

JOURNEY TO HAPPINESS



Mahendra Kumar Shakya

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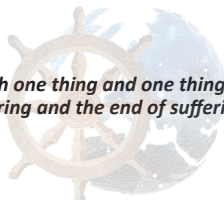


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JOURNEY TO HAPPINESS



***"I teach one thing and one thing only:
Suffering and the end of suffering."***

-Lord Buddha

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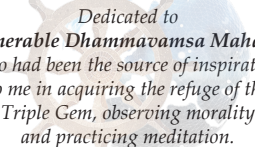
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*Dedicated to
Late Venerable Dhammavamsa Mahasthavir
who had been the source of inspiration
to me in acquiring the refuge of the
Triple Gem, observing morality
and practicing meditation.*

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बुद्धो लोकोत्थितस्स लयागतस्स
NAMO TASSA LOKAHITASSA TATHAGATASSA

विश्व शान्ति विहार VISHWA SHANTI VIHARA

बीकमण्ड, काठमाडौं, नेपाल, फोन नं.: ०१-४६२२९८८
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Foreword

It was a great opportunity to go through the book 'Journey to Happiness' authored by devotee Mr. Mahendra Kumar Shakya. The way the writer has attempted to make the Buddha's fundamental teachings into simple language for ordinary people is admirable. Due to degenerating spiritual values human life is getting harder and unsecured. This book makes greater sense today when human life even at the climax of material development, is becoming more miserable. The senior citizens are being more vulnerable and living a painful life. In this context, the writer's recommendation to follow the path of Buddha as the last resort for everyone is highly relevant.

The writer is worried about the weakening condition of the social and economic status of the country due to degradation in religious norms and values. Despite having a huge potential of natural resources and economic development, our dependency on external resources and aid is increasing day by day. The rampant corruption, anarchy and increased irresponsibility are the main reason behind backwardness; therefore, he opines to respect and practice the teachings of Lord Buddha particularly Sila, Samadhi and Prajna in our lives. If we are conscious of *Dharma*, then it increases the number of honest and responsible citizens and consequently helps in the holistic development of the nation. The writer has warned those people who indulge in sinful activities like corruption, commission, and cartel and not to misuse this invaluable human life.

Therefore, this book is very relevant to the current scenario of Nepal. He has also presented his thought of what is and what is not *Dharma* in a simple way. I hope all the readers will have a fair evaluation and get benefitted from this book.

Publication of this book with the purpose of *Dharmadan* for the liberation of departed parents and relatives is a praiseworthy effort. I wish it will be the cause of their liberation.

निशुदय

Ven. Bhikshu Nigrodha
Former Vice Chairman,
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25th June 2019



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॥ जगो रत्नजन्मा ॥

लुम्बिनी बौद्ध विश्वविद्यालय

केन्द्रीय कार्यालय

लुम्बिनी, नेपाल



July 2, 2019

I am very pleased to know that the book entitled Journey to Happiness, written by Mr. Mahendra Kumar Shakya, is going to be published by his own efforts.

The teachings of Buddha such as loving kindness, tolerance, the conduct of non violence, harmony, self contentment, universal brotherhood have been relevant through ages and have continued significance even in today's world and also are being a source of inner peace. This book seems to have highlighted various teachings of Buddha including author's own experience as well as feelings which gives a new style of expression. I hope that the messages contained in this book will certainly expose a new dimension to ongoing academic development of Buddhist Studies.

On this very auspicious occasion of publishing the book, I would like to convey my warm greeting to the author for his enthusiastic efforts and meritorious deeds.

May all beings be happy.

Dr. Manik Ratna Shakya
Dean

Lumbini Buddhist University
Lumbini, Nepal

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About the book

Peace and happiness is the common agenda of humankind today. The practical applications of science and technology, in this 21st century, have enabled mankind to live more comfortable lives and experience wonderful things beyond the imagination (Ven. Dhammananda, 2002). Despite the fact, human lives today, are more miserable and disturbed than ever because of the unhealthy competition and the mindset that accumulation of material wealth and facilities is



the sole source of peace and happiness. Those enjoying the power and affluence of material wealth in the most developed countries are also not happy. The madness of material affluence and misuse of deadly weapons resulted in the death of hundreds of innocent people almost every year in the dreamland, the USA. The terrorism emerged from the seed of enmity and revenge has been a serious threat to human civilization. The tactic of deliberate vehicle ramming used by terrorists in recent years has made terrorism difficult to defend. No country on the globe is safe and secured from terrorism today. This has proved that peace and happiness are not possible without proper religious guidance and spiritual development. In this situation, the word of Buddha that 'hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world; it is appeased only by loving-kindness (*Na hi verena verani sammantidha kudacanam averena ca sammanti esadhammo sanantano*") has greater relevance in the present world.

Today, due to globalization, heightened ambitions and polarization of family, the elderly parents have become a family burden in the Nepalese society. Influenced by western civilization and culture, and declining spiritual values many elderly parents have suffered misbehaviors from their descendants. Despite having capable children, beautiful bungalows, material wealth, many elderly are helpless to live a lonely and discarded life in elderly homes. They do not even have someone around to provide a glass of water at the last moment. In such a time, *dhamma* is the best refuge where we can take an

* Dhammapada, Verse 5

unwavering shelter. We can neither stop aging nor stop the separation from the loved ones; however, by adopting and practicing *dhamma* we can spend our elderly life delightfully. This can also help us relieve the pain of separation. What counts now is the strong moral ground and well-practiced meditation that determines easy and delightful aging. There is no refuge better than *dhamma* for our elderly life. One of the objectives of writing this book is also to help make aging easy and beautiful.

In Nepal, every year a hundred thousand animals and birds are slaughtered as a “spiritual practice”. In this 21st century, what can be more unfortunate and shameful for humankind than animal sacrifice at the name of religion? What can be the bigger illusion than killing innocent animals for spiritual gain? Slaughtering innocent animals cannot be righteous and spiritual. This is the message we wish to deliver to the readers. If this could help reduce the practice of animal sacrifice, I and my wife Anjalee would think that our effort is successful.

According to the respected Vipassana teacher, Satya Narayan Goenka, Dharma is the art of living that teaches us to live happily and peacefully within and generating peace and harmony for the others. According to him, *dhamma* should be developed as an easy, practical and an indispensable part of our life. If this could be a means of sharing the teachings of the Buddha particularly *Sila* (morality), *Samadhi* (Meditation) and *Prajna* (Wisdom) among the general public, political leaders and bureaucrats could have a significant role in the prosperity of our country.

We are rich in natural resources and have every potential to have a prosperous country; despite the fact, our dependency on external aid is increasing year after year. Because of the officials, deceitful to their own mother organization, most of the projects owned by the nation have not been prospered. Nepal is passing through a pathetic situation due to the rampant corruption and lawlessness followed by a sharp decline in ethics and moral values. If we could have warned in mass and raised a sharp awareness about the inescapable consequences of the evil deeds (*karma*), the corruption and lawlessness would not have flourished to this extent. One of the main objectives of the book is to warn those enjoying corruption and commission with the message that every corrupt and evil deed have painful and inescapable consequences.

Needless to remark, children are the future stars of the country. It is

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painful that in the birth country of Lord Buddha, the school curriculum does not include even a couple of pages about him and his teaching. Increasing the number of morally good citizens, it is essential to raise spiritual awareness from schooling itself. We can expect good citizens from the children who have understood the religious fact that every evil act has a painful and inescapable consequence. Therefore, it is high time to include moral education and meditation practices from primary schooling.

A man is said to be the master of own destiny; because only human life has an opportunity of making efforts that lead to the divine realm. Nobody has seen the future; however, who is honest and hardworking will have a beautiful future. Nobody has seen heaven, hell and sublime realms; however, it is logical to assume that one who is honest and sincere to the people and the country, will certainly have a rebirth in a good realm. This is an important message of this book.

Prince Siddhartha who was born in Lumbini and enlightened in Buddhagaya continued preaching the *dhamma* for 45 years mainly in the southern plain of Nepal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh area of India. Therefore, those areas during the time were destined to have the prestige of 'the land of the Buddha'. Despite the fact, we Nepalese from his birth country never realized the importance of understanding his message to the human world. We rather remained satisfied calling Nepal the birthplace. His teachings particularly the morality, meditation and wisdom if could guide and inspire general Nepalese, political leaders, bureaucrats, private sectors to be honest and virtuous could have an invaluable contribution in the mission of prosperous Nepal.

Emperor Ashoka visited Lumbini at the time when there were no modern means of transportation. He is also believed to have visited Kathmandu and erected stupas. It might have taken him several months or even a year. We must understand that the Emperor came to Lumbini with the mission of love and compassion to our generation. The intention behind erecting pillars and stupas with the relics of the Buddha was to inspire our generation to explore and understand the teachings of the Buddha, indeed. We should be inspired by the message of the Emperor, carved in the stones and the monuments and should be attentive in practicing Sila, Samadhi and Prajna.

May all living beings be happy!!!

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About the English Edition

After publishing the third revised edition in vernacular Nepali language, I am pleased to bring English version of my book, 'Sukhatirako Yatra' (Journey to Happiness) again for the purpose of Dharma Dana. The book has been written with the objectives of bringing Buddha's teaching in access to more and more people. I hope, this edition will benefit those readers who are not comfortable reading in Nepali.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Binaya Chandra Gurung and Mr. Amrit Tuladhar for their editing support. Likewise, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my friends, Mr. Nay Lin (Australia), Mr. Jinyu Tang (Australia), Dr. Gunaraj Subedi (USA), Mr. Krishna Rai (England), Dr. Ghana Shyam Gurung, (WWF Nepal), Mr. Tilak Bahadur Dhakal (Nuwakot), Mr. Subhash Jadodia (Thapathali), my maternal uncle Mr. Hera Ratna Shakya (Lagankhel), my son Master Anmol Shakya (New Zealand), daughter Miss Avantika Shakya (Australia), for their spiritual donation. I would also like to thank Mr. Mohan Hada for layout designing and Dongol Printers for printing the book. Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife Anjalee Thakali for her encouragement publishing this version of the book.

May they all living beings be happy!!!

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Mahendra Kumar Shakya
21 June, 2019
Kathmandu.

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A Happy Retired Life

Atta dipa atta sharana and dhamma dipa, dhamma sharana (Live as islands unto yourself, being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge. Dhamma is the light, dhamma is the island, the refuge) is one of the unique qualities and the secrets of happiness in the teachings of the Buddha. For a Buddhist, one is the source of light and oneself is the refuge, dhamma is the source of light and dhamma is the refuge. The essence of *atta dipa, atta sharana and dhamma dipa dhamma sharana* is to rely on oneself and to rely on *dhamma* rather than the outside world, family, friends, rites and rituals, etc. In Buddha's teachings, we are accountable for our own *karma*. We ourselves are responsible for our own happiness and misery. We create our own heaven. We create our own hell. We are the architects of our own fate (Narad, 2006; P: 220). Understanding and cultivating the essence of , "*Atta dipa atta sharana and dhamma dipa dhamma sharana*" discussed here as the secrets of a happy and peaceful retired life.

Aging is definitely natural. It brings with it, the increasing frailty, chronic illness and diseases of older age such as dementia, diabetes and heart disease (Mowat and O'Neill, 2013). Our hair turns grey, the face gets wrinkled, body bends and becomes weaker and eyes get blurred. We start losing memory power. The risk of falling and breaking the bones increases. Many such aspects of aging can be hard to endure. Now, because of modern medical facilities, our average life expectancy has definitely increased. This has increased the length of our retired life. However, spiritual practice can help us to age gracefully, and prove that the last part of life is a fruitful time for spiritual inquiry and practice (Richmond 2011). For many Siamese elders, the experience of aging is an opportunity to reflect on their own lives and to deepen their understanding of Lord Buddha's *Dhamma* (Teachings) through the practice of meditation plus retreat and by the cultivation of good *kamma* (deeds) that will

result in a more favorable life and future rebirth (Ratanakula, P., 27 December 2012, "Reflections in Aging in Buddhist Siam").

Today, influenced by western civilization, culture and polarization of family, the elderly parents are becoming a family burden in the Nepalese society. Many elderly parents have suffered misbehaviors from their descendants. Due to the spiritual decline, the elders have become a matter of serious concern in the family. There is a growing number of offsprings who pay all attention to their kids while ignoring the elderly figures. There is a growing tendency that offsprings are tempted to grab the parents' property and ignore the obligations towards them. This is what worries the Buddhist society most in the days to come.

Globalization and Nuclear family

Almost all Nepalese parents wish their kids to study in developed countries and get settled there permanently. They celebrate with zeal and enthusiasm when their kids are granted the U. S. Green Card or Permanent Resident Status in these countries. In consequence, many parents are forced to live in elderly care homes despite having capable children. Despite owning bungalows, vehicles and huge properties, many elderly are helpless to live a lonely and discarded life. Such a scary situation is being developed in the society at present that the death of elderly living alone is unnoticed for days together. They do not even have someone around to provide a glass of water at the last moment. Most successful and prosperous people also have the same fate. Life in hospitals remains even harder, having to face all sorts of hazards.

***Dhamma* the best refuge**

In such a time when you are alone, *dharma* is the best refuge. There is no kin better than *dharma*. What counts now is your moral ground and how well-practiced is your meditation. If you are accustomed to meditation and have a strong moral ground, you are destined to bear a simple and peaceful elderly life. This requires to develop a good moral ground and put meditation to sound practice well in advance.

It is said that there is “separation after union and union after separation.” It is quite true that for every union, there is separation; however, it is not essential that every separation ends with the union. This is one of the bitter realities of our lives indeed. The wife and husband who started life with a strong nuptial knot of marriage will not be together always. They too have to experience the pain of separation so hard and unexpected. At the time when an elderly pair is struggling with life supporting each other, one has to depart. Because of the nuclear and globalized family, this is emerging as one of the most painful realities that most of us have in the event to pass through.

The Buddha has said that often a beloved is the source of suffering. Separation with the loved ones and union with the hated ones is the salient reasons for suffering. Despite our unwillingness, we cannot avoid separation from our loved ones. Therefore, it is wise to think and prepare for the part of our life when no dearer one is around. Our breath remains with us throughout our life; therefore, it is wise to be accustomed to living with it. Likewise, the sensations in our body keep rising and passing throughout our life. Therefore, we should establish a friendship with our breath and the body sensations so that we do not have to be alone during our retired life. This is our duty for sure. *Anapana* is that art of meditation that teaches us to enjoy with our own incoming and outgoing breaths and *Vipassana* is the art of reaching the ultimate reality of life by observing impermanent nature of the body sensations equanimously.

Divine Messenger

Enlightened people consider grey hair as a sign of divine message because it gives a clear indication of the bitter reality of our life that the departure time is close at hand. Time to surrender all the properties and wealth is approaching. Time is advancing towards some hardship. So it is time to start a spiritual life. It is time to evaluate, make corrections, rectify lacunas and prepare for a more meaningful life.

It is believed that human life is a transit point between the divine and lower realm. Only human life has an opportunity of making efforts that lead to the divine realm. Humankind can make efforts to *Nibbana*, the salvation by laying the moral foundation, practicing meditation and gaining the insight. This is why human life is said to be precious. Human life is the land of cultivating good *Karma* and practicing *Dharma*. It is a valuable opportunity gaining permit of the divine realm. The cultivation of Sila, Samadhi and *Prajna* (morality, meditation and wisdom) is possible only in the human realm. Lower and divine realms are respectively the realm of punishment and the realm of reward, and they do not have the opportunity of developing any morality, practicing meditation and gaining insight. Therefore, it is wise to utilize the human life to the maximum extent by cultivating righteous deeds, preventing heinous acts and purifying the mind. At the time of death, nothing will come with us except the good and bad *Karma* that we have committed.

According to the Buddha (*Anguttar Nikaya*, the book of four Sutta 85) there are four categories of life in this world: The one heading towards darkness to darkness, the one heading from darkness to light, the one heading to darkness from light and the one heading to light from light (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012, P 467 to 468). They are as follows:

One heading to more darkness from the darkness

In this category, a person is born in a low family --- one that is poor with little food and drinks, subsists with inevitable difficulty and he is ugly, unsightly, dwarfish, with much illness, --- blind, crippled, lame or paralyzed. He cannot obtain normal foods, drinks, clothing and not getting vehicles, garlands, scents and unguents, bedding, housing and lights. He is engaged in misconduct of body, speech and mind. In consequence, with the breakup of the body after death, a person who leads such a miserable life is reborn in the plane of more misery, in a bad destination, in the lower world, in hell. It is in this way a person is heading towards more darkness.

One heading to light from the darkness

In this category, a person is born in a low family --- one that is poor with little food and drinks, and subsists on inevitable difficulty, and is ugly, unsightly, and dwarfish, with much illness being blind, crippled, lame or even paralyzed. He does not obtain foods, drinks, clothing and vehicles, garlands, scents and unguents, bedding, housing, and lightings; however, is engaged in good conduct of body, speech and mind. In consequence, with the breakup of the body after death, the person is reborn in a good destination, in the heavenly world. It is in this way a person is heading towards the light.

One heading to darkness from light

A person is fortunate enough to have been born in a high and an affluent family with great wealth and property, with abundant gold and silver, with abundant treasures and belongings; and he is handsome, attractive, graceful, possessing the beauty of complexion. He obtains food, drinks, clothing and vehicles, garlands, scents and unguents, bedding, housing and lightings; however, is engaged in misconduct of body, speech and mind. In consequence, with the breakup of the body after death, a person who leads such a life is reborn in the plane of misery, in a bad destination, in the lower world, in hell. It is in this way a person is heading towards the darkness from light.

One heading light from the light

A person who has this type of life is fortunate enough to have been born in an affluent family with great wealth and property, with abundant gold and silver, with abundant treasures and belongings and he is handsome, attractive, graceful, possessing the beauty of complexion. He obtains foods, drinks, clothing and vehicles, garlands, scents and unguents, bedding, housing and lightings. He is engaged in good conduct by body, speech and mind. In consequence, with the breakup of the body after death, the person is reborn in a good destination, in the heavenly world. It is in this way a person is heading to light from light (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012, P 467 to 468).

Now, the time has come to decide where to go: towards light or darkness? If we have been doing misconducts by body, speech and mind, this is the time to stop it and if we have been doing good conduct, this is the time to promote and continue it. Where we are and what is our current position? Wherever and whichever position we are in, we should decide our journey towards the light. This opportunity of self-evaluation and making efforts engaging in good conducts of body, speech and mind is available only in the human realm. Therefore, we should not give up this opportunity, because the misuse of human life is to be punished in hell, the empire of misery for thousands of years. The human life is a blessing to the wiser and curse to the fools indeed.

As mentioned by the centenarian Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi¹, we should take our retired life as a blessing. An opportunity to correct the mistakes and better lead the next life towards the heavenly world. The notion of '*atta dipa atta sharana*' has invaluable potentials of making our retired life bright and beautiful. The Buddha has said that the attachment is the reason behind suffering. We feel sad when our expectations with our nearest and dearest are not met. This is one of the main reasons for the sufferings of aging. Therefore, we should not make any expectations. Instead, we have to keep ourselves busy in spiritual practices, safeguarding our body, speech and mind. This is in fact to realize the essence of *atta dipa atta sharana*, *dhmma dipa dhamma sharana*, *ananna sharana*.

In the elderly days, it is better to have well-cooked food with better chewing; however, due to weak and falling teeth, proper chewing of food is not possible. This may bring a problem in digesting food. The Buddha has many a time appreciated *Jaulo* (rice boiled softly with green gram). *Jaulo*, because it has a lot of water and is also also easy to digest, can show up as the best option of healthy food during old age.

1 A Nepali writer and Scholar. Government of Nepal honored him with the 'Litterateur of the Century' title on August 23, 2017.

Practicing '*atta dipa atta sharana*' is about leaving the darkness and aiming for the light. All behaviors arise from the mind. When the mind strives to be compassionate, then the light is set before your eyes. When the mind is evil, you will fall into darkness naturally. The teachings of the Buddha is all about training the mind and now it is high time for us all to train our mind.

Let's begin our day in the morning and pack up in the evening with at least 5 to 10 minute's *Anapana* meditation focusing the mind on the incoming and outgoing breaths so that by the time we get older let the meditation be developed as a habit or a refuge. One should cultivate the basic moral precepts like abstaining from taking life, taking what is not given, abstaining from sexual misconduct, false speech, taking toxicants and develop the moral ground for meditation. This is called abiding by the "*Pancha-Sheel*." The duration of meditation should be increased slowly and steadily and gain control over one's own mind. In the Dhammapada, it is said *Atta nawa sudantena natham labhati dullabham*. (With oneself fully controlled, one gains a mastery that is hard to gain) (Buddha Net).

It is said that an idle mind is dangerous. Some even allege that an idle mind is a devil's workshop; therefore, we have to engage our mind in something good. Loving-kindness (*Metta*), Compassion (*Karuna*), Empathetic Joy (*Mudita*) and Equanimity (*Upekkha*) are the four sublime states of mind as taught by the Buddha also known as *Brahmavihara*. Practicing the four superb states of mind is the best way to engage our mind during the old age. This will lead to our rebirth into one of the twenty authentic realms. Cultivating the mind with either *Anapana* or *Vipassana* is also a good way of spending time in the old age. Concentrating the mind by counting bids as in the mountain region of Nepal is also good during the aging period.

According to the respected *Vipassana* teacher Reverend Satya Narayan Goenka, *Vipassana* is an art of living in the present. It is the art of unveiling the ultimate truth by observing the sensations that are continuously raising and passing in the body, equanimously. Currently, *Vipassana* meditation centers

are running a 10 day's meditation session in different cities throughout the world with free boarding and food facilities. Likewise, *Satipatthana* meditation sessions are also being organized. Because the enlightened one developed meditation entirely to mankind, human life will definitely be incomplete if we do not experience meditation in one of the centers at least once in our life.

The spiritual development requires to have a strong moral foundation. Spiritual practices will not last long at all without a strong moral foundation. Therefore, let us be moral, lead a simple life and experience immense pleasure of moral purity. Let's make our old age happy and peaceful as proclaimed by the centenarian, Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi. *Atta dipa atta sharana*. Be your own light and be your own refuge. That's the best policy for sure.

The Dhammapada verse 155 states
He who neither practices the life of purity nor has acquired any wealth, at old age, is like a white heron, watching an empty pond.

Let's us not waste our time and repent like the white heron in the empty pool without a fish.

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The Secrets of Peace & Happiness

"If a man speaks or acts from the uprightness of mind, happiness follows him, close like his never-departing shadow."

-The Dhammapada

Peace and happiness is the common agenda of humankind today. Different people follow different approaches to achieve peace and happiness. Usually, people tend to seek happiness within the affluence of material wealth and facilities and put all moral and immoral efforts in accumulating wealth. In contrast, wise people take pleasure in donating than in accumulating. The origin of peace and happiness for them is the blameless action of body, speech and thinking. I experience great happiness while returning money overpaid by shop-keepers. Those who are honest in their job, with the family and the country, should also possess a sense of satisfaction and joy.

The hectic lifestyle of the people in the most developed countries proved that people can't be happy merely by accumulating material wealth and resources. This can be realized by close observation of the people living in a well-decorated building with the apparent affluence of material wealth. It is said that all that glitters is not gold. Likewise, what is seen is not necessary to be the ultimate truth. The incidences of suicide committed by those who are most successful in their life proved that material wealth and dignity is not everything that is required for peace and happiness. In an article written by Mr. Rameshwor Khanal, the former Secretary of the Ministry of Finance mentioned that the mere accumulation of wealth without honesty does not bring happiness. Analyzing an account of a bureaucrat with the corrupt mindset, Mr. Khanal illustrated the fact that one can't be happy even with the wealthy and luxurious life in a foreign country. The wealth earned dishonestly is the source of worry and distress. Thus one needs to contemplate deeply towards sane attitudes.

Different spiritual teachers have suggested different approaches to peace and happiness. The Dhammapada, the gist collection of Buddhist teachings, pointed out the fact that everything first begins in the mind and therefore, a healthy mind is the origin of peace and happiness. It says all mental and physical phenomena have minds as their fore-runners; they have minds as their chiefs; they are mind-made. Therefore, if one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him close like the shadow that never leaves him.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama in his book 'The Power of Compassion' mentioned that if our mind is healthy, full of love and compassion, it is natural that we succeed in gaining peace and happiness simultaneously. This law of nature is equally applicable to all humankind regardless of the religious sect, race, caste, creed, color, gender and the country of origin. The respected *Vipassana* teacher Satya Narayan Goenka says that the vibration of a healthy mind full of love and compassion not only generates peace and happiness; it however also makes the entire surroundings calm, peaceful and blessed with the essential tranquility.

It is said that our facial appearance is the reflection of our mind. We can easily notice the people stuck in some problem from their melancholy appearance. The angry mind can be detected with the red and black look. On the other hand, a happy and peaceful mind can be perceived with a bright and attractive appearance. Therefore, maintaining a peaceful and healthy mind also proves to be an ardent necessity to have a bright and attractive look.

'Healthy Mind in Healthy Body'. We have been hearing this dictum from the schooling, which gives top priority to maintaining physical health. Does a healthy body really have any co-relations with a healthy mind? Is it rational to say that all the people with good physique are free of greed, anger and jealousy? No, it is not reasonable to allege that all having a healthy body should also have a healthy and intelligent mind. They are also involved in unnecessary vanity and pride as well. On the contrary, Medical Sciences have found that angry, jealous and agitated minds will spark negative impacts on our

body systems. Citizens losing temper more often are likely to have the problem of high blood pressure. Residents with a jealous mind are more likely to have gastric and depression. Therefore, it is not a healthy body at all; we must thus, value the essence of a healthy mind to own a body perfectly fit and healthy.

We are obliged to give importance to our hair-style. We change and decorate it with various colors; however, we never think about caring the mind inside (Basnet, Babita; 2018). We go for a morning walk. Our morning stroll is mostly concerned with physical health rather than mental health. We take a balanced diet to maintain our physical health. With the growing age, we regulate and forbid oily and sugary foods to maintain our health. Since maintaining mental health is crucial in sustaining physical health, caring the mind is more essential. Guarding the sense organs and preventing the entries of outside contaminants like passions is most essential.

Mindfulness

Usually, our mind keeps wondering like wild animals. Most of the time we are absent-minded. *Anapana* meditation brings our wandering mind back into our body and makes us mindful. Mindfulness can be practiced in all our daily activities like walking, eating, traveling, which are beneficial to maintain both mental as well as physical health.

Dhamma.Digital

Metta, (Goodwill) & Karuna (Compassion)

Metta (Loving Kindness) is one of the good qualities of a healthy mind. The mind is said to be luminous by nature but is defiled by adventitious pollutants that have entered through the sense organs. *Brahmavihar*² is the practice of providing a healthy diet of loving-kindness (*Metta*), compassion (*Karuna*), empathetic joy and equanimity to the mind polluted with greed, jealousy and anger. *Metta* is formally defined as the wish for the welfare and

- 2 The *brahmavihāras* (sublime attitudes, lit. “abodes of Brahma”) are a series of four Buddhist virtues and the meditation practices made to cultivate them. The Brahma-viharas are: 1. loving-kindness or benevolence (*metta*) 2. compassion (*Karuna*) 3. empathetic joy (*mudita*) 4. equanimity (*upekkha*)

happiness of all beings.

Sharing the purity and merits gained through virtuous acts like charity, moral precepts, meditation and retreat wishing peace and happiness to all beings is an inseparable part of the Buddhist tradition. *Metta* meditation can be practiced by radiating love and kindness over the loved ones and the entire world.

The *Nalaka Sutta* in *Sutta Nipat* says “As I am, so are these. As are these, so am I. Drawing the parallel to yourself, neither kill nor get the others to kill.” (Ven. Thanissaro, 1998). Similarly, the *Metta sutta* suggests that one practicing *Brahmavihara* should render peace and happiness to all living beings including those strong or weak, small, medium and giant in size, those seen and unseen, located close by or far away, those born and to be born, should remain radiating boundless love over the entire globe, all the directions upwards to the sky, downwards to the depth, free from hatred and ill-will, day and night all the time whether standing or walking, seating or lying until in an awakening state. (Sangha, Amaravati; 2004)

Karuna (Compassion) is defined as empathy with those afflicted by suffering. These days, hundreds of people are dying almost every day due to war and natural disasters. In some of the countries in the Middle East, the people are plagued by a tragic life that they do not even have time to lament. In our country too, incidences of road mishaps are resulting in a number of casualties almost every day. *Karuna* meditation is to radiate empathy to those sentient beings having a miserable life. Engaging mind in radiating compassion to the afflicted people and the entire world is better than setting the mind free to be ruined with passion, anger and greed. Once we wake up in the bed, we can radiate compassion to those grieved by suffering until we leave the bed. Similarly, we can practice radiating compassion to the people and the entire world once we lay in bed until conscious and not in sleep.

Metta and Karuna meditations are easy to practice; they turn out to be effective too when one can feel positive changes immediately. It is believed that those practicing *Metta and*

Karuna meditations garner a bright and attractive appearance and they are loved by the deities and ghosts. They do not have a terrible dream nor a nightmare and will be blessed with sound sleep. They die consciously and are reborn in the divine realm as if awakening from a deep sleep. *Metta* and *Karuna* meditations are believed to be effectively liberating the mind from such oppressive states as ill will, anger and aversion.

Mindful Eating

Usually, we are absent-minded while eating. Many a time we are not even conscious of what we are chewing. Eating slowly and mindfully with proper chewing enhances better digestion of the foods, absorption of the nutrients and makes our look radiant and healthy. As such, a vegetarian meal is much suggestive throughout our life period. A vegetarian diet signifies long life, a healthy life.

Chakramana (Walking Meditation)

The Buddha in his teaching has mentioned the utmost importance of mindfulness during all of the four postures of our body like standing, sitting, walking and sleeping. His followers regularly practiced mindfulness while walking called *Chakramana* (walking meditation). *Chakramana* was inseparable in Buddha's daily life. *Chakramana* is the art that we can engage our mind in the morning as well as in the evening walk. We can better practice and realize the preciousness of *Chakramana* while in a long walk through quiet forests and lonely places. Mindful walking not only protects us from accidents; however, also gives us immense pleasure. This art is quite simple and can be learned from monks and laymen who are accustomed to it. It is said that the mindfulness in *Chakramana* lasts longer.

Training the Mind

Dr. Ambedkar cited that "the cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of Human Existence." Buddhism lays a lot of importance in cultivating the mind. In fact, Buddhism is all about training and purifying the mind. In *Anguttar Nikaya*, the Buddha says:

"No other thing do I know, O monks that brings so much happiness as a developed and cultivated mind. A developed and cultivated mind truly brings top happiness."

"No other thing do I know, O monks, that brings so much harm as a mind that is untamed, unguarded, unprotected and uncontrolled. Such a mind truly brings much harm. No other thing do I know, O monks that brings so much benefit as a mind that is tamed, guarded, protected and controlled. Such a mind truly brings great benefits. (Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2010, P: 6)"

The respected *Vipassana* teacher, Mr. Goenka says the untrained mind is harmful and destructive like wild beasts. The wild elephant while entering into a local community, destroys houses, tramples crops and also attacks people. But a person tactful, skilled and wise with his skills, techniques and wisdom train the elephant, make it domesticated and have its service as he wishes. The human mind is a thousand times powerful than a wild elephant. According to the enlightened people, there is no other power in the universe super-fast and energetic than the human mind. Therefore, in the universe, there exists nothing more beneficial and cheerful than taming and controlling own mind. However, this is not as easy as by word of mouth. Just like a wild elephant, training and domesticating the mind requires proper patience, techniques and wisdom. It consumes a considerable amount of time and it has to be done by oneself.

Venerable Dhammananda in his Dhamma talk '*The Power of the Mind*' mentioned that one is held responsible to train and purify one's own mind. We are the sole owners of our minds and we with our own efforts should control and train our minds. No divine powers, including Lord Buddha himself, can purify the other's mind. Meditation is the solid art of training the mind. Breathing meditation (*Anapana*) is usually practiced controlling the running mind. In *Vishuddhimarga*, (the path of Purification, translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli) it is said:

Taming the running mind

For the mind that has long been dissipated among visible data, etc. , as its object, and it does not want to mount the object of concentration through-mindfulness-of-breathing; it runs off the track like a chariot harnessed to a wild ox. Now, suppose a cowherd wanted to tame a wild calf that had been reared on a wild cow's milk, he would take it away from the cow and tie it up apart with a rope to a stout post dug into the ground; then the calf might dash to and fro, but being unable to get away, it would eventually sit down or lie down by the post. So too, when a person wants to tame his own mind which has long been spoilt by being reared on visible data, etc., as an object for its food and drink, he should take it away from visible data, etc. , as object and bring it into the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty place and tie it up there to the post of in-breaths and out-breaths with the rope of mindfulness. And so his mind may then dash to and fro when it no longer gets the objects it was formerly used to, but being unable to break the rope of mindfulness and get away, it sits down, lies down, by that object under the influence of access and absorption.

Morality is considered as the foundation of the spiritual path to enlightenment. Buddha has encouraged his layman followers to regularly practice meditation. Meditation and wisdom are complementary to each other ultimately leading to purification and emancipation. One must have a good moral foundation before realizing the pleasure of meditation. For his layman followers, Buddha suggested five moral precepts in everyday life. These precepts include abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking drugs and liquors. Buddha encouraged his followers to look after parents and kids with the earnings of honesty. Stay far away from any pollution. As such, smoking must be completely alleviated to protect our tracheas and evil and corrupt practices. Drinking and gambling must too be avoided by all means. Alcohol will damage liver whilst gambling will ruin our minds. Observing these moral precepts requires one to possess mental qualities like compassion, honesty, and dedication in one hand and on the other through practicing

these precepts one initiates cultivating these qualities in mind.

Spiritual teachers have pointed out the fact that those with good morals and a positive mind remain calm and fearless even at the time of death. Those with boundless love and compassion remain free of all the worries. In the famous book *Vishuddhi* Marg, it has been written that those practicing love, compassion and friendship have sound sleep. They will have easy death with full consciousness as if sleeping and will appear in heaven as if awakened from the sleep.



Buddhist Rituals During Gestation

"Jatipi dukkha", according to the Buddha, birth is suffering, conception is suffering. It is said that life in the womb is hard and miserable. This must be the reason the Buddha said birth is suffering. The cycle of rebirth that is bringing sentient beings into the womb, again and again, is suffering. Religious leaders say that infants inside the womb remain with both palms held together is an indication that the life inside the womb is hard and miserable. At the time of the Buddha, Sivali suffer a long gestation complained about his ill fate with Venerable Sariputra. Sivali compared the womb with *Lohakumbhi* hell. *Lohakumbhi* is a narrow iron cell, the beings born there are believed to suffer excessive heat. Modern science denies the speculation that the baby can have a feeling in the womb because of the brain not developed well.

Development of the mind in the womb

If so in what stage does consciousness develop in a baby in the womb? When does it start to have sense? Giving the reference of the Buddha, Late Venerable K Sri Dhammananda (2002) in his dhamma talk 'Power of the mind' says that development of a baby starts from the mind. A mind is the nucleus of life. According to him, the great Scientist, Einstein too has accepted the argument stating that mind must come first. If the mind is the origin of life, then the speculation in the scriptures that life in the womb is miserable is logical.

In the story of Mahabharata, it is said that Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna learned the art of breaking into the *Chakravyuha*, a military formation while inside his mother, Subhadra's womb when Arjuna was narrating the art to Subhadra. But Subhadra fell asleep when narrating the art of returning from the *Chakravyuha*; consequently, Abhimanyu could learn only half of the art and he was killed trapped inside the *Chakravyuha* because

of his incomplete knowledge on the technique (Wikipedia). The story of Abhimanyu justifies the arguments that consciousness develops from the gestation time.

Perception of a baby in the Womb

If the baby is truly conscious inside the womb, how should it experience? We all had been in the womb; despite the fact, answering this question is not easy. While having a Sauna bath, in a room heated with hot steam, what happens if somebody locked the door from outside? I often have the frightening and restless experience while in a sauna bath and think that one can have similar experience inside the womb too.

How many of us have experience of being trapped inside a lift? How many of us have experience of being locked inside the narrow toilet without a window? If you are alone in the house and the house is in an isolated place where one can't expect external support. Imagine how you experience when trapped inside a narrow, warm, poorly aerated room in such a helpless situation. Maybe a baby should also have a similar experience in the womb.

Influence of the baby in the womb on the mother

The dream of a pregnant mother has significant importance in our society. The dream is thought to forecast the future of the baby in the womb. Bodhisattva Siddhartha was said to have entered the womb of the queen, Mahamaya Devi in the form of a white elephant on the full moon day of July. The queen was scared of the dream explained all to the king the next morning. The King soon gathered the Brahmins reputed at interpreting the dream and made queries. The Brahmins foretold that a son will be born to the queen, who will be distinguished and great, and become Buddha, enlightened and fully awakened. The King was so happy with the prediction made by the Brahmin fortune-tellers and announced for the celebration throughout the country.

Similarly, the Buddhist literature suggests that the nature of the baby in the womb also will have some influence on the behavior

of the mother. When prince Ajatsatru was in the womb, his mother, the queen felt a strong desire for drinking fresh blood from the arm of the King, Bimbisara. When the King knew about the desire of the queen, he asked the fortune-tellers the secret about the desire. The fortune-tellers told that the baby in the womb will kill the father for the throne. Likewise, in Besantar Jataka story, when the queen, Fusati Devi was pregnant she felt a strong desire to establish six charity stations one each in the four corners of the city, one at the center and another in Royal palace and offer charity. Upon consultation the fortune-tellers the King became so happy by knowing that there is a generous baby in the queen's womb who would never be satisfied with donating. The King established six charity stations in four corners, one in the center and one in the palace and made the queen donate food, drinks, clothes, and ornaments. These stories tell about how the nature of the baby in the womb influence the nature of the mother.

What is good to do during Pregnancy and what is not?

What is the right age to start *Vipassana*? Answering this question, the respected *Vipassana* teacher, SN Goenka said, *Vipassana* should be started as early as possible. According to him the baby from the mother practicing *Vipassana* meditation during pregnancy will also have positive impacts of *Vipassana*. According to health education, the mother, at the time of pregnancy should take enough green vegetables and nutritious food. She should be free from tension as that will have negative effects on the baby. Medical doctors have suggested the pregnant mothers not to drink liquor and be away from smokers. It is believed that if the pregnant mother makes fun of disables the baby will also be disabled; therefore, she should not make a caricature of any disability in pregnancy. Mocking disables is not at all a good task.

Rituals of Gestation

According to the Buddhist traditions, the gestation ritual is done in the third month of the gestation. The pregnant mother after

having a bath, observes five moral precepts with the refuge of Triple Gem, Buddha, *Dharma*, and Sangha and listens to Paritrana sutra from the monks. This is believed to be beneficial to both the baby and the mother. During this period, activities like offering charity, practicing moral precepts and meditation regularly will certainly have positive impacts on the baby. In Buddhist countries, the mother daily listens and memorizes Ratan sutra and Angulimala Sutra. This is believed to be beneficial to both the mother and the baby.

In the teachings of the Buddha, practicing love, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity are known as four sublimities i. e. Brahmavihara. According to the respected *Vipassana* Teacher, Satya Narayana Goenka, love, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity are symbolic to the four heads of the Brahma, the creator of Hindu mythology. If the mother practices Brahmavihara, the positive vibes produced will certainly benefit the baby. It is equally important to behave rationally with all in daily contacts. During pregnancy, the family members including the mother should not involve in killing any living beings.

Dhamma.Digital

Heedfulness

“Vaya Dhamma Shankara Appamadena Sampadetha” (All the component parts are subject to decay, work out your salvation with diligence). This is the tremendous parting expression of the Buddha to the humankind at the last moment in the Mallas’ Sal grove in Kushinara. “Be heedful to gain your own salvation”. Addressing the monks, Buddha concluded his entire message to the whole world. Why did the Buddha place such importance to the word Heedfulness in his parting message at his last moment? His final word has provided intellectual nourishment that is crucial to the entire mankind. We should understand the gravity of the message and practice *Dhamma* very attentively.

What is Appamada (Heedfulness)?

Literally, the meaning of *Appamad* is to be attentive, vigilant, and careful. *Appamada* is to be industrious in the pursuit of self-purification and gaining one’s own salvation. On the contrary, wasting time recklessly addicted to sensual pleasure and being reluctant in the cultivation of *morality*, meditation and wisdom are *Pamada* or heedlessness. *Pamada* or heedlessness is to delay in practicing *Dhamma* with the mindsets that I am tired now, I am feeling sleepy, I don’t have time now, so I will practice it tomorrow. According to Buddha, heedlessness is the most serious obstacle in the path of *Nibbana* (salvation). It is like wasting time in bringing a person pierced by a poisonous arrow, severely injured and bleeding, to a doctor.

On the other hand, *Appamada* (heedfulness) is to be energetic, to be mindful in practicing *dhamma*, the pursuit of self-purification and gaining one’s own salvation at the very moment without wasting a single minute, carefully and attentively. In short, life is momentary and uncertain. Death can come to us at any moment without prior notice. Considering these uncertainties, to be attentive in offering donations, observing moral precepts,

practicing meditation and abstaining from sensual pleasure, now from the very moment is *Appamada*.

In *Anguttar Nikaya*, the Buddha says, “among the internal factors, I do not see even a single factor, O monks! that brings so much benefit as heedfulness. Heedfulness, O monks, leads to a great benefit. It triggers un-arisen wholesome states to arise and arisen unwholesome states to disappear right away”.

Avoiding misconducts in terms of body, speech and mind diligently and mindfully and secure the goal of *Nibbana* through achieving at least the state of *Sotapatti* (stream winner) is “***Appamadena Sampadetha***.” It is believed that for the stream winners the entry to hell and other lower realms is closed forever. He/She within a maximum of 7 lives in either the human realm or above achieves liberation (*Nibbana*). No power in the universe is believed to have the capacity to avoid it. **Dhammapada Verse 178**, says about the stream winners,

*Pathabya ekarajjena saggassa gamanena va
sabbalokadhipaccena sotapattiphalam varam.*

(Far better than sovereignty over the earth, or far better than going to the abodes of the *Devas*, or far better than ruling supreme over the entire universe, is the attainment of *Sotapatti* Fruition).

Dhamma.Digital

In Buddhism, it is believed that having human life is exceptionally rare. Likewise, it is hard to have the opportunity to be exposed to the *dhmma*, the teachings of the Buddha. Cultivation of *dhmma* and continuing it is further difficult. There are only a few who really practice *Dhamma* while the majority misuses the precious human life. We love sleeping and do not want to leave the bed. It is very difficult for us to wake up and practice meditation. We spend weeks, months, years and our entire life by sleeping in the bed, absolutely unaware about the preciousness of life. Heedlessness is so harmful that makes us ruin our entire life by indulging in the sensual pleasure. In his parting message, the Buddha alerted us not to waste the precious human life.

In this material world, we are wasting our time in such a way that we don't really find time to listen and practice the *dhamma*, the rich tenets of the Buddha. Usually, when somebody approaches us with a proposal for practicing meditation, most of us instantly avoid pretending that we are too busy and don't have the time. On the contrary, we can manage time to watch the movie continuously for two hours and more. If we hear a loud voice of arguing in our neighborhood, we come out in the verandah leaving half-finished meal even without cleaning hands. However, this is quite regrettable that most of us cannot manage time to listen and practice the *dhamma* and understand the reality of life.

Sometimes, I feel like comparing our busy life with that of broiler chicken inside the cage in the butcher's shop. The meat vendor as per the demand of the customer drags the chicken out of the cage, cut its throat and put it in the pot filled with boiled water for dressing. After dressing, the butcher cuts the chicken into small pieces all in front of other chickens. The chickens inside the cage are watching all these, do not feel scared and try to escape from the cage. This is not surprising with the chicken; however, for human beings with such a well-developed mind, this cannot be acceptable. We quite often observe death. We have observed the demise of our grandparents, our parents and we ourselves are no exception to death; however, we never think about death. We never think about escaping from the trap of death. If not it could have brought huge changes over the way we live. We would not be that corrupt in accumulating the wealth that we have to leave on our death.

Respected *Vipassana* Master Satya Narayan Goenka in his book 'Dhamma, the Art of Living' says that we are liable to be deeply influenced by the spiritual beliefs and values of the society where we were grown up. The spiritual belief we inherit from our native community will have tremendous impacts on us that we consider them as the final truth and we deny all religious faiths and beliefs that are contradicting with them. This makes our spiritual belief like one-way traffic and prevents us from using common sense. The belief keeps us away from the truth and reality and there is

a risk that we are likely to continue with the same spiritual belief life after life. This is the biggest risk after all.

One Way Traffic

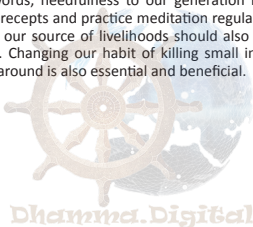
Once we are accustomed to a particular religious belief, it is so difficult to come out of it; therefore, the spiritual belief is also compared with opium. The addiction to opium remains only for some time; however, that of a religious belief can last throughout life. Therefore, the addiction to religion is more dangerous than that of opium. This is like a vicious cycle difficult to escape. Therefore, examination and re-examination are required before adopting any spiritual belief. Good judgment and common sense are highly essential before accepting any religious faith.

Lord Buddha was so caring that he always encouraged his faithful disciples to continue their efforts in fighting with fetters and purifying the mind. After his *Mahaparinirvana*, many thousands attended *Nibbana*, the ultimate goal following the path heedfully as guided by the Buddha. Two centuries after his *Mahaparinirvana*, the great Mauryan Emperor, Ashok adopted the teachings of the Buddha and renounced all the violence forever. The Emperor was so impressed with his teachings that he erected 84 thousand monuments with the relics of the Buddha. In the 20th year of his coronation, he came to Nepal with Venerable Upagupta, erected the pillar in Lumbini to mark the birth-place of the Buddha, and exempted all the taxes to the local people around. He is also believed to have visited Kathmandu and made stupas in the valley which can still be seen. The pilgrimage of such a busy emperor, all the way from India, at the time when there were no modern means of transportation, erecting the stone pillar to mark the birth-place of the Buddha and making stupas with the pious relics of the Buddha should be the source of inspiration to our generation indeed. His respect for the Buddha and his cosmic concepts should be food for thought and a source of inspiration to our generation to explore deep into the teachings of the Buddha.

In the Bamiyan province in Central Afghanistan, two enormous

figures of the Buddha 175 feet and 120 feet high were created in the 4th and 5th centuries respectively. The statues were carved from the living rock and were finished with fine plaster and paints also reported to be decorated with gold and jewelry. We should understand that the people in Afghanistan did not erect the statues in the rock without any mission. In fact with the statue, they wanted to pass the message to our generations about the preciousness of the Buddha and his teachings. We should understand their message and take it as the source of inspiration to explore and practice the teachings of the Buddha particularly the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path heedfully.

In simple words, heedfulness to our generation is to observe five moral precepts and practice meditation regularly every day. In addition, our source of livelihoods should also be good and respectable. Changing our habit of killing small insects as and when seen around is also essential and beneficial.



Spirituality (*Dharma*)

Since ancient times people have been following spiritual practices inherited from their family, their ancestral community and traditions. It is quite usual that the religious belief inherited from their native community will have such an impact that every individual considers the belief as superior and the final truth. Some people take a dip into the holy Ganga and believe to have been sanctified from all the misconducts and evil deeds. Some people light candle-sticks or butter-fed lamps in pious places as a spiritual gesture and practice. In Kathmandu, we have seen people walking day and night on a specific occasion to visit all the *stupas*, *chaityas*, *chhortens*, *shrines* and religious monuments in the Valley with the belief that each step in the walk conjures up as sacred as donating a few grams of pure gold. Similarly, fasting has become an inseparable part of our spiritual life wishing a good and long life to the beloved ones. We have observed people lashing until bleeding one's own naked body with belts and chains. We have also observed people piercing their own palm with an iron nail as a spiritual practice. One Indian national who thought of having a son with the blessing of Goddess, GadhiMai, slaughtered 108 male buffalos in the temple in Bara district of Nepal. In the name of spirituality, every year thousands of animals and birds are sacrificed there. The incidence of beheading a boy to please God in Nawalparasi district a few years before is sheer evidence that how wild one could behave in the name of spirituality. This is totally stupid and against any norm and civilization.

What is Spirituality?

Definitions and understandings about spirituality vary among various religious teachers. For me spirituality basically is humanity. Spirituality is a conscientious thought and conduct. All living beings want to be happy as the way we do. They fear death

and punishments like us. All want to live, enjoy and be secure totally free from any penalties. 'As I am, so are the others. As are these, so am I.' Drawing the parallel to oneself, neither to involve in killing nor get others to be killed in the name of spirituality. The animals do not have a well-developed mind and their life is believed to be inferior and difficult than ours; despite the fact, they too do not wish to die. They too do not like to be insecure. Having this conscience, behaving with love and compassion is spirituality. As suggested by Confucius of China, treating the others as one would like others to treat oneself is spirituality.

In the Dhammapada, Lord Buddha in his simple words has defined *dharma* (spirituality) as not to commit any evil and cultivate what is good and moral and purify one's own mind. This is the basic doctrine of the Buddha.

*Sabba papassa akaranan Kusalassa upsampada
Sacitta pariyodapanan Etan Buddanu sasanan*

The great Hindu Sage, Veda Vyas in the essence of the eighteen *Puranas* (Sacred Writings) affirmed that helping the others is meritorious, and hurting the others is a vice (*Paropakaram Punyaya Papaya Parapeedanam*).

According to the respected *Vipassana* teacher Satya Narayan Goenka, Dharma is the art of living that teaches us to live happily and peacefully within and generating peace and harmony for the others. Dr. Ambedkar emphasized that the purpose of religion is to guide man how he should behave with the other men rather than pleasing the unseen divine power so that all men may possess a happy and peaceful life (Verma, 2010. P: 59).

Spirituality not only teaches leading a happy life; but also teaches to accept death in a normal way. In *Anguttar Nikaya* it is said "Brahmin, there is a person who has not done anything evil, cruel or wicked, but has done what is good and wholesome, who has made a shelter for himself. When a grave illness befalls him, these thoughts come to him 'I have not done anything evil, cruel or wicked, but have done what is good and wholesome, I

have made a plain shelter for myself. I shall go hereafter to the destiny of those who do such deeds.' Hence he does not grieve ... nor does he become deranged or overcome with fear. This mortal too is one who does not remain scared of death, who is not afraid of demise that is." (NyanaponikaThera and Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2010. P: 64). Therefore, spirituality is also an art of having a peaceful and fearless death.

Why Spirituality (*Dharma*)?

According to Dr. Radha Krishnan, *Dharma* is that force which shapes and sustains human life. It is the only path that leads to everlasting peace, prosperity and joy in this world. All our present-day problems are a direct result of disregarding '*Dharma*', under the influence of materialistic philosophy, in the belief that it alone can help in happiness and secure the welfare of the people. *Dharma* alone is the solution to all the social, economic and political problems the world is facing today (Gupta, 2015).

Venerable Dhammananda (2002) in his *dharma* talk, 'the power of the mind' mentioned that only humankind have religion because they have an extraordinary thinking mind. According to him, no beings in the entire universe other than the human race possess any proper religion. Human beings by thinking, analyzing and using the sense of reasoning can achieve anything in the world. The human mind can be developed to the extent to destroy the whole world at once and on the other hand, enlightened religious teachers have developed their minds to such an extent to guide the entire humanity to the right path. Science is blind without spirituality. Without a religious influence, the human mind can be the cause of utter destruction. Therefore, spirituality is essential to protect human civilization and guide it to long-lasting peace and prosperity.

Today because of the deteriorating religious values, people are so self-centered that they do not respect their own principles, commitments and ideals. Due to the erosion of their ethical and moral values widespread from top to bottom, the people, especially those on the bottom rungs of the society, are suffering hardships. If we could raise awareness of the law of *karma* that

every evil action has an inescapable consequence, the system in Nepal, would not be so corrupted and polluted to this extent as at present. Sane ideologies could help eliminate all corruptions and pollutions incurred in the society unnecessarily.

Spirituality and Science

Some people say spirituality is faith and some say it is blind faith. According to S. N. Goenka (2013, P: 37), *Dharma*, the teachings of the Buddha is a pure technique of mind and matter, the science of mind and matter and the interaction of mind and matter. As an essential requirement mentioned by Dr. Ambedkar, spirituality (*Dharma*) must be in accord with science. According to him, Buddhism is based on reasoning. It follows the law of nature; therefore, it can also be compared with science. In nature, the cultivation of bitter gourd produces bitter fruits while grape seeds produce sweet fruits no matter whoever (a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Christian or a Muslim) sows the seed. In the same manner, moral and ethical acts produce delightful fruits whereas the acts of butchering, stealing, fornicating have lamenting and tearful endings. The rough and aggressive speech ends in hostility whereas a polite speech is pleasing. If our mind is full of love and compassion, it is usual that we will have peace and happiness. On the other hand, if our mind is full of evil thoughts, we are bound to suffer. No matter which spiritual belief we follow.

Accountability

In the teachings of the Buddha, every human being is individually accountable for the good and bad acts committed by oneself. In the *Dhammapada*, it is said, "if one speaks or acts with an evil mind, suffering follows him close as the wheel follows the hoof of the beast that draws the cart." Therefore, it is not well to do a deed which brings regrets, the fruit whereof is received with tears and lamentations. (Dr. Ambedkar, 1957).

We are all accountable and can't escape the results of good and evil acts we have committed. We see people tearful with pain in hospitals. How nice would it be if the kin could share part of

the pain, However, sharing pain is not possible. This is because everybody is individually accountable for one's own acts and the fruits whereof can't be shared. No rituals, faiths or blessings can help to escape from the miserable consequences of our heinous acts. Just as the fire burns, whoever catches it, the evil act also punishes, whoever cultivates it. The Law of *Karma* is self-regulated that any external power has nothing to do with it. After death, only our "*Karma*" remains with us.

Animal Sacrifice, an Evil Tradition

Contrary to the belief that all living creatures are descendants of the almighty God, animals are sacrificed as a spiritual practice. In this 21st century, what can be more unfortunate and shameful than animal sacrifice? Where is our human sense? Animal sacrifice wishing for good health and prosperity is just nonsense. It is like wishing to harvest ambrosia by planting poison. One can't harvest mango by planting a neem tree. One who wishes to enjoy a delicious mango should plant grafted mango sapling and care with water and manure every day. In its due time, it bears fruit that will be delicious. *With sinful acts, one cannot expect to be blessed with prosperity, good fortune or happiness (Bhattarai, 2016).*

At the time of the Buddha, a Brahmin, Uggatasarira was preparing to sacrifice 25 hundred animals including 5 hundred bulls, 5 hundred male calves, 5 hundred heifers, 5 hundred goats, and 5 hundred sheep, approached the Buddha to know his views. The Buddha alerted that those who prepare for animal sacrifice mentally declare that I will slaughter these many cattle, these many rams and these many calves and goats. This way they make harmful *karma* for themselves even before they set up the sacrificial post, ignite the sacred fire and give instructions for the animals to be slaughtered. In this way the act of animal sacrifice which is believed to be spiritual, in reality, is harmful and evil, having tearful and miserable consequences. Contrary to their expectations the act, in reality, leads them to a difficult and miserable life in hell.

It is not necessary that all those advocating for spirituality are also spiritual in reality. It is not necessary that all traditions inherited as part of spirituality are spiritual in reality too. Today, many Spiritual Leaders are not loyal to their own belief. Therefore, a living society should use common sense and discard all such corrupt traditions, rites and rituals. In *Kalama sutra*, the Buddha suggests Kalamas in using common sense as follows:

When Kalamas after thorough observation and investigation you find anything that agrees with the reasoning and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and shape your life in accordance with it (Please see page no 50 to 51 for detail).

Buddhists believe that due to endless cycles of rebirth, it is hard to find living beings having no kin relations. Therefore, the enlightened one has taught to see all living beings with brotherhood and practice *Brahmavihara*. *Brahmavihara* is the four sublime states of mind as taught by the Buddha that includes loving-kindness (*Metta*), Compassion (*Karuna*), Empathetic joy (*Mudita*) and Equanimity (*Upekkha*).

Spirituality and Rituals

In Buddhism, parents are extremely respectable. In *Anguttar Nikaya*, it is said, those families, O monks, dwell with Brahmas where at home the parents are respected by their children. Those families dwell with the ancient teachers where at home the parents are respected by their children. Those families dwell with the ancient deities where at home the parents are respected by the children. Those families dwell with those worthy of worship where at home the parents are respected by their children. "Brahmas" monks, is a term for father and mother. "The early teachers" is a term for father and mother. "The early deities" is a term for father and mother. "Those worthy of worship" is a term for father and mother. And why? The parents are of great help to their children, they bring them up, feed them and show them the world with witty guidelines (NyanaponikaThera and Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2010, P: 54).

Parents bring up their kids with the utmost care; therefore, it is natural for the parents to expect their kids to be loyal to them. However, how many youngsters realize that they too have been brought up by their parents in the same manner? How many could really support their parents at the time of their aging? Wise people consider that the act of raising kids is analogous to the investment on the kids and the act of caring for the elderly parents is analogous to the repayment of the investment. Contrary to the fact that most of the people ignore to return the investment of their parents on them, they expect a full return on their investment from their kids. Misunderstanding the gap between the investments and the expectations is the root cause of the crisis with the aging communities in South Asian countries. Thus the children should be obliged in learning to reciprocate the generous favors their parents have earlier performed in their lifetime.

Nepal has been one of the countries with the fastest-growing Christian population in the world. Today, one group of Christians are fully engaged in tagging their label to more and more Nepalese. The monetary enticement is the principal pulling factor than any pure belief. Widespread poverty has made a huge section of the population in rural Nepal vulnerable to sectarian conversion. The caste discrimination prevailing in Hinduism has further accelerated the conversion. The rapid conversion in the label without understanding the religious values could be a serious threat to social harmony. Respected *Vipassana* teacher, Satya Narayan Goenka denied the notion of conversion from one organized religion to another religion. According to him, the conversion should be from misery to happiness, cruelty to compassion and bondage to liberation. Conversion should be in the mindset and not in the label.

Lastly, spirituality is humanity and not cruelty. It is the truth but not an absurdity. It should be simple and easy and not manipulative. Let's use our moral sense and improve our conducts rather than just tagging the label. Let's be rational with all in our daily contacts rather than pleasing the unseen divine power. Let's cultivate the mind and not waste time in spiritual gossiping. Let's practice moral precepts, meditation, and develop insight. Let's be happy and let the others be happy too.

The Divine Messengers

In Buddhist societies, an old man, a sick man and a corpse are considered as the divine messengers. Because they give us the divine message that one day we too are liable to be old, be sick and die. The *Anguttar Nikaya* (Numerical discourse), speaks about these divine messengers as follows (Translated from the Pali by Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi):

There are three divine messengers, O monks. There is a person of bad conduct in body, speech and mind who perishes soon. There the warders of Yamalok seize him by both arms and take him before Yama, the Lord of Death, saying: "This man, your majesty, had no respect for the paternal and maternal parents, nor for ascetics and Brahmins, nor did he honor the elders of his family. He remained corrupt and dishonest to the country and the countrymen. May your majesty inflict due punishment on him!" Then, monks, King Yama questions that man, examines and addresses him concerning the first divine messenger:

"Didn't you ever see, my good man, the first divine messenger appearing among humankind?"

And he replies: "No, Lord, I did not see him."

Then King Yama says to him: "But, my good man, didn't you ever see a woman or a man aged eighty, ninety or a hundred years, frail, bent like a roof bracket, crooked, leaning on a stick, shakily going along, ailing, youth and vigor gone, with broken teeth, with grey and scanty hair or none, wrinkled, with blotched limbs?"

And the man replies: "Yes, Lord, I have seen this."

Then King Yama says to him: "My good man, didn't it ever occur to you, an intelligent and mature person, 'I too am subject to old age and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds by body, speech and mind'?"

"No, Lord, I could not do it. I was negligent rather."

Then King Yama says: "Through negligence, my good man, you have failed to render noble deeds by body, speech and mind. Well, you will be treated as befits your ignorance. That evil action of yours was not done by mother or father, brothers, sisters, friends or companions, nor by relatives. But you alone have done that evil deed and you will have to suffer the consequences."

When, monks, King Yama has questioned, examined and addressed him thus concerning the first divine messenger, he again questions, examines and addresses the man about the second messenger. A sick man is considered as the second messenger and finally king Yama interrogates about the third divine messenger saying.

Didn't you ever see, my good man, the third divine messenger appearing among humankind?"

"No, Lord, I did not see him."

"But, my good man, didn't you ever see a woman or a man dead for days and the corpse swollen, discolored and festering?"

"Yes, Lord, I have seen this."

"Then, my good man didn't it ever occur to you, an intelligent and mature person, 'I too am subject to death and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind'?"

"No, Lord, I could not do it. I was negligent."

"Through negligence, my good man, you have failed to do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind. Well, you will be treated as befits your negligence. That evil action of yours was not done by mother or father, brothers, sisters, friends, or companions, nor by relatives. But you alone have done that evil deed, and you will have to pay the price."

Then, having questioned, examined, and addressed the man concerning the third divine messenger, King Yama becomes silent.

Thereupon the warders of hell inflict many kinds of torments on him on account of which he suffers grievous, severe, sharp, and bitter pain. Yet he does not die so long as his evil *kamma* is not exhausted.

The wardens of hell torture him. They drive a red-hot iron stake through one hand and another red-hot iron stake through the other hand; they drive a red-hot iron rod through one foot and another red-hot iron rod through the other foot; they drive a red-hot iron stake through the middle of his chest. There he feels severe pain racking and piercing, yet he does not die so long as that bad *kamma* is not exhausted. "The wardens of hell throw him down and pare him with axes. There he feels severe pain racking, piercing, yet he does not die so long as his bad *kamma* is not exhausted. The wardens of hell harness him to a chariot and drive him back and forth across the ground that is burning, blazing, and glowing. They make him climb up and down a great mound of coals that are burning, blazing and glowing bright. They turn him upside down and plunge him into a red-hot copper cauldron that is burning blazing and glowing bright. He is cooked there in a swirl of foam. And as he is being cooked there in a swirl of foam, he is swept now up, now down and now across. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings, yet he does not perish so long as the bad *kamma* is not exhausted (Angutlar Nikaya, the book of three sutta 36, Page: 233-36).

Human Diversity and the Law of *Karma*

It is not well to do a deed which, done, brings regrets, the fruit whereof is received with tears and lamentations.

-The Dhammapada

Despite the fact that all human beings belong to the same species, *Homo sapiens*, we can't find such enormous diversity in other living beings as in humankind. A huge variation ranging from the Buddha to Deva Dutta is not found in other living beings. Bill Gates, Xi Jin Ping are also human and Albert Einstein and Dr. Ambedkar were also human.

According to the Ayacana Sutta, when the Blessed One was newly Self-awakened, he was staying at Uruvela on the bank of the Neranjara River, under a Banyan tree, reflecting that the *Dharma* he has attained is deep, hard to realize, peaceful, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise and for a generation delighting in attachment, excited by attachment, enjoying attachment, it is difficult to know and perceive. As such, "if I were to teach the *Dharma* and if others would not understand me that would be tiresome and troublesome for me." Just then Sahampati Brahma, having known of this with his own awareness appeared before the Buddha and knelt down before him, saluted him sincerely with his palms held together before his heart. He pleaded, let the Blessed One teach the *Dharma*, let the One-Well-Gone teach the *Dharma*! There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away because they do not hear the *Dharma*. There will be those who will understand the *Dharma* (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1997).

The Buddha then surveyed the world with compassion and perceived the enormous **diversity of human beings**. He saw

beings with keen as well as dull faculty, beings easy to teach and hard and the Blessed One gave his consent to the Brahma, to teach the *Dharma*. He initiated preaching *Dharma* to five Brahmins known as Panch Vargiya Bhikkhus. Then continued teaching and preaching the *Dharma* for forty-five consecutive years day and night, sleeping for only 2 hours a day.

It is usual that the people born and grown up in different countries, in different environments differ in color, physique and nature. However, those born and grown up in the same geography, the same environment and even from the same pair of parents also differ. The capacity and ideals of the twins developed from the same embryo are also not similar. Some are wise, some are talented, some are stupid, some are religious and some are criminal minded, some are generous and some are mean like Adinnapubbaka³. Some are having a huge family with many relations whereas some are without any family. Some are nice looking whereas some are ugly. Some are having a long life while some are short-lived. Some are economically good and some are deprived.

The Law of *Karma*

What is the reason behind such a huge diversity among human beings? What is its source? It cannot happen without any reason. In the teachings of the Buddha, everybody is individually accountable for one's own *karma* and diversity is seen linked with that individual's past *karma*. Our present mental, moral, intellectual and temperamental differences are mostly due to our own actions and tendencies, both past and present (TsemRinpoche. com). In the Dhammapada, it is said that just as every object is accompanied by a shadow, even so, every volitional activity inevitably accompanied by its due effect, the *Karma Vipaka* (Ven. Sayadaw).

3 A greedy Brahmin at the time of the Buddha, despite possessing an enormous wealth his only son, Mattakundali died, without having any treatments.

Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda Mahathera in his *Dharma* talk 'Power of the Mind' mentioned that all living beings are born as per their past *karma*. Their past *karma* is also held responsible for their present status, talents and thoughts. Consequently, all of the 7 billion people in this world have different status, looks, talents and thoughts. In Buddhism, *karma* explains the inequalities that exist among mankind. These inequalities are not only due to heredity, environment and nature but mostly due to the *karma* or the results of our own actions. Indeed the *karma* is one of the factors which are responsible for the ultimate success and the failure of our lives.

According to him, *karma* is an invisible power that we cannot see it working with our physical eyes. The theory of *karma* is self-regulated and guided. To understand how *karma* works, we can compare it to seeds: the results of *karma* are stored in the sub-conscious mind in the same way as the leaves, flowers, fruits and trunks of a tree are stored in its seed. Under favorable conditions, the fruits of *karma* will be produced just as with moisture and light, the leaves and trunk of a tree will sprout from its tiny seed. "As you sow, so shall you reap." Those who do good *karma* reap a harvest that is delightful and those doing evil *karma* reap the painful and tearful harvest. We can sell the farm products if we did not like it; on the contrary, we are bound to suffer the consequences of the *karma*. We can't sell or give the produce of *karma* to the others. The Dhammapada (verse 127) warns about the inescapable consequences of evil *karma* as follows.

Not in the sky, nor in the middle of the ocean, nor in the cave of a mountain, nor anywhere else, is there a place, where one may escape from the consequences of an evil deed.

Moggallana was the second of the Buddha's two chief male disciples. He is considered the foremost among the monks who possessed magical faculties. One can imagine how terrific could be the *karmavipaka*, the fruition of evil *karma* from the story of how the monk had to die. Following the consequences of the past *karma*, it is said that he suddenly lost the psychic powers

he has long exercised and had to be shattered into pieces by the brigands. Even Moggallana, such a powerful monk, could not escape the consequences of his past *karma* at all.

All living beings are said to be the descendants of the Almighty God. If so, all beings could be equally competent, equally prosperous; they should not be different in wealth, looks and talents. If the Almighty is the creator and the parents of all living beings, he would have ensured that his descendants are smart, capable, talented and not lame, ugly, idiotic and criminal minded. Despite all these, why some are billionaires by birth without any efforts and some had to suffer abject poverty? Why are some born as the prince and some as a slave? Similarly, it is said that all living beings are part of the Almighty God. If this is so, as a part of the Almighty God, living beings would not have to suffer the hardship. As a part of the Almighty God, people would not have committed crimes. If all sentient beings were the descendants of eternal, everlasting Brahma, they would not have suffered from aging, disease and death.

As Buddhists, we believed in the action of *karma*: what we sowed in our past we reaped in the present and what we will sow now we will reap in the next rebirth. As a human being, we all are born equal; however, the longevity of our life, health, beauty, power, riches, high birth, wisdom may differ because of the action of our past *karma*. Thus the Buddha said: "Each person reaps his own fruits." (*Metta* and *Paw*)

We harvest and enjoy the crop cultivated in the previous season; in the same way, the status, wealth, family, prosperity that we are having now is mostly the result of our past *karma*. Despite the fact, it is not true that our present is completely guided or controlled by our past. Some religious teachers believe that whatever thing that is happening in the world are all pre-planned. They are guided by the Almighty God, as in a play and we do not have any independent role in it. The Buddha has denied this notion. If every individual's role is predetermined by the Almighty as in a drama, then our talents and wisdom would have

no role and we did not have to attempt and work hard. We would not have to follow moral obligations and practice meditation. We would keep acting our role like a machine until we die and so we would not be responsible for the wholesome and un-wholesome acts we commit. If a criminal is born to commit a crime as per the plan of Almighty God, then it is the Almighty who should count responsible for the crime.

The Buddha alerted the law of *karma* as follows

Beings are owners of *karma*, heirs of *karma*, *karma* is the source of wealth and prosperity, *karma* is their kin, *karma* is a refuge, an island. Whatever *karma* one does, good or evil, oneself is accountable to its consequences. Our good *karma* is the source of wealth, our relations, refuge and inheritance in reality.

With Bimbisara, the king of Magadha, Buddha says, “Great king! at the time of death, all the accumulated wealth is left at home, friends and families follow up to the cremation ground and bid farewell; but the *karma*, good or bad follows the deceased closely like the never-departing shadow.”

Buddhists believe that a man will reap what he has sown. As a sapling, *karma* also takes some fixed time bearing fruits. We cannot expect water passing through a long pipe to come out from the next end, instantly. Likewise, both good and evil *karma* also takes time to ripen. If a tree fails to bear fruit for a long time, we doubt that the tree is sterile. In the same manner, if someone is having a hard and miserable life despite having a moral and generous lifestyle, it is usual for him/her to think that ‘Good Punished, Evil Rewarded’ is the ultimate truth in this world. When farmers have nothing left in the bin to cook and the crop is yet not ready to harvest, they have to console themselves by observing the crop growing luxuriantly in the field. In the same way, if one is having a hard and miserable life in spite of doing enough moral and generous deeds, one should admire the moral and virtuous deeds he has been doing and console himself. In the cold and long night in winter, those suffering from insomnia may be upset with the night so long and never-ending. But, how long may be the night,

daylight is inevitable; in the same way, it is certain that the good deeds will also ripen and bear fruits in its due course of time.

The Dhammapada Verse 120 says as follows: A person may do good things. But those good things may at first seem evil. But when the good matures, then the good will be seen to be actually good (BuddhaNet. net).

*Bhadropi passatipapam
yava bhadram na paccati
yada ca paccati bhadram
atha bhadro bhadrani passati.*

In *Majhima Nikaya* (the Middle Length discourse), *Culakammavibhanga Sutra*⁴, the Buddha explains how *karma* accounts for the fortune and misfortune of beings. According to him, those persons who are the killers of living beings, murderous, bloody-handed, merciless to all living beings, having performed and completed such *karmas*, on the dissolution of the body, after death, they reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell. If on the dissolution of the body, after death, instead of reappearing in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell, they come to the human state, they are short-lived wherever they are reborn. However, if some woman or man, having abandoned the killing of living beings, abstains from killing living beings, lays aside the rod and lays aside the knife, is considerate and merciful and dwells compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. Due to having performed and completed such *karmas*, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a happy destination, in the heavenly world. If on the dissolution of the body, after death, instead of his/her reappearing in a happy destination, in the heavenly world, he/she comes to the human state, he/she is long-lived wherever reborn.

Those envious if reborn as a human, they are weak and powerless and those not envious are influential wherever they are reborn.

4 (Burrowed from Metta, A. and Paw, M., n. d. ; *Culakammavibhanga sutra*)

Angry People are ugly wherever they are reborn and those calm and cool are beautiful and nice looking. Generous people are rich wherever they are reborn and those not giver of food, drinks, clothes, medicines, and shelter to monks and Brahmins are poor. Those who do not admire while offering food, drinks, clothes, medicines, and shelter to monks and Brahmins, are reborn rich; however, they can't utilize the wealth. Despite possessing enormous wealth, they can't enjoy a luxurious life. They even can't have good food and clothing. Therefore, it is important to ensure that things are offered with due respect and reverence.

In *Anguttar Nikaya*, the Numerical Discourses, the Buddha explains to Queen Mallika, the wife of King Pasenadi, the karmic causes through which women can achieve beauty, wealth and influence⁵.

"Here, Mallika, some woman is prone to anger and easily infuriated. Even if she is criticized slightly, she loses her temper and becomes irritated, hostile and stubborn; she displays anger, hatred and bitterness. She does not give things to the ascetics or Brahmins: foods and drinks; clothing; garlands, scents and unguents; beddings, dwellings and lightings. And she is jealous; one who envies and begrudges the gain, honor, respect, esteem, homage and worship given to the others. When she passes away from that state, if she comes back to this world, wherever she is reborn, she shall look ugly, ill-formed and unsightly; poor, destitute and indigent; and lacking in influence."

"Another woman is prone to anger and easily infuriated. But she gives things to the ascetics or Brahmins. And she is without jealousy, one who does not envy, resent or begrudge gain, honor, respect, esteem, homage and worship given to the others. When she passes away from that state, if she comes back to this world, wherever she is reborn, she shall look ugly, ill-formed and unsightly; but she is rich, with great wealth and property, and influential."

"And still another woman is not prone to anger or often

5 (Burrowed from Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012. P: 578-579)

infuriated. And she gives things to ascetics or Brahmins. . . . And she is without envy. When she passes away from that state, if she comes back to this world, wherever she is reborn, she is beautiful, attractive, and graceful, possessing the supreme beauty of complexion; rich, with great wealth and property; and influential”(Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012. P: 578-579).

Law of Motion

Sir Isaac Newton, the great scientist in his Law of Motion stated that the action and reaction are always equal; on the contrary, in the law of *karma*, the reaction is always greater than the action. A single seed sown in a fertile land can produce millions of identical seeds. Likewise, small misconduct once ripen can bring huge penalties. In *Mukhapakkha Jatak* story, the Bodhisattva was said to be punished for 80 thousand years in hell for ruling 20 years as a king. Similarly, in *Matakabhatta Jataka* story, as a consequence of sacrificing one goat, the Brahmin priest had to be reborn as goat and beheaded 500 times. The Dhammapada says one should not treat the evil lightly, saying, “It will not come to me.” Drop by drop is the water pot filled. By little added to little evil accumulates. The accumulation of evil is painful. On the contrary, one should not think casually of the good, saying, “It will not come to me.” Drop by drop is the water pot filled. By little added to little does good grow. The accumulation of good is delightful (Dr. Ambedkar, 1957). Therefore, by understanding the law of *karma*, one should be cautious, refrain from all evil; cultivate the good; cleanse own thoughts; this is the teaching of the Buddha.

So let's use common sense and have a self-evaluation. If we find ourselves doing misconducts, let's stop and overcome evil by good instead. If we find ourselves doing good conducts, let's repeat it. If the evil behavior of an individual gets replaced by his good behavior, he will illuminate the entire world.

Understanding the Differences in Teachings of the Buddha

Buddha's nonacceptance of the existence of eternal power in the Universe

Only humankind has religion because they have a thinking mind (Venerable K Sri Dhamma Nanda; 2002). Spiritual teachers have discovered religions to guide humanity to peace and prosperity; however, in history, there have been wars for the religion that killed thousands of innocent people. Even now, there are disputes for the religious label at the cost of human casualties.

Despite the fact that varied religious teachings were discovered and propagated by different spiritual leaders throughout history it is interesting to see that many similarities in terms of their origin, the final goal and the path leading to it. The goal of these religious teachings is to ascend to heaven or achieve liberation. Despite the differences in names and founders, most of these teachings have accepted the existence of a pervasive permanent superpower in the Universe as the sole source of creation and emancipation. They believe that the pervasive superpower is eternal and the center of origin. Union with power is the ultimate goal of these religions.

One of the first fundamental differences that distinguish Buddhism from other religious teachings is that Buddha has denied the existence of almighty power in the Universe. Unlike in other religions, in Buddhism, it is not a union; however, liberation from all the bondage is the ultimate goal, the Nibbana.

Traditions of Blinds

Buddha rejected the idea of a supreme god as this is just a traditional illusion (Dhamma Wiki, a Buddhist Encyclopedia). He has often employed an analogy of blind men clinging one to other to deny such perceptions that the first one does not see, the

middle one does not see and neither does the last (Sacrityayan and Ven. Rakshit, 1964, P: 419). According to Buddha, the belief of almighty God is a tradition of blinds that have been continuously passed down from generation to generation.

Buddha says that it is not possible for any such power to maintain their supremacy eternally. He has frequently used the word, Mara, to reveal the evil power that disturbs those trying to do well for the liberation of mankind. It is said that he himself had to defeat the mighty army of Mara before being enlightened. However, such power according to the Buddha is also not permanent and could be replaced by others after an interval of several thousand years.

Four Noble Truths

In contrast, Buddha discovered the truth of suffering that every living being experiences in real life. He identified temptation as the origin behind all the sufferings. He put forward the vision that one can be completely liberated from the sufferings and he is the guide to show the path to emancipation. The truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering are the 'Four Noble Truths' discovered by Buddha and nobody can be liberated without understanding the tenet.

In this way, while the majority of the religious teachers were advocating the existence of eternal power, Buddha rejected it. Instead of wasting time and energy in such idle gossip he explained the truth and origin of suffering that every living being is passing through in life and that we could be guided towards a path leading to complete cessation of suffering.

Once the origins of the sufferings are uprooted one can be completely emancipated. Buddha taught about the 'Noble Eightfold Path' as the only exceptional way (*ekaeno ayan maggo*) to emancipation. He refused both the approaches of indulging in worldly pleasure and self-mortification as two extremes to be avoided and suggested to follow the middle path as the only way leading to liberation.

One is Responsible for One's Own Purification and Emancipation

Many religious communities have accepted the existence of pervasive eternal power in the universe as the sole source of creation and emancipation. The religious practices espoused by those religions focus on rituals that are directed towards pleasing that power. The religious teachers ask their followers to pray, worship, believe, take bath in a holy river, fast, worship fire, chant, etc as the path of purification and emancipation. They also believe that the mere belief in such an almighty power is enough to destroy all the sins or evil acts and leads to purification and emancipation. Buddha's view is quite different. Buddha teaches that every individual is responsible for his or her own purification and emancipation. There is no room for such views like purification through the bath in Holy River, visiting holy places, holy gods and temples (Ven. Dharma Rakshit; 1956, P: 11). In Buddha's teaching, no one can purify others (Ven. Dhammananda, 2002). Buddha is only the guide and cannot provide purification and emancipation simply through his blessings. For the purification and emancipation, one has to be morally good, practice meditation and develop wisdom. This is the second fundamental difference that declares Buddhism as a separate faith from others.

Buddha narrated followings to the Venerable Ananda, his personal secretary;

*Ananda! Atta deepa biharatha atta sarana!
Tumehi kichchang atappam akkhataro tathagata !!*

(Ananda! be light of yourself, be the refuge of yourself, Buddha can only guide but it is you who has to walk the way to the destination.) Mahaparinirvan Sutta, Digha Nikaya.

In Dhammapada, it is said
*Atta hi attano natho
ko hi natho parosiya
attanawo sudantena
natham labhati dullabham.*

Verse 160: One indeed is one's own refuge; how can others be a refuge to one? With oneself thoroughly tamed, one can attain a refuge (i. e., Arahatta Phala), which is so difficult to attain.

Sigalovada sutta

Instead of pleasing the unseen almighty power, Buddha taught about behaving those in everyday contacts with love and goodwill. He taught the doctrine of love and goodwill among the humankind and other living beings.

In *Sigalovada sutta*, the Buddha told a young householder named Sigala, who had been saluting the six cardinal directions every morning as his father's last wish, that the mother and father are the East directions, the teachers are the South, wife and children are the West, the friends and associates are the North, servants and employees are the Nadir, the ascetics and brahmins are the Zenith; and treating them with love and respect is actually to salute the six directions as per the discipline of the noble ones (Ven. Amritananda; 2015, P: 42) .

Accountable for one's own *karma*⁶

Different religious teachers lure followers by providing easy solutions to their evil acts. They believe that the mere act of believing or pleasing in their mighty power is enough to release the followers from all the evil actions they have committed. However, in Buddhism one is accountable for one's own acts (*karma* or *kamma*). In the teachings of Buddha, every living being is individually accountable for the good and bad acts committed by oneself. In Anguttara Nikaya, Panchaka Nipata, Nivarana Vagga, the Buddha asked the monks to be aware and perceive the following:

Kamassa kommi, kamma dayado, kamma bandu, kamma patisharane, em kammam karissami kalyanang wa papakang tassa dayado bhawissami.

6 Wholesome and unwholesome acts committed by a person is called as *karma* in Sanskrit and *kamma* in Pali

(Beings are accountable for own acts, *kamma* is the source of wellbeing and worth, *kamma* is the brotherhood, *kamma* is the refuge; whatever *kamma* one does good or bad is accountable to bear the fruit or result of that).

Ven. Dhammananda (2002) mentioned that the past *kamma* is responsible for an individual's births, talents, status and thinking. As directed by past *kamma*, children even from the same pair of parents differ significantly in the thoughts, status, looks and talents. Some are talented, some are idiotic, some are nice looking some are not, some are wealthy and some are poor, some are religious minded and some are of a criminal minded. This is the reason the 7 billion people on earth think and behave differently. If people were created by some god or Brahma or the creator, surely they all would be equally competent, capable and nice looking.

Rejecting the Notion of Everlasting Soul

Most religious teachers have accepted the notion about the permanent soul. They believe that all living beings are mortal; but, the soul is eternal. As the snakes change their skin, so too does the soul keep changing the body. Buddha has not accepted this argument about the existence of an eternal soul. His view is known as the 'Theory of no eternal soul' (*Anatmabad*). *Anatmabad* is another fundamental difference that makes Buddhism unique.

To understand Buddha's theory of *Anatma*, one has to understand about impermanence (*Anatta*). Understanding the impermanence as discovered by Buddha requires thinking minutely and analytically. The zygote made with a fusion of sperm with egg continues to change until it becomes a baby, child, youth, adult, old aged before finally dying. Usually, we do not realize or notice that nature is continuously changing in every micro-second or nano-second. The fact of continuous and continual change in every creature in the universe is called by Buddha to be the law of impermanence.

To elaborate on the law of impermanence, Buddha has illustrated an analogy about a burning candle and running water in a river. Generally, laymen realize impermanence only when the flame is extinct; however, if we wisely and minutely think we can realize that the creation and extinction of the flame are continuously taking place. The flame lit at the beginning flickers and ignites another flame immediately after. In this way, the flames keep creating and extinguishing and new flames keep replacing the old ones continuously. This process of extinction and creation of flame takes place in such a speed that our ordinary eye can't capture it; consequently, we think that the initial flame itself is the final flame; however, billions of flames lit and extinguished in the process in fact.

According to Buddha, the whole universe is also passing through the process of creation and destruction and the new universe is continuously replacing the old one. According to Ven. Piyadassi Thera (1956, P: 7) "The whole universe is constantly changing, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments". This phenomenon of change or the nature of creation and destruction, with the new one continuously replacing the old, is the law of impermanence as discovered by Buddha. If the entire universe is constantly changing through the phenomenon of creation and extinction, with the old continuously replaced by the new one, how then can one advocate about the existence of everlasting and never changing soul?

According to Buddha, the soul is just a concept, which acts as a foundation to the feelings of self. This does not have any strong base. When the eye comes into contact with any visual object, it develops a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. With the development of these feelings, it also undergoes the mental processes like perception, mental formations, consciousness and one develops feelings like "I saw" as if there is some different entity inside to see.

Therefore, it is not wise to consider that the 'me and my feelings' produced through contact of the 'sense organs' with their

respective objects is related to the eternal soul and the role of a mighty supernatural power (Dutta and Wajpeyi, 1956, P: 156-57). This is nothing more than an illusion. If every living creature has a soul that forms part or comes from a mighty superpower, then they would not have to pass through the sufferings. If everything that is happening in the universe is as per the planning of the mighty superpower, then it is not the criminal to be accountable for whatever crime he/she commits.

Universe envisioned with uncountable solar systems

Many religious teachers have limited the periphery of the universe within the single solar system. They describe the universe as three realms viz. heaven, earth and hell, which is limited to the boundary of a single solar system. Buddha differs from the majority of the religious teachers because according to him, the universe goes far beyond the periphery of a single solar system. Buddha teaches that there are 31 planes of existence in a single solar system and there are innumerable solar systems in the universe (Ven. Nanamoli and Ven. Bodhi, 2009, P: 46). Buddha is believed to have the capacity of controlling and influencing ten thousand solar systems. It is believed that the Nibbana, the final destination of Buddhism is beyond the 31 planes.

No blind devotion

Usually, religions are based on faith. Some teachers say that religion is nothing but believing. When spiritual teachers fail to convince followers with logic, they ask the followers to believe and discourage them from questioning or making any argument about their teachings. In contrast, Buddha has asked his followers not to accept any teachings without proper testing and reasoning. He has asked the community of Kalamas as follows (Ven. AnandaKausalyayan; 1957, P: 65, P 191-197):

Come on Kalamas!

- Don't believe anything just because it is heard and preached for years.
- Don't believe anything just because they are traditional and

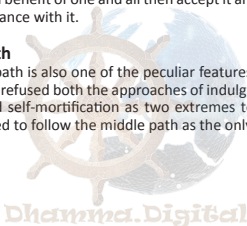
coming from generations.

- Don't believe anything because it is spoken and rumored by many.
- Don't believe anything just because it is as per your religious books.
- Don't believe anything just because they are as per your beliefs
- Don't believe anything just because the teacher has an attractive personality.
- Don't believe anything just because the teacher is honorable to your family.

When *Kalamas* after thorough observation and investigation you find anything that agrees with the reasoning and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all then accept it and shape your life in accordance with it.

Middle Path

The middle path is also one of the peculiar features of Buddha's teaching. He refused both the approaches of indulging in worldly pleasure and self-mortification as two extremes to be avoided and suggested to follow the middle path as the only way leading to liberation.



Spirituality (*Dhamma*) for Prosperity

The word, Nepal is believed to be derived from two Nepalese terms like Niyam and Pal that Niyampal literally means the country that respects and follow rules and regulations very well. In history, Nepal was famous for justice. However, today Nepal, the birth-place of Lord Buddha and the Land of Mount Everest, Niyampal is passing through the situation of sheer lawlessness. In the Hindu Epic, the Mahabharat, only one *Shakuni*⁷ made *Pandavas* and *Kauravas*, fight the devastating war of Mahabharata; whereas Nepal has Shakunis not only in politics but also in bureaucracy, prepared to commit all sorts of evils for personal gains. Due to their dirty political games, Nepal has been passing through the most frustrating situation in the history of modern Nepal. A few hundred thousand non-Nepalese said to have obtained Nepalese citizenship. Don't know how expensive they will be for the country in the days to come.

In the past two and half decades, Nepal went through enormous political upheavals including one decade-long Maoist Insurgency. Many parents lost their children and many children lost their parents; however, the political change, achieved at the cost of thousands of innocent lives benefitted only the politicians and their supporters but to great despair, the condition of the general public remained pathetic. People in the remote parts of the country are dying without even having basic medicines like ORS⁸; whereas the political leaders have become almost immortal with the treatments in the expensive hospitals overseas. Poor people have to sell their properties for their treatment; whereas the leaders and their family are having high-class treatment without

7 A cunning man, main villains in the Hindu Epic Mahabharat, brother of queen Gandhari and maternal uncle of Duryodhana

8 Oral Rehydration Solution

spending a single penny from their pocket. Because of the privilege of having treatment from the government expenditure, leaders are going overseas even for a simple sickness that can be cured within the country. Otherwise, the sum spent on the treatment of leaders in expensive foreign hospitals could be used to make new health posts in remote areas and upgrade hospitals in the cities.

Political History

Nepal was under the active monarchical system from 1960 to 1990. The system was above the constitution and indicated to be the main obstacle for development. The people's movement in 1990, restored the multiparty democracy that was thought to be vital for development. The democratically elected government of Nepali Congress was thought to bring change; however, it not only failed to meet people's expectations but also introduced a number of irregularities and practices of abusing power. The national industries that were producing the basic needs of the people and providing employment to thousands of youths were all sold in the name of privatization. Health and education, which are the basic right of the people were commercialized (Misra, 2018) for the self-interest of the elite few in Power. Nepal had to face political instability for two and a half decades and had to face Maoist insurgency that cost 17 thousand lives.

Despite the fact that the country had to bear the anomalies and instability for two and half decades following the restoration of multi-party democracy, the leaders in the constitution assembly introduced such a political system where the probability for a party having a clear majority was almost impossible. The system was lucrative to the leaders but expensive to the grassroots and the whole country. The proportionate electoral system has been a good source of income for the leaders and also means of bringing family members in the parliament. The number of ministries is determined by the political *bhagbanda* ('party quota system') for sustaining the coalition. It is very unfortunate that the gluttonous leaders are not serious about the financial burden and consequences of breaking and increasing the number

of ministries. Contrary to the experts' suggestion limiting the number of ministries in the center not exceeding 15, the number has been increased to 22.

Political *bhagbanda* is prevalent in all academic, judicial, diplomatic and constitutional appointments. These events led to the decline of confidence in those honest and sincere civil servants and discouraged them from performing their institutional duties (Dahal, 2015). There is a widespread perception of the public that these appointments are often associated with a huge amount of payment. This has also been disclosed by the former Police Chief, Mr. Achyut Krishna Kharel (2018) in his autobiography. These modes of bribery in the corridors of power are fairly understood by using the telecom terminology of "prepaid" and "post-paid" payment (Ghimire, 2011).

Lack of Ethics and Self-Respect:

Thapa (2017), in his book 'Rajgaj', has uncovered a frightening picture of corruption, in Nepal. Despite the fact, only a few are brought into the exposure of which most are given clean chit in the judicial process. There are several examples that the concerned authority misuses the power in taking revenge rather than punishing the culprit (Thapa, 2017). Nepal is the country where honest and dutiful are targeted because those in power prefer the illegal path (Karki, Sushila; 2018).

The rampant corruption and lawlessness resulted from the political instability followed by a sharp decline in ethics and moral values have made the life of the ordinary people pathetic. Their condition has become like that of a wooden log at the edge of a sharp saw that whatever direction the saw makes a move, forward or backward technically, the log had to be torn apart. For the people having no connection, the academic certificates are no more than a piece of paper. There are growing frustration and disappointment that the average citizen is unable to receive a public service without paying a bribe. Those people who garnered hope to see a prosperous and democratic New Nepal are now experiencing rising frustrations due to a sharp decline in

the moral, ethical values and the credentials of public servants (Shakya, Umesh; 2009). Youths, who are a pre-requisite for the prosperity have all left the country and Nepal is turning into a country without youths. The remittance has become one of the main sources of the Nepalese economy.

Mishra (2017) accused politicians lacking self-respect, dignity and integrity are responsible for the increased foreign interventions and manipulations in Nepal. The Nepalese have to be demoralized among the international communities because of the poverty demonstrated by the leaders and bureaucrats (Sigdel, Shailendra; 2015). It is catastrophic that our leaders give more priority to foreign interests than the country's own interests.

At the time when the trade deficit is growing rapidly and the country's economy is passing through a volatile situation, the temptation of the bureaucrats on foreign trips has not only revealed their poor mentality; however also their irresponsibility. In the fiscal year 2017/18 despite the regulations of the Prime Minister's Office, 5 thousand bureaucrats had foreign trips that put a burden of 2 billion rupees to the country (Pandit, 2018, Annapurna Post). Furthermore, it is sad to notice that even the "people's representatives" who are expected to solve the people's problem are tempted to have foreign tours out of the tax payer's money. The foreign trips have become a means for the bureaucrats and the leaders ratifying the illegal earnings while having amusement in the government expenditure (Thapa, 2017). Millions of rupees are spent from the state coffers every year on their foreign visits. However, it does not seem so far that the nation has benefited out of these trips. Their priority seems to be visiting foreign countries rather than focusing on the issues concerning the general public (Rai, BirendraBangdel, "The Himalaya Times", 26 Oct 2017).

It is pathetic that public service ethics are eroding with an increase in the incidences of unethical practices and a lack of accountability (Shakya, Umesh; 2009). Many found to be deceitful to their own mother organization. We quite often have

news like NTC staff leaking information in favor of NCELL and the staff of Nepal Airlines Corporation being loyal to the private airways. Civic sense is missing in almost everywhere. Even “innocent” farmers are feeding their customers with pesticide-laden fruits and vegetables (Aryal, 2017). The incidence of rape and murder is quite common these days. The role of the institution that is responsible to bring the criminal into justice has not been satisfactory. In the incidence of rape and murder of innocent Nirmala Pant in Kanchanpur, the police have been accused of destroying all the evidence in favor of the criminal. This is a grave offense of the cops indeed.

Mr. Lok Mani Rai, a senior journalist from “Kantipur Daily” exposed the mysterious role of the staffs of the electricity corporation in delaying the hydropower projects. What can be more painful and immoral than the personnel who are responsible to develop the hydro-power and make the country self-sufficient while they are involved in delaying the technical projects? When do we realize the truth that we can have a prestigious life only when our country is prosperous? Being a poor citizen of a prosperous country is better and prestigious than being a rich and corrupt resident of a poor and deprived country. We have already suffered the hardship of the trade embargo imposed by our neighbor three times in the past. We have a huge potential for developing the hydro-power; however, we lack a sense of dignity and self-respect. If not, we would have accelerated the hydro-power projects and provided alternative options for the cooking gas and fuel by now.

Is Nepal Really Poor?

Nepal is on the front line in the list of poor countries; however, is it Nepal or the Nepalese mentality really poor? We are blessed with natural resources. We have such a beautiful country with mountain ranges, lakes, rivers, forests, unmatched biodiversity and spiritually important sites carrying tremendous potential for tourism. Despite the fact, our dependency on external support is increasing year after year. The mission of most of the educated people is also limited to a well-paid job and family

rather than utilizing the resources for the prosperity of the country. Consequently, with the growing number of Ph. D.'s from internationally renowned universities, the dependency on foreign aid is increasing. We even can't clean our lakes and manage natural resources without foreign aid. As an agricultural country, we have not even been able to supply quality seeds to the peasants.

This is not so sad that we can't compete with the world in modern technology; however, why can't we produce vegetables like onion, tomato, potato, chilly without foreign aid? We have established agricultural offices in different districts and started an agricultural extension and development program over the past three decades; despite the fact, we are importing over 50 trucks of vegetables almost every day. Why are our "efforts" taking us deeper and deeper under the surface like a helpless animal trying to come out of the quagmire? We were exporting rice until the 1980s; however, now we are importing a huge quantity of rice every year and the quantity is increasing rapidly. At least this should not be the outcome that we expected from our investment in the agricultural sectors. In such a situation, how can the officials feel comfortable attending seminars overseas?

The Consequences of Corruption

Everybody should understand that one can't be happy with the wealth accumulated by dishonesty and corruption. How can humankind be immoral and disgraceful to the extent to ruin our own institution that has provided shelter, prestige and fund for the education of the kids? How can an official supposed to be loyal to the people and the nation be happy with the earnings of dishonesty and bribery? The Buddha says "Bad deeds, and deeds hurtful to ourselves, are easy to do; what is beneficial and good, that is very difficult to do." Wise people understand by seeing the others, while the fools commit evil again and again.

According to the enlightened one, human life is very short and

the happiness that we sense here conjures up just as a fraction. In this context, for the happiness that is insignificant, it is not wise to commit any misconduct that has an enormous painful consequence.

The law of *karma* is self-regulated and can't be manipulated. One should be aware that corruption and bribery are evil acts and have inescapable consequences. They are like an alluring bait in the fish-hook with a painful ending.

Mishra (2014) in the collection of his poems "PAPA, (The Evil)" writes that the fruit of the evil can come in the form of agony at the time of aging. It can come in the form of life soiled in the slurry of own urine and stool. Sin can come in old age in the form of the corpse of children and grandchildren. Misconducts may delay bearing consequences but does not let anybody escape it. The version of the scripture that the corrupt are put in the pot full of heated oil upside down, they have to be reborn in a latrine pit and have to suffer the hardship in the hell, is just not a tale terrifying the children. The Dhammapada Verse 119 says "Even an evil person may still find happiness so long as his evil deed does not bear fruit, but when evil begins to mature, the evil-doer will understand evil to be evil."

The Importance of Spirituality

Spiritual emptiness and erosion in religious belief are among the various factors held responsible for promoting corruption (Hantati, 2015)⁹. If we could have warned in mass and raised a sharp awareness about the inescapable consequences of the evil deeds (*karma*), the corruption and lawlessness would not have flourished to this extent. The basic cause of the degeneration of the external world is a result of not acting in accordance with the *Dhamma* (Ven. Buddhadasa). The Hindu epic of Mahabharata also says that spirituality is the unfailing solution to all social, economic and political problems. Therefore, the

9 Workshop Report (2015), The Role of Religion and Islamic Values in the Fight against Corruption and Bribery, Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy

measures in combating corruption will not be effective and sustainable without restoring spiritual and ethical values (Philip, 2011), particularly when those responsible for restoring law and order themselves are in the illegal track.

In *Adhammik Sutta*, the Buddha highlighted the significance of the ruler alone to be just and good. In the *Sutta*, the Buddha illustrates, ‘When the ruler of a country is just and good, the ministers become just and good as well; when the ministers are just and good, the higher officials become just and good as well; when the higher officials are just and good, the rank and file become just and good as well; when the rank and file become just and good, the people become just and good as well.’ (Weediyage; 2016). As a result, all seasonal circles run smoothly and the outcome of the environment shall be nourishing. So, the people of the country will become healthy. Spirituality is the foundation for the prosperity and well-being of the people.

Recently the country observed the tremendous impact of ethics and will-power of a couple of limelight persons in the energy sector that resulted in the unbelievable achievement of ending the load shedding completely from Kathmandu, the capital city, which was earlier suffering from a deliberate ‘no light’ situation up to 18 hours a day. This display of ethics exhibited by these two important people led to a chain of positive impacts that resulted in the economy of the country to grow by 6.94 percent for the first time in 23 years (The Kathmandu Post, 25th April 2017).

The Buddha while explaining the reason behind the prosperity of the Vajji Republic highlighted the seven unbeatable *dhammas*, (the *Sapta Aparihaniyadhamma*)¹⁰ and commended that

- 10 Hold regular meetings to discuss matters pertaining to the day-to-day administration, meet, work and disperse as a team, strictly follow the law of the country, be submissive to the elders, respect the women-folk and condemn the oppression of women, follow the religious customs and protect them, respect the clergy and hold them in veneration (Weediyage, 2016).

the Vajji Republic continue to be flourishing as long as they stick to these *dhammas*. In a sheer query of the ministers of King Ajatsattu, Lord Buddha admonished that Vajjis were undefeatable so long as they adhere to these seven *dhammas*. The story behind the prosperity of Vajjis reveals the importance of respecting and protecting the ethical and spiritual values rendered for the prosperity of a country.

Emperor, Ashok the Great (304-232 B. C. E.) ultimately went through a spiritual transformation. He not only adopted the teachings of the Buddha; however, applied the Buddhist principles to the way he ruled his vast empire. He administered the *Vipassana* meditation as a fundamental instrument of reforming the governance of his gigantic kingdom within South Asia; consequently, the system of administration in his time appeared so efficient, humane and responsive that it remained unparalleled in the human history (Singh, 1997).

Nepal as the Birth-Place of Lord Buddha:

Nepal is the birth-place of the Buddha and for the Nepalese, it is a matter of top pride and admiration. Many international devotees still have a misguided belief that India is the birth-place and this hurts all of us regardless of religious beliefs, castes or race. Many a time we have united to oppose this baseless claim. The recent one is the “Buddha was born in Nepal” campaign organized by the Nepalese youths in Kathmandu. Despite the fact, we never realized the importance of understanding his teachings. The teachings of the Buddha particularly the morality, meditation and wisdom could have profound impacts in producing good citizens, good bureaucrats and leaders, and thereby building prosperous Nepal. It is unfortunate that we could not value the teachings of the Buddha. Even those who claim themselves to be Buddhist have not been benefitted from his sublime tenets.

It is painful that in the birthplace of Lord Buddha, the school curriculum does not include even a couple of pages that the children could have exposure to his preaching. We can expect good citizens from the children who have understood the fact

that every evil act has a painful and inescapable consequence. Therefore, it is high time to include moral education and meditation practices from the primary level. Needless to remark that the children are the future stars of Nepal. The ancient vernacular of PALI must be initiated in the secondary and higher level Syllabus by all means. It has been sixty-eight consecutive years that the first democracy dawned in Nepal, yet we have not been able to witness the instruction of PALI even in Buddhist high schools. How ridiculous it is indeed! It was Lumbini that finally put Nepal on the World Map as a “Zone Of Peace.”

While we claim our country as the birth-place of the Buddha, we should not forget that the best way of inheriting the legacy of the Buddha is to treasure and practice his teachings. Because we have not been able to cherish the value of the Buddha and his teachings, Nepal is facing severe consequences of sectarian conversion in the past couple of decades. There have been several attempts attacking our spiritual values and traditions established since ancient times. The disturbances due to the spiritual encroachment have resulted in a tremendous increase in corruption and disorders. The lack of moral education in the curriculum has made youths less responsive to their parents and community.

How Vipassana Introduced in Public Sector in Burma?

According to Shakya, Rantasundar (2009), U Ba Khin was appointed as the first Accountant General of independent Burma after its independence in 1948. He, with the permission of U Nu, the then Prime Minister of Burma, introduced 10 days of *Vipassana* meditation to all senior and junior staffs from his office. Earlier, the office of the Accountant General was defamed as the center of corruption and it was virtually impossible to have any work done without paying bribes. In such an office with such a polluted environment, U Ba Khin not only maintained strict regulations but also provided its staff with the opportunity of experiencing the esteem of *Vipassana* meditation and realizing the Dhamma. Consequently, within a period of 3 to 4 years, the majority of the department turned out to be free of the taint of

bribery and were seen as respectable. Despite the governmental rule of retiring after the age of 55, the Government of Burma retained U Ba Khin in work until he was 67 for his outstanding performance.

The Impacts of *Vipassana* on the Prisoners in Indian jails

The Indian Government has introduced *Vipassana* to the prisoners in its jails. According to Vyas (2005), the camp had significant impacts on the prisoners. Almost all realized a reduction in mental tension and experienced peace and happiness. This also had positive changes in their behavior. Prison authorities also recorded significant reductions in violence and criminal behaviors inside the jail. Further, many long-time smokers also gave up smoking habits spontaneously.

Recommendations

Being the birthplace of the Buddha, Nepal should be immensely benefitted from his teachings. In the context when corruption is paralyzing the development efforts in the country, the teachings of the Buddha, particularly morality and meditation, aspects could bring a lasting solution.

In Nepal, *Vipassana* meditation sessions of 10 day's duration are being run in eight centers throughout the country Viz. Budhanilakantha, Kirtipur, Itahari, Chitwan, Pokhara, Birgunj, Lumbini and Surkhet with free board and food provided in the facilities.

The introduction of *Vipassana* meditation as a way to share with our politicians, particularly the members of the parliament and those in bureaucracy, the teachings of the Buddha, particularly the *Sila* (morality), *Samadhi* (Meditation) and *Prajna* (Wisdom) could help restore ethics and make them accountable to the people. The Government of Nepal introduced *Vipassana* for its new Officers, Doctors and Police Officers in 2015. The newly recruited Police Officers, Doctors and Section Officers were made to attend 10 days of *Vipassana* meditation in Dhamma Shringa *Vipassana* Center, Budhanilakantha, Kathmandu. This could

have had significant positive impacts on the civil services and bureaucracy of Nepal if given further continuation; unfortunately, it was not continued for unspecified reasons. The Government of Nepal should resume this initiative started in 2015. It should introduce *Vipassana* meditation as a cost-effective and practical means of fighting corruption by nourishing and developing the nascent ethics of its civil servants, parliamentarians, judiciary, and civic leaders. As part of official training, it should continue sending its civil servants who are in everyday contact with the public to the *Vipassana* meditation.

Now, Nepal with the government in the center, province and local level has enormously increased the expenditure. This is high time for our leaders, bureaucrats to be sensible in minimizing the expenses. They must put an instant stop on enriching themselves at the cost of others. Government squandering the state money is a colossal crime indeed. This is the time we decide the number of our ministries to an optimum level. This is the time to minimize foreign trips. This is the time to curtail the health expenditures in distant lands when we do own many capable hospitals back at home. Reuse and recycle the resources we have. If we stick the number of the ministries as per the suggestion of the experts, we still can manage our expenditure without increasing the tax. Now, we only need to use our conscience and avoid temptations for a new vehicle when we have to import even a tiny needle.

A single day's life of an honest and patriotic person is nobler than a hundred years of life of an evil and corrupt.

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Human life is believed to be a transit point between the divine and lower realm. Only human life has an opportunity of making efforts that lead to the divine realm. Humankind can make efforts to Nibbana, the salvation by laying the moral foundation, practicing meditation and gaining the ritual insight. This is why human life is considered to be precious. Human life is the land of cultivating good Karma and the land of practicing Dharma. It is a valuable opportunity gaining permit of the divine realm. The cultivation of Sila, Samadhi and Prajna (morality, meditation and wisdom) is possible only in the human realm. Lower and divine realms are respectively the realm of punishment and the realm of reward, and they do not have the opportunity of developing any morality, practicing meditation and gaining insight. Therefore, it is wise to utilize the human life to the maximum extent by cultivating righteous things, preventing heinous acts and purifying the mind. At the time of death, nothing will go with us except the good and bad Karma that we in event committed.