of the ultimate goal. But at the same time he learns to be patient enough to build the conditions necessary to cause the knowledge that frees his mind from all entanglements whether that of this world or the next. He, thus, fulfils his duties towards himself and the rest of his life is dedicated for the common good and happiness of all.

These seven Factors of Enlightenment have to be practised and developed simultaneously, though they become more intense at each higher stage.

8. What are 'the eight' ?

The Noble Eightfold Path

—Wonderful is the arising of the Buddha in the world. It is more wonderful when the people having heard his words and having lived accordingly, they realize the Truth and become free

like the Buddha himself. Gautama, the Buddha was not the only Buddha who had trodden on the earth, but there had been Buddhas in the distant past and there will be in the future too e.g. Maitriya Buddha. The span of interval between the two Buddhas is so long that the path shown by the one is absolutely forgotten. Even mere hearing of the word Buddha, Dharma or Sangha would be considered as astonishing.

A Buddha is the one who discovers the forgotten Path which was shown by the previous Buddha. It is just like a person finding a way in the midst of the forest which has not been used for a millennium. When the Bodhisatva Siddhartha was wandering in search of the Truth, only two extreme paths were available to him. One was the path of self-indulgence—the general aspiration that a common man could see and look for. That was the way the prince Siddhartha had lived for twenty-nine years in his father's royal palace. The other was the path of self-mortification of all sort as Siddhartha himself practised for six years and proved futile.

In other words, there were two extreme

views prevalent at that time. One was the view of eternalism which asserts that 'Self' existed and for that every thing is predetermined. Contrary to that was the view of annihilation which affirmed that 'Self' did not exist, there was no life after death and therefore, life was to be enjoyed even at the expense of others. Siddhartha found no refuge in these two views and therefore discarded them. He searched for a new path. Finally, he discovered a Middle Path following which he eventually achieved Enlightenment and thereby became the Buddha.

In his first sermon, the Buddha instructed his first five disciples that a person who was leading a homeless life should leave the two extreme paths and he should instead follow the Middle path for that was conducive to vision, insight, wisdom, knowledge and light. It is noble in the beginning, noble in the middle, and noble at the end. This path is also known as the Noble Eightfold Path and consists of the following eight practices :

a. Right Understanding— Understandings such as a person being supported by his parents should support them in turn, good deeds bear

good results, bad deeds bear bad results, merit and demerit do exist, and the association with the wise is a blessing, are considered as right views. The right understanding, in short, is to understand the Four Noble Truths thoroughly that there is suffering, it has its causes, the causes can be removed and the Eightfold path leads to the Cessation of suffering. It helps determine what is right and what is wrong to do.

b. Right Thought— Having understood what is right to do and what is wrong to do, a person should consciously determine to follow a line of action which is commended by the wise. Here the most commendable thoughts are the thought of renunciation, the thought of getting rid of ill-will and the thought of not harming any beings.

The Right Understanding and the Right Thought are the two qualities of wisdom, and therefore they come under the category of wisdom.

c. Right Speech—The first line of action to be taken after making right determination is to refrain from false speech and to speak the truth. One should also give up the practices of

back-biting, use of harsh words and habits of gossiping.' Speeches should be pleasant and beneficial to the hearer. Such acts bring harmony and unity in the society.

d. Right Action—It is to refrain from acts of killing, stealing and committing sexual misconduct. Instead a person should practise loving—kindness, generosity, and treating opposite sexes properly. Right action is the action that brings harm to none.

e. Right Livelihood—A person should lead a proper life that is to adopt such a profession that is neither harmful to oneself, nor to others, nor to both, but promoting good of oneself, good of others, and good of both the parties. At least he should not take the job of trading in human beings, selling poisons, selling arms and killing animals. One should lead a honest life, free from corruption and unlawful practices.

Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood constitute a moral life and comes in the moral exposition.

f. Right Effort—Here a person makes

effort to give up old bad habits, stops learning new bad ones, instead he learns good conducts and promotes good habits that one already has. He makes persistent effort to make an end of suffering by being energetic in doing all skillful acts.

g. Right Mindfulness—Mindfulness is the key to success. Without the development of mindfulness a person cannot progress in his daily life. Absent-mind and forgetfulness obstruct a person from progressing towards achieving the desired goal. On the other hand, when a person is mindful, his memory becomes sharp and powerful. He will be more aware and, therefore, goes ahead of others. All good qualities come to him who practices mindfulness.

The Practice of Mindfulness

Among all the practices the Buddha had emphasized the practice of mindfulness stands foremost. In this connection a long discourse had been delivered in the district of Kuru. The discourse deals with great details of various aspects of practising mindfulness within the

framework of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, namely, the mindfulness of body, feelings, mind and mental objects.

Mindfulness of Breathing

The practising of mindfulness of breathing is one of the most important techniques of developing mindfulness. It has sixteen gradually advancing stages, which complete the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in itself. The mindfulness of breathing is, therefore, widely taught and practised among the Buddhist followers of all ages. It is the most simple and easiest but subtle practice which if practised frequently, a person would be suitably rewarded with inner peace of mind and understanding.

In Buddhism all four major bodily postures of sitting, standing, walking and lying down are considered as the objects of mindfulness, but sitting and walking mindfully are most common in practice. A person desiring to develop mindfulness of breathing should choose a quiet place and sit down cross-legged, if possible, keeping his body erect and relax.

Then he should mindfully direct his mind to the breathing process, focusing his mind at the tip of the nose or the spot where the breath is felt coming in and going out. He should be just aware of breathing in and breathing out by mentally noting them. There should not be regulating or controlling the breath but just watching mindfully. If the mind wanders outside, then he should bring it back again and the practice should be continued.

He breathes in mindfully, and breathes out mindfully thus:

- (i) As he draws a long breath in, he should know that a long breath has been drawn in;
- (ii) As he breathes out a long breath, he should know that he breathes out a long breath;
- (iii) As he draws in a short breath, he should know that he draws in a short breath;
- (iv) As he breathes out a short breath, he should know that he breathes out a short breath;

- (v) Consciously experiencing the whole body he should breathe in;
- (vi) Consciously experiencing the whole body he should breathe out;
- (vii) Calming down the whole body he should breathe in;
- (viii) Calming down the whole body he should breathe out.

Thus a person trains himself.

The influence of the Discourse on Mindfulness over the people of Kuru at that time was so great that when two or more women met together, one would ask the other about the subject on which she was practising in. If the answer was affirmative, she would be praised for her energetic life and fruitful days. But if the answer was negative, she would be condemned as living a useless life and she would be advised to begin the practice.

h. Right Concentration—Right Concentration is directly related to removing one's mind from evil mental states and abiding in wholesome mental-states. Traditionally, Four Jhanas, the

state of purities of mind are associated with this practice. The first state of concentration is composed with applied thought, sustained thought, joy, happiness and one-pointedness. In the fourth state a person becomes free from pleasure and pain and arrive at a state of perfect mental purity and equanimity.

The last three practices of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration come under the development of Concentration-Samadhi. Thus the Noble Eightfold Path, in other words, consists of the three major teachings, namely, on Sila-Moral Conduct, Samadhi—Mind Development and Prajya – Wisdom. Though wisely classified into eight practices, the Noble Eightfold path is not to be practised separately. Each practice is intrinsically related to the development of the other. Eventually, all these Eightfold Practices should be developed simultaneously—Magga-samaggi. Besides, they can be practised at two different levels, namely, at the mundane level and at the spiritual level, that is to say the practice of the Middle Path can be applied for the material well being as well as for the spiritual advancement.

9. What are 'the nine' ?

The nine abodes of sentient beings

—These are the nine spheres of existence wherein beings go through vicious circle of birth and death, as long as the causes of birth are not eradicated completely by the mighty power born of the development of the Noble Eightfold Path. These nine spheres can be grouped into three broad types of existence, namely, (1) the sphere of Sensual Pleasure wherein there are four types of beings, namely, human beings, animals, beings in the purgatory and devas— heavenly beings, (2) the sphere of Form where those who have attained any one of the four absorptions (Jhanas) will be born as Brahma-devas, in any one of the sixteen Brahma abodes, corresponding to the qualities of the Jhana attained, and (3) the four Formless spheres where beings are born according to the attainment of any one of the four Formless-Jhanas.

Nirbana is beyond all these nine spheres. It is the state after attaining which a person will be born no more. The cycle of birth and death is completely stopped functioning for him because

such a person has eradicated all those factors which condition a new birth.

10. What is 'the ten' ?

The ten qualities of an Arahat

—An Arahat is a Disciple of the Buddha who has attained the Four Fruits of the (a) Stream-winner, (b) Once-Returner, (c) Non-Returner and (d) Arahatship by following Four Paths to the Four Fruits. He is also the one who has (a) the realization of the Truth, things as they are, and (b) the attainment of Nirbana, the Supreme Happiness.

The Aim of Brahmacharya, the Chaste Life.

A disciple who follows the Noble Eightfold Path sincerely and resolutely will gradually attain the Four Paths and the Four Fruits as he or she eradicates the Ten Fetters which bind beings in the wheel of existence. By the utter destruction of (1) the belief in the Eternalism, (2) the Sceptical doubt about the Buddha and his Teaching, and (3) the clinging to rites and rituals, the disciple becomes a stream-winner. By the utter destruction of these Three Fetteses and

by wearing thin of (4) the craving for sensual pleasure and (5) the Ill-will, the disciple becomes a Once-Returner. When the disciple completely destroys the first Five Fetters, he becomes a Non-Returner. With the utter destruction of the above Five Fetters, plus the eradication of the remaining Five Fetters namely (6) the Attachment for existence in the Rupa Brahma sphere, (7) the Attachment for existence in the Arupa Brahma sphere, (8) the Conceit, (9) the Restlessness and (10) the Ignorance, the disciple becomes an Arahāt.

The ultimate aim of the followers of the Theravada Buddhism is the attainment of the Arahātship. The disciple who achieves this state is said to have fulfilled the chaste life or Brahmacharya and is also said to have done what is to be done. He attains Nirbāna, the Freedom from Suffering.

There are two types of Arahāts. One is the Arahāt who has realized the Truth, but who is not endowed with psychic powers. The other Arahāt is the one who has realized the Truth and is also endowed with various psychic powers. Between these two types of Arahāts, the

latter one is more preferable because he can be more helpful to the common people in making them understand the Dharma, thereby help prolong the existence of Buddha-sasana the Buddha's Dispensation.

A Happy Life

A man loves happiness and hates suffering. Everyone wants to live a happy life and wishes to avoid a wretched life. But only wanting and wishing something will not make a man happy. He has to work for it. All those who have claimed to have lived a happy and successful life have been men of work and liberal mind. A person who wishes to be happy should not be miser, jealous, or lazy. Instead, he should be generous, appreciative and energetic.

Happiness is an attitude of mind. It is also an art to be learned. One can learn to be happy even just looking at the nature around oneself. Seeing birds flying in the sky, fruits bearing in trees, flowers growing in the garden, squirrels climbing trees, children playing on the ground and so on. Simple joy resides here. But to be really happy, a person must follow certain

sound principles following which one could feel material as well as spiritual security.

Three Levels of Happiness

1. **Happiness at present**— There are four principles following which a person can live a successful life and thereby be happy here and now. Here a person should be endowed with the virtues of (1) being energetic in one's profession; (2) protecting and properly using one's wealth that has been earned honestly and not to spend wastefully by gambling or drinking; (3) leading a balanced life according to one's income and (4) associating with good friends. These four virtues are conducive to material well being.

2. **Happiness in future**—Those who wish to be happy in the long run should be possessed of three more virtues namely (1) Moral Conduct of abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies and drinking intoxicants; (2) Generosity thereby cleaning one's mind from greed and (3) Wisdom—of growing in

knowledge and getting rid of Ignorance. Possessed of these seven principles, a person will be happy at present as well as be happy in the future, even from existence to existence. These seven virtues are conducive to material as well as spiritual well beings.

3. **The Highest Happiness**—To achieve the supreme happiness, the above seven virtues are not enough. One should follow the Noble Eightfold Path in its entirety, namely, (i) Right Understanding, (ii) Right Thought (iii) Right Speech, (iv) Right Action, (v) Right Livelihood, (vi) Right Effort, (vii) Right Mindfulness and (viii) Right Concentration. A person who lives according to the Noble Eightfold Path will eventually make an end to suffering and thereby realizes Supreme Happiness of Nirvana.

Human Relations

Man is a social being. He is born in a society, grows up and dies in the society. Man is also supreme among all living beings because

he is endowed with free will as well as potentiality to be extremely beneficial or harmful to the entire world of beings.

A person grows up amidst human relations of parents and children; husband and wife, brothers and sisters, teachers and taught, masters and serfs, friends and acquaintances etc. His happiness and sorrow not only depend in himself but also in his relations with others. He feels sad and insecure when his relation with others is poor but, on the other hand, if his relation is good, he feels happy and secure.

For the survival in the society a person has to adopt some line of action. There are four broad lines of action available to an individual. These four lines of actions are as follows:

1. **Black action bearing black in result** —An action whether that of body, speech or mind is said to be black when its result makes the doer feel later on sad, remorseful and painful. Actions rooted or motivated in excessive greed, hatred and delusion are of such nature. Some unwholesome acts may even seem sweet while doing but as the results ripen the doer will feel burning

from within and without. Committing crimes of killing, stealing, adultery, lying, gambling and taking intoxicants are some of the black actions. Such actions should be avoided.

2. **White actions bearing white in result**—All those actions which are good, wholesome and skillful are called white actions, such as acts of generosity, moral conduct, social welfare, developing wisdom, tolerance etc. The wholesome actions bear pleasant, desirable and agreeable results. They are commended by the wise. Man should not be afraid of doing good deeds. It is the another name for happiness. All desired things can be obtained through good deeds. A person should do more and more good deeds in one's daily life.
3. **Black-and-white action bearing black-and-white in result**—Most of the human beings in the society perform black and white mixed up actions. No person does evil deeds throughout his life. In fact, to be born as human being is in itself conside-

red to be the result of good deeds done in the past. No one is born noble or a criminal. One who does much noble deeds becomes a noble person, while the other who does much inhuman deeds becomes a criminal. A common man does some black and some white deeds that is the reason for seeing him sometimes happy and laughing and at other times sad and crying. Such happenings can be seen even in one's day to day life.

4. An action that is neither black nor white but leads to make an end of result-bearing actions — The fourth type of action is the best of all the actions. It is born of practising the Noble Eightfold Path and is motivated by detachment. At this stage a person stops completely doing 'black' actions and 'black and white' mixed up actions. He lives in accordance with the 'white' actions only but without wishing anything in return except the attainment of Nirbana—the highest goal. Though he does not wish any material result of his 'white' deeds, yet they bear fruits to him. Such a person is usually endowed

with different degrees of health, cheerfulness, happiness and strength.

The relation of a person who lives in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path becomes amicable and pleasant. He wishes welfare and happiness for all living beings. He lives as the symbol of simplicity, righteousness and peace. He gradually completes his human duties and thereby qualifies to be the true heir to the right of attaining the highest human goal, even during his life time. For the rest of his life, he lives an energetic life. Out of compassion, he shows fellow beings the Righteous Path. Eventually, when his body is exhausted and the term of his life comes to an end, he enters into final Nirbana—freedom from rebirth.

Once above four lines of action are clearly discerned through insight wisdom, a person then, should make up his mind to take that line of action which is acceptable to his circle of relations, that is to say, doing more white actions than black ones. This is the minimum requirements for keeping a good relation. To maintain even this it is essential to think about rights and duties a person has towards his

relations. The Buddha has taught some common rights and duties of a householder which are briefly iterated here as follows:

1. a. Five duties of a son towards his parents:

- (i) Supported by parents, he should support them in turn.
- (ii) He should do his job to his best.
- (iii) He should keep up the honour of his family.
- (iv) He should manage his inheritance, and
- (v) He should keep up the offerings due to his deceased relatives.

b. Parents being served by a son thus, should show affection to him in these five ways:

- (i) They should keep him away from evils.
- (ii) They should put him in the right path.
- (iii) They should get 'him receive proper education.

- (iv) They should match him with a suitable wife in due time, and
- (v) They should hand over inheritance in due time.

2. a. Five duties of a pupil towards his teachers:

- (i) He should rise up to greet them.
- (ii) He should support them.
- (iii) He should be ready to learn from them.
- (iv) He should serve them, and
- (v) He should grasp attentively what they teach.

b. Teachers being revered by their pupils thus, should in five ways show them affection:

- (i) They should train them so that they are well-trained.
- (ii) They make them practise what they have learned.
- (iii) They should be their counsellors.

- (iv) They should praise them before their friends, and
- (v) They should guard them on every side.

3. a. Five duties of a husband towards his wife:

- (i) He should show due respect to his wife.
- (ii) He should show compliance to her.
- (iii) He should not commit a breach of promise to her.
- (iv) He should make her the incharge of the household, and
- (v) He should supply her with finery.

b. She being honoured thus, should in five ways show her affection to him:

- (i) She should do her duties thoroughly.
- (ii) She should treat his family members properly.
- (iii) She should not commit adultery.
- (iv) She should guard what he has earned, and
- (v) She should use her skill and zeal in her job.

4. a. Five duties of a young householders towards his friends and comrades:

- (i) He should help them by giving assistance.
- (ii) He should speak to them in kind words.
- (iii) He should act for their welfare.
- (iv) He should put them in equal terms, and
- (v) He should keep up his promises.

b Friends and comrades being honoured thus, should in five ways show affection to the young householder:

- (i) They should watch over him when he is slack.
- (ii) They should watch over his property when he is slack.
- (iii) They should be his refuge in times of fear.
- (iv) They should not forsake him in times of trouble, and
- (v) They should show respect for the rest of his people.

5. a. Five duties of a master towards his servants and workers:

- (i) He should assign them work according to their strength.
- (ii) He should provide them with food and wage.
- (iii) He should nurse them in times of sickness.
- (iv) He should give them a share of dainty, and
- (v) He should give them leave of absence in due season.

b. Servants and workers being honoured thus, should in five ways show affection for their master:

- (i) They should rise up early.
- (ii) They should take rest late.
- (iii) They should take what is given.
- (iv) They should do their work thoroughly, and
- (v) They should praise their master everywhere.

6. a. Five duties of a householder towards his spiritual teachers:

- (i) He should behave towards them kindly.
- (ii) He should speak kind words.
- (iii) He should think of them kindly.
- (iv) He should not close the door to them, and
- (v) He should provide for their material needs.

b. Spiritual teachers being revered thus, should in five ways show their affection to the householders:

- (i) They should restrain them from evil.
- (ii) They should set them in the right way.
- (iii) They should teach them what he did not know before.
- (iv) They should clarify what they had already heard, and
- (v) They should show them the way to heaven.

It is to be understood that someone's duties become someone else's rights and vice versa. The Buddha has dealt with various relations

including the relation of Citizen and State. His main purpose is to protect human beings from falling down to lower status or to purgatories due to their negligence and ignorance. If people were to pay due heed to these simple day-to-day right and duty relation and to live accordingly, they are assured of higher stages of human life that is the material as well as spiritual well being even on this earth. They can live a heavenly life on earth.

DIVINE LIVING ON EARTH

The Buddha, out of Compassion has also shown a Divine Way of living while a person is sitting, standing, walking or lying down on earth. This is another significant approach to the happy living. Here a person lives practising the Four Divine Abode—Cattaro Brahma-vihara.

1. Loving—Kindness—Metta. A person feels his mind with the thought of universal brotherhood. He considers all human beings as the members of one big family. For him, there are no enemies in the world, all are kiths and kins, friends and acquaintances, near or dis_

tant. Here a person, at first—develops Loving-kindness on to himself saying—‘May I be free from enemies, may I be free from ill-will, may I be free from troubles of body and mind, may I be happy. He extends this thought towards all fellow beings without discrimination of any sort whether caste, class, or race.

2. Compassion—Karuna. Beings are prone to various kinds of sufferings due to their own ignorance or black actions or natural courses of life or external pressures. A person seeing others suffering works for freeing them from their miserable conditions, by adopting harmless means. He himself abstains from harming others whether through body, speech or mind. He says on to himself,—‘May I be free from suffering.’ He willingly serves fellow beings whenever he avails this opportunity.

3. Sympathetic joy—Mudita. A disciple becomes sympathetic towards others and tries to understand them. As a mother to her child, when others are happy he is happy, and when they are sad he is sad too. He does not entertain any thought of jealousy or malice but always wishes for their prosperity. He tells on to

himself, 'May I not be partaken from the due fortunes.' He neither tries to partake others from their fortunes.

4. Equanimity—Upekkha. At times when things go beyond his control, he then practises equanimity, that is to make one's mind balanced and unmoved by the ups and downs of the life. He firmly believes, 'I am the owner of my deeds, (Karma), heir to my deeds related to my deeds, born of my deeds, abide-supported by my deeds, whatever deed I shall do whether good or evil, of that I shall be the heir'. He believes in the causes and consequences and does not leave anything to the fate or chance.

After having established himself in the abode of divine living, he then gradually extends the same thoughts to his dear and near ones, like parents, friends, teachers, relatives etc. He further extends it to other living beings including hostile ones, to all those who are existing and those who are about to exist in all ten quarters of the world. He feels his mind with the boundless thoughts thus:

1. Loving-Kindness — May all beings everywhere be free from enmity, free from ill-will,

free from troubles of body and mind—may they be happy for ever.

2. Compassion—May all beings everywhere be free from suffering.

3. Sympathetic Joy—May all beings everywhere be not partaken from the fortunes obtained by them.

4. Equanimity—All beings everywhere are the owners of their karma, heir to their karma, related to their karma, born of their karma, abide—supported by their karma, whatever karma they will do, whether good or evil, of that they will be the heirs.

Every act bears due fruits. The acts of living in accordance with the Four Divine Abodes even for a spilt second bears a great merit. It is a wholesome act and bears eleven benefits says the Buddha:

(a) One sleeps well, (b) wakes up well, (c) does not see evil dreams, (d) loved by the human beings, (e) loved by non-human beings, (f) devas-super beings protect him, (g) not harmed by fire, arms and poison, (h) mind is

easily concentrated (i) bears cheerful appearance (j) dies without confusion, and (k) if he has not achieved the Arahathship, he would be reborn in the realm of Brahma.

May every faithful ones be benefitted from the practice of the Divine Living on the Earth.

The Law of Karma

The Law of Karma is one of the basic teachings of the Buddha. The whole Buddhist philosophy revolves around the Law of Karma. It can, thus, be said that to understand the Law of Karma in detail is to understand Buddhism itself.

The Law of Karma governs all beings. The unity and diversity existing amongst mankind is solely due to the Law of Karma. Karma means volitional action. At one place, replying to Subha, a young Truth seeker who asked about the cause of inequality existing amongst mankind, the Buddha has said:

“All living beings have Actions (Karma) as their own, their inheritance, their birth-place,

their relatives and their refuge. It is Karma that differentiates beings into low and high states.”

The Buddha has also given details thus:

1. If a person abstains from killing living beings, he will be born with long life;
2. If a person abstains from harming living beings, he will be born with good-health;
3. If a person abstains from ill-will and anger, he will be born with fair-complexion;
4. If a person abstains from jealousy, he will be born powerful;
5. If a person practises charity, he will be born in a rich family;
6. If a person practises humility, he will be born in a noble family;
7. If a person associates with the learned and is of inquiring spirit, he will be born intelligent;
8. If a person is given to killing living beings, he will be born with short life;

The rest should be understood in their opposite order.

Relating to the Law of Karma, the **Samyutta Nikaya** resounds thus:

“According to the seed that’s sown,
 So is the fruit ye reap therefrom;
 Doer of good (will gather) good,
 Doer of evil, evil (reaps);
 Sown is the seed, and planted well;
 Thou shalt enjoy the fruit thereof.”

Buddhism has generally accepted Five Laws. They are: 1. The Law of Karma; 2. The Law of Climatic phenomena; 3. The Law of Physical Organic Order; 4. The Law of Mind or Psychic Powers; and 5. The Law of the Norm i.e. the Law of Cause and Effect relations such as birth conditions old age, sickness, and death.

Here the inclusion of the Law of Karma shows its importance.

Karma is motivated by Craving (Trisna) and Ignorance (Avidya) or a state of not knowing things as they really are. Volition itself is the doer of Karma and its result is reaped through the Feelings. Intentional activities done through body, speech and mind become a sort of Karmic force that bears results. The Karmic

force naturally transmits from one existence to the other. The doctrine of Karma thus, advocates that happiness and misery, which are the common lot of humanity, are not rewards or punishments assigned by an external supernatural power as such, but are the necessary results of their wholesome or unwholesome deeds done either in the present life or in the past lives.

The Law of Karma is studied in different ways and levels. The traditional classification of the Law of Karma is listed as follows:

I Karma according to its time of Operation :-

1. **Ditthadhamma Vedaniya Karma: Immediately Effective Action**
2. **Upapajja Vedaniya Karma: Subsequently Effective Action**
3. **Aparapariya Vedaniya Karma: Indefinitely Effective Action**
4. **Abosi Karma: In effective Action.**

II Karma with reference to the priority of Effect:-

1. **Garu Karma: Heavy or Serious Action.**
2. **Asanna Karma: Death-Proximate Action.**
3. **Acinna Karma: Habitual Action.**
4. **Katatta Karma: Cumulative Action.**

III Karma according to its Functions:-

1. Janaka Karma: Reproductive Action
2. Upathambaka Karma: Supportive Action
3. Upapidaka Karma: Counteractive Action
4. Upaghataka Karma: Destructive Action.

The Law of Rebirth

Rebirth is correlated to the Law of Karma. Janaka Karma or Reproductive action is the main Karmic force behind Rebirth. Rebirth means a being to be born again after death and the Karmic force entails the accumulation of some strong desires, attachments and ignorance. Ignorance strictly denotes the unknowing of the Four Noble Truths.

The Law of Dependent Origination explains the process of life-circles. According to the Law, present birth is conditioned by past lives and the future birth is conditioned by the present life. Will or attachment conditions becoming and becoming inturn conditions birth. Therefore as long as there is becoming (bhava), there is rebirth. Even the great Being Bodhisattva had strong will of becoming a Buddha and helping the suffering world. Rebirth is thus, a fact varifiable by evidence. For a Buddhist, all

Jataka (birth) stories are the reliable testimonies for the existence of the cycle of birth and death.

Rebirth does not connote the existence of a permanent Soul. How can a permanent Soul be expected to be free ! But the natural Karmic forces of life that are defiled by attachments continues from one existence to the next just like a burning light is passed on to the other. There is no transmigration or reincarnation but a continuation of life forces.

Explaining the conception of a being the Buddha said that there should be coming together of three main elements, namely, a. the coming together of the father and the mother, b. the mother should be on fertile period, and c. the presence of 'the being to be born'-Gandhabba. In absence of any one of these elements rebirth cannot take place. Here Gandhabba (= gantabba) refers to a suitable Karmic force ready to conceive in that particular womb.

The sacred Buddhist scriptures accept thirty-one planes of existences. If a person develops higher mental purity, he would be

born in one of the twenty-Brahma worlds Those who live according to the moral and charitable life would be born in one of the seven sensual worlds and finally those leading a cruel and immoral life would be born in one of the four awful states. But those who lead a pure and holy life, eradicating all defilements would attain 'parinirvana'—the Release from Rebirth, as in the case of the Buddha and his Arahant disciples.

The Law of Norm-Dharma

Norm (Dharma) generally means the reality of life. The reality is based on some natural laws which cannot be altered by any being in the world. Whether the Buddhas appear in the world or not these Laws go on operating. They are:

1. **Anitya**—Transient are all compounded things;
2. **Dukkha**—Subject to suffering are all compounded things, and
3. **Anatma**—Mundane and Supra-mundane phenomena are unsubstantial or void of 'Self'.

The Tathagata realized the reality of the Nature fully. Having realized the Truth he put forward, taught, made clear, pointed out, analysed and unfolded the truth to devas and men. Those who are able to see and understand these Three Common Characteristics through their own insight wisdom, they will put an end to all sufferings. This is the only path to purity.

The fact is that if a person perceives things other than through these three common characteristics, he is entangled in the wheel of birth and death. When there is misapprehension of things, then there arises feelings which conditions craving. Craving conditions grasping, grasping conditions becoming. Becoming conditions birth. Birth conditions old age, death, sorrow, grief etc. This chain is called the Law of Dependent Origination. This law is the true manifestation of the Natural Laws.

The Law of Dependent Origination

The profundity of the Dharma taught by the Buddha is clearly seen in the operation of the Law of Dependent Origination. The Buddha himself had said, "Deep indeed is the Casual Law, and deep it appears to be. It is by not

knowing, by not understanding, by not penetrating this Truth that beings in the world have become entangled like a ball of twine..... and unable to pass beyond the Ceaseless Round” (of rebirth). The Dependent Origination Law operates in two distinct ways as follows:

- I. 1. Ignorance conditions Actions bearing results,
 2. Actions-Saṅkar Condition Consciousness,
 3. Consciousness Conditions Name and Form,
 4. Name and Form Conditions Six Senses,
 5. Six Senses Conditions Contact,
 6. Contact Conditions Feeling,
 7. Feeling Conditions Craving,
 8. Craving Conditions Grasping,
 9. Grasping Conditions Becoming,
 10. Becoming Conditions Birth,
 11. Birth Conditions Old-age, Death,

Sorrow, Grief, Pain, Lamentation and Despair.

This is the arising of all Sufferings.

II. But when the operation is reversed through ending of Ignorance, Actions come to an end. From the ending of Actions comes the ending of Consciousness; from the ending of Consciousness comes the ending of Name and Form; from the ending of Name-and-Form comes the ending of Six Senses; from the ending of Six

Senses, comes the ending of Contact; from the ending of Contact comes the ending of Feelings; from the ending of Feelings comes the ending of Craving; from the ending of Craving comes the ending of Grasping; from the ending of Grasping comes the ending of Becoming; from the ending of Becoming comes the ending of Birth; from the ending of Birth comes the ending of Old-age, Death, Sorrow, Grief, Pain, Lamentation and Despair. This is the ending of all Sufferings.

“He who enjoys the Dharma, sleeps happily with a serene mind. The wiseman ever delights in the Dharma made known by the Noble One (the Buddha). Dhammapada—79.”

Overcome anger by calmness,
 Evilness by goodness;
 Overcome the miser by generosity,
 Liars by truthfulness.

— Dhammapada-223

THE NOBLE SANGHA

Significance

The Noble Sangha is the third of the Three Jewels in Buddhism, the other two being the Buddha, the Teacher, and Dharma, the Teachings taught by the Buddha. This Triple Gem is collectively the most significant and respectable object for all Buddhist followers throughout the world. Millions of people utter these sacred words as taken of reverence each day. They go for refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha for life and vow to continue to go for refuge in the future lives too till they attain the final Nirvana. They consider that any service they could render for the cause of the Triple Gem accrues a great merit. And the service so rendered must be through the practice of Truth and Non-violence, since there has never been a place for violence and bloodshed in the name of Buddhism. The merit of this marvellous memory for mankind goes to the Noble Sangha which has provided an active

leadership since the Buddha's Mahaparinirvana.

Origin

The Origin of the Sangha dates back to the day when the Buddha gave first initiation to the group of five monks, just after the turning of the Wheel of Dharma at the Deer Park in Saranath. The Sangha was thus founded by the Buddha himself. With the joining of the prince Yasa and his friends in the newly founded community, the number of members reached sixty, excluding the Buddha. The propagation of the Dharma was first entrusted by the Buddha to those sixty monks. Later on more male members of the society joined the Order under the leadership of the Buddha and the tradition continued even after his passing away.

Meaning

It would be pertinent here to explain the meaning of the term "Sangha". The Pali term 'Sangha' has generally been translated into English as the "Order", or "Community", or "Holy Brethren". It implies directly to a group of people who have gone forth from home into

the homeless life under the Teachings of the Buddha with a view to attain certain spiritual realization. The spiritual realization refers to many different degrees of attainments that a person may achieve during the course of his mind development and body disciplining including the ultimate goal Nirbana.

In the modern sense, the Sangha can be termed as a spiritual Buddhist Organisation having Nirbana as its supreme goal. Broadly speaking, the Sangha consists of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. All lay followers in Buddhism can be considered to belong to the Buddhist Spiritual Community to the extent that they go for refuge to the Triple Gem and have Nirbana as their supreme aim of life. In its narrowest sense, the word 'Sangha' refers to any members of the monk's Community. The Community should have at least four full-fledged monks who are leading the monastic life under the 'Patimokkha'—the Disciplinary Code of the Sangha consisting of 227 Precepts.

Ordination Procedure

In the beginning there was no elaborate ceremony as we have today in admitting mem-

bers in the Sangha. Those who had faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and wished to go forth into homeless life, they were commanded by the Buddha with the words: "Come monks! Well proclaimed is the Teaching. Lead a chaste life for the complete ending of suffering." This category of monks belongs to the first group who were exclusively admitted to the Sangha by the Buddha himself.

As many male members from far and near came to seek admission in the Order, the Buddha then delegated the authority of admitting householders in the Sangha to his competent monk disciples. A person seeking for Ordination must shave his hair and beard and wear saffron robe. Adjusting his robe on one shoulder, he should pay homage to the monks by kneeling before them. With hands raised and palms together, he should, then thrice utter the utterance of going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. This second procedure was later applied to young boys wishing to lead the monastic life as a novice. Venerable Rahula the Buddha's son, was the first novice to be ordained. A novice has to observe at least ten precepts.

When there were many more monks in the Order, the Buddha then laid down the third procedure of Ordination called the "Fourth Act of Announcement." According to this procedure, there must be at least five monks in the case of rural area, and ten monks in the case of urban area. They should gather together at a specified place. Two of the monks should announce the Sangha of the intention of the applicant to be admitted in the Sangha under a specified and competent preceptor. For three more times the declaration is made and permission is obtained through a unanimous consent of the monks participating in the Ordination ceremony. The ceremony takes about an hour's time these days. The applicant has to fulfil certain requirements such as attaining at least twenty years of age, obtaining permission from his parents, being free from debts, being free from communicable disease etc. After Ordination he should stay under his preceptor's guidance at least for five years.

Tenure and Removal

Usually, a person seeks to be a monk on his own will and stays so as long as he keeps

the vows he has taken. He may leave the monastic life whenever he wants to or he may be terminated by the authority on the ground of moral misbehaviour and a breach of any one or all major Precepts like breaking the celibacy, stealing, killing human beings and boasting the attainment of supernatural power which he does not possess.

Types

There are three categories of Sangha to be found.

1. The Great Sangha:— This Sangha is always presided by the Buddha himself. So it is found only during the life of the Buddha.

2. The Noble Sangha:—It consists of monks who have attained any one or more of the Four Paths and Four Fruits towards Nirvana. Traditionally to this Noble Sangha that Buddhist followers go for refuge along with the Buddha and the Dharma.

3. The Conventional Sangha:— The third type of Sangha is a group of all those monks who have gone forth from home into homeless-

ness under the Buddha's Teaching and Discipline but who have yet to attain the paths and fruits.

Objectives

Every organization has its own aims and objectives for which it stands. The Buddhist noble Order too has its own. Six broad objectives of the noble Community are given here as follows:

1. It aims at showing an alternative life style for householders to achieve the supreme happiness Nirvana.
2. It upholds Dharma – the righteousness in the spirit of Justice and Equality for all mankind.
3. It encourages universal brotherhood among all human beings.
4. It stands for liberty in the development of mind.
5. It symbolises for leading simple, purposeful and a energetic life.
6. It stands for securing a field of merit for the world of gods and men.

Functions

The Sangha has a great responsibility towards the people in the society. It has the first hand responsibility of showing people the way to supreme security which no material well-being can provide for. It has to deal with the most difficult and subtle aspect of human life that is the behaviour of human mind in its totality. Besides, the Sangha has many other functions to perform. The duties of the Sangha may broadly be grouped into two categories, namely, (1) duties towards individual good, and (2) duties towards common good.

I. Duties towards the Individual Good

Traditionally two main duties are assigned to a bhikkhu. Firstly, he has to study the Buddha's teachings in its letter and spirit and then to teach the same to the learners. Secondly, he has to practise Insight Meditation, that is to say training his mind in the direction that the Buddha has instructed so that he may be able "to see things as they are." Generally, a young monk is advised to study more and then put the knowledge acquired thus into practice, step

by step. A middle aged monk is advised to devote his time mostly in practising insight meditation and lead an exemplary life for the young generation. Monks should practise self-control to a considerable degree. They should not harm or injure any body. They should lead a contented, honest and energetic life so that the purpose of leading a chaste life would be realized eventually.

II. Duties towards the Common Good

Each monk being affiliated to the noble community has some duties to perform in return. Generally, monks are literate in the Buddhist society. Out of compassion they use to do many useful duties towards the society. The power to perform various duties by monks are directly derived from the authorised sacred Buddhist scripture, 'Tipitaka'. Some of the most common duties of monks are as follows:

- (i) To propagate the Buddha's Teachings, 'out of compassion for the world, for the gain, welfare and happiness of gods and men.'

- (ii) To contact religious functions to new applicants, training them, conducting ceremonies for birth, naming, marriage, death etc.
- (iii) To defend and protect the True Dharma and its followers.
- (iv) To provide leadership for the Buddhist Community as a whole.
- (v) To take necessary steps for promoting and reviving the Buddhist tradition and culture and restoring sacred places.
- (vi) To make an assessment of movable and immovable properties of the Order and to make their proper use.
- (vii) To hold and participate in various Buddhist social and spiritual activities at local, regional, national and international levels.
- (viii) To keep a sound relationship with other religious communities by participating in their joint activities for the peaceful purposes.
- (ix) To undertake any other activities as the Sangha may decide from time to time.

Administration

The administration of the Buddhist Order has been based, right from the beginning, on seniority-cum-democratic consent. The fact is that those who are senior in leading the monks life and competent are to administer juniors not by any compulsion but through compassion and understanding. There is no place for power seekers, for the task to be performed for oneself is emphasized first. Those who have not completed this preliminary task of self-discipline are neither suitable nor qualified to lead those who are willing to be trained and have been already trained. Besides, the monk administrators have to be accepted by the lay community of the particular area as well.

All the activities of the Sangha are to be motivated by moral obligation, compassion, and the truth that is absolutely good for all. Even those who have deviated from the agreed moral norms of conduct should be dealt with not by harsh or inhuman punishment but by taking such measures as they would eventually be reformed and improved, for there is no eternal condemnation.

Requisites

Four main material requisites are permitted for bhikkhus to seek in a proper manner while heading towards the ultimate goal—Nirbana. Firstly, they are allowed to receive robes from donors for the purpose of covering their body and protecting it from heat and cold. Secondly, they are allowed to hold a bowl in their hands and collect food from the hands of the pious people, so that they might overcome their hunger and devote their time for the practice. Thirdly, they are permitted to shelter themselves in a monastery built and donated for the purpose. Lastly, they can take medicines when they become sick.

All these four requisites have been provided voluntarily by the community of laity as an act of merit-making. Bhikkhus are grateful to all devotees for their unshakable confidence and material support rendered on the way to spiritual development. In turn monks show laity the right path not only towards heavens but also to Nirbana. They also stand by them as a friend, philosopher and spiritual guide in the mundane world.

Besides above four requisites, the next important thing for monks is to get proper education—the education that train them to renounce more and more of worldly affairs and prepare themselves for the ultimate goal. Whatever mundane knowledge available for them should be directed towards spiritual advancement. It means that they may get secular education but not for its own sake but for finding its relevance to the ultimate value.

The society today do not lack knowledge about how to live. There are many experts and numerous educational and training institutions to train people on how to be skillful and successful in various careers. Arts, commerce, science, administration, technology, to name the few, have developed tremendously. Monks do not have to specialize and make contribution in these fields. Bhikkhus should get education more on why human beings should continue to live, what is man's ultimate aim and how to achieve it. Besides, monks should lead an exemplary life of peace and prosperity by following the Noble Eightfold Path so that the world in turmoil is benefitted from their practice.

Sources of finance

The members of the Sangha live in monasteries and from there they run the Sangha administration. To run the Sangha administration properly, provisions for new monks and requisites needed for them are to be provided. Traditionally, the lay community has been the most significant body for supporting the material needs to the Sangha. There are three main sources of finance for the Sangha, namely, (i) donation from individual lay followers, (ii) government's grants-in-aid and (iii) donations from native and foreign associations.

Hurdles to be removed

All types of organizations face some kinds of problems. These problems have their causes. To remove causes is the way to reach the goal of the organization. The Order too has some difficulties to overcome for its smooth running. Some main hurdles to be removed by the Sangha are as follows:

- (i) The functions of the Sangha has not been efficient enough to meet the growing demands of the society. There is some sort of misplacement of emphasis

such as giving more importance to the form than to the essence. There are too many rites and rituals. Formalities should be within the reach of every common man.

- (ii) Political interference has been playing almost negative role in the Order. Elements like ego-seeking, bossism, and vested interest have to be reduced if not totally removed.
- (iii) There is an acute lack of finance for the Sangha to carry out its maintenance and welfare activities.
- (iv) The admittance ratio of the new members in the Sangha does not commensurate with the growth of population. More young members are to be attracted to the Sangha.
- (v) There is lack of imparting proper training to the missionary monks.
- (vi) The interaction between the Sangha and the lay-community is not so satisfactory. In fact, there has been an increasing gap between the two.

Suggestions for improvement

Man is a living being. His body goes on changing. His mind too changes. His relation with the world also changes. Spiritual understanding is the only close and enduring thing for man. But the spiritual understanding must be dynamic and adaptive to suit the changing world otherwise it would be not of much use to humanity. As for the spiritual organization, it continues to exist in the society as long as the people in the society wants. Its members would be replaced by the new generation. The new generation always has new problems to overcome.

Society becomes increasingly complex. To meet the needs of the time, the Order should be efficient and adaptive. The community members should try to study, analyse and provide remedy for every common problem in the society. A religion which is unable to provide a satisfactory solution to the common problems will fail to gain popular confidence. The religion that is most human, stands for human dignity and is dynamic as man himself, continues to exist among mankind for ages. Some

valuable suggestions to improve the functions of the Order in the modern society are innumera-
rated here.

- (i) The Buddha's basic teachings should be made freely available to all sections of the society.
- (ii) The community leaders or senior influential bhikkhus should be committed to the norms of the Dharma.
- (iii) Favourable political atmosphere is to be created so that the machinery of the Sangha operates smoothly.
- (iv) Financial matters of the Sangha should be properly managed.
- (v) Common people are to be encouraged to participate in various creative spiritual activities. Public opinion is to be heeded and access for common man to come in close contact with the authorities be made easy.
- (vi) The admittance of young members to the Order should be more searching and considerate. And once joined, they should be given proper training.

- (vii) Monks should spread the Dharma more efficiently and effectively.
- (viii) More efforts should be made for uplifting the weaker sections of the populace.
- (ix) Participating and keeping in close contact with peaceful movements both at national and international levels should be encouraged.

Conclusion

The Sangha has been great benefactor of the society. It still stands for the cause of humanity. It will continue to serve the populace better when due consideration is given to the above humble suggestions. May the Noble Sangha for ever remain as the highest field of merit for the suffering world.



Happy is the arising of Buddha, the Awakened;
 Happy is the teaching of the True Dharma;
 Happy is the unity of the Noble Order;
 Happy is the devotion of the united.

-Dhammapada-194



The Author

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