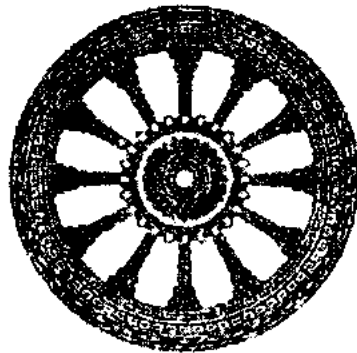




THAI BUDDHISM
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

VENERABLE PHRA DHAMMAMEDHABHORN
(RABAE THITANYANO)



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FOREWORD

This book bears a very long and interesting history from its beginning till its completion. All questions collected herein were raised, more than two decades ago, by the late His Serenity Somdet Phra Nyanavarodom, who was at that time known as Most Venerable Phra Nyanavarodom and was the Secretary-General of the Dhammayut Sect. They were distributed in the form of leaflets to all the high-level executive monks attached to the Dhammayut Sect, who participated in a number of the training courses offered to them, with no reason given by the distributor who seemed unlikely to need spontaneous responses.

As one of his former students, and a lecturer of Mahamakut Buddhist University, of which His Serenity was then the Rector, the author collected all the questions and attempted to answer them at the best of his knowledge. His attempts were done with high respect to the late His Serenity. To make it easy for the readers to follow and understand, the questions are roughly classified into 9 categories as follows :

1. The questions concerning the various kinds and levels of beliefs.
2. The questions concerning the different religions,
3. The questions concerning the education system,
4. The questions concerning the executives and subordinates,
5. The questions concerning the doctrinal principles,
6. The questions concerning the Order of Sangha,
7. The questions concerning the Vinnana (consciousness),
8. The questions concerning the practice of the Dhamma, and
9. The questions concerning the endless cycle of the rebirths and redeaths.

All the questions and their answers were published in Thai version by the title, 'Song Sing Songsai (Clarification of Doubts)', and distributed to the interested Buddhists, both monks and lay disciples. It is noticeable that it was warmly welcomed by the readers, thus being out of print in a short period.



Later on, Professor Siri Buddhasukh, an English lecturer of Mahamakut Buddhist University and one of the author's teachers, came across the book, and found it substantially valuable, thus deeming it worthy of translation into English for foreigners' perusal so that they might cherish a better knowledge and understanding of Thai Buddhism.

This is the second publication of its kind written by the author that is translated into English by Professor Siri Buddhasukh. The first one is entitled, 'Great Reply to the Global Problems', which contains the author's answers to the questions on Buddhism, especially Theravada Sect, raised by foreigners around the world and collected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their answers. So far it has been published and distributed, free of charge, to both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, in the number of more than thousand copies.

Hereby, the author would like to take this opportunity to say something of Professor Siri Buddhasukh in honour and appreciation of his endeavor and sacrifice in translating this title.

Professor Siri Buddhasukh was a devout Buddhist with unshakable faith in Buddhism. He had lived a low-profile, but productive, life through his life span. He

was a 'born-to-be-teacher' with high spirit of teaching and compassion toward his students, due to which he even mentioned in his postmortem will, donating his remains to a hospital for medical students to study human anatomy. It can be said that he was a true teacher in real sense both during his life time and even after his death.

Moreover, due to his expertise in English, he translated a numerous number of books, especially those on Buddhism, into English, not for the sake of earning any income, but just for the sake of the dissemination of Buddhism as well as satisfaction of his highest reverence to the Triple Gem. Even this title was translated with no single penny paid to him at all. It is therefore expected by the author himself, without any suspicion, that Professor Siri Buddhasukh, who already passed away, would be reborn, through his great contributions to Buddhism, in the realm of transcendent bliss.

As for the publishing of this book, there lies a problem related to proofreading its drafted version, which needs a person who is well-versed in both Buddhism and English. Fortunately, the problem was, however, redressed when Ajahn Thanom Butra-Ruang,



one of the former students of Professor Siri Buddhasukh, who once used to work as the assistant editor while Professor Siri Buddhasukh was the editor-in-chief of the WFB journal issued by the World Fellowship of Buddhists, volunteered to do this job as a token of his tribute and gratitude to his revered teacher, without payments as well. The author hereby extended his thankful appreciation of the contribution and sacrifice performed by Ajahn Thanom Butra-Ruang, and wished him a great success and happiness under the principles of the Dhamma that were well discovered and declared by the Lord Buddha.

As regards the readers of this book, let the author keep them informed of the fact that all the questions presented herein are very often raised by the participants in almost all venues of lectures, seminars and gathering on the topic of Buddhism, not merely in the time being but also in the future or even in the past it is possible that they would have already been asked. Such being the case, the author hopes that all the answers provided will be helpful for them in face of such questions, especially those in the field of Thai Buddhism.

By the Grace and the Might of the Triple Gem may all those who have taken part in preparation of the book till its completion and made it available in the world of literary works as well as its readers be blessed with a sustainable growth and practical development in the Buddhist Teachings, that were well expounded and established by the Lord Buddha for the whole of their life span.

Most Venerable Phra Dhammamedhabhorn
(Rabaeb Thitanyano)

Director

Tri Ratananubhap Fund

for Education, Propagation and Protection of the
Security of Buddhism

Wat Bovornivesvihar, Bangkok, Thailand

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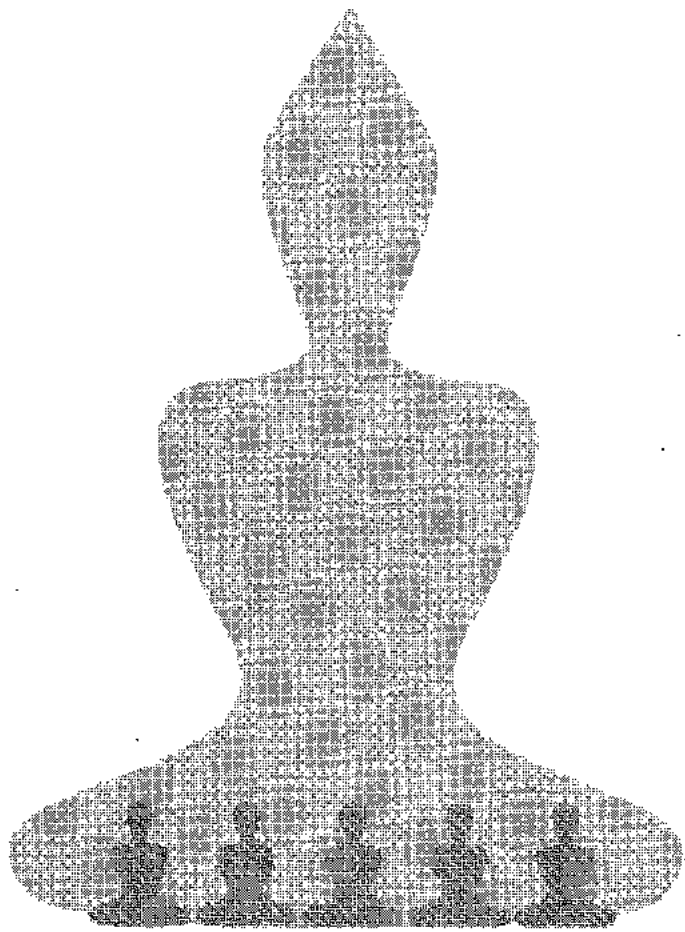
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**CHAPTER I****QUESTIONS CONCERNING
VARIOUS KINDS AND LEVELS
OF BELIEFS**

1/1 QU : Is there really a ‘Home-Guarding Angel’, which is called in Thai ‘Phra Phoom Chao Thee’ ?

ANS : The Thai term, “Chao Thee” or “Phra Phoom Chao Thee”, literally implies a spirit or angel guarding a home or the area of the home. This is the term generally called by the people. As a matter of fact, according to the Scriptures, they are what is called “Bhummadevatā” i.e spirits or angels dwelling on the ground or on the earth. Their existence is a reality. They used to exist before our birth here, being therefore living things such as other living beings on earth. Their



existence is therefore not dependent on our belief or disbelief. If they do exist, our disbelief cannot in any way affect their existence. In case they do not exist, the belief of all the people in the world cannot create their existence. There are in fact other kinds or levels of Devatā or spirits or angels viz. Bhummadevatā (angels dwelling on the ground of the earth), Rukkhadevatā (angels dwelling on the trees) and Ākāsadevatā (angels dwelling in the air). These were mentioned in the Buddhist Scriptures that after the Buddha's First Sermon the different kinds or levels of Devatā were everjoyed and did as follows :

“All the Devatās or angels beginning with Bhummadevatā, having listened to the Buddha's First Sermon, expressed their ecstatic announcement to those on the level of Cātummahārājika, who expressed in the same way their ecstatic announcement to those of the higher and higher levels respectively.” This implies the fact that they are a form or level of living beings, of which there is no need to be afraid, to pray for their divine help, to submit our lives to them and so forth. *What should be done is the attitude of accepting them as our friendly, next-door neighbours ready and willing to give*



a helping hand to us whenever possible. Thus there is a Thai poem to the effect that

The given will one day the givers be;
The respected will respect thee;
The beloved cherish our good things done;
These facts except the evil one.

This means that, if we extend or radiate our goodwill or loving-kindness to them, they will respond the same way. If, on the other hand, we pay no attention to them, they will likewise pay no attention to us, there being nothing to be afraid of or any problem thereof. This is the free attitude of mind on both sides. However, *the reality of their existence cannot be denied*, since they are what is collectively called the “Opapātika” (spontaneous) birth in so many places referred to in the Buddhist Scriptures.

1/2 QU : It is often said that to build a spirit house for the spirit or angel guarding the home or the area around the home is a superstitious belief based on ignorance and irrational fear, there being nothing concerning Buddhism in any way, but, as is often seen today, there can be found such spirit houses in so many government offices and education institutions. Such being the case, is it not a way to induce the children to cherish a wrong, unbuddhistic belief? What should be the proper reply to the question probably asked by the children?

ANS : From the vantage point of the ultimate truth, it is to be admitted that whatever belief in the realm of reasoning is still more or less amalgamated with Avijjā or ignorance in the ultimate sense of the term. This, of course, includes the belief in, and the consequent building of, the spirit house as guardian of a home. But it is sure to be an extremist and deliberately pessimistic point of view to brand it as being opposed to, or antagonistic towards, the principles of Buddhism.



This can be seen in the case of the Buddha's establishment of the laity's code of practice, one of which was called the Devatābali i.e. the sacrifice or worship to be made to the Devatā or angels. This obviously implies the fact that *Buddhism recognises the existence of those unseen beings*, no matter whether we call them spirit, angels, celestial beings or even ghosts, demons and hellish beings. They all are products of nature by the same reason as we human beings are. Now, when they really exist, what wrong should there be when we accept and recognise their existence? As far as the building of the spirit houses for Bhummadevatā as guardian of a home is concerned, it depends on the attitude of an individual who is, democratically or buddhistically, free to do so. But, it should be noted, this does not mean that *those people who do so regard those Bhummadevatā superior to the Triple Gem*, or even to their parents. All this is a part of life. All are free to do so or not to do at all. There is no fixed rule nor commandment nor prohibition. It is regarded only as a suggestion by the Buddha given to the laity. In case some people choose to do so, regarding it as a means of additional encouragement or a boost for their mental comfort they should be looked upon as children,



to whom the playing of dolls are indispensable as a source of their rightful enjoyment. And this does not mean that they have worshipped those dolls and regard them as superior to their parents. What wrong or evil should there be in the case of those children and those Buddhists who build the spirit houses for “Phra Phoom Chao Thee” as guardians of their homes?

That there are in some government offices the “Chao Thee” spirit houses is a kind of tradition inherited from the past. It is in a way a sense of value, giving a fresh encouragement that it might somehow be beneficial in some way or another to the places and the officers working therein. This is because, as mentioned before, *we as human beings treat those spiritual beings as our friendly, next-door neighbours*. There is no crime, therefore, in establishing a feeling of goodwill and friendship with those beings whose existence is after all a reality that cannot be denied.

In case we are asked by the children, we should feel free to explain the reason mentioned above. It is no use branding such a practice as being foolish, superstitious or unbuddhistic. To do so would be like



treating our own ancestors with contempt, which is but a contemptuous attitude towards our own ancestors, who were in fact not so stupid or foolish like that. The Buddha's reference to those spirit beings mentioned in several places in the Buddhist scriptures should be referred and explained to them. They should be made known that, as long as people are not strong enough to stand stalwartly on their own feet, some supplementary supporters are indispensable. This is like going up a ladder. In the early stage of growth or development, we may have to depend on the handrails or banisters to support ourselves for the time being. This before we are able to stand unflinchingly on the strength of our own feet alone. This is one level of the spiritual development of an individual.

In the case of a servile and morbid fear to such an extent that there must be a supplicating and trembling prayer and ceremonial worship asking for protection by those spirits, it is to be understandingly considered as a level of mind development and attitude for those people. It is highly inadvisable to induce the children to have an aggressive and hostile tendency towards such people. Buddhistically speaking, there is



in Buddhism no such absolute and contemptuous negation of such belief and practice. What the Buddha said was only to the effect that *such beings are not the highest or holiest point of refuge*. This in the sense that such beings cannot offer an entire release from the bonds of suffering. This saying of the Buddha shows how the Buddha did not unconditionally deny their existence nor condemn such practices of some people. In case they cannot be encouraged to look forward to the absolute deliverance from suffering, then such a belief and practice are indispensable for them as a kind of prop to bolster their higher development later on. After all it is to be admitted that such a level of mental development cannot be totally eradicated from society where there are still people of different levels “rub shoulders” with one another in a free society.



1/3 QU : What is the meaning of PARAMĀTMAN in Buddhism? In what sermon did the Buddha refer to it? What was the effect of his reference to it?

ANS : There is no PARAMĀTMAN teaching in Buddhism. It was the doctrine that existed before the times of the Buddha. Later on it was gradually transformed and then personified in the form of the Brahma God. It was generally believed that the Paramātman is something like a divine collection of abstract beings, which may be looked upon as the Universal Mind, consisting of innumerable smaller minds. Those minds are called VIÑÑĀṆA or CITTA, each of which is separated from its “Originality” to inhabit the bodies of human beings and animals. After a period of time, which nobody knows how long, there will be an opportunity for each Viññāṇa or Citta to attain to the condition of purity or perfection and then each will be re-united with the Paramātman. From such a point of view, it is nothing but the concept of God, the world-creator or the universe-creator.



Buddhism does not accept this belief or theory. What the Buddha taught was the result of his Enlightenment, not a mere concept or a postulate of speculation. Nor is it just a theory proclaimed as the full-final one. As a matter of fact, the concept of God as the world-creator or universe-creator existed even before the times of the Buddha. It was after the Buddha's Enlightenment or firsthand experience and discovery that the supreme Truth was realised. That the people of those times believed so was because of their limited knowledge, which bound them within that confinement.

It can be concluded that there is no Paramātman in Buddhism. What the Buddha sometimes referred to was the term 'Brahman', implying Lord Brahma. In fact the Buddha did not pay much attention to this, except when he was questioned by some people. Thus he only answered them to the extent that it would be understandable for them. His main purpose was, as in one of the Buddha's salutation passages in Thai, "to point out the Path delivering people from suffering, thus leading them to ultimate peace and happiness." This implies the teaching that stresses the method by which to remove, or at least to reduce, suffering, thereby achieving the



result in the form of peace and happiness in proportion to the level and maturity of each individual. The concept of Paramātman was therefore nothing of importance. Whenever questioned, he replied only what was necessary. It should be noted that there was nobody in those times who questioned the Buddha about the Paramātman, except only that concerning Lord Brahma. The Paramātman concept was, as earlier mentioned, transformed into the Lord Brahma, who was then thought of as a concrete, personified idea, which was developed in later times.

1/4 QU : Kindly clarify your thoughts concerning many people of several groups and levels worshipping trees, ant-hills, spirit, gods and goddesses, including the advertisement of amulets, charms in the forms of Buddha images and coins etc. through such mass media as radio and newspapers. Should there be any effect on Buddhism?

ANS : From the attitude of a headstrong and pernicious fault-finder, such practices of such people may be regarded as the grossest form of primitive



superstition. But if we look at them with a more tolerant and understanding point of view based on reason and truth, we must realise the truth that such practices are instinctive of human beings of all ages and times. How many of them there will be depends upon the level of development of each individual, which cannot be forced to be the same at all times. That is why the Buddha said,

“Human beings threatened by imminent dangers turn to mountains, ant-hills, trees and other places supposed to have divine power as their refuge.”

The Buddhist attitude is not one of absolute denial or contempt. So said the Buddha, “Those are not the supreme refuge that can be relied upon. *Those taking refuge in such things cannot be delivered from suffering.*”

This is another fact that cannot be denied, since those people who have done so do not have in mind the full-final supreme attainment characteristic of Buddhism. They act, or react, in response to their instinctive fear in time of distress or in the hope of security and encouragement for themselves. Whatever is



nearest and most tangible to them they instinctively turn to attach themselves to. This attitude of mind can never be eliminated from the world of human beings. They are like, as earlier mentioned, the dolls for the children or those who are not yet strong enough to go up the ladder only through the strength of their own feet alone. When they have grown up enough they will outgrow those props and do not make a God of those things any more. However, there may be a question here whether by that time there will be no need for those playthings or props. The answer, certainly, is that such things cannot be completely abandoned, since there will be more children or children-minded people of the coming generations following again. This, therefore, needs a sympathetic, gentle reasoning based on the spirit of goodwill, which is based once again on the patience to wait for their gradual spiritual development. This instead of pointing an accusing finger and branding them as superstitious and stupid. It is not the nature of Buddhism to do so.

This is true also of the good-luck charms and amulets in the form of Buddha images and coins, which were skilfully or diplomatically, so to speak, applied



with good intention as a prop for the children-minded people. But later on until today it has deteriorated into a business affair with monetary policy as the prime target. This is to be unequivocally deplored. Certainly the glowing advertisement through the mass media exaggerating the quality of those things is grossly indecent, thus producing a strongly negative effect on Buddhism as a whole. Those mass media such as radio and newspapers are listened to and read by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Besides, there are sure to be a number of people who have never acquired any benefit from those things. They will certainly point an accusing finger at such a belief and practice. Thus it is impossible to hope for everybody to accept and praise such a business affair, however lucrative it is.

Such being the case, there should be something like a middle way between those extremes. Since it cannot be totally dispensed with because of the earlier mentioned reason, there should be a skilful way to make use of it as much as possible even though the 'use' thus made is not yet the best or ultimate one. In case it is the Buddha image or the Buddha-image coin, it can be used as a symbol for recollection of



the Buddha's virtues or the virtues of the Sangha, which can bestow upon the people a sense of consolation and encouragement. This is the first step. Now there comes the second, which is no less important, step. It is for those who distributed. This is to introduce the observance of Sila or Precepts to the people who want to receive them. They must be advised to abstain from killing, stealing, committing adultery, telling lies, and drinking liquor or being involved in other intoxications, including the abstention from the Apātyamukha or sources of ruin such as gambling and others. If they cannot restrain themselves from doing so, then they will be no longer protected by the Buddha images or the coins. This is also a skilful method to be made use of for those who are not yet spiritually mature to look forward to the total extinction of suffering.

This is how to make a skilful use of the things that cannot be totally dispensed with. It is far better than to condemn it unqualifiedly and destroy it indiscriminatedly. Such a belief is indispensable for a group of people. It is only when there is an exaggerated advertisement of the quality of those things for pecuniary



purpose that it will bring about the worst negative effect on Buddhism and thus must be strictly banned and barred from doing so.

1/5 QU : How can the teachings of the hereafter i.e. the realms of heaven and hell, hungry ghosts and demons be reasonably explained as regards the reality of their existence?

ANS : First of all, it must be stressed that the terms 'heaven and hell' taught by the Buddha have several implications, depending on the context and the circumstances. The one most obvious to all refers to the nearest, everyday experience of the visible, material world, implying the pleasures of the senses viz. pleasant sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and conditions of mind, they will most certainly reply that they are happy and in high spirits. That is heaven in one sense : the lowest, simplest, most obvious one.

On the contrary, hell implies the obvious sufferings such as hatred, to have a desire to retaliate, or to harm the others in various ways. Such a mind is burned by its



own feelings of envy and hatred, which is hell in one sense. Another condition may be cited in the case of prisoners whose freedom is limited and who have to suffer in various other ways in the prison. This is hell in the tangible, material world of the present life.

The term 'Peta', literally hungry ghosts, implies the insatiable greed or avarice. It was symbolised or personified in the scriptures as the beings whose mouths were as small as the needle-eyes but whose stomachs are as large as the mountains. Certainly there can never be any fulfilment of such a greed and desire. In other words, they are like the bottomless pits, which can never be filled up, no matter how much we try to fill them up with various materials. A human being with the condition of mind as a hungry ghost can be often seen here in this world. They are called Manussapeto : human beings with the insatiable greed of hungry ghosts.

Asurakātya implies the desire to cheat, swindle and take an unfair advantage of others. They are not graceful or dignified people in society, often being treated with contempt by those who know their background.

Such is the meaning of heaven and hell in the most obvious, material world. But *there are other senses or levels for people with higher maturity.* The simplest



meaning is suitable for the children-minded people. Now, when we are asked by such people whether or not there is a ghost or an invisible being, we must first of all cite the Buddha's two other terms viz. Idhaloka and Paraloka i.e. this present world or the 'here' and the hereafter respectively. The first one is the material existence on this planet Earth, whereas the second implies the invisible worlds or realms after the dissolution of the body of this planet Earth. It should be noted that at present scientists have studied astronomy and cosmology and are able to discover many incredible facts about our Earth, thus calculating its age as more than 4,600 million years. They also revealed an undreamed-of fact that there are the stars that inhabit living beings that need no oxygen the way we do. They are Kammayoni, literally born of their own kamma. It has been estimated that there are 1,000 stars or worlds of that kind. All these mean that we cannot cherish a narrow-pointed view that there are only nine planets revolving around our sun. The space between each galaxy is so vast that, even in a travel to the planet Neptune in this solar system of ours, it takes about 500 years by space vehicle before we can reach it. All these have been recognised by the Buddha's supreme Nāṇa or



Insight. He was able to understand the condition of life of those realms, be they called the heavenly or the hellish ones. They have real existence, being thereby not fictitious stories. The three main worlds or realms are called planes of sensuality (Kāmāvacarabhūmi), planes of form (Rūpāvacarabhūmi) and Formless planes (Arūpāvacarabhūmi). The realms of woe are four in number viz. Niraya (hellish being), animals (Tiracchāna), hungry ghosts (Pittivisaya) and demons (Asurakāya). The four realms of woe are included in the planes of Sensuality (Kāmāvacarabhūmi).

For the sake of 'safety first' i.e. as long as we do not yet fully realise these truths, it is advisable to have at least a degree of humble confidence in the Buddha's teachings, which are his direct experience through his Enlightenment. At least it can serve as a 'prop' in time of distress and danger. After all it is better than to brush it all aside and condemn it as a fiction.

Too many people today have excessive pride in their knowledge or study, which is still very limited. Having read a few text-books on science, they conclude



that they have known everything, being thereby something like the Sabbaññū i.e. the knower of all. Whatever is contradictory to science, they confirm that it must be impossible or untrue. As a matter of fact, science may be compared to a tottering child, being still very limited and narrow in extent. **There have been several data later discovered that have modified, changed or contradicted the earlier accepted truths.** The atom theory is one instance of this. It was as first thought to be indivisible, but later on the truth was found to be the opposite, since it still consists of the proton and the electron etc. In the case of the Buddha, it was his direct Insight, which cannot be brought to proof through the microscope or telescope. In case we are not in the position or level of spiritual development to disprove his Enlightenment, it is for the sake of 'safety' first, at least for Buddhists, that we should base our faith or confidence on his direct experience. There is, of course, nothing to be ashamed of in such an attitude of mind for Buddhists.



1/6 QU : Buddhism teaches that one who does good or makes some meritorious deeds has a right to enjoy their effects, there being no possibility to do so for others who have not done so. Now, why should in a Buddhist ceremony or activity there be the instruction to dedicate the fruits of merit to the deceased people?

ANS : Such is the truth in the absolute context, but it is to be noted that the beneficial effects of merit start with the mental aspect i.e. when a Buddhist thinks so. Now, a question arises as to what is called Puñña or merit in the real sense of the term.

So said the Buddha, **“Puñña is the meritorious quality, which is working for the washing away of spiritual defilements or pollutions such as greed. Its beneficial effect is tranquility and peace of mind.”**

This shows that both the cause and the effect concerning the Puñña belong instantaneously to the doer, even though it is on the mental kamma level.



There is no question here in the same way as there is no question concerning other material acts such as growing plants. So said the Buddha.

“Just as a person sows any seed on the ground, so he is in the position to reap the fruits thereof. This is true also in the cases of a person who does good or evil : who plants meritorious or wicked kamma.”

This is nothing but the law of cause and effect. Evil kamma produces evil effects; meritorious kamma yields meritorious ones. Evil results in suffering, whereas good results in happiness. Such being the case, those doing evil are sure to suffer evil effects, whereas others doing merit will certainly enjoy meritorious effects. Now comes the question as earlier mentioned : since there is no one doing good or evil in place of the other, why, then, can there be the paradoxical truth to be considered also on another level or aspect of truth?

On the first, primary level we may refer to the Buddha's saying, “We have our kamma as our own, being destined to inherit our own kammic effects. We have kamma as our (level of) birth, or (kind of) family, as refuge. Whoever has done any kamma, be it good or



evil, is to inherit its effects.” This is what we say in our chanting passages every day.

Now comes the second level of the truth, which appears to be something like a paradox. The essence of this is not that person is doing good in place of another. It is the expression of meritorious qualities such as goodwill and gratitude. These are stimulated by Dāna or dispensing of charity called *Dānamaya* in P’ li.

Dedication of the fruits of merit done through charity to the deceased relatives or friends is called *Pattidānamaya*. When the deceased have known of our goodwill and gratitude to them by some way or another, they will ‘*anumodanā*’ i.e. acknowledge or appreciate what we have done to them with such a good intention.

Such an acknowledgement or appreciation on the part of the deceased is called *Pattānumodanāmaya*. It is characterised by the reduction or removal of such defilements as envy or hatred from their own minds. This through the medium of our dedication of the meritorious fruits through our sincere goodwill and gratitude. This is something like our reminding them of



their own former similar merits they used to do. The fruits of such dedication will be in the forms of longevity, complexion, happiness and strength of the deceased who appreciate our dedication. This despite the fact that sometimes the deceased may not know of our having done so to them. Nevertheless, this is possible through the constructive and concentrated power of merit itself, which results in, therefore, the development of longevity, complexion, happiness and strength desired by all.

It is worth noting that even a non-Buddhist foreigner appears to have understood this truth well enough. That person is Voltaire, pen name of Francois-Marie Arouet, 1694 - 1778, a French writer who believed in deism and devoted himself to tolerance, justice and humanity. His view-point in this respect was recorded in the Readers Digest FAMILY WORD FINDER page 51, "By appreciation we make the excellence in others our own property." Thus when the deceased have appreciated the fruits of merit dedicated to them, they enjoy, to a more or less extent, such blessings as longevity and others. This is nothing but to arouse or stimulate what is already in their own minds.



1/7 QU : Most Thai children are afraid of ghosts. Kindly explain how to correct this attitude of mind through the doctrine of Buddhism. What is the reason for which the deceased are called ghosts?

ANS : The Thai word 'Phee' meaning ghost has so many abstruse and elusive meanings. In Pāli language it is called '*Pisāca*' referring to the inhabitants in the various realms of woe such as *Asurakāya* or demons, *peta* or hungry ghosts. In an extended sense implying the invisible beings, the angels in the realms of bliss are sometimes included as one of the 'Phee' type, also the earlier mentioned 'Phra Phoom Chao Thee' or guardian spirits for homes. In the colloquial vernacular, the husband and wife in angry terms call each other 'Phee'. Such is how the Thai word 'Phee' has its meaning depending upon the context and the circumstances. These implications must be explained to the children. It is no use refusing absolutely the existence of what is called 'phee' or ghost. Buddhism does not regard these 'phee' as dreadful beings. As a matter of fact, to associate with the 'phee' is less risky than to



associate with human beings, some or many of whom are found to be less sincere and more deceitful, and thus more harmful, than the 'phee'. While I was still a layman, I used to invite the 'phee' for a friendly conversation, asking them about the historical incidents concerning archaeological sites. They were willing to do so, and did not express any gesture or feeling of hatred whatever.

We must tell our children that the 'phee' or ghosts in the fairy tales are entirely fictitious. Such characters cannot do harm to us. All this depends on our own imagination, which does harm to ourselves. What is most harmful and dreadful is the human beings that want to do harm to us in various countless ways beyond our imagination. This, therefore, is the most dreadful source of harm or danger we must at all times be wary of. Even some Bhikkhus are heard to have been 'harmed' by this kind of human 'phee' or ghosts.



1/8 QU : There are some Bhikkhus who establish themselves as seers. Others promise to avert a catastrophe by magic means, whereas still others boast about their ability to implant magic powers into Buddha amulets and charms. What method should be used to correct these superstitious beliefs?

ANS : This is, as earlier mentioned, the question concerning a group of people who still need something as a 'prop' or encouragement. Generally the Bhikkhus who are seers can attract people to Buddhism by this way. I used to converse with a very famous seer Bhikkhu who was often approached by many renowned people such as Cabinet members and wealthy people, asking for his help from this ability of his. He answered that such was not his prime purpose. What he did most of all was to preach sermons to all those who went to see him. To prove this fact, I used to visit him while there were some celebrities going to consult him. He really did what he said was his prime purpose i.e. giving sermons for the most part. For instance, when a husband and a wife who quarrelled with each other went to see him,



he gave them Dhamma instructions on how to live together peacefully and to be tolerant with each other. This was how a seer just made use of his reputed power as a medium for people to put the Buddha's teaching into practice in their daily life and work. The point of significance here is how and what purpose one should make use of it. I just could not help thinking that, should there be enough time, it is worth the trial method for diplomatically disseminating the Buddha's teachings. In ancient times, we learn that when a venerable Bhikkhu who was respected for his reputed magic powers distributed the Buddha amulets to his disciples, he specifically forbade them to tell lies, to use insulting words and others in the realms of Precepts. Those receiving the amulets from him were bound to observe the Five Precepts to prevent the amulets from abandoning them in time of danger and distress. This is called an *Upāya* or a skilful means by which to induce people to practise morality. However, it cannot be denied that there are also some of those Bhikkhus who have done so for material gains and therefore exaggerated the qualities of their products. This is certainly harmful and destructive to Buddhism. There must be some means to prohibit them from doing so.



The promise to avert a catastrophe by magic means is also a kind of mental 'prop' for those who still need it. This cannot be prevented or condemned absolutely. They need what was called a hand-rail or balisters for the feeble strength of their 'legs'. We cannot abandon them or remove them from the heterogeneous characteristic of our society on this planet Earth. It needs time before their maturity has developed enough. This needs our sympathetic tolerance and at the same time our patient and skilful method to raise the level of their maturity later on. It is not useless or hopeless trying to do so with our goodwill and understanding.

1/9 QU : Kindly suggest how to change or correct the belief of a superstitious society. Too many people nowadays are going crazy about communication with the deceased and the ghosts through mediums i.e. those who claim to be able to communicate with the spirits of the dead.

ANS : There is no hope for the elimination of this kind or level of belief, no matter what we do. It



should be noted that the belief in the existence of the invisible beings such as angels and ghosts is the oldest one, existing from time immemorial, in all places and regions of the world. Those who view Thai society like this should turn to look at the situation in Africa and we shall see that those western, modernised people who are regarded as more civilised than we are cannot do without this belief. In some cases it is more serious and more retrogressive than the situation in Thailand. Now arises a question, a significant one : since this cannot be totally eliminated, how can we turn it to their benefit without turning them to our enemies, who conclude that we regard them to be backward or idiotic? Buddhism has not supported this belief and practice, but Buddhists are tolerant and understanding enough to apply it skilfully as a kind of the lower rungs of a ladder by which to enable them to a higher level of development. It is necessary, therefore that we should be tolerant and sympathetic towards them under these circumstances and for the above-mentioned reason.



1/10 QU : The chanting passages for Buddhists at present are in Pāli language, the meaning of which most of the devotees do not understand. I would like to suggest those passages be chanted in Thai so that the devotees may understand their meaning clearly.

ANS : This is a special point for a more delicate consideration. There is a difference between giving sermons and chanting the salutation passages and scriptural extracts, the former, of course, being done in Thai so the people can understand. This serves its purpose rightly. But as far as the latter or salutation passages are concerned, the purpose is to create the peace of mind. This is common practice in every religion. It is the religious activities to be preserved in the former, original language and pronunciation. This shows how both are different in purposes and effects. While listening to sermons, the devotees determine the meaning, but while listening to the chanting passages, they listen to the lulling sound with faith and ecstatic joy, resulting thereby in peace of mind, which sometimes



in some cases, will result further in their being in the condition of spiritual buoyancy like being elevated into the clouds. This is called *Anussati*, being thereby a level of *Samādhi* or meditation. It is a kind or level of spiritual freshness, giving spiritual strength, peace and absence of worry, at least for some moments. But for those who cannot do so, preferring instead to walk to and fro, being uncontrollably restless, chatting with others all the time, this is quite another matter.

The result of this is that the Bhikkhus' chanting is for the 'phee' or the corpse in the coffin, not for such human beings. After all, this is the point to be borne in mind : the difference in purpose between the delivering of sermons in Thai and the chanting passages in Pāli. Those passages should not be translated, else it would create a confusion, since each translator of each denomination would interpret the meanings of those passages in preference to his will or level of knowledge and maturity. This would result in tumultuous chaos. However, the translation in published standard book-form must also be done as a way by which those interested in its meaning can study it personally.

So the chanting of passages in Pāli, aiming at the peace of mind, is on the level of *Samādhi* or



meditation, whereas the sermons in Thai aim at developing Paññā i.e. wisdom or Insight. This should be tried once or twice i.e. by closing the eyes, not chattering, controlling the mind with mindfulness for some time, possibly about 30 minutes, fixing your attention on the lulling sound of the chanting passages, then there might be something strangely or subtly peaceful taking place within the mind. It is worthy to note that in Africa the chanting passages can be applied for hypnotic purpose. It is the lulling, tuneful sound the meaning of which the listeners do not know that the restless mind, after a period of determined self-control, can be elevated to an atmosphere beyond its conscious, day-to-day level. On this level there will occur a mysterious, or divine, power. It is for this reason that the devotees prefer to close their eyes while listening to the Bhikkhus' chanting. At a point after some time they will find themselves in what may be called another, more refined dimension. The chanting sound will be fainter and seems to come from far away, while the listeners will be blessed with a feeling of joyous buoyancy like floating in an unlimited space. Of course, this needs time and efforts. But just try it on yourselves and you will see how wonderful its effects are in strengthening your morale and will power.



1/11 QU : There are Bhikkhus who boast about being able to implant the divine, magic powers in the Buddha images or amulets and good luck charms. Is not that the way of making the people more ignorant, superstitious and benighted in those things rather than to take refuge in the Triple Gem? Does it not blemish or tarnish the worthiness and nobility of Buddhism?

ANS : Strictly speaking and as far as the real purposes in many cases are concerned, there should not be the motive to deceive or dupe the people. It is in many cases based on good intention, giving the people patience and encouragement in time of distress and danger for the people whose maturity does not yet reach the topmost level. As earlier mentioned, these are like dolls, which are necessary playthings for children. There is certainly no evil intention on the part of those who made dolls, who understand how such things are necessary for the children.



Those amulets or charms in the form of Buddha images or coins are in fact called a kind of *Uddesikacetiya* or symbols and representations for recollection of the Buddha, including the Dhamma and the Sangha. They have come into being through the reasonable and decent purpose of those people in those times. The same is true of people in these days. In the ancient times it was one way of drawing with good intention the people to the Dhamma by means of such things as mediums. While distributing those things, the Bhikkhus made it a rule to instruct those people to abstain from violating the Precepts such as from killing and others. Take into account even the chanting passages for implanting the divine powers into those things. Their meaning was none other than the stress on the virtuous qualities of the Buddha, who had for aeons of time developed his *Pāramī* or moral, virtuous qualities in various forms on the highest level until his final life as prince Siddhattha. This is nothing but a means by which to make those things the symbols or representations for highest worship. It may be looked upon in one sense as the tri-coloured flag as symbol of the Thai nation. It has been determined that it must have such and such colours in such order and form of



stripes. As long as the cloths of those colours are separated, not combined together in the determined stripes, forms and colours, so long is there nothing to be regarded as a desecration attempt and an offence in any way. But if it is in the shape and form or order of colours already determined to represent Thailand i.e. in the tri-coloured national flag, it must be an offence and a crime for anybody to put such a piece of striped cloth in an indecent manner showing the sign or feeling of contempt. The same is true of amulets in the form of Buddha images or coins.

Of course, this cannot be regarded as perfection in the absolute sense of the term. But it must be admitted that **how many people there are in this world who are able to perform everything absolutely complete and perfect.** This even in the times of the Buddha himself. A perfect being in that sense must be an Arahant. This truth should be admitted and tolerated. What is more important, how many people are themselves perfect enough to point an accusing fault-finding finger to others as being imperfect and deficient? Even the harsh, insulting words they cannot yet abstain from, what else can they hope to attain to a higher level of spiritual development and maturity for themselves?



As regards the question whether or not to do so would blemish or tarnish the purity of Buddhism, it is to be admitted that there is to be a degree of imperfection in the concept of the perfectionists. But it is worth noting that *religions, such as Buddhism, may be looked upon as a small, pure brook trickling down from a mountain-top*. It is at that stage of birth clean and pure, being useful, however, to a small group of people of highest maturity. Later, those brooks become greater streams, cascading downwards steadily, together with, as a matter of course, some other impurities such as dirt and roots or branches of plants and trees on the way until they become a great river. Certainly, at this stage it cannot be expected to be as clear and pure as in the stage of its birth on high. But it is to be admitted that now it has become useful to quite a number, or to an innumerable number, of people on both sides of the banks. Its water can be purified for drinking and other purposes such as for irrigation and for hydroelectricity projects. This despite the fact that such water is not as clean, pure or unpolluted as that on the mountain-top.

So this is the fact to be admitted and accepted or tolerated, particularly for many, or most, people, who



cannot, and dare not, go to the mountain-top. Inevitably they have to depend on the water that has passed through the gorges, valleys and other impurities on the long journey. The perfect purity in all respects may still be expected, but not for the majority of people, since people progress spiritually not at the same rate. There is a limit of susceptibility or degree of maturity for each of them. This is to be accepted as a matter of course, no matter in what age and region it is. Even in the times of the Buddha himself, people were seen by him as being like the four kinds of lotuses in a lotus-pond. There is no need to repeat here what those four kinds of lotuses are. What is the purpose here is only to have the attitude of tolerance and sympathetic understanding towards those people. Of course, if anybody thinks that he shuns them most of all, and does not want to have anything to do with such beliefs and practice, then he or she is absolutely free to do so. But *there should not be an attitude of treating with contempt other people who still cannot do without those things.* After all they are still pious and sincere Buddhists. They have a good point in that they cherish no aggressive attitude, not treating with contempt those who have a point of view different from theirs. They may be



somewhat superstitious or imperfect, yet they do not prefer to find fault with others. They still preserve the *Vacisucarita*, not speaking harsh, insulting words. At least they should be appreciated in this respect.

1/12 QU : Kindly explain the following two kinds of meat viz. *Pavattamaṅsa*, implying the animals' meat available under ordinary circumstances. This may have two meanings viz.

a. animals that die through old age or through some kinds of diseases. These mean their natural death, and

b. animals that die through being slaughtered by human beings.

ANS. : It is right that the term '*pavattamaṅsa*' refers to the animals' meat available in ordinary circumstances. These may be because they are old, ill, kill each other or being killed by man. The purpose of the Buddha's discipline in this case is that the Bhikkhus played no part in, being thus not the cause of, those

animals' death. Thus they do not see that the animals were killed with the specific purpose of offering their meat to them; nor do they hear of such an action; nor do they have any reason to suspect that the animals were killed purposely for them.

Under these conditions, the Bhikkhus can eat the meat offered them. It must be noted that the Bhikkhus' life depends upon other's piety and willingness to offer them almsfood. While on their almsround, the devotees will offer them whatever has been available and prepared from whatever they have. In case it is the animal's meat, it is the *pavattamaṅsa* since it is not killed specifically for Bhikkhus. The cause of the meat is too far away for the Bhikkhus to bear any responsibility thereof.

This is applicable also to the laity. If they buy and eat the so-called *pavattamaṅsa* for food, there is no problem concerning the death of those animals. Should they allow their thoughts to be too far reasonable, they would be able to eat nothing and would then not be able to live at all. At present there is a widespread and exaggerated propaganda to the effect that those who abstain from eating meat, being strict vegetarians, do not



encourage the killing of animals. This is still a mistaken and misleading concept. It must be remembered that nowadays there can scarcely be any vegetable that is absolutely free from insecticide, which has killed innumerable insects. Based on this attitude of mind, even rice cannot be eaten, since while the farmers are ploughing the fields, various kinds of animals such as earthworms, ants, snakes, cockroaches and others have been crushed to death thereby. Even while walking at night in a dark place, there is also an occasion that we might trample down some small animals such as ants without knowing it.

Such being the case, the method of practice of Buddhism is based on the Middle Way, not being associated with extremes. Let us compare eating vegetables with eating meat and we shall see how there is surprisingly a degree of similarity between them. Vegetables have been sprayed with insecticides by the gardeners. Then they are passed through the middlemen before those vegetables arrive at the buyers in the markets. The devotees, having bought them, prepare them as almsfood for the Bhikkhus. Thus the Bhikkhus are the fourth step in this link or network, whereas the

devotees are the third one. The same is true in the case of eating meat. The process begins in the slaughterhouses; then come the middlemen; after that the devotees buy it to prepare it as almsfood for the Bhikkhus, who are then the fourth and final link. As far as living beings are concerned, we shall see that there are more animals killed for each piece of vegetables than one piece of animals' meat. This in case it is such one big animal as a pig, whereas *one shrub of vegetables could be the cause of hundreds or thousands of living beings such as insects and other small animals such as ants and worms having been killed.*

Thus in Buddhism there is the Buddhist middle way to the effect that Bhikkhus must not take part or be involved in killing. In case the Bhikkhus see, or hear or have the reason to suspect that those animals have been killed specifically for them, then they are strictly forbidden to eat their meat. There is a disciplinary offence called Dukkata for the Bhikkhu who still cannot abstain from doing so. However, usually the Bhikkhus do not boast of their practice, since in doing so it might hurt the feelings of the devotees. It is only on other occasions that the Bhikkhus may tell them about the



Buddha's prohibition and allowance, **all of which are conditional, not absolute.** This is to implant in them the right way of practice towards Bhikkhus and is a way of encouraging their faith and practice in the right way.

1/13 QU : There are some people who, while placing a piece of robe or cloth on the corpse as a gift for a Bhikkhu, stand with their hands joined in token of respect, while others only stand still. What should be the right way? Kindly explain.

ANS : As a matter of fact or of tradition, while the Bhikkhu is drawing away the robe, the right manner for the lay devotees is to join hands in token of respect. This is the same as when they are listening to the chanting passages or to a sermon. As regards those who only stand still, it might be that they are following the modern, western method. However, if they are in the western uniform and in the manner of showing respect, there is nothing indecent or improper in such

a case. Thus *there is no problem of right or wrong in this matter*. It is based on the tradition each person prefers. Those in full official uniform should stand still in the manner of respect and that is enough and proper for them. Otherwise they can join hands in token of respect if they prefer to do so. After all this is not a matter of right and wrong. It is a mere tradition or culture each prefers. But from the Buddhist viewpoint in general, we think that to join hands in token of respect is advisable.

1/14 QU : Why, when there is any member of a family dead, should there be a tradition for other members of the same family to 'nourish the feeling of suffering' literally rendered, for a period of time, generally 100 days? During such period they are to dress themselves in black.

ANS : In my opinion, it is better not to do so i.e. not to cherish the feeling of grief or suffering, even in the symbolised form of being dressed in black.



The Buddha always taught his disciples not to cherish that kind of feeling at all. As far as the genuine spirit of Buddhism is concerned, there is no such tradition. The dead are already, and eternally, gone. It is therefore no use cherishing that feeling of grief or sadness, since it cannot help anybody or anything. However, in case anybody during that period has patiently and piously applied the Dhamma of the Buddha to their daily life and work, determining to dedicate the meritorious fruits thereof to the deceased, without being overwhelmed by grief or sorrow, then it is a good thing to do so.

As regards being dressed in black through the period of 100 days, there is a good point to be derived therefrom. This is one of frugality, as opposed to a luxurious living, since at the same time the person usually abstains from using perfumes and cosmetics. The black dresses, although there are more than one suit, do not cost as much as the gaudy, multi-coloured ones. This is the good point where economy is considered. But as far as cherishing the feeling of sorrow and grief is concerned, it is inadvisable to do so. This is the good point from such a tradition, which must not be literally interpreted. Any person doing that



should understand this subtle meaning i.e. the one 'behind the scene'.

Above all, it must be understood that this is not purely a Buddhist tradition. It could be a mixture of something derived from the Chinese influence, with which we have been long associated. Finally, it must be remembered that, from the Buddhist stand-point, suffering is not to be cherished or nurtured. It is the condition, as one of the Four Noble Truths, which is *to be determined*, delved to its causes, and then reduced or removed through the Noble Eightfold Path.

1/15 QU : Is there any fixed rule towards what direction the corpse should be laid, this while making merits and dedicating their fruits to the deceased? Is it true that there is no fixed rule for that, since this depends upon the place where it is laid?

ANS : Usually this depends upon the convenience due to the place where the corpse is laid. If there



should be a tradition at all, the corpse is usually laid with its head towards the western direction. However, there is no right or wrong involved in this matter, except that there is some other point to be considered such as the feet of the corpse should not be laid towards the direction where some celebrities may pass by. This is like setting the group of altar-tables, which is usually on the righthand side of the Bhikkhus who perform the rites. However, once again there is no fixed rule for this. All depends upon the place and circumstances of each case. As regards the rites to be performed for the deceased, it again depends upon the preference of the host, since there is usually some difference in doing so in a specific place or region or season. This, therefore, is to be considered specifically for each case and circumstance.

1/16 QU : Why in prostrating oneself before an ordinary person (not a Bhikkhu) is it enough to do so only once, and also with the palms of the hands not open?

ANS : Once again, this is a tradition or social etiquette later established. While prostrating before the Buddha image and the Bhikkhus, people do so with the so-called 'five elements' i.e. with the forehead touching the floor, also with the two knees and the two palms spread out. While prostrating before the corpse, we do so only once, showing that we do not respect it as much as the Triple Gem. This is also called '*Sāmīcikkamma*' i.e. what is proper and decent in accordance with social etiquette. It later has become an established tradition reflecting the Thai culture from the ancient times, until it is an accepted method of paying respect to the Triple Gem by that way. In case a person does not do all those 'five elements', there is nothing wrong or evil, except that it appears to be something against the accepted traditional value, which is the symbol or the mark of development of a nation. The Thai nation



has passed through a series of traditional and cultural influences. As such there is something specific of their own such as how to prostrate before the corpse, the ordinary people, the Buddha image and the Bhikkhus.

1/17 QU : It is sometimes believed that the remains of the burned corpses should be floated away in the water, instead of being buried. Now, if we want to do some meritorious deeds in order to dedicate the fruits thereof to the deceased, there ought to be some of the burned remains as mediums. Is this right or wrong?

ANS : This is one of the methods inherited from the ancient times, being possibly associated with Brahmanistic rites. It is well known that in Brahmanism after the corpses have been burnt, the remains must be floated along the Ganges river. This with the purpose of washing away the deceased people's sins so that the deceased might be purified by doing so. This was the original concept. When it later came to Thailand, it was

mixed with our belief and practice since we regard such method as a way of paying respects to the deceased. This is for fear that, if they are buried, the ground on that area might be trampled by other people. In order to avoid this seemingly disrespectful action, we choose to have their remains floated away.

Another benefit to be derived therefrom is that it is a method of keeping the place clean. In a monastery where there is a crematorium, if the bones or the remains cannot be eliminated by that way, they will certainly accumulate into a huge pile or hill of bones. So this is possibly the method of doing away with those things by disposing of them in a faraway place, the best of which is nothing but in the sea, with the additional benefit that those bones will not be trampled on by anybody and thus be purified in accordance with the Brahmanist tradition. This is therefore a skilful method for both the material cleanliness and healthy state of mind, with the additional benefit of being a way to pay respects to the deceased.

In the case of the *Pañsukula* rites, it is not all the remains that are disposed of. There is usually a



small amount enshrined in an urn or a container in the form of a small pagoda. It is this part that is taken for the *Pañsukula* rites i.e. one for the deceased. However, if there are no remains left, there is a photograph or a name written on a piece of cloth or paper. There is nothing significant in this practice, since the prime mover is the fact that the younger generations are still grateful to their deceased ancestors and take pains to do a meritorious deed in order to dedicate the fruits thereof to them in the hereafter. This so that those deceased people may acknowledge and appreciate such an act and as a result will be blessed with more spiritual progress and development in their realms. This is the main point of the *Pañsukula* rites, whereas other details are of secondary or supplementary importance. There is nothing wrong or evil in case there is something deficient or as a surplus. Even though there is nothing whatever of such minor details, there is again nothing wrong or evil as long as the main point is understood and preserved in the minds of those involved in that matter.

1/18 QU : In a funeral rite there is sometimes a tray of food of various kinds to be an offer to the Buddha. The host, having made up his mind and chanted the passages dedicating that tray of food to the Buddha for a while, concluded that the Buddha has come to partake of that food. Then he called his deceased relatives or friends to eat that food that was left over by the Buddha. Kindly explain whether it is right or wrong to do this. If it is not wrong, is it possible that the deceased will be able to eat that food and enjoy the fruits of merit dedicated to them?

ANS : This is the case I have never heard of. What has been known so far is the offer of food in the tray to the Buddha only. This is therefore something like what is called *Pubbapetabali* in India, meaning the food dedicated to the deceased only. They usually arrange a tray of food, together with water, in their rites and called their deceased relatives to come to eat and drink it. This is also incorporated into a Thai



tradition which is meant to offer it to the Peta or hungry ghosts. Usually it is done during the period called 'Sart' (sārda) in Thai i.e. on the last moon day of the tenth lunar month. In ancient times this was done in an elaborate way. There was a man dressed like a hungry ghost coming to the scene of rites. Then the children, including sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, heaped up various kinds of food and things to offer them to that supposed ghost. This may vary to some extent in different locations or towns. As a matter of fact, those people knew that the deceased could not come to consume such material food directly. But they know that there is a kind of hungry ghosts called *Paradattūpajīvī Peta* i.e. the ghosts that live on the things or meritorious fruits dedicated to them by their relatives. In case they know and appreciate that act of their younger generations, they will acknowledge and appreciate it. Then there will occur to them the kind of food they want by means of that dedication on the part of their relatives. There was an instance of this fact in the case of a woman teacher named Boonchu, who used to live in a town possibly called Lopburi, some 150 kilometres north of Bangkok. She lost consciousness and was presumed dead for some time.

Then she came to, and narrated what she saw in the hereafter that she had found what should be called Peta or hungry ghosts. During that time she was hungry and was invited to eat that food. She then asked him how she should eat and whether or not the owner of that food had given her the permission to do so. She was replied that the villagers in that area had dedicated that food unspecifically i.e. to whoever came across and could eat it. It is unspecific dedication or giving of this kind that the non-human beings who are in want of food can eat to satisfy their hunger. However, the teacher Boonchu did not eat that food. This shows that the food of this material world dedicated to the hungry non-human beings in the hereafter is not reduced in amount, since it will remain the same as it is. But at the same time, due to the power of mind based on the dedication determination there will occur the same thing in the non-human world for those hungry non-human beings to satisfy their hunger. Thus the main point of this is, as earlier mentioned, the dedication determination, not merely to tell them to come and eat the food,—which is the Brahmanist way. There is no evidence whether or not to do so will result in the same thing as in Buddhism. But if the food is determinedly dedicated, the result might be the same.



1/19 QU : Is the chanting of incantations, which is reputed to have the therapeutic, divine power connected with Buddhism? If not, why do some Bhikkhus make holy or lustral water with the magic healing power against the diseases? Or is it the magicians or the witch doctors who exaggeratedly claim to do so in the name of the Buddha?

ANS : There is a historical reason in this matter. It can be said to be the mixture of Buddhism, as generally understood by the public, and *Sayasāstra* i.e. occultism, the latter being broadly classified into two categories viz. the black magic and the white one. *The white magic aims at applying whatever powers it has for the benefit of other people in whatever ways are possible, and as much as possible, whereas the black magic's purpose is to destroy or to do harm to other people in various ways such as to pronounce a curse upon the enemies and to do various other occult practices to harm others physically, mentally, including other's morale.* These practices have been in existence

long before the times of the Buddha. But they are not, and must not be treated as Buddhism or part of Buddhism in any way. It is something like the outer bark of a tree or farther than that. However, since the world of human beings is a heterogenous society, consisting of so many different levels of spiritual development and maturity, they are indispensable at all times for those groups of people whose maturity cannot yet be developed higher or to a more refined degree than that.

From the Buddhist scriptures, we learn that the holy or lustral water existed around B.E. 1000. This we know from the *Atthakathā* or the commentarial texts compiled by Venerable *Buddhaghosācārya*, who related how there was a famine in the city of *Vesāli*, resulting in so many people dead until there was no place to bury the corpses. The Buddha was then invited by the *Licchavi* kings to come to their rescue from this catastrophe. The Buddha accepted the invitation. When he arrived at the city of *Vesāli*, there was suddenly a deluge of rain cleaning the city and washing the corpses away along the river. Now the Buddha, with a view to eliminating such distressing circumstances, ordered



Venerable Ananda to recite the Ratanasutta, praising the virtues of the Triple Gem and making the holy or lustral water thereby to sprinkle it around the walls of the city of the Vajji. This shows how such a concept of lustral or holy water existed in Buddhism a long time ago until it has become inseparable from Buddhism to boost the morale and will power of the people. This is true also in the case of healing the diseases.

There are some diseases which the mind is strongly attached to and thus worried about too much. Now, in case a person has an unshaken faith in the powers of the white magic, the mind that is over-sensitive to the diseases will develop its own immunity power gradually and the diseases will gradually be reduced or removed. I used to know an old man who drank lustral water given by his nephew-in-law, who told him the water consecrated by a famous Bhikkhu named Klai, whom he revered so much. He drank it with full faith and soon recovered completely from the chronic disease of headache : Now what is the reason for this?

This is because of the power of unshaken faith that the water had the healing power for his headache.



It is because of this level of faith that, if the patient does not surrender himself unconditionally to the disease, he will develop the self-healing power potential within himself. *The lustral water serves only as a medium. It has no actual healing power in itself.* What it helps is the strengthening of the morale and will power. This is to be borne in mind, otherwise the people will at all times depend upon such water, which is in fact not a cure-all. Then the disease will become worse and chronic until it is irremediable. There is an instance of this in the case of a person who was afflicted with malaria. He went to take a bath in the lustral water and surely his condition grew worse.

At this point it can be concluded that Bhikkhus poured the holy or lustral water on a patient because of his good intention. But often it is regarded that the Bhikkhus are superstitious and use black magic. After all, *there is a moral duty or accountability for the Bhikkhus towards the laity to help support or strengthen the laity with a sincere good intention.*

Now that the laity are in need of support and consolation from the Bhikkhus and believe that such



an action of the Bhikkhus is sure to be a sign of auspiciousness for them, there is then no evil nor harm done. This includes the anointing of the sign-boards of various business buildings. In fact the Bhikkhus themselves do not like to do so, since his movement will be impeded by the length of his Civara or robe and in order to do so he has to raise out and up his robe to climb the ladder before anointing the sign-boards. But why, then, does he do it? The answer is nothing but not to disappoint the people who have strong faith in him and also, as earlier mentioned, to boost their morale and will power to fight the battle of life.

At the same time, however, there is also another group of Bhikkhus who have taken pains to explain the reason and the essential points of the Dhamma to the laity so that they can develop themselves and depend on themselves more and more. This is because it is not advisable, as far as the application of Dhamma in daily life and work is concerned, to stop and rest satisfied only at that submissive level. It is a waste of time, neglecting thereby the opportunity to 'go forward' to a higher, more refined level, especially at the time when



they are in the position to make the maximum use of physical and mental strength of their own.

So it is useless treating them with contempt. It should also be noted that the Buddha had classified people into four kinds of Lotuses in a lotus-pond. This before he had decided to preach the Dhamma of his discovery to them. We may be the first or the second kind of lotuses, but we must not forget that there are also the third and the fourth kinds. It is impossible to hope all the people to be the first kind of lotuses, since **people progress at different rates due to their own accumulation of kamma in the past and also to their spiritual ripeness at present.**



1/20 QU : Is it true that the relatives make a kind of merit called ‘Cang’* in the funeral rites before burning them so that the deceased may enjoy the fruits of merit thereof? Will their intention in this world be fulfilled for the deceased in the hereafter?

ANS : The Thai term ‘Cang’ implies the sermons in the form of something like a synod or general council i.e. Sangāyana in Pāli term. So this means the chanting in a summarised form the causes of the Sutta or Discourses and the Vinaya or Discipline. It was believed in the ancient times to be one way of expressing the gratitude and returning the kindness of the deceased parents. This is also a way to prolong the life or the existence of Buddhism in the world. There is, as a matter of fact, nothing extra-ordinary in this. Another way is to invite the Bhikkhus to chant the text called Abhidhammatthasangaha. In this respect they are a form of doing meritorious deeds. The relatives i.e. the hosts may avail themselves of that occasion to dispense

* the ‘c’ to be pronounced as Cāga or Sucarita in Pāli

charity, to observe Precepts, to listen to sermons and to give a helping hand to one another in various ways. Thus they may collect a sum of money for the dispensing of charity and dedicate the fruits of that merit to their deceased relatives.

After all, this is only one of the occasions to do meritorious deeds. As long as it is a merit and can yield the fruits thereof to the deceased relatives, so long is it advisable to do so. But there are at the same time three conditions under which the deceased relatives may know and appreciate those fruits. These are :

- a. The living relatives have done some meritorious deeds with the above-mentioned purpose.
- b. They determine to dedicate the fruits of their merits to the deceased relatives; and
- c. The deceased have known of this through some means and then appreciate such an intention of their living relatives.

It is when three conditions are met that the deceased relatives will be able to enjoy the fruits dedicated to them. However, it must also be noted that *this process cannot be looked upon as sending*



something by post. It is the case of the acknowledgement and appreciation on the part of the deceased relatives. This is called Pattānumodanāmaya i.e. merit derived from acknowledgement and appreciation of the merit done by other and dedicated to them. However, there are cases concerning the dispensing of charity to some kinds of the deceased who are hungry ghosts or Peta. It was mentioned in the text that the material food offered was transformed into the refined food in the realm of such ghosts so they can eat and drink to satisfy their hunger and thirst.

1/21 QU : In lighting the incense sticks for the set of altar tables, is it admissible not to light them from the candle-sticks? If not, why?

ANS : The meaning of this question or the purpose of the questioner is quite obscure. Why should one prefer to light the incense sticks from other places than the candle-sticks nearby. The incense sticks are in the tray. Why should they be brought from the candle-



sticks? However, it can be concluded that all these are minor, insignificant details too elaborate to pay attention or to be attached to. There are several kinds of altar-tables, some being a set of 3 whereas others may be 7 or 9, or even 12. Such details are what have been traditionally practised. If there is no harm done to anyone, there is no need to be strictly attached to such details and regard any difference from it as wrong or evils, which will only cause regret and unnecessary troubles. This except that there has already been prescribed some fixed process to be strictly followed.

In such cases as this, there is nothing wrong in taking the unlighted incense sticks from their tray, not from the candle-sticks. Besides, it will help making the set of altar-tables more good-looking instead of heaping them all in one place. All these, it should be noted, cannot be judged as right or wrong. They all depend on what has been traditionally or habitually done in each place, although it may sometimes be contradictory to what has been accepted as traditional in another place. In case a person has inadvertently done differently due to ignorance, there should not be any fault-finding motive against that minor difference. All these are more



suppositions in a specific place or society. The newcomers should therefore study the etiquette of the place carefully and follow the saying, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” In case to do as the Romans do should cause a great harm, then there should be a reasonable explanation so all can understand. What is most important is that there must not be a quarrel due to a contemptuous attitude towards each other because of this etiquette. There is no absolute right nor absolute wrong since it has been inherited from ancient times through the good intention of our own forefathers i.e. to create an atmosphere of peace and serenity. There is therefore no seriousness about these things. If ‘*to do what the Romans do*’ is not harmful nor an evil, then it is highly advisable not ‘*to offend the Romans*’.

1/22 QU : There are chanting passages taught by old people to drive away the thieves, robbers or cat-burglars. It is : May the Buddha make the vile and felonious thieves retreat; may the Dhamma make them retreat; may the Sangha make them retreat, weakening their hands and feet. Are there such chanting passages in original Buddhism?

ANS : Certainly none. It is in the realm of what may be called the 'white magic'. The chanting passage in Thai, it should be noted, used the informal terms to refer to the thieves,—which terms appear to be rude and abusive to the Thai people nowadays, who usually used such words in time of anger or quarrel. But they were not so in those times. Such chanting passages are Buddhism mixed with a degree of magic, here 'white magic', citing the virtues of the Triple Gem as the driving forces against the intruders into the homes. There are also other passages such as *Buddhapūjā mahātejavanto*, *Dhammapūjā mahāpañño*, *Sanghapūjā mahābhogavaho* : I worship the Buddha, who has the



supreme force (*against evil*); I worship the Dhamma as the supreme wisdom; I worship the Sangha as the source of supreme wealth. These passages may be seen as a kind of prayer but after all it is based on the supreme power of the Triple Gem. To the question as to whether there is such a passage in any scriptural text, the answer is that there is none, since it was composed later on by those who had a tendency towards the white magic and at the same time worshipped the Triple Gem and therefore wanted to have protection by the Triple Gem. The same can be said of another 'white magic' passage reputed to ward off the wild animals that threatened to attack the foresters or those who like to go to enjoy the forest sceneries. The passages cite, as usual, the supreme power of the Triple Gem to ward off those ferocious beasts, but at the same time they also suggest that, in case of real emergency and for the sake of 'safety first', the people going there should climb up the trees in order to help themselves i.e. they should not rely solely upon the 'Gāthā' or those chanting passages.

It should therefore be sympathetically understood that these were the skilful means of the Buddhists in



those times who knew how to apply or make use of the Triple Gem for their brethren and sisters. Those who had a desire to steal or rob others' possessions such as the cat-burglars might be afraid of the supreme power of the Triple Gem and might draw back from doing so voluntarily and could develop a good intention towards other people. This is the Dhamma called *Mettā* i.e. goodwill or loving-kindness, which is also characteristic or nature of the Sangha. Guided by the fear and worship of the Triple Gem, a person cannot be overruled by greed for others' possessions. This, therefore, can at least reduce, if not totally remove, all dangers from the thieves or the bandits. After all, it was not in the original Buddhism in the times of the Buddha. It was invented by our wise ancestors for the benefit of others by referring to the supreme power of the Triple Gem as the highest refuge.



1/23 QU : There is a tradition for Buddhists to say the chanting passages while prostrating themselves on the pillow before going to sleep. What passages, then, should be the best or the ideal one?

ANS : There cannot be the best for everybody. It all depends on individual preference and attitude or degree of maturity. Generally, the chanting passages are intended to remind the Buddhists of the virtuous qualities of the Triple Gem. There are also some that are the teachings of the Buddha in various aspects. Those passages are generally in Pāli language, beginning for instance, with *'Namo tassa....., Araham sammāsambuddho, Svākkhāto....., Supatipanno.....* and so forth. There is no fixed rule or commandment in this respect. It is at all times a good thing to do so and should be appreciated. However, in case it is to be a systematic method used by many people, the passages usually begin with Homage to the Triple Gem i.e. *Araham sammāsambuddho.....* Then follows *'Namo tassa Bhagavato.....*, followed further by *'Itipiso Bhagavā.....Svākkhāto....., Supatipanno.....* After that

it is the individual's preference to choose any other passages he or she likes best. This may be the passages inducing the *Saṅvega* or the disillusioned weariness concerning the truths of life. Or it may be some other passages for self-reminding and self-suggesting purpose. If the chanting passages are long enough and the mind is well-established in the meaning of those passages, the words uttered are *Vacīsucarita*, meritorious words. The mind will be peaceful and tranquil sometimes overwhelmed with an ecstatic joy. Then it is *Manosucarita*, meritorious mental kamma, since it is at least during such moments divorced from the defilements of greed, hatred and delusion to a satisfactory degree.

It is for this reason that there can be no arbitrarily fixed rule or commandment that a Buddhist must say this or that chanting passage in particular. This as long as the passages can induce peace, tranquility and wisdom, being skilful in both words and thoughts. What should be the best for each individual is what can induce him or her to realise through meditation and insight the supreme virtues of the Triple Gem. The deeper the peace and meditation and insight, the better, or the best, it is for an individual who has skilfully chosen those



passages and has realised their benefit firsthand. As long as there is a chanting in this manner, although it cannot be said to be perfect or full-final, yet it is better than to do nothing at all and look down upon it as stupid and idiotic.

1/24 QU : Can we obtain some benefit from asking another person to offer almsfood to the Bhikkhus for us?

ANS : Certainly. Usually we as the owner of the almsfood can derive more meritorious effects of that act than another one who does so in our name. However, the latter person is also in the position to enjoy some meritorious fruits in what is called *Veyyāvaccamaya* i.e. the merit obtained from giving a helping hand in a meritorious act. This is the reason in general. In a specific case, there is also another factor to be taken into account. This is the mental condition of the person who offers almsfood to the Bhikkhus in place of another one. This person might



have a full faith in the Triple Gem and does so with piety and devotion, while the owner of almsfood does not care so much about it.

So there are a number of factors to be considered. First of all, it is the thing to be given, which must be considered whether it has been obtained by rightful means or not. Then come the Bhikkhus who receive the almsfood. This is to know whether or not they deserve those things given or offered to them i.e. whether or not they have other meritorious qualities to make them deserve the things offered to them. The third factor is the mental condition of the devotees themselves i.e. whether or not they have a sincere and fervid faith before dispensing charity, while doing so and then even after that. If there are all the three factors present, then the quality of meritorious deed is sure to be highly beneficial, both to the owner of the almsfood and the one who does so in his or her place. Again, in case there are all the elements equal in both persons, then the owner of the almsfood will obtain more meritorious results, since he, or she, is the owner of those things.



1/25 QU : What is the difference between making merit (Puñña) and dispensing charity (Dāna)?

ANS : The term '*Puñña*' (merit) has a very wide scope of meaning. It includes *Dāna* or charity, which is only one of its several implications. The essential meaning of *Puñña* is the will based on good intention towards anybody or anything. With such an intention present, all a person does such as to dispense charity, join hands in token of respect or reverence to others worthy of respect, giving a helping hand in a harmless deed in a decent manner, showing the right way to a person who has lost his way, getting up and offering a seat for an aged person or a child in a bus, can be included in the scope of the meaning of the term '*Puñña*'. The working of *Puñña* is to reduce or remove what is called Kilesa or Spiritual Defilements. Thus to dispense charity is a means by which to reduce miserliness or greed or the sense of possessiveness in one's belongings. To join hands in token of respect and reverence is to eliminate pride or vanity. To give a

helping hand in a harmless and beneficial work is to reduce self-centredness. Thus there are occasions for *Puñña* everywhere as long as they are characterised by the good or selfless intention, which helps reduce the Defilements from the mind. After doing the *Puñña*, there will be the happiness both of the body and the mind. This is the obvious effect of *Puñña*. Thereafter the doer of *Puñña* will enjoy its effects in a variety of degrees and ways in proportion to the strength of the cause thereof. In some cases it may take a little longer or even a much longer time.

Now to come back to *Dāna* or dispensing charity, which is one of the *Puñña* or merit. It must be understood that *Dāna* is the first step of *Puñña*, being easier to do than other kinds. It usually does not yield so much effect. After all it is easier than to observe the Precepts. Even the Five Precepts are much more difficult than *Dāna* if a devotee wants to observe them strictly in all cases and at all times. This is because to do so requires the courage to reduce or remove, at least during that period, five kinds of Defilements, whereas to dispense charity is to deal only with one defilement i.e. greed or miserliness.



To conclude, *Dāna* is only one of the several meanings of *Puñña* since *Puñña* has a very wide scope of meaning. A devotee can do *Puñña* in all cases and at all times as long as there is the goodwill as the basis for doing so.

1/26 QU : What is the significance or importance of the pouring of water after the making of merit in order to dedicate the fruits of doing so to the deceased? If after the making of merit or *Puñña*, there is no such pouring of water with such an intention, what will be the effect thereof?

ANS : This tradition is in fact one of Brahmanism. It was incorporated into Buddhism later on, but only in some of its forms, not in its essential purpose. The Brahmans did so by getting into the river, scooping up water with the hands and letting it flow along with the current. The purpose was that the doers wanted the fruits of merit they had done to flow along with the current to the deceased relatives in the hereafter. In the



times of the Buddha, King Bimbisāra was the first person who did something like that, but not exactly in the same manner. He put some water into a container called gourd, then poured the water onto the ground as if to make it seep under the ground and refresh the ground underneath in the same way as the effects of those *Puñña* would refresh the minds of the deceased relatives. This was therefore a symbol in material form, there being no compulsion nor commandment in this matter. In case the devotees do not do so, it means only that they have not done another form of *Puñña* called *Pattidāna* i.e. not having dedicated the fruits of merit to the deceased, and this results in the deceased having no opportunity to acknowledge nor appreciate it. It does not matter, therefore, whether to use the water as a medium or symbol or not. It is in fact the mind-to-mind communication based on good intention towards all sentient beings.

In the case of using water as the medium, there must not be another hand to receive the water thus poured out and devotees should not wash their hands, since the water used is to be clean, not for hand-washing. This is again to symbolise the sincerity or purity of the



mind to dedicate the fruits of merit to the deceased. That there is in some cases another hand to receive the water thus poured from one hand is caused by misunderstanding, since in the ancient times some devotees used a glass or a bowl of water. While being poured down, the water tended to overflow the container. So the devotees used another hand to prevent such an overflow. This gave birth to the idea that other people should cooperate by reaching out their hands to touch the water in order to have a share in the merit so dedicated. There is a Thai saying referring to an aged Bhikkhu lifting the almsbowl to the level of his eyes. His real purpose was that he wanted to check if there was any hole or crack at the bottom of his bowl that might make the water or other things leak in and out of it. Other people seeing this did not know his purpose concluded that to do so might be an auspicious sign of good luck and thus followed his example traditionally and blindly.

The same is true in the case of pouring the water in dedicating the fruits of merit to the deceased. Let the water, if some devotees are still attached to it, pour out of the gourd as it generally does. In making



what is called a mind-to-mind communication, let it be in Thai, there being no need to do so in Pāli language, *except when the devotees are able to understand the meaning of those passages very well.* In case they do not want to do so, it means that they do not obtain more merit of dedication and then the deceased will have no opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate it. So it is a good tradition to dedicate the fruits of merit to the deceased, who are the relatives and friends and to other sentient beings in general. There is no harm in doing so. It is just an increase of the amount of merit having been done.

1/27 QU : Is it true that the deceased can receive or enjoy the fruits of merit dedicated to them?

ANS : This is true under the following conditions
viz.

a. The devotees, who are the givers, have done some kinds of merit such as dispensing charity and observance of Precepts.



b. After that, it may be sooner or later, they made a mind-to-mind communication to dedicate the meritorious fruits thereof to the deceased.

c. The deceased, in whatever realms of the hereafter they are re-born, have known, or have been informed of, such a meritorious deed and its fruits having been dedicated to them, and then express their acknowledgement and appreciation to such an act of the devotees in the material world.

As long as there are the three conditions present, so long can the dedication be fruitful. But it must be remembered that **the receiving or enjoying the fruits of merit is not something like the receipt of parcels by post.** It is the matter of food for the mind and is therefore non-material. So it does not mean the deceased always eat the food or other things dispensed by the devotees. What is the result is that their mental bodies will be strengthened through their acknowledgement and appreciation. In the case of merit that is the dispensing of charity, those who are hungry will have their hunger reduced or removed. This does not mean that they have to eat that food and quench their hunger and thirst the way we human beings do. The food for such non-human



beings collectively called *Opapātika* is called *Piti* or ecstatic joy. Their lives subsist on that kind of joy, which is also called divine food or refined food.

Such is how the three factors are indispensable for the dedication of the fruits of merit to yield any beneficial effects to the deceased. At the same time it should also be noted that, *no matter how much fruit of merit we have dedicated to others, it does not mean that the fruit of merit to occur to ourselves has to be reduced by any means.* On the contrary, it will develop and increase indefinitely, since we have increased our merit of dispensing charity and observance of Precepts to the deceased with a really good intention to make them happy or at least to make their sufferings reduced to a certain extent.



1/28 QU : The funeral rites, which are by nature the expression of grief and sorrow for the departure of the deceased, should be performed silently and serenely, consisting of solemn activities of dedicating the fruits of merit to the deceased. This should be enough for such an occasion, especially for Buddhist devotees. But, as is often seen nowadays, it has become an occasion of joy, of merry-making. In some places in the countryside, there are festivals for eating food and drinking alcoholic liquor on the monastery pavilion, right in front of the Bhikkhus. There are also entertainments such as cinema show, theatrical performance and 'likay' i.e. Thai traditional dramatic performances. This certainly is a senseless waste of time and money and is obviously in conflict with the nature of the occasion. What is Your Venerable's view-point in this matter? Should it be supported or corrected or banned altogether?



ANS : Our ancestors had also felt the same way for a long time, but they could not find any way to solve this problem. There are three kinds of activities that insidiously undermine the economy of the Thai family and society. They are : ordination, marriage and funeral rites. The cause of this is that the Thai people are generally subject to the superiority complex, being thus willing to ruin themselves in order to preserve that attitude of mind. As a result, there used to be several instances of families that plunged themselves into a destitute condition just to flatter their ego. Thus there were warnings by the people in ancient times against self-ruining activities as follows :

1. A family was forbidden to arrange two grand activities at the same time such as marriage and ordination. This was a skilful means by which to prevent the younger generations who wanted to inflate their ego from ruining themselves too soon.

2. There is a Thai saying to the effect that a dead man ruins the living ones who are members of his family. This implies the fact in many cases where the funeral rites were arranged too pompously as a show-off of the status symbol of the host. This produces



several undesirable effects. It is a useless and superfluous luxury, unreasonable or foolish. This is how the deceased have ruined the members of the family despite the fact that they were gone for ever and knew nothing or desired nothing of that kind.

As a matter of fact, the funeral rites that are really the Buddhist tradition have nothing to do with such a show-off to express what is supposed to be the sign of sorrow or gratitude. In the Buddhist texts, we learn that the Buddhist funeral rites were simple, not ceremonial nor pompous. The deceased were cremated a short time after that :—the way it is done in present India. Even the Buddha's remains were kept only for 7 days. That they were kept so long was due to the purpose of waiting for Venerable Mahākassapa, the eldest Bhikkhu of that time, to pay his last respects to the Buddha's remains.

But the funeral rites in Thailand appeared to be more ceremonial and pompous. They have been adulterated by those from the Mons country, Burma and China. There is little that is really Buddhistic. This might be also because of the advertisements of those



who sell those things concerning the funeral rites that they have invented to tempt the customers. It is true that there is in the Buddha's teaching the advice called *Pubbapetabali* i.e. the rites or the sacrifice in making merits for the sake of the ancestors. But that suggestion has been exaggerated and done at the expense of the family's economy. *Thus the Buddhist principle is to obtain the maximum benefit from the most economical means.* This implies the main or real purpose of doing anything and stresses the avoidance of the desire to flatter the ego or for a show-off.

There has been a campaign against this wasteful practice for a long time. Bhikkhus also make an example of rites arranged by themselves. But the Thai sense of value has been so firmly established that it is more difficult than, so goes a Thai saying, *'pushing a great mortar up a steep mountain slope.'* Sooner or later the person who does so becomes exhausted and the mortar slips down the slope once again. So the efforts of the person who tries hard to push it up are deplorably wasted. So far, therefore, there is no sign of changing this sense of value unless there is a law or commandment from the government to prohibit such a practice.



This must also be supplemented by a systematic teaching to the youths in the schools imbuing in them the essential purpose of Buddhism, which stresses the practice of simplicity. However, this is a campaign that needs time, to be started first by the government agencies, supported by the private sector. With such joint efforts, there may be a hope for the betterment of the situation of self-ruining only to flatter one's own ego, whether on the occasion of ordination, marriage or cremation rites. The point to be always stressed is, as earlier mentioned, to obtain the maximum benefit from the most economical method.

As matters stand today, the cremation rites arranged on a grand scale with unnecessary supplements are still being done in the countryside. In the cities, however, they have been substantially reduced as far as the luxurious items are concerned. The period for keeping the corpses before cremation is shortened. The chanting process is also obviously reduced. With the economic crisis as at present being aggravated, there is sure to be a change in the sense of value of the host of those rites. In case there is no courage to change such an attitude of mind, it will be the hosts of the

activities themselves that will suffer later on most of all. After all, with such a desire to flatter one's ego not abandoned, it is the case of 'one for himself'. If they prefer to reap such baneful effects, let them face their own fate.

1/29 QU : Why should in some Buddhist rites there be Brahmanist ones intermingled? Is it correct or proper to do so? If not, how can the situation be corrected?

ANS : This is the attitude of mind looking at things from a very narrow, limited angle. There is also some beneficial effect, not only the baneful one, in such an intermingling. At least it is a connecting link breeding the feeling of friendship between both faiths. It should be remembered that there was a historical reason in this matter. It was that Brahmanism had been introduced into the region called Suvannabhumi (South-east Asian region including Thailand) before Buddhism. At the time when Buddhism reached the region, Brahmanism had infused an inspirational influence on



the high societies and the royal families. Thus the various religious rites were conducted in accordance with those of Brahmanism, while the Brahmans were highly respected. At least those rites had bestowed upon the people the morale and strength of will to a certain extent.

To the question as to whether or not it is right, the answer is that it is all right from the Brahmanist standard and also in conformity with the attitude of mind of the Thai people. It should be remembered that Buddhism had taken birth in the midst of the Brahmanist sphere and influence. It is inevitable, therefore, that there was bound to be some 'foreign' things intermingling with Buddhism. This cannot be absolutely or totally eliminated, especially on the general principles and activities for the general public.

What is also worth noting is that the teachings of Buddhism consist of what is called reformation and revolution. There was therefore what was formerly in Brahmanism as well as what is the special, essential characteristic of Buddhism as a result of the Buddha's discovery. This does not concern religions directly. It



involves the people or the laity who accept the faiths. Those who used to be Brahmanists before being Buddhists usually abandoned what they thought was in conflict with Buddhism but could not help preserving what they thought was acceptable to them, since all those dealt with the cultural and traditional values. To the question as to how they can be, and should be, corrected, the answer is that there is no need to do so. Even if we have corrected the rites or the intermingling elements, those who still cherish a desire for it will never correct their attitude. All those things will remain as they are, being indispensable for those people of such a level of development.

In one aspect religion may be looked upon as a tree, which has the outer bark, the inner bark and the core, including the leaves and flowers and fruits. All these supply the need of each individual, which is different in each case and each time. It does not mean that a person going to a tree always wants to have its core or hardwood. Often times the people want to have its bark or flowers or fruits. Now, in case a tree has only its core, without the inner and outer barks, the leaves, the flowers and the fruits, it means that the tree is



a dead one. This is true also in the case of a religion. If we want to preserve only the pure Dhamma in the full-final sense of the term, then it will exist for perhaps one life-span of a human being, whose maturity has been developed to that highest, supreme condition. In another aspect, a religion may be compared to the figure of a cone i.e. a solid body or a hollow shape with a round base, sloping sides that narrow to a sharp point at the top. The number of people who are able to attain to the full-final point of religion is generally small. This is true in all places and at all times. In fact at present there are quite a number of people or denominations that boast about their success of attainment. But it is doubtful how much per cent is that boast, which is so much exaggerated, can be relied upon. A person who professes a religion is, as earlier mentioned, like a person going into the forest looking for what can be obtained from a tree. He will get what he wants to have, be it the outer bark, the inner bark, the flowers, the leaves or the fruits or the core. There is a benefit to be derived from every part of that tree. This depends upon what part of it the person wants to have, if he is wise enough to see its benefit. It is the person who enjoys pointing an accusing finger at others

that cannot derive any benefit even from a bar of gold. A wise man knows how to make use even of the excrement.

As Buddhists, therefore, we should be sympathetically tolerant, always seeing more or less benefit in whatever we come across. On the mundane level, there is nothing or nobody that is perfect. This is the truth to be admitted. We must intelligently weigh its pros and cons. Some Brahmanist traditions that have been intermingled with Buddhism are like that. After all it was Brahmanism that had its roots here before the introduction of Buddhism, at least about 20 years in this region called Suvannabhumi. There is something, therefore, that cannot be absolutely eliminated and there is no need to eliminate it, either.



1/30 QU : What is the meaning of the Thai saying to the effect that there is to be another person in place of the dead one? Does it mean that a dead man cannot be reborn until there is another one who happens to meet his death at that place?

ANS : Certainly not. It is a Thai idiom referring to the fact that a meritorious or an evil kamma of one person will be followed by another person of the same tendency. There is no implication of death here. It can mean the instance that is followed even within that person's life-time.

All the deceased must take birth, or re-birth, in a realm suitable to their kamma i.e. their accumulation of good or evil before their death. They cannot wait until there is another person who comes to die at the same place of their death. This is a strange concept I have never heard of before. This Thai saying is a common idiom well understood by all the Thai people, who know well about the influence of an exemplary behaviour,



both in the good and the evil aspects. They will be followed by other people with the same habit or tendency, both within that life-time and after death.

1/31 QU : Kindly explain how the prediction of future events by the seers comes into being. Is it against the disciplinary rule in case it is a Bhikkhu who does so?

ANS : This has been the belief and practice of the people in various other places of the world, not only in Thailand. This stems from the doubt and the inquisitive nature of human beings. Usually people cannot help wondering about what had happened to them in the past such as whether or not they used to be born before. If so, what was the nature of their former lives? How did they live their lives then? And after that, where were they born again and again?

Some doubt about the future. Others doubt about the past and the future. But the answers to these questions are beyond the ordinary human beings with



ordinary intellect and even with modern scientific knowledge, which is centred only on the tangible, material aspect. Thus such a doubt cannot be banished by modern scientific knowledge. Now, it is common that people want to know about their future, whether or not and how the troubles they are suffering at present can be reduced or removed, also whether their progress and prosperity at present will change for the worse or the better. Thus they first asked their elders, who they assume will be able to know better. But there is a point where those aged people cannot go beyond, and this was the cause for the search for one who was reputed to be able to answer their questions and solve their problems. Such people were called seers, who the people believe can see the future through their clairvoyance power. This branch of knowledge of precognition has been existing for millions of years. With the scientific knowledge still unable to answer such questions, the seers cannot be dispensed with even in modern society, where many people in time of trouble and distress about the future cannot help going to consult them, since they still cannot find any other better refuge in such circumstances when their lives are often at a crossroad, making it difficult for them to make a definite decision.



As a matter of fact, if people are convinced of the Buddha's saying that the nature of effects is produced by that of their causes, they will be less troubled and worried. Looking forward for good or beneficial effects, they must perform the corresponding good causes. Thus there is the Buddha's saying, "*Merits will yield the beneficial effects by themselves. Nothing can be the result of the stars and planets in the sky.*"

As for those who have reached the higher, more refined level of knowledge called Insight into the former lives, they have nothing to worry about. They have known everything about the former lives of their own, needing no more knowledge about the future. They can also tell both the past and the future of other people as well.

To the question whether a Bhikkhu who establishes himself as a seer has committed a disciplinary offence or not, the answer is that it is not quite wrong nor quite right, depending on the level of Precepts or Discipline in the context. There is no such prohibition for a Bhikkhu in the Vinaya Patimokkha or Code of Discipline. If anything, it is on the Majjhima or inter-



mediate level of Precepts or Sila. This was mentioned in the Book of Discourses or Suttantapitaka, referring to the act of predicting the future. It was called the offence *dukkata* i.e. a small or minor offence. However, in one sense we must not neglect what the Buddha did not want his Bhikkhus to do and not overlook the importance of such a prohibition. At the same time, the changing circumstances must also be taken into account. Now that the Bhikkhus are members of a heterogeneous society, consisting of people of different levels of maturity and different tendencies, it is also advisable that they should not ignore or take no notice of such people, not treating them as being **non-existent**. Whenever, or wherever there are both the Bhikkhus able to lead the devotees to the highest level and the devotees who are able to tread the Path to that height, they can form a group of their own. But whenever, in many cases, there are not such devotees with such a degree of maturity, the Bhikkhus will have to 'give' them whatever they can 'receive' not teaching beyond their heads, so to speak. Even the Buddha also did so, classifying sentient beings into four categories compared to the four kinds of lotuses and 'give' them what they could 'receive'.

There are in one sense the following desires pre-dominant in all people viz. the desire for love, consolation or warmth, security and something for the mind to attach itself to. At all times there are a group or a great number of people not mature enough to look forward to the highest, full-final spiritual attainment. Such being the case, they need some 'prop' they can imagine with their present degree of susceptibility, which, of course, must be to a certain extent lower or less refined than the former, smaller group. Were Bhikkhus to ignore their presence, preferring to estrange themselves from such people at all times, those people would be mercilessly left alone, being at all times helpless and hopeless in time of difficulties when they have to face the insurmountable obstacles or unanswerable questions. It is for this reason that the ability for precognition has come to play a vital role in the circle of Bhikkhus for quite a long time. The essential purpose was none other than the good intention to help relieve the people's suffering at least to some extent. This ability is therefore a medium or a magnet drawing the hopeless and helpless people into Buddhism, when there were the sermons or the Buddha's teachings skilfully inserted or added to the prophecy. The same



was true also in the case of Buddha amulets and coins and the rites to avert the imminent catastrophe.

Of course, it is the undeniable truth that, whether a person will have a good luck or a bad one, depends upon his own kamma. This essential teaching of the Buddha can be inserted in the prophecy given by the Bhikkhus. So this is to be looked upon with a tolerant, sympathetic attitude of mind. It is approaching the matter from various angles, thereby respecting others' viewpoint with the spirit of tolerance. After all, it is not woefully evil or a wicked kamma. It can be an advantage to a group of people on a level of development. Bhikkhus who can help them in this respect have not done any evil or wrong, whereas others who are experienced in other aspects are free to do what they can do. All these are instances of the '*division of labour*' for the benefit of society as a whole. This, therefore, is the joint efforts to preserve Buddhism in a fruitful way. Do not treat one group with contempt only because they are doing what you do not like nor want them to do. Our joint efforts will serve as massive pillars steadfastly supporting the super-structure of Buddhism for a long time to come.

1/32 QU : It is said that if a person happens to see a ghost, he is advised to do some meritorious deeds and dedicate their fruits to that ghost. This so that it may not come to disturb him again. Is this true?

ANS : In case the ghost did come and we dedicate the fruits of merit to it, then it is possible that it may not come to disturb us again. However, this is true especially in the case that it came to ask for the fruits of merit. But in case it came with other purposes such as with a revengeful desire to do harm to us or in case we happen to see it without its desire to be seen by us, then we should extend our Metta or goodwill and loving-kindness to it, together with dedicating the fruits of merit having been done to it. By this way the ghost may not come back again. Such cases are often laughed at by people who have never experienced this themselves. Thus they always maintain that it is impossible or is a mere hallucination. So they categorically deny all these facts. Some there are who have never been asked by the ghosts for the dedication of the meritorious fruits from them.



However, the best way in all cases, no matter for whatever purpose the ghosts come, is to make merit and dedicate the fruits thereof to them. Even if they come with a revengeful purpose or with hatred, our expression or reaction in the spirit of friendship and goodwill is the best anti-dote against such a desire for revenge or hatred. It is sure to reduce to a great extent the imminent troubles to arise therefrom. When they come to ask for a share of meritorious fruits, to let them have a share of, or an appreciation in, those merits is certainly the best way.

1/33 QU : Is there any connection between those vegetarians and the observance of the Five Precepts? What is the real reason for being vegetarians?

ANS : There is certainly no connection whatever. It is only the First Precept that seems to be associated with that practice. The First Precept is to abstain from killing, but eating has generally no connection with killing, particularly when it is not done by oneself. This

is the real, underlying reason. It is therefore quite another matter that there are some who insist on their viewpoint of trying to find reason to connect eating with killing. Such people always find reason to satisfy their attitude, assuming arbitrarily that if there is no eating, then there cannot be killing, since there is no use to do so. This is like the unsolvable, all-time debate that which comes first : the egg or the hen, since if there is no egg, there is no hen. But if there is no hen, there is no egg, either.

As to the doubt what is the reason of abstaining from eating meat, it is the case of "one man's meat is another man's poison", which depends on individual constituents of the physical body. Some find it agreeable to their health eating meat, while others feel that to be vegetarians is more agreeable to them. Now, the people in various places of the world eat different kinds of food. This is true also of animals. As for human beings, generally we can eat both vegetable, meat and fish. This is known everywhere. In case it is agreeable to a person's health to be a vegetarian, it can also help economy in some case when the vegetarian food is less expensive in cost, but this is not always so, because



there are other cases where vegetarian food such as some kinds of fruits are more expensive than animals' meat.

The problem concerning vegetarian is that many who are vegetarians are inclined to exaggerate the virtue of their practice and then treat with contempt those who eat animals' meat, concluding that those who eat meat are immoral beings and are like the devils or giants. This is a foolish and morbid vanity, being thereby a contemptible attitude of mind. In such a case it is better for them not to be vegetarians at all.

The Buddha's advice on this problem is that, as earlier mentioned, we are not involved in the killing. We do not see; nor do we know; nor do we have any reason to suspect that those animals were killed specifically for us. The meat is what is usually available in the market, and as such there is no evil kamma on our part as far as killing is concerned. But if we take delight in exaggerating the value of the practice of being vegetarians and point an accusing finger at those who eat meat, then our words are evil, being the *Vacīduccarita*. Our mind is also overwhelmed by vanity,



which is also an evil. Such a self-pride together with treating other with contempt is the sign of Kilesa or defilements, expressed in words, deeds and thought. The exception in this case is only that we prefer to do so since we have seen that it is agreeable to our health. Such a vegetarian's attitude as this is to be appreciated.

1/34 QU : The vegetarians abstain from eating animals' meat for the reason that it is obtained from living beings. But why do they eat vegetables and fruits since those are also taken from the trees, which are also living things?

ANS : It should be noted once again that the practice of vegetarianism is not a commandment in Buddhism, which has no such absolute prohibition. That it is not absolute is due to the two conditions, the first one being already mentioned above, whereas the second one pointing to ten kinds of animals' meat that were prohibited for Bhikkhus such as the meat or flesh of a human being, of an elephant, a tiger and a snake. The practice of vegetarianism was initiated by Devadatta



Bhikkhu, who was obsessed by self-pride and requested the Buddha to prohibit the Bhikkhus from eating animals' meat. But the Buddha refused to comply to Devadatta's request, since he knew how many there were the laity who were not vegetarians. When the Bhikkhus went out for almsfood and told them they did not eat meat, it would be an awkward burden to the householders. Later on, during the reign of King Asoka, there was a prohibition for his citizens against eating meat. This concept was therefore inherited from the Hindu culture. It was not the essence of the Buddha's teachings. Of course, as the monarch governing the country, King Asoka had the right and the power to issue such a commandment. But the Buddha as a religious founder could not do so. As far as the vegetarians are concerned, there are some who proudly boast about their practice through their self-esteem and egotism, whereas others do so quietly, seeing that it is agreeable to their health.

Now as to the question of living things, there is a vast difference between the life of trees and that of animals, the former having only the breaths but no mind such as the animals have. So they cannot be classified under the same category and on the same level.



All animals have what is called *Prāna* i.e. life. Thus killing them is an evil kamma. As for plants and vegetables, there is no offence for the laity to cut them. But the Bhikkhus are forbidden from doing so, since they have to follow a more refined practice. Buddhism does not regard trees and vegetables as having the same level of life or *Viññāna* as that of animals. However, in those times there was also a belief that plants and vegetables were also living beings. That is why Bhikkhus were forbidden from cutting them. Thus it can be concluded that the life of plants and vegetables and that of animals are different things i.e. on different levels. Animals after death will be re-born, whereas plants and vegetables can only reproduce themselves in another manner. It is therefore not an evil kamma for the laity to cut them.



1/35 QU : The practice of vegetarianism is now a great vogue, being something like a sensational fashion. What is your idea concerning this?

ANS : There is no idea concerning such a fashion. This is not just a vogue nowadays. There are some nations who practise vegetarianism for reason of health or of economics or for the sake of observing Precepts. It was around 280 years after the Buddha's passing away that there was a royal command by King Asoka, preventing the killing of animals. The king himself was also a vegetarian. The same thing also occurred in China by reason of agriculture. This was because the Chinese people in those days had killed so many animals that it was afraid there would not be enough animals for use in the work concerning agriculture and farming. The then Chinese king Ling Boo Te requested the Chinese Mahayana Bhikkhus to make an example of this by abstaining from eating animals' meat and then inviting the people to do the same thing. At the same time the Bhikkhus had it recorded in the Mahayana scriptures



to the effect that Buddhists were forbidden to eat meat. To make it more effective and divine, the prohibition was attributed to be the Buddha's command.

To abstain from eating meat on the grounds that it was a divine practice for the sake of higher attainment used to be practised by the Buddha while still being a Bodhisatta i.e. the Buddha-to-be before his Enlightenment. But later on, having seen that it was not the right way leading to purity, he stopped that practice and turned to the target of elevating the mind to a more refined level as the main theme.

My idea is that some groups of vegetarians have too much self-esteem and treat others with contempt, looking down upon others as devils or giants and branding the Bhikkhus who are not vegetarians as being not Bhikkhus. This is not the characteristic of a virtuous person. Moreover, they claim the Buddha had never partaken of animals' meat. This despite the fact that there are in the Book of Discipline ten kinds of animals' meat that are forbidden. It shows that the *Buddha's prohibition in this case was conditional, not wholesale or unconditional*. Then there was also the permitted condition that Bhikkhus knew that the animals were not



slaughtered specifically for them i.e. they did not see nor know nor had reason to suspect so.

All these mean that as long as the Bhikkhus were not involved in that killing, so long was there nothing wrong as the offence in the Discipline. In the Pali Canon we also learn that the Buddha and his Arahanta disciples also partook of the animals' meat under such permissible condition. It was because Bhikkhu Devadatta, who was obsessed with egoism and superiority complex, wanted to show that he and his disciples were stricter and more devoted in this respect than the Buddha. He requested the Buddha to issue a commandment prohibiting Bhikkhus from eating animals' meat. This clearly shows that the Buddha and his Arahanta disciples had eaten meat, otherwise Bhikkhu Devadatta would not have made such a request to him. This, therefore, is a deliberate misinterpretation of the meaning with the aggressive attitude of mind, inflating their own ego and looking down upon others with contempt. If, according to them, those who eat animals' meat are not Bhikkhus, then it means that the Buddha and his Arahanta disciples were not Bhikkhus, either. Could this be so?



The claim that those who eat animals' meat are devils and giants or ghosts means that their own parents, who also ate meat before, were such creatures as devils and thus they themselves are the offspring of such hellish beings. The main point here is therefore not what the people or the Bhikkhus eat, but how they behave physically, verbally and mentally. The aggressive criticism is nothing but the *Vacīduccarita* i.e. evil words. As regards their claim that to abstain from eating meat strengthens the virtue of *Mettā* or goodwill and loving-kindness is again falsified. The virtue of *Mettā* must also be expressed in physical and verbal acts. The Buddha's saying was, "*Mettā kāyakammam, Mettāvacīkammam, Mettāmanokammam : Goodwill through physical, verbal and mental acts*". Such an aggressive attitude through insulting words is wrong even on the level of primary Precepts, not to mention these of the higher, more refined one. After all, the spiritual purity is not the result of merely abstaining from eating meat.

Another matter of the same kind used to occur in the times of the Buddha, when he proceeded to meet the recluses who took their bath in the river Bahuka. Their concept was that they would be purified through



bathing in that river. The Buddha asked them whether or not all living beings, having taken a bath in that river, would be purified by that means. They all answered in the positive. The Buddha asked them further what would happen to them when they had been thus purified. They answered that they would be born in a realm of heaven by doing so. Then, so said the Buddha, all the aquatic animals therein such as the fishes, tortoises, crabs and others must be all destined to heaven. They would far outnumber human beings who were destined the same way, since human beings could not remain in the water of that river all the time. This is another evidence showing that the practice of vegetarianism used to be done long before the times of the Buddha. The Buddha used to meet more challenges and brave more terrible ordeals than those vegetarians, but he saw that such a practice alone did not lead to any purification of the mind. It was a useless self-torture. So he decided to abandon it. Thus Buddhism does not deny the eating of meat under the above-mentioned conditions. Spiritual purity, according to the Buddha, is the practice that leads to reducing and removing spiritual defilements in accordance with the principles of Silā or Precepts, Samādhi or Meditation and Pañña or Insight Wisdom.



The more the devotees advance their practice along that principle, the more they approach their spiritual purity. Such devotees eat whatever is allowed under the above-mentioned conditions. They eat just to reduce the pangs of hunger, at the same time preventing the greed for taste, but only to strengthen the body to live a life of chastity for a longer time when it is possible. Without greed for the taste of food or treating others with contempt merely because of the kind of food eaten, they are said to have attained to a level of purity. *The vegetarians' aggressive attitude is therefore a distortion of the Buddha's principles, since there is nowhere in the scriptures that confirm that those who eat meat must be born in a realm of woe.* On the contrary, the harsh, insulting words distorting the Buddha's teachings through self-esteem and separating one Buddhist group from another by means of a glib tongue, ignoring the evidence in the scriptures, will lead the speakers to a realm of woe.

The suggestion for the practice of this is that the devotees must do so only for the sake of their health, which in some cases is really agreeable to them. Never cherish an aggressive attitude or wrong views; nor eat it with the craving for greed in the taste of that



food. As long as there is an uncontrollable *Tanhā* or desire in eating the food, so long will it betray the mind that is not yet sufficiently purified. Do not forget that the *Kāmaguna* or sensual objects implies what is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched and thought. The vegetables are the *Rūpa* or objects to be seen, with the taste of their own to be felt by the palate. This is true also of the animals' meat. When the Buddhists eat with an uncontrollable desire in the taste of the food, be it animals' meat or vegetables, they are said to be similarly eating while being obsessed by *Tanhā* or desire. This is the point to be borne in mind at all times.

On the other hand, those devotees who eat the *Pavattamaṅsa* i.e. meat ordinarily available in the market without their being involved in the killing by any means and do not cherish an aggressive attitude towards anybody are sure to follow the Buddha's principles in the rightful way with the right views or *Sammāditthi*, which is to be the criterion by which to judge the correctness or otherwise of a belief or practice. There must not be a deliberate distortion of the Buddha's saying, thereby causing a falsified Dhamma in Buddhism. This the faithful devotees must in all cases and under all circumstances not do.



**THE GREAT KING NARAI OF THAILAND'S
RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST
ON THE PART OF
THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY TO HAVE HIM
CONVERTED INTO A CHRISTIAN**

“Does King Louis XIV want me to be converted into a Christian? This is matter of profound significance. My royal ancestors have professed Buddhism for quite a long time. It is therefore very difficult to have me abandon my ancestors' faith. Had the God, who has created the earth and the sky, wished to have all the peoples profess the same religion, he would have done so long ago.”



Highlights of the Chapter I



Buddhism recognises the reality of the existence of 'Phra Phoom Chao Thee' or guardian spirits as our invisible, friendly next-door neighbours who are ready and willing to give a helping hand whenever possible.

It does not mean that Buddhists who believe in the existence of guardian spirits regard them as superior to the Triple Gem.

The dolls are for the children or those who are children-minded and handrails or balustrades for those who are not yet strong enough to go up the ladder through the strength of their own feet.

The glowing advertisement through the mass media exaggerating the quality of the good-luck charms and amulets is grossly indecent, thus producing a strong negative effect on Buddhism as a whole.



For the sake of ‘safety first’ as long as we do not yet fully understand the truth, it is advisable to have at least a degree of humble confidence in the Buddha’s teachings, which are his direct experience through his Enlightenment.

In the realm of science, there have been several data later discovered that have modified, changed or contradicted the earlier accepted truths. The atom theory is one instance of this. It was at first thought to be indivisible, but later on the truth was found to be the opposite.

Puñña is the meritorious quality, with its working for the washing away of spiritual defilements or pollutions such as greed. Its beneficial effect is tranquility and peace of mind.

By appreciation we make the excellence in others our own property- Voltaire.

What is more harmful and dreadful than the ‘phee’ or ghosts is the human beings that want to do harm to us in various countless ways beyond our imagination.



How many people are there in this world who are able to form everything absolutely complete and perfect? How many people are themselves perfect enough to point an accusing, fault-finding finger to others as being imperfect and deficient?

Religions, such as Buddhism, may be looked upon as a small pure brook trickling down the mountain-top. It is at that stage of birth clean and pure being useful, however, to a small group of people of highest maturity.

There should not be an attitude of treating with contempt other people who still cannot do without those 'props'.

The white magic aims at applying whatever power it has for the benefit of other people, whereas the black magic's purpose is to harm other people in various ways.

There is a moral duty or accountability for the Bhikkhus to help support and strengthen the laity with a sincere good intention.



The receiving or enjoying the fruits of merit is not something like the receipt of parcels by post.

No matter how much the fruit of merit we have dedicated to others, it does not mean that the fruit of merit to occur to ourselves has to be reduced by any means.

The Buddhist principle is to obtain the maximum benefit from the most economical means.

A religion may also be looked up as a tree or a cone.

Bhikkhus are members of a heterogeneous society, consisting of people of different levels of maturity and different tendencies. It is advisable that they should not ignore such people, treating them as being non-existent.

Many vegetarians are inclined to exaggerate the virtue of their practice and then treat with contempt those who eat animals' meat, concluding that such people are immoral beings and are like devils or giants.

The Buddha's prohibition concerning eating animals' meat is conditional, not wholesale nor unconditional.



CHAPTER II

QUESTIONS CONCERNING DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

2/1 QU : I have learned from a person who used to be a columnist who cherished the idea that all religions have the same purpose and as such are equal in quality and status. What is your idea in this matter?

ANS : This is not true, there being a marked difference. The purpose of Brahmanism is to be united with the Lord Brahma ; that of Christianity is to serve Lord Jehovah ; that of Islam is to be united with Lord Allah, whereas that of Buddhism is the attainment of Nibbāna. There is also a mention in Buddhism of birth in celestial realms as angels, but the purpose is not to serve anybody. Each is the owner of his or her celestial



abode. In all matters we do not want to be enslaved by anybody. Should we be a Brahma in a Brahma realm, then we are 'born free' therein; never are we in the position to serve anybody. Such is the difference, the decided and evident one.

Such is what is called the 'Dialogue' the Christians started a long time ago. From our observation, there are two popular slogans to the effect that all religions are similarly good and religions teach men to be similarly good.

These two sententious slogans are intrinsically non-sense. The Christian religion teaches its disciples to be good in the Christian way; so is Islam in the Islamic ideal; so is Brahmanism in the Brahmanist goal. Each is markedly different from the others, including from the Buddhist attainment. This is therefore the false allure concocted to mislead the people of those other religious faiths. Realistically speaking, had there been a truth in such a slogan, it would have been enough to have one religion in the world, since it would have led the disciples to the same attainment. The essential truth, therefore, is like the saying that all the people of



the world are by nature human beings. It overlooks the fact that they are far different in characters, tendencies, degrees of maturity and so forth.

2/2 QU : Is there anything in Christianity like Sila (Precepts) in Buddhism? If there is, how many are there? And in what manner is their ordination?

ANS : Their Precepts or Sila are not like ours. In one of the books called catechism, there is a criticism to the effect that the Precepts of Buddhism are too many for human beings to observe fully. It was concluded in that book, that the person who did so (i.e. the Buddha) was insane. This has brought about a storm of furious indignation by Buddhists. Such is one of the 23 items of hostile criticism against Buddhism. There was a furore and strong reaction against this book, which consists of the above-mentioned statements as one of its 23 insulting items.



As regards the Sila or Precepts, there is sure to be a difference. As far as the rites are concerned, there is nothing complicated. The one concerning marriage is really simple, whereas those concerning ordination were established later on. During the time of Jesus Christ himself, there was the rite of diving into the water and coming up, being something like the Brahmanist concept of *Dvija* i.e. the second birth, implying the diving into the water and coming up, not resemble the one of our own. That practice of Christianity was not formerly called Sila or Precepts. It is only in later times that it is deliberately used to resemble the practice of ours and is called (in Thai) *Silamahāsanid* i.e. the Holy Communion. But, realistically speaking, it has nothing to do with the Sila characteristic of Buddhism.

With regard to the systems of practice, it is to be noted that when Christianity was divided into two schools viz. Roman Catholic and Protestants, the former confirms that there still exist the recluses called 'Father', whereas the Protestants had no such recluse, but has instead a missionary or group of religious teachers. They do not live a life of chastity and they can marry and raise a family. Colonel Ingersoll, who wrote about God and criticised so much about God, was son of lay



religious preacher, who had studied carefully about the religious doctrine for a long time. He had a clear understanding of Christianity and as a result had compiled a valuable treatise on God and Christianity.

2/3 QU : You used to mention that Christianity has sneaked into Buddhism with the purpose of undermining and destroying Buddhism. What method have you in defence of such an atrocious invasion? Or is it merely to make it known to Buddhists?

ANS : My purposes are :

1. To make the Buddhists realise the fact that there is at present a hidden danger disguised in the form of friends in our country. If you read the 'Bulletin' or the news reports of the activities of the Vatican, you will see the details of its activities clearly. It says that there is at present only the strengthening attempt of each denomination. This is because the Buddhists themselves are now strongly disunited, being factionally divided into such groups as Bodhirak, Saccalokuttara and several others such as the great Sambuddho, the small



Sambuddho. There is even a group that hold themselves superior to the Buddha himself. Compared to the armed forces, they are very feeble and frail.

I used to express my idea that we Buddhist Bhikkhus are almost defenceless against the attacks. In the neighbouring country of Laos, I was told that, although the Communists there did not force the Bhikkhus to disrobe, yet they made an announcement they were willing to welcome the Bhikkhus with such and such grades of Pāli language to work with them in such places with such salaries per month. The higher the Pāli grade, the higher the salaries. This resulted in most of the Bhikkhus disrobing themselves and being assigned to work in such and such places in the seminars. After that they were seen no more. As far as I can remember, there are about 18 Bhikkhus with the highest ninth Pāli grade. All of them had been offered almsfood by the people. They came from the farms, the forests and the mountain areas. Having been offered a high position by the Communists, they made an instant, shameless out-turn, using harsh language in insulting the Buddha and his teachings. All these betray the imminent danger, now that they have come and have



started their aggressive campaign against us. As a result we must be extremely careful and always keep an eye on their wily tactics.

2. To make the Christians know that they must not do any such thing against us.

3. To request the Government and the Sangha remedy the situation and correct themselves, improving their quality in a suitable manner.

4. To awaken the lay Buddhists and the Bhikkhus to this imminent danger, since most of them are still unaware of this fact. Of course, we do not criticise them in some of their activities that help materialise the development of the country as a whole, which includes medicine, public health, economics and society. These are their benevolent activities rendered to us. We willingly appreciate their efforts. However, when it comes to religious matters, it becomes an embarrassing problem. Many government officers still cherish the idea that we should remain neutral, not lending any support nor being antagonistic to them. This, to me, is most puzzling.



Buddhists and Buddhism are being ravaged; the filthy thieves are breaking into our home; we call for help to the police. But the police say they cannot do anything, since they must be neutral, unable to move to give us any help, otherwise the thieves cannot break into our home. Is this the duty of the police? Is this what the police department established for? They are forced to remain unmoved, even while seeing the thieves are breaking into our home. This despite the fact that the police are none other than the Thai citizens.

I offer my opinion concerning this matter without any influence or authority. It is only through being concerned for the security of Buddhism, our national religion. Whatever can be said or done I have said and done as a Thai citizen, not violating anybody's rights and dignity. If it is acknowledged by both the government and the Order of Thai Sangha, I will appreciate it. Of course, this cannot be accomplished by myself alone. It needs the joint efforts of all Buddhists who have come to realise the imminent danger of this situation in our country at present as far as Buddhism is concerned.



2/4 QU : It is evident that the Christians have offered their help to the Thai people in various forms. As such they should not be regarded as interfering or intruding, since their actions are beneficial to the Thai people. We should therefore cooperate with them. What is your idea in this matter?

ANS : There is nothing to blame or find fault with them in this matter. We are willing to cooperate and appreciate their help. We can tolerate this if the people are willing to listen. What we cannot tolerate and have to contradict is their aggressive attitude towards Buddhism in the following three points viz.

a. They regard our Lord, the Buddha, as being inferior to Jesus Christ, being something like Christ's disciple or retinue.

b. Misinterpreting or distorting the Dhamma of the Buddha and telling the people that their Lord commanded the Buddha to do so.

c. Imitate and encroach upon the Thai Order of Sangha, calling their monks Bhikkhus and Sāmaneras,



Sangharaja and others, which are used and well-known in the Thai Order of Sangha.

These are what we cannot tolerate since they are too aggressive and would adulterate our Institution of Sangha and Buddhism. Other activities such as the development of economics and society, including public health and medicine we are willing to cooperate and do not find fault with them. We used to converse with each other through the telephones as religionists and academicians. Whatever contradiction there is we are willing to discuss. This we did even with the revolting Buddhist group of Bodhirak. I used to write a number of books informing them of their extreme practice and misinterpretation. We are not enemies and can discuss matters with each other. But whenever there is anything intolerable, there must be a frank and friendly discussion. There are nine main items of this group. We contradicted them only in two points, in which the Triple Gem was treated with contempt. There is no question concerning other matters. Now, as far as the Christians are concerned, they are welcomed to invest in our country. If our citizens should prefer to be Christians because of this, they are free to do so. As a matter of fact,



even though they profess our religion, we cannot help them attain Nibbāna if they do not put the Dhamma into practice sincerely and earnestly. As a matter of fact, the economic problems can lure a great number of people into Christianity, since under such a situation even the Bhikkhus cannot get enough almsfood for themselves. How, then, can they give help to the Buddhist devotees? But in other matters, Bhikkhus can still render help to the people in accordance with what the Buddha had explained in his teachings concerning the (personified) six directions.

2/5 QU : It is known that both Christian and Islamic religions have caused troubles to Thailand. What are those troubles encountered so far ?

ANS : What is a matter of great concern is one of security, if the disciples of these religions have increased until they are near or almost on the same level as that of Buddhists. This has been known to occur in various regions of the world. One instance of this is in India, where the disciples of Sikhism have



been increased steadily. They have been attempting to separate themselves from India by segregating the state of Punjab from India. This is true also in Lebanon and Ireland, where religions are found to be the primary cause of troubles.

Most significant of all at present is Christianity, the disciples of which want Thailand to be their 'beach-head'. This was openly stated in an assemble a few days ago in the midst of quite a number of Buddhists to the effect that at present the Italian Government had cherished an aggressive attitude towards the Vatican. It is time, so they say, to prepare for the establishment of the Vatican in Thailand. This was in fact their aggressive attitude towards Thailand and the Thai constitution, in which it is clearly stated that Thailand is one country and is inseparable. The Vatican is widely known to be the country of Vatican called the Vatican city state. The Vatican is planning to create the Vatican city state in Thailand. If their plan should work out successfully, it would mean **Thailand has lost her independence and integrity, becoming thereby two countries, one of which will be under the Vatican ruling power.** This is true especially for the people who are Christians.



Looking back into the reign of King Rama V, we shall see that the Christians were self-dependent; they were under their own law and under the judgment of their own court of justice. This is therefore an **attempt to sever our country into two parts, with the one being absolutely independent of the other.** It becomes two countries independent of each other, that is.

Now, if their attempt should be successful and their aim realised, it would create a serious problem regarding security, integrity, freedom and sovereignty. Their region would become a 'thorn in our side', piercing and pricking the feeling of the Thai people as a whole all the time.

This matter, in fact, is under the responsibility and far-sightedness of the government to do something as a preventive measure for self-protection and self-defence. Looking at the matter from the realistic point of view, the Islamic people dwell in their own region, teaching their own disciples, without the purpose of converting the disciples of other religion. But if a Thai wants to marry a Muslim girl, it is the inflexible rule that Thai person must be converted into a Muslim.



This is reasonable enough. Should there be different religions for the members of the same house, there would certainly be a more or less degree of contradiction and disagreement in that home, with the lack of unity and cooperation as a result. Of course, if each member is tolerant enough towards the difference in the religious beliefs and practices, there would not be much difficulty and trouble in that matter. But there are still other matters where the difference cannot be overlooked or tolerated. These could increase in amount and degree with the passing time. Some there may be that are remediable and tolerable, but others there might also be that are irreconcilable. They will be left as they are, supporting the attitude that whatever will happen will happen. But when it has happened, it rests upon each member how to come to terms with one another.



2/6 QU : There are many people who say that the practice of fasting in Islam is useless and stupid. What is your idea in this matter?

ANS : Such a sarcastic accusation is unjustified. It is a matter of trust and ferbid faith of religious devotees, who sincerely and earnestly follow what their religious founder has taught them to do. Such a practice trains the disciples to have patience based on faith, confidence and loyalty towards their religious founder's teaching. To point an accusing finger at them, blaming them as having a blind faith, is really blameworthy for the person who does so. There is nothing to support such a fault-finding attitude. Such a practice is, on the contrary, beneficial economically and socially. It enhances the spirit of unity i.e. to do the same thing at the same time and with the same spirit. This is not an easy thing to achieve, but the Islamic people have continuously done this for a long time and in all regions. It is really praiseworthy for their unity and concerted efforts.



2/7 QU : Is it possible that there should be a religious war in the future? There are at present other religions with greater resources of money and trained personnel with high psychological or suggestive power competing with one another to attain the goal of being the only supreme religion of the world.

ANS : This is a really sorrowful state of affairs. Religions have as their aim the peace through the spiritual development of their disciples. **All religious founders were similarly blessed with loving-kindness and compassion towards all sentient beings.** They have devotedly tried to find out the ways and means by which to make all the people in the world live together in peace and prosperity as brothers and sisters. Now, **after the demise of those founders, their disciples have later misused, or rather abused, the power for the sake of their own interest and glory.** These result, as has been shown in historical records, in inhuman violence and slaughtering. Even at present, the most obvious one can be seen in Lebanon, which is not a great country and which is the land of the same race



of more than 2 million people. But that they belong to the same stock or line of ancestry cannot induce them to be united and cooperative towards each other. The underlying reason for this is nothing but the different religions despite the fact that they have the same president. The tragedy has been clearly seen in daily news reports today.

As far as Thailand is concerned, it is clearly seen that other religions than Buddhism have been planning their hostile invasion continuously through their ever-increasing number of disciples. They have freely dumped their money and trained personnel to achieve their aim of being the supreme religion of Thailand in place of Buddhism. Looking back at the historical records and forward at the trend of events in the future, it is still difficult to say whether their aims will succeed or fail. The possibilities are equal in both cases.

What makes it impossible is the fact that, no matter whether citizens profess any religion, as long as they have as their supreme leader the same monarch, belong to the same stock of people and dwell in the same country, so long are they morally or spiritually



bound by such similarities. Even when they profess different religions, there is the possibility that they live with one another as brethren and sisters under the same 'supreme parent'. Thus they possess a degree of tolerance and do not find it inevitable to drift into a religious war such as those in Vietnam, Lebanon, Ireland and the Crusade war, all being **religious wars, which are freakish by nature so far as the aims of peace and unity of all religions are concerned.**

However, there might be in the future some other conditions that cannot be thought of nowadays. What is important at present is that the Buddhists must study and realise the intrinsic value of their own religion so that they can intelligently follow the Buddha's doctrine in the right manner with the right views as the beacon light of their lives. This is in accordance with the Buddha's resolution before preaching the Dhamma of his discovery to the people to the effect that he would maintain the life of his body until the four groups of his disciples viz. Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male lay disciples and female lay disciples had understood his Dhamma and applied it to their lives so that they would be able to disseminate that Dhamma to other



people. Whenever there was any danger threatening Buddhism, then they would be able to cooperate and unite to safeguard Buddhism against such threatening dangers.

Thus if we Buddhists can do so, then the teachings of the Buddha can be preserved and protected from the 'foreign' powers. This is really a very significant and sensitive matter. From historical records, we have learned the ironical truth that the causes of unity and disintegration were very often, paradoxically enough, instead of the problems concerning race or leader, the matter concerning religious beliefs and practices. It was found that people of different races, leaders and countries were often willingly united and cooperative if they professed and followed the same religious beliefs and practices. The Crusade war was a typical instance of this fact. Those people, despite the difference in their races and leaders, became united in their efforts to fight for the sake of their religious faith. On the contrary, even though they are of the same race and under the same leader i.e. in Lebanon, yet they condescended to fight and kill each other desperately just because of the religious condition. What



is worse, they dragged other people of different nations to join them in the war against those of their own nation. This could be seen in the Crusade war. Those people were of different races, had different leaders but professed the same religion and as a result took to slaughtering each other for the cause of religion. Even in the case of the same race and under the same leader such as in Lebanon, the same cruel thing happened in the name of religion. Worse still, they dragged and drugged other people to join them such as in the Crusade war.

It is therefore a historical precedent that could be followed once again any time, anywhere, should those responsible for the real spirit of their religions not learn from history and not apply those tragic incidents as lessons for the sake of peace in accordance with the spirit of their own religious founders. This can be seen in the fact that after the Crusade war, there have been more sad incidents of the same kind occurring again and again.

Whatever will happen in the future is therefore difficult to foresee or predict. The chances are equal



for the good turn as well as the bad one. If people are sensible enough, they will not condescend to slaughter one another for the cause of religions, all of which are based on the teachings promoting unity, peace and security. They are all characterised by the practice of non-violence, loving-kindness and compassion. However, it is worth noting that Buddhism has taken birth in the world for 2597 years, not merely 2552 years after the Buddha's passing away. This means **Buddhism was born 45 years before the Buddhist era.** From historical records, we Buddhists can justifiably be proud of the fact that in all passing ages we have not harmed anybody nor waged any war under the condition of disseminating the Dhamma of the Buddha. Thus, if the Buddhists still cherish this attitude of mind, being thereby patient and ready to forgive and forget, they will be able to find a basis for sympathetic understanding for the benefit of both sides and there will be a hope for averting the catastrophe caused by a religious war.

What is most important is that we must not be heedless of the threatening circumstances but always be on the alert for self-defence. There is no way to predict whatever will happen in the future.



However, we learn from history that men never learn from history. This is the crucial point to be duly considered. But, if man should bring himself to learn from history and know how to avert and avoid the old mistakes, it will be fortunate for all concerned. Let us hope it will be so.

2/8 QU : There are at present numerous instances that threaten the security of Buddhism. It is strange that many elders in the Order of Sangha appear to be indifferent and inactive towards those sad and shameful incidents. Can you let me know why it is so? And what steps has the government taken to cope with those ignoble incidents?

ANS : They might be so either for the sake of self-security or through their own ignorance of the facts. Perhaps they might be afraid of an adverse criticism in case they have done something drastic, although it is just and fair to do so. *It is natural that members of the executive branch are always in the*



position of being hurled with brickbats as well as being offered flowers. The fear of being criticised will result in nothing worthwhile being done.

On the other hand, there are cases that are subtle and that require an equally subtle investigation before any definite decision can be made as to whether that matter is right or wrong and how much it is decent or inappropriate. This kind of the matter does not concern the government, which has had little concern about the welfare and security of Buddhism for quite a long time.

It can be said that Buddhism has been neglected ever since the change of absolute monarchy to democracy. The exception appears to be the government under the leadership of Field Marshal Phiboon Songkram, but that was only a few years before his passing away. *From that time on Buddhism was cast off like a valueless surplus, being like a ship drifting aimlessly in a shoreless ocean.* Many celebrities in our country know about Buddhism in the form of ritual and ceremonial activities. They go to participate in the offering ceremony of *Phāpā* (forest cloth), and Kathina robes or lifting the spires of convocation halls (Uposatha)



merely as president or chairman of those activities. They know little about the Dhamma or the essential points of the doctrine of the Buddha and as such cannot do or help Buddhism more than that. Their cooperation is only superficial or perfunctory, being just 'skin-deep', so to speak. To know the value of Buddhism and realise the truth of the Buddha's doctrine necessitates a sincere and earnest study and practice.

2/9 QU : Once I came across an old man who was an Islamic. He said that both the Buddha and Jesus Christ were sons of his God the Allah. Thus both were separated into two religions. This is obviously against the accounts on the life of the Buddha. He also said that the disciples of his faith far outnumbered all other faiths in the world. Is there any truth in this boast of his?

ANS : Such is the characteristic of the theistic religions. It should be noted that in such religions what



God came last is to be the greatest, the topmost of the ones that came before that. This is nothing but to inflate one's ego against the others. Just think of what is called the beauty contest. England arranged the contest for the title of Miss World i.e. the most beautiful girl in the world. Now the United States did the same thing, but offered the grander title of Miss Universe. Literally speaking, such a title contest must be participated by the girls from other planets in this solar system, or even from planets in other remote system of other suns. But the fact is that there is no girl from any other planet coming. *Thus the Miss Universe title is nothing but to make it sound grander than the Miss World title of England.* In the same way Lords Shiva and Nārāyana, being the Brahmanist gods of the mountains and the oceans. When later Lord Brahma was created, he became the creator of Shiva and Nārāyana. This shows how *various gods are created by human beings*, who want to boast that the god they created must be superior to the one before those others. This is why, as earlier mentioned, the Buddha has become the son of Allah, the god of Islam, which was born more than 1,000 years after Buddhism, whereas Christianity was born more than 500 years after Buddhism. These are therefore



nothing but to make one's own god superior to those of other religions due to their own superiority complex.

2/10 QU : The Islamic people told me that there used to be a debate in which all other religious representatives including Buddhists were invited to discuss which is superior to all others. It was agreed in the assembly that Islam was the foremost, being superior to all other religions in the world. To what extent is this true?

ANS : Of course, this is true, to themselves, that is. The same is also true to Christians and Buddhists, both of whom claim that their own religions are foremost, supreme and highest. But we have to take other matters into account as well. Formerly, the number of Buddhists was greatest; Christians the second; but this must include all of their schools and sects, since Christianity has several schools. Then Islam comes the third and Hinduism the fourth. But only three religions i.e. Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, are regarded as



world religions. This is because the religion that has been recognised as world religion must have its disciples spread out in so many countries and nations, not the one for any specific country. As for Hinduism there are about 600 or 700 million Hindus, possibly 800 million. But they are all Indians, so it is not yet a world religion. At present, as far as the number of disciples is concerned, Christianity comes first; Islam the second; Hinduism the third, while Buddhism the fourth. Now, the number of Buddhists used to be about 511 million, but where are they now? They are in China and Mongolia, who are now forced to be Communists. This is true also in Vietnam, North Korea, Cambodia and Laos, most of them having been converted into Communists. Thus, where the number is considered, Buddhism cannot boast about it any more. In fact, the real Theravada School exists only in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, whereas there is still the Mahayana School in such countries as Japan and South Korea.

According to the Report of the United Nations declared in the middle of B.E. 2526, of all the population of the world numbering 4,586 million, the following list shows the percentage of various religious disciples :



| | | |
|-----------------|-----------|---------------|
| Christians | 35 % i.e. | 1,605,100,000 |
| Confucius | 11 % i.e. | 504,460,000 |
| Buddhism | 11 % i.e. | 504,460,000 |
| Hinduism | 12 % i.e. | 550,320,000 |
| Islam | 15 % i.e. | 687,900,000 |
| Other religions | 16 % i.e. | 733,760,000 |

2/11 QU : It is often argued that Bhikkhus are useless surplus, doing nothing but being parasitic consumers, living on the people's almsfood and other things. They have done nothing for the development of the country. What is your idea in this matter?

ANS : If the term 'surplus' is meant to imply not to do or take part in such labours or works as the farmers, the gardeners and other industrial workers, then the armed forces must also be called surplus; so are the teachers and the physicians, since all of them take no part in the production sector. It must be noted, therefore, that this is in accordance with the principle of 'division of labour or duty' in a heterogeneous



society, where different groups of people have different kinds of work to do for the security of the whole. Such being the case, Bhikkhus render their service in religious matter; other groups of people also have other, different duties to perform. Thus the accusation that Bhikkhus are useless surplus is groundless, based on fault-finding attitude. If they are to be accused as being the non-productive section of society, then the penitentiaries and the armed forces have not produced anything in the factories. But each group has its own responsibility to perform. Should all the people in a country take part in the production projects, where would those productions be kept? And who will be the buyers or consumers? Such an accusation, based on a fault-finding attitude, is groundless, unjust and nonsensical.



Highlights of the Chapter II



There is a slogan that all religions have the same purpose and as such are equal in quality and status. This is not true. It is like saying that all the people of the world are by nature human beings. It overlooks the fact that they are different in characters, tendencies, degrees of maturity and so forth.

There is a criticism to the effect that the Precepts of Buddhism are too many for human beings to observe fully. It was concluded that the person who did so (i.e the Buddha) was insane.

Buddhists and Buddhism are being ravaged; the filthy thieves are breaking into our home; we call for help from the police. But the police say they cannot do anything, since they must be neutral, unable to move to give us any help.



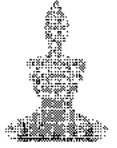
The Vatican is planning to create the Vatican city state in Thailand. If the plan should work out successfully, it would mean Thailand has lost her independence and integrity, becoming thereby two countries, one of which would be under the Vatican ruling power.

All religious founders were similarly blessed with loving-kindness and compassion towards all sentient beings. But after the demise of those religious founders, their disciples later misused, or rather abused, the power for the sake of their own interest and glory. These result in inhuman violence and slaughtering.

Religious wars are freakish by nature as far as the aim of peace and unity of all religions are concerned.

We must not be heedless of the threatening circumstances but always be on the alert for self-defence. We learn from history that man never learned from history.

The cooperation on the part of many celebrities in our country is only superficial or perfunctory, being just 'skin-deep', so to speak.



CHAPTER III

QUESTIONS CONCERNING EDUCATION SYSTEM

3/1 QU : From your view-point, is there anything in the general national education plan that should be supported and opposed?

ANS : This problem is to be looked upon from both sides, or both angles. Whatever change introduces new concepts or practices is always disagreeable and opposed by a group of people. The reason for this is that, from time immemorial ever since the beginning of human history, the usual and stubborn obstacle is born of the deep sentimental attachment to the former tradition, belief and practice. They are timidly afraid of changes, which are characteristics of the changing world.



All things being impermanent, sooner or later they are bound to undergo a change when confronted with the changing circumstances. However, the main point is not whether or not something should be changed. If need be, the changes are to be accepted. But we must exercise our wisdom power, directing the manners of change to the benefit of us as much as possible.

Such being the case, it is impossible to expect everyone to support it. Some opposition in one form or another there must be. One human being is not the 'xeroxed copy' of another or the others. Each approaches the problem from different angles, due to the basis of his or her level of wisdom development power, which is, of course, more or less different in each case.

As far as the study of Buddhism is concerned, there is no need to be similar to the general education system of the government. It should be noted here that the study of *Nakdham* (i.e. Buddhism in Thai) and Pāli (i.e. Buddhism in Pāli) as they are at present were initiated by His Royal Highness Prince Vajirañāṇavarorasa, the then Supreme Patriarch of the Thai Order of Sangha. He was vehemently criticised in various ways,



including a deluge of anonymous letters insulting him wantonly that he had demolished the ancient traditions. But, *being sure it was really beneficial, he struggled on valiantly, introducing whatever was sure to improve the former method and in order to keep up with the changing circumstances.* Now it is about 100 years after his courageous initiation, we have seen how the study of Buddhism he had initiated is really beneficial in keeping up with the situation at present.

Before that time i.e. about 100 years ago, the Bhikkhus were the leaders in everything, including intellectual knowledge and other branches of knowledge in those times. The Thai monasteries were the educational, cultural and spiritual centre of the people. Various arts and sciences, including medicine and even the art of fighting, were studied within the Buddhist monasteries, which were then something like the highest educational institutions i.e. the universities of the country. The stone inscriptions in the monastery of Bodhi in Bangkok are evidence of this fact. When later on the government stepped in to plan the national education system, the Bhikkhus were steadily overtaken by the lay disciples until now they are said to have



gone farther forward than the Bhikkhus. In some aspect the Bhikkhus can be said to be lagging far behind them as far as the modern scientific and intellectual knowledges are concerned. However, in their position as spiritual guides for the people, they are still unchanged. The Buddha is called '*Lokavidū*' : having realised the nature or the truths of the worlds (*both of human beings and the cosmos*). He was also '*Vijācaranasampanna* : perfect in knowledge or wisdom and conduct, living thereby an exemplary life worthy of being leaders to his disciples, since they are imbued with both the faith in his knowledge and exemplary life and conduct. That he was *Lokavidū* : having realised the nature or the truths of the worlds, both of human beings and the cosmos, enabled him to understand the nature and tendencies of his disciples. His teachings were therefore in accordance with the tendencies and degrees of receptivity or maturity of those who came to him to listen to his teachings. That was why he was blessed with an outstanding success within a short time.

Under present circumstances, Bhikkhus are bound to study some parts and some kinds of worldly knowledge in order to keep up with the people. As



matters stand today, quite a number of Bhikkhus who have been ordained for a long time were educated only in the primary education. There are few who have passed the secondary education or the university level before being ordained and there is still none of them who are well-known and appreciated by the people in general. Many there are who have passed the secondary level and continue their education while being ordained. This would take not less than ten years before they are able to do anything to be acknowledged and appreciated by the people. It is for this reason that Bhikkhus at present should know something of modern worldly knowledge so that they can apply it as medium by which they can teach the people and be respected by the people at large.

This new education plan for the Bhikkhus was initiated by the Supreme Patriarch of the monastery of Makutkasatriyāram and has achieved a degree of satisfactory progress. There are at present more than 30 schools of this system. Those who agree with this plan are those who are able to look at the situation from the same angle, seeing that there is to be some essential change for progress. Even in the teaching of *Nakdham* (*the study of Buddhism in Thai*) and of Pāli



(the study of Buddhism in Pali language from the Scriptures) should also be improved as far as the method of teaching, the assessing of results including other related aspects, are considered to keep up with the rapidly changing circumstances and to supply the need of modern man in this age of scientific and technological progress.

However, there are also other factors to be taken into account. The situation in Thailand is not the same as that in Burma and Sri Lanka. We have the tradition of having our youths ordained, at least for a period of time. Of those having been ordained, more than 95% stayed in the Bhikkhuhood temporarily. After that they returned to the life of house-holders. It is worth noting that, *should those 95% not return to lay life, or even should 50% of them stay on in the Bhikkhuhood for the rest of their lives, there would have been no place for them in Thailand, since all the monasteries in Thailand would then be crowded, or rather overcrowded, within 5 years.* Thus those youths who wish to be ordained in the following i.e. in the sixth year would have no place in any monastery left for them. This fact should therefore not be overlooked. It is a reality that must be considered intelligently.



Nowadays, this new system of Bhikkhus' education had made substantial progress. Many of those Bhikkhus who have studied in this system have graduated. Some of them, having left the Bhikkhuhood, continued their education in the state universities. These show how there are those who support it as well as others who oppose it. This is to be expected in all cases and at all times. Even the Buddha himself was no exception to this.

Thus religious matters are also subject to criticism as well as to support. **There should be no fear or dread of the opposing voices if the initiative is beneficial to many.** Only what is harmful to many should be abstained from. Were we to take into account others' criticism in judging our initiative, then we would be doing nothing at all. It was said that some time ago there was an old Bhikkhu making the handle of a knife that was made of a kind of wood soaked in a kind of good lacquer. He asked those who come to see it whether it was good or beautiful or not. Some of them said that it should be improved, whereas others advised that it should be corrected there. Finally, that knife handle could not be used for any purpose, since



it became too small after many corrections and improvements. This is an instance how it is impossible to please everybody, since by doing so you must be pleasing nobody at all.

It should be noted also that this new system of modern Bhikkhus' education does not abandon the principles of the Dhamma and the Discipline in any way. On the contrary, it helps improve and expand the Bhikkhus' knowledge of both the Dhamma and the Vinaya better i.e. wider than the former system called Nakdham and Pali earlier mentioned. Supposing a Bhikkhu studies the highest i.e. the third grade of Nakdham course. Then he went on to study Pali until he reached the fourth grade. Thus is equal to the time spent in the general government education plan, the students of which has a wider range of knowledge in modern subjects, since the Nakdham course consists of no such subjects. In this matter there are, of course, both those who support and those who oppose it, depending on how much which one is more than the other. Now that it is really beneficial to most people in the long run, there should be no hesitation but to take courage in doing it and facing all adverse criticism.



3/2 QU : There is a ceremony for worshipping or recalling with gratitude the kindness of the teachers who impart their knowledge to their pupils. Is there anything to make it connected with religion?

ANS : This kind of activity is in fact connected with Buddhism already, since it begins with the worshipping of the Triple Gem, the chanting of scriptural passages. In some places the students have to observe the Precepts, while in other places there is no such observance as a necessity. The passages praising the virtues of the teachers are

I pay homage to my teachers
Who inspired me with their teaching,
Gave me benefit beyond measure.
Their instruction so inspiring.

With gratitude I recollect
Both their compassion and goodwill.
Herewith I offer my respect
For their selfless service until



I have achieved success so far.
May I remain well-established
In their teaching as guiding star
With my aim and task accomplished.

This so I may in future be
Able to proffer some benefit
To my home and my beloved country.
All this really to your credit.

From the above passages we shall see the students are taught to realise the magnanimous character of the teachers who have taken pains to teach and educate their students to be able to apply the knowledge taught to them to their life and work. Thus the students are advised to recall with a sense of gratitude and reverence towards the teachers for the latter's goodwill and compassion. They recall the benefit they have derived from the teachers by doing what they have been taught to do. This is already connected with religion, especially where in such places there are the Buddha image and the offerings as representing the Triple Gem. The best way in doing so during such rites is for the teachers to explain to the students the details of the teachers'



beneficial and compassionate attitude towards the students. While chanting the virtues of the Triple Gem from various scriptural texts, there are always the solemn praise of the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. The teachers should associate those virtues with what they have studied from them in the schools.

3/3 QU : Between parents and Bhikkhus, whom should we respect and revere more than the other due to the fact that they both seem to be beneficial to our life equally?

ANS : There should be no question in this matter. In our capacity as offspring, we should take care of our parents most of all, on the grounds that they have given our lives, being like the Lord Brahma and the first teachers of the offspring. What is to be especially noted is that they are compared to the Arahantas within our home, besides being the best friends of the offspring. To take care of the parents and wait upon their wants are the moral responsibility of the offspring. In fact,



sometimes we may not be in the position to do our best. Yet if it is the best we can do then we can be satisfied.

To revere and respect the Bhikkhus, including giving them the almsfood and taking care of them in other ways, is the moral duty of Buddhists as a result of our faith and merit resources, to the extent that it is possible for us. Of course, this is due to some opportunity on some occasions, since we cannot meet the Bhikkhus very often or at all times. As far as waiting upon them is concerned, there is no need to do to them as carefully and as often as to do so to our parents. The offspring are therefore duty-bound to wait upon them as much as possible and as often as possible. This is the essential difference between taking care of the parents and the Bhikkhus.



3/4 QU : While giving a sermon or a lecture, it usually arouses little attention on the part of the listeners. It is 'tasteless,' so to speak, if only the Dhamma is explained. Should we insert something humorous or laughable to arouse the listeners' attention, would it be inappropriate or indecent to do so?

ANS : The purpose of explaining the Dhamma of the Buddha is to promote the listeners' understanding of the Dhamma and to apply it to their daily life and work. To insert something humorous or laughable, as is the characteristic of lay people, is inadvisable although some, or many people may find it pleasing and agreeable for them. There is a disciplinary offence in the Vinaya i.e. the *Dukkata* to do so. It should be enough for the Bhikkhus to cite some instances that will make the listeners smile, such as saying the word of wit or wisdom in a story concerning somebody. This is called *Sampahansana* i.e. making the listeners delighted and encouraged in doing good, not just making it a rude or obscene joke that satisfies the voluptuous tastes and indulgences of the people.



Such a manner of preaching is indecent and unbuddhistic in every way. Many people who take delight in such a manner of preaching cited several examples that are vulgar and obscene, having nothing to do with the Buddhist principle of renunciation and wisdom at all.

It must be noted that the real purpose of delivering a sermon or giving a lecture on Dhamma is to prevent the minds of the people from being carried helplessly away by the current of defilements such as to indulge in sensual pleasure, which, of course, can never be fully satisfied. Such a greed or lust is insatiable, making the people overlook or be blind to the truths of life. Now, *if the Bhikkhus or the lecturers make a religion of vulgar and obscene jokes in their sermons or lectures, it will be like accelerating the speed and the power of defilements over the minds of the people.* By doing so there is nothing to be gained, except the loss and the harmful effects on the people's minds, which are already submissive and susceptible to the influence of defilements. What we should do is to follow the Buddha's method of giving real-life instances and similes or metaphors to strengthen the people's will power to do good and abandon evil. To treat the Buddha's



Dhamma as a vulgar joke, the people will remember only the joking aspect of the story. They will not be able to realise the truths of the Buddha's teachings. Such being the case, Bhikkhus should not degrade themselves by treating the Buddha's Dhamma as a joking vulgar story just to please the people's natural desire for such a cheap and vulgar pleasure.

3/5 QU : The purpose of taking the children to listen to sermons is to convince them how to do what is really beneficial to themselves. But it is most often almost impossible to change their childish nature and view-points. They find those sermons very boring to them and are not willing to go to the monasteries for such a purpose. How or in what means can this attitude of theirs be corrected?

ANS : The feeling of being bored while listening to the Dhamma sermons or lectures can in fact occur to teachers as well as to the students. This is the ordinary fact to be expected of most people, who



shun having to fight against the tempting power of defilements. They feel how it is pleasant and enjoyable to be carried along by the current of defilement, thus being able to play when they want to play, to enjoy themselves in other ways such as to drink alcohol whenever they feel like it. Such is the nature of ordinary worldlings.

To listen to the Dhamma is to be taught the reason or decency of not submitting themselves unconditionally to defilements. It is, of course, against the feeling and the nature of the ordinary minds. Many people are tempted to feel that they have lost their priceless freedom to indulge themselves in sensual pleasure. This is true not only in the present time. Even in the times of the Buddha, he once said, *“So few people can reach the other shore on the other side of the ocean. Most of them can only stroll leisurely along this side of the ocean.”*

It is to be admitted that only few of devotees can achieve the full-final point of attainment. Many are able, if anything at all, to realise only some points of the Dhamma or understand it superficially. It is therefore



up to the teachers who have realised how this is really beneficial to the children to find some ways and means to convince the children of the value of the Buddha Dhamma the way some physicians apply. This is to coat the bitter medicine with sugar so that the patients may find it tolerable to them. Of course, the purpose here is not to have the patients eat sugar, which is only a medium by which they can swallow or accept the bitter medicine without a repulsive feeling against the medicine given them.

As a matter of fact, to teach Dhamma to a modern man it is advisable for the preachers to insert some stories concerning a real-life drama as illustrations. This so that the people or the children may be convinced of the value of the Buddha Dhamma, which is indispensable for their life. After a time they will be encouraged to take more interest in the religious aspect. However, this takes both the time and the patience, including the tact and wit, of the teachers or preachers, who do not give up their efforts easily after a few failures in their attempt. This is in a way like learning how to read, which requires persistent efforts on the part of both the teachers and the students.



3/6 QU : From the Buddhist stand-point, to what extent is the life of a teacher associated with the Dhamma?

ANS : This does not require so much thought. Just think of the 9 epithets of the Buddha's virtues and we shall see how the Buddha was blessed with the unexcelled characteristics of a perfect teacher, in both his attainment and noble, exemplary conduct. Those 9 epithets are :

1. **ARAHAM** : The Buddha was an Arahant i.e. one who is absolutely freed from the influence of defilements, being thus absolutely purified.

2. **SAMMĀSAMBUDHO** : His Enlightenment was through his own efforts. This concerns the knowledge, the spiritual attainment that is full-final and unexcelled.

3. **VIJĀCARAṄASAMPANNO** : He was perfect in both *Vijjā* and *Carāṇa*, the former implying the knowledge he imparted to his disciples, whereas the



latter referring to the conduct or behaviour that was exemplary, worthy to be followed by all his disciples.

4. **SUGATO** : The Well-gone. This means he always radiated his loving-kindness and compassion to all the people wherever he went and stayed. He always did his duty as the teacher, which in this case was the supreme teacher of the worlds.

5. **LOKAVIDŪ** : The World-knower. This refers to his supreme knowledge in all respects about the world of human beings and the cosmos. Thus he was able to make use of his supreme knowledge to teach the world in a variety of ways.

6. **ANUTTARO PURISADAMMASĀRATHI** : He was the supreme trainer of the people. This is nothing but the unexcelled characteristic of a teacher. He was able to find out the ways and means to suit the tendencies, aptitudes and the degree of maturity of each of his disciples through various principles and means by which to convert the wicked people into the virtuous one and then to the levels of different stages of the Noble Disciples.



7. **SATTHĀ DEVAMANUSSĀNAM** : Teacher of celestial and human beings. The meaning here is clear enough to prove his unexcelled ability as a teacher.

8. **BUDDHO** : The Knower, the Awakened One. This implies the ability of awakening his disciples from the sleep nightmares of Ignorance. This stressed his twofold ability viz. his personal quality and his ability to teach and awaken his disciples from their sleep and dreams or nightmares of Ignorance.

9. **BHAGAVĀ** : One who taught the Dhamma of his discovery in various elaborate details to suit the tendencies and receptivity of his disciples.

This is why he has been given the appellation of the *Teacher of teachers*.

In establishing the Order of Sangha, if we look back into historical records, we shall see that the Buddha's main purpose of sending his Arahant Bhikkhus to disseminate the Dhamma for the first time consisted of three main points viz.

a. To propagate the Dhamma i.e. his teachings for the people to study it.



b. Having studied the Dhamma, they will be encouraged to live that Dhamma i.e. putting it into practice in their life and work.

c. To be able to teach other people to do the same thing i.e. to study and practise the Dhamma.

It should be noted that the third is the direct responsibility of the teachers. How inspiring was the Buddha's instruction given to the first missionary Bhikkhu group of his can be known from the following passage :

“I have, O Bhikkhus, been delivered from all bonds of the divine or celestials as well as those of human beings. The same is true for you. All of you go forward for the benefit, advantage and happiness of the human and celestial beings. Do preach the Dhamma that is beautiful in the beginning, in the middle and at the end, perfect in both implication and connotations. There are beings whose layer of defilements is not so crude and thick. Those beings, not having listened to the Dhamma, will decline and deteriorate in their spiritual development.”

The above passage reflects the Buddha's purpose in establishing the Order of Sangha i.e. to perform the



duty of teachers for the sake of beings in the world with the spirit of compassion.

The Buddha's methods of teaching may be classified into three ways as follows :

1. To teach the people to realise the truths that should be realised and that they can realise;
2. To teach with the support of reason by which the listeners may ponder upon before realising those truths;
3. To teach in what may be called a '*miraculous*' way. This means those who follow his Dhamma will be able to realise it, to the extent of their practice and the degree of their own maturity.

All these are nothing but the teachers' duty and responsibility, rendering benefits to listeners or students. As far as the Order of Sangha is concerned, the Buddha had also established the main points of teaching for the benefit of the people in their capacity as teachers. There are six main points as follows :

1. To teach them not to do evil;
2. To teach them to do good;
3. To render with the compassionate attitude whatever service is possible to the people;



4. To teach the people what they have never known or heard of before;
5. To make much clearer what they have known and heard of before;
6. To tell them the practice leading to birth in a realm of bliss.

There are the methods of teaching for the spiritual refinement and development, enabling them to live a life of happiness and security both in the present and the future.

The qualities required of the Bhikkhu teachers were also established as follows :

1. To teach the Dhamma or the principles systematically, not haphazardly;
2. To support the teachings with reason, instances, comparison, accounts concerning some individuals in order to make the listeners realise the truth;
3. To teach with the intention to produce some benefit to the listeners;
4. Not to teach with the intention to win wealth and fame or respect on the part of the listeners;
5. Not to teach or preach with the intention to criticise others; nor to praise oneself and treat others with contempt.



All these show how all-inclusive are the duties and responsibilities of religious teachers, encompassing a wide range of all levels and kinds of teachers. At present, there is still one important thing that worldly educational institutions cannot succeed, be they on the kindergarten level or the university one. This is to lead an exemplary life in applying the Dhamma of the Buddha in order to be the inspiring models for their students. If they can do so, they will spontaneously be blessed with the results proportionate to their level of spiritual development.

It is for this reason that the Buddha was given the epithet, “The All-Enlightened One through his own efforts’. By means of his own method of teaching there occurred a group of people called *Anubuddha* i.e. those who followed his practice until they have attained to the same Enlightenment, being thereby called *Ariyasāvaka* or Noble Disciples. In this aspect it will be seen that the works of ordinary teachers of worldly subjects cannot be compared with those of the Buddha’s Noble Disciples. This is because the **scope of Buddhism is not limited to any specific individual or group of individuals. Its aim is for the sake of people in all**



walks of life and ages that are in the position to learn, to understand and to practise. There is also a system that can be applied to any of those individuals or groups, no matter in what status or level of society they are. On some occasions and for some individuals there is no need to learn or study so much, for if they can sincerely and earnestly put into practice whatever little they have learned and understood, they can achieve the success or attainment in proportion to their level of maturity. There is thus no reason for suspicion or doubt as to why different individuals can acquire far different results from their practice of the Dhamma. The Buddhist system of teaching was established with the spirit of self-sacrifice for the sake of the people as a whole. It is often argued that Bhikkhus do not have to pay the house-rent, nor do they buy food, since they can get it as almsfood offered them by the devotees. This may be true in one aspect, but on second thought how many people there are who have not paid the house-rent and do not buy food that can work selflessly as the Bhikkhus have been doing? So we shall see that the work of Buddhist Bhikkhus is really that of teachers, following the foot-steps of the Buddha, the Supreme Teacher as the religious founder who was



the teacher of both human and celestial beings. It is the perfect model of the working and spirit of a real teacher in the best sense of the term.

3/7 QU : I would like to have your idea of how to train and educate the youths to have a correct understanding of Buddhism so they can follow the path of decent and righteous behaviour.

ANS : The most significant point is **how** to create an image or model inspiring respect and reverence on the part of the youths. This is to point out the benefit obtainable from the examination marks and the permanent benefit obtainable from the Dhamma practice. This is its positive aspect, which is to be followed by making them realise the negative one. Although the marks to be obtained from the study are still superficial and only tangible, yet they are the bases for the real understanding, making them more enthusiastic in their study based on recognition also of the inner, more refined value.



Psychologically speaking, before a person is willing to do anything, he must be made to foresee the benefit obtainable therefrom, especially the one that can be shared by others. For instance, if we want to urge a person to plant a tree, we must point out the benefit obtainable therefrom so that he may be willing and earnest to do so, especially when he knows the effect is on a wider scale. If, for instance, a teacher asks the students to plant a coconut-tree, telling them that each tree will produce only one fruit, then there will be few students who are willing to follow his advice. The teacher must explain in details how one coconut-tree can produce quite a number of coconut-fruits, including several other products from various other parts of the tree as by-products or bonus for quite a number of years, possibly until they grow old. With such an inspiring suggestion the students will certainly be willing and enthusiastic in planting the coconut-trees.

This is the principle of suggestion, which stresses the usefulness or benefits to be obtained in details. Some effects may not be obvious. Here the teachers must try to make the students realise their value. From the Buddhist stand-point, all efforts must start with what



is called *Chanda* or interest and enthusiasm, which is one i.e. the first one of the four *Iddhipāda* : sources of success. It rests, therefore, on the teachers' tact and wit how to arouse the students' interest and enthusiasm first of all. This is indispensable for the teacher before he can win the students' respect, belief and willingness to follow his suggestion.

3/8 QU : Is there any means by which to prevent the people from following blindly the social activities that indulge in vulgar and nauseous taste?

ANS : This is to stress the spirit of self-responsibility. An instance at present can be cited in the case of the people's struggle for what is called democracy. If each individual learns **what** is his own duty, **what** is others' rights, thereby trying to do one's best within the limit of one's ability and discipline, one will not overstep one's limits nor interfere in others' affairs. This means self-control and self-discipline, being able to analyse with discriminating wisdom whatever comes his way. He will not be 'sucked' as it were, (in the



vernacular term) by anybody or anything. *That there are often chaos and confusion today betrays the people's lack of self-discipline and self-control, not knowing where and when they should stop and look at things from another angle.*

3/9 QU : How can we teach the children to understand the meaning of the term 'NIBBĀNA'?

ANS : We can make it simple so they can understand. First of all, let them know that NIBBĀNA means the extinction. If they ask what is extinguished, then we tell them that it is the extinction or the end of all evils. There is no need to use the term Kilesa or Defilements. We tell them that anger is a kind of evil, so are envy, laziness and lack of respect. Thus they must put an end to those evils. When they abandon laziness, they become diligent. If they can abandon anger, they become normal, cool and peaceful. If they abandon greed, they become generous. After that all sufferings as a result of anger, laziness, greed and other



evils will be put an end to. This is Nibbāna, at least in a small way. This will make them understand that in fact most people are able to attain such a parallel of Nibbāna more or less in their life. The teacher can cite an instance of a student who is usually lazy and tell him to abandon or stop that laziness, which is evil or, politely speaking, is a bad thing. This until they can understand the general meaning of the term 'Kilesa' or defilement. Then the students will become diligent in order to abandon that laziness. This means that the sufferings that will result from failing in the examination, from being unemployed, or from being punished by the teachers or by their parents will not occur to them any more. Such is a parallel of Nibbāna, when the fire of defilements is extinguished. This results in the extinction of all sufferings. They must also be made to understand that all sufferings result from being under the power of emotional impulses. If they can conquer such a condition of mind and abandon or abolish evil powers or Kilesa, all sufferings as a result thereof will be abolished.

This means to make it simple and easy to understand for the children. There should not be the use of high-sounding, technical terms in the beginning,



otherwise it would make them bored. It also rests upon the degree of susceptibility or maturity of each student how much they can understand and apply it to their life. If they are highly developed spiritually, there will be no problem in doing so. But the simple explanation is also indispensable. An instance may be cited in the case of not returning anger with anger, otherwise it will breed more serious anger; or the case of returning a friend's evil act with good and compassionate one; even in the case of winning the heart of a miser with kind or reasonable words. What results from being able to do so is the peace and tranquility, both of the body and the mind.

What should be done further, after citing instances of various kinds as mentioned above, is to tell them what good and evil effects there are of doing good and doing evil the way they have experienced themselves in their concerted efforts. A student who appears to be incurably lazy or aggressive should be asked so he can find the result himself. A story or an account of some people in the past should also be related to the children so they may be able to criticise those in the stories intelligently, knowing how some are good and friendly,



whereas others are evil and should be shunned by all. This, in the end, should lead them to the understanding that such a peace, both of the body and the mind, can be called remote parallel of the condition called Nibbāna. This will give them a general understanding until they grow up and are ready to understand and be receptive of more refined teachings.

**The Royal Proclamation indicating
the Resolution of King
Buddhayodfaculalok the Great
(King Rama I)**

**“It is my wish to patronise
Buddhism as national religion
Then to defend and stabilise
The country, the people as free men.”**



Highlights of the Chapter III



All things being impermanent, sooner or later they are bound to undergo a change when confronted with the changing circumstances..... If need be, the changes are to be accepted.

Under present circumstances, Bhikkhus are bound to study some parts and some kinds of worldly knowledge in order to keep up with the people.

It is worth noting that, should most (i.e. 95% of) Bhikkhus not return to lay life, or even should 50% of them stay in the Bhikkhuhood for the rest of their lives, there would have been no place for them in Thailand, since all the monasteries would then be overcrowded, within 5 years.

There should be no fear or dread of opposing voices if the initiative is beneficial to many... Were we



to take into account others' criticism in judging our initiative, then we would be doing nothing at all.

One characteristic of giving sermon is *Sampahansana* : to make the listeners delighted and encouraged in doing good, not just to make it a rude and obscene joke that satisfies the voluptuous taste and indulgences of the people. Such a manner of preaching is indecent and unbuddhistic in every way.

The works of ordinary teachers of worldly subjects cannot be compared with those of the Buddha's Noble Disciples. This is because the scope of Buddhism is not limited to any specific individual or group of individuals. Its aim is for the sake of the people in all walks of life and ages that are in the position to learn, to understand and to practise.

That there are often chaos and confusion today betrays the people's lack of self-discipline and self-control, not knowing where and when they should stop and look at things from another angle.



CHAPTER IV

QUESTIONS CONCERNING EXECUTIVES AND SUBORDINATES

4/1 QU : Please tell how to abandon the prejudices based on love or affection towards the executive.

ANS : This is a queer question. The term '*Chandāgati*' means prejudice based on love or affection. That it is queer is because on most cases most people generally have a prejudice based on hate or anger against the executive. Thus we can find in many instances on many occasions the subordinates are inclined to put the blame on their bosses, criticising them adversely, saying that they should not have done this and that. The citizens also point an accusing finger at the government, Bhikkhus within a monastery also reproach their abbots, the retinue censure their leader, the children reproach



their own parents. But the questioner in this case refers to the prejudice based on the feeling of love or affection. Thus there can be two points in answer to this question as follows :

The first point may be that those who are criticised or repoached are really good or virtuous people, worthy of respect and reverence. In such a case it is not wrong; nor is it an evil, that we should express our goodwill by admiring respectfully the virtuous qualities that they really have. Of course, this does not mean we should do so to flatter them, worming our way into their affection. Such a behaviour is really a debased and detested one.

The second point is based on seeking a refuge or shelter by attaching oneself to those in power with the sole intention of self-interest and self-benefit. This is different from the first point in that the former pays respect and admires the superiors through their virtuous qualities, whereas the latter aims at the gains or benefit to accrue to oneself. However, in case we submit ourselves unconditionally to their ideas, no matter whether they are right or wrong and decent or indecent,



then it is not based only on the prejudice of love, but also on one of *Moha* i.e. delusion. *This is because a superior is, generally speaking, still a worldling, being liable to do something wrong on some occasions. If through our prejudice of love or affection, we always agree with him, no matter whether it is right or wrong, then there is danger when we agree to what he does or says that is wrong or evil. There are often instances of this kind of flattering just for the benefit of one's own interest, instead of that of one's superiors.*

4/2 QU : I accept the truth that the Dhamma can purify the mind. Now what I am still in doubt is the problem how the Dhamma can be of benefit to the poor people who have to live from hand to mouth, often having not enough to feed or nourish their bodies, and also how the Dhamma can cope with the problem of corruption.

ANS : As far as the poor people are concerned, there are two points to be taken into account as follows:



a) **The hard-working poor.** These refer to a number of poor people who are always hard-working, trying to help themselves to the best of their ability. Yet they cannot raise themselves from that mire, unable to make the ends meet. Such cases require the spirit of compassion on the part of other well-to-do people who sympathetically understand them and are willing to give them whatever help is possible. However, there are not so many of such cases. If their situation is widely known, there are sure to be quite a number of pious people who willingly come to their rescue and raise them from such a pitiful condition. *If such poverty-stricken people are known to be really hard-working and to have tried their best to help themselves already, there will be many magnanimous persons who come to offer them helping hand until those poverty-stricken people can raise themselves satisfactorily from the hand-to-mouth existence.*

b) **The lazy and fun-loving poor.** This category of people always makes a religion of fun, entertainment, being spendthrifts loving all kinds of luxuries and being intoxicated in various kinds of drugs. Often they spend their life in being involved in the sources of ruin such



as gambling, night roving, indulging in sensual, or sexual, pleasures. The Dhamma applied for the above-mentioned case cannot be applied here in the same manner. Others' help will aggravate the situation, making them sink deeper into the mires or the sources of ruin. To help this category of people will make matters worse, even bringing the downfall of society and the country as a whole. Often there can be found quite a number of these people pretending to be poverty-stricken so they can be offered help from other people.

In order to solve this problem, there are two points to be considered. First of all, they must be convinced of their responsibility for the future of their own life. Before expecting or requesting help from others, they must try to help themselves to the best of their ability.

While trying to help themselves, they must apply the Dhamma of the Buddha to their life and work, both negatively and positively. On the negative aspect, they must follow the Buddha's teaching to abstain from the sources of ruin, which, first of all, is the tendency to be lazy in work, not to argue that it



is now too cold, too hot, too early, too late, and others such as it is now raining, it is now a very hot day, I am now still hungry, I am now very thirsty. All these arguments against beginning their work must be abandoned, since such conditions are normal and occur to everybody at all times.

On the positive aspect, they must be hard-working in whatever is their duty and responsibility. With persevering diligence and persistent efforts, there can be no problem of object poverty, except that such efforts are based on delusion or ignorance, not knowing **when, what** and **where** anything should or should not be done. This kind of delusion can be also the source of the problem of poverty. However, having obtained the money as the result of intelligent hard working, a person should save part of it for 'the rainy days', not to indulge in gambling, alcoholic drinks, other intoxications and sexual affairs.

There is a saying to the effect that money does not grow on trees. This implies the fact that it cannot be obtained easily. Only with patience and courage to face the hardships can it be obtained. If we use it



carelessly and luxuriously, just to gratify the ephemeral, sensual pleasure, it will be impossible to raise ourselves beyond the mire of privation and destitution. At the same time we must also be careful i.e. selective in associating with people. This means to stay away from evil people, who will lead us into evil ways. In other words, this is the middle way of frugality or thriftiness, as opposed to extravagance and miserliness.

Such is how the Dhamma can be of significant benefit to those who apply it intelligently. What is to be noted here is the fact that the Dhamma is not merely the inspiring power from any divine being. It is the virtuous qualities, the truth, the law of cause and effect, to be incorporated into one's own life and work. This is in accordance with salutation passages for the Dhamma, one of which is '*Opanāyiko*' i.e. to be incorporated into one's own mind and daily practice. It is by doing so that the Dhamma can protect the aspirants like a great umbrella protecting a person from the rains.

Such is how the Dhamma can help the people, especially the poverty-stricken one. It does not mean that they are bound to remain in that destitute condition



at all time. *If those people have a determined will, willing to 'put their shoulders to the wheel', then there will occur a way by which at least to reduce their depressed condition to a certain extent.* However, in case there are obstacles insurmountable to them, then other people with a sympathetic compassion and understanding are always willing to come to their rescue. This has happened in several places on several occasions.

The problem of corruption. Now comes the most significant point of the question : the problem of corruption and how to remedy this deplorable situation. This dishonest, illegal or immoral behaviour, being harmful to both the people and the government, often implies such a detestable act on the part of the government officials. As a matter of fact, such an act, for instance, of *bribery implies both sides i.e. the givers and the receivers. It is a two-sided affair.* Such an act on the part of the giver is not done through the feeling of love or goodwill. It is done to obtain the selfish benefit, to purchase the convenience, the influences and other privileges, all of them being due to the government and the rightful benefit to accrue to the government. Now the giver of bribe has selfishly



purchased those rights for his own benefit. This is made possible when there are the receivers of bribes, who are none other than the government officials. Thus the giving and the receiving of bribes is a kind of cheating the government. It deprives the government of the rightful benefit which belongs to the government. This loss occurs very often because there are always a number of people offering the tempting bribes to the government officials whose duty is to do everything for the preservation of the benefits to accrue to the government. They feast gluttonously on those corrupted practices, thereby doing harm to both the government and the country as a whole.

This problem of corruption has caused great difficulties and worries to so many countries in this region. It has been this malignant cancer that has brought about the collapse of some of our neighbouring countries, which had lost their freedom and were colonised by foreign powers. The leaders of those countries were occupied only with their own selfish benefits of trying to amass as much wealth for themselves as possible. Their insatiable greed had made them blind to the security and integrity of their own countries.



To solve this seemingly unsolvable problem, the people and the government officials must be made aware of their own status and accept whatever is decent and appropriate to them as far as the scope of their duty and responsibility is concerned. They must be conscious of the fact that each one of them is just a particle of dust in the whole mass of the country. If the country is to face collapse through the selfish and insatiable greed of the citizens of a country, how can an individual remain as a free citizen of a free country?

The next step is to imbue into the minds of both the people and the government officials the conscientious discharge of their duty and responsibility. This is to realise what is the righteous benefit they can enjoy and what is wrong or indecent that they must avoid. This requires the analytical wisdom based on an impartial self-survey so that they may not be under the influences of those temptations. *With an indomitable will and courage, they will be imbued with self-restraint and able to achieve success in whatever is required of them as honest citizens and government officials.*



The cause of corruption is the inordinate greed overwhelming the minds of people. As a matter of fact, as worldlings we cannot absolutely do away with greed, but we are still in the position to control it, keeping it within a decent limit supplemented by right and persistent efforts to acquire what we want. This is to be expected of everybody in the mundane world. The point, therefore, is to be able to check or control it, not to be overruled by it. This is like a fire, which, under control, can be used in various ways for the benefit of our daily life.

Another factor that is to be seriously considered is to enact a law against this evil practice. There was more than 30 years ago an attempt to enact such a law, but without success. It seemed there are still a group of people who wish to preserve this malpractice for their own benefit and who, as a result, are afraid that they might be prevented from doing so. Thus it appears there have been attempts to delay this Act as much as possible, thereby shelving or "freezing" it as long as possible. As a matter of fact, should there be a stringent law on this malpractice, it would be an effective remedy against the chronic influence of corruption. This would



as a result encourage the people to be honest citizens of the country, not resorting to the underhand methods to gratify their insatiable greed. This shows how the chronic, cancerous disease of corruption can be coped with to a satisfactory degree. It could be reduced considerably, if not removed. But this depends on how much each individual can apply the Dhamma in their life and work and abandon their selfish, endless desire in that direction.

4/3 QU : How can we control and discipline the five Khandha i.e. the five Aggregates of Existence?

ANS : This means to control and discipline the thoughts, words and deeds so they cannot stray from what is virtuous into the vicious path. This, of course, depends on self-awareness, realising the benefits of the discipline and the civilization. All these may be regarded as superfluous, being more than what is needed and then impossible for an individual to observe. However, most of them are dependent on a great degree of common-sense, being based on the spirit of not doing harm to



others. *With moral responsibility supplemented by unbiased commonsense, a person will always stop to think of whatever will happen to others, whether or not it will be harmful to others and thus should be avoided.* Of course, it requires a certain degree of self-restraint, which is as a rule in conflict with the dictates of defilements. As worldlings, the power of temptations and environment, including one's own tendency or weak points in various forms, always exert their powers in a person's judgement on all occasions. The virtue of self-restraint as an immunity power is therefore great significance in all places and at all times.

It is for this reason that Buddhism always stresses the persistent efforts in self-training for the sake of self-taming. This is to be done regularly through such dedicated efforts until it becomes the second nature of the Buddhists, being the spontaneous nature of the thoughts, words and deeds. The mind having been developed to such a refined level will be able to immediately check the growth of evil or harmful thoughts of its own. Confronted with the temptations and sinister influences from outside, it will again be able to stop the reaction that will be harmful to itself



and others. The virtue of *Khanti* or patience and forbearance will become characteristic of such a mind, which is then well-disciplined and well-controlled. This, of course, is made possible through *Sati* or mindfulness occurring instantaneously. It is the effective prevention measure against unwholesome and detrimental reaction and response to circumstances.

With such self-discipline and self-restraint, it is certain that various problems and difficulties, be they of families, societies or even the country as a whole, will be considerably reduced. There is no need, then for any person in authority to issue a command or enforce a prohibition. The quality of the citizens of a country will be improved satisfactorily. The enormous amount of money will not be wasted away in the preventive and curative measures for the malpractices such as bribery, both by the givers and receivers. What results is that such a vast amount will then be applied fruitfully for the development in all aspects of the country.

All this can be summarised into the self-warning motto that, *as human beings who are still worldlings,*



even though we are not in the position to help others, yet we must not behave in such a manner as to be harmful both to ourselves and others.

With this awareness it will be possible to create self-taming and self-discipline, knowing we are all accountable for our own actions, be they good or evil, and harmful or beneficial. While driving a car, we are ready and willing to obey the traffic rules, no matter whether there is a traffic policeman or not. At the red light we stop, whereas we drive on when there is the green one showing. We also drive along our lane, as regulated by the traffic law. Were everybody willing to do this, there would not be such problems as have caused headaches and chaos the way we have been confronting them nowadays in many places. This is the habit to be cultivated regularly until it becomes, as earlier mentioned, our second nature. All these are in fact nothing but the natural rules even in other aspects of our life. Just recall how long i.e. how many times we had to exert our efforts and do the exercises before we are able to read, write or walk and so forth the way we are doing today. All these require repeated drills or exercises which sometimes amount to hundreds or



thousands of times. As long as we are not able to do so, then it requires our regular and persistent efforts in self-training and self-discipline. To summarise, all these are in accordance with the law or the truth of cause and effect itself. No until we have fulfilled the causes can we hope to obtain the effect thereof.

4/4 QU : It is possible today that the practice of Dhamma in Buddhism should lead the aspirants to the Fruition. Can it be true to what they said? And how will the aspirants have to do or practise in order to achieve that supra-mundane level? Kindly explain.

ANS : This is a question that is difficult to answer, being difficult to confirm or disprove for each case. It is the refined and subtle achievement realised by an individual alone. Outwardly, such a Noble Disciple looks like other people. What characterises such a person is the calm and tranquility in words and deeds, which reflect that high achievement. Before the Buddha's passing away, a mendicant by the name of Subhadda questioned him about the existence of the Noble



Disciples in this world. Answering his question, the Buddha said to the effect that *wherever there is the Norm and Discipline i.e. the Dhamma and the Vinaya with the Noble Eightfold Path existing, along with the study, the dissemination and the practice or the treading of that Path, then the world would not be void of the four levels of the Noble Disciples.*

Looking at the circumstances at present, we shall see that there are still the study, the dissemination and the practice of the Path in various places. Also there have been sincere and earnest aspirants in all ages until now, the difference being only in the number of those aspirants in some places and on some occasions due to various factors. It is thus not unreasonable to assume that the world of Buddhism should not, in accordance with the Buddha's saying, be empty of the Noble Disciples to be found somewhere if we know how to look and search intelligently, with an unbiased analytical wisdom. It is also to be noted that the attainment of the Noble Path and Noble Fruition is not confined to the people of any caste, birth or social status or even the intellectual wisdom. Whoever puts into practice the Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom to a level where Precepts are perfectly purified, and Meditation and



Wisdom developed to a reliable condition is said to have attained to the Path and Fruition of the *Sotāpanna* or the Stream-winner. There is a criterion whereby an aspirant can be said to have attained that Stream-winner level. It consists of the absolute abandonment of the three *Sanyojana* or Spiritual Fetters as follows :

1. **SAKKĀYADITTHI.** This is the concept based on the attachment of 'self'. The full meaning is that for the Stream-winner there is in his mind no attachment to the five Khandha or Aggregates of Existence as he himself; nor as he is the five Khandha ; nor as the five Khandha in him; nor as there is 'he' in the five Aggregates or Khandha. Thus, with the four aspects in each of the five Aggregates having been abandoned, the twenty aspects of the 'self' attachment is consequently abandoned.

2. **VICIKICCHĀ.** This refers to the doubt or the feeling of uncertainty concerning the eight significant items viz. in the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha; the three steps of practice i.e. Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom; the past, the present, the future, and the *Paticcasamuppāda*, i.e. the Chain of Dependent



Origination. Each of those items has elaborate and profound details to study earnestly before a subtle understanding is acquired.

Now, a Noble Disciple on this level has a clear understanding, without an idea of doubt concerning such themes or points as mentioned above. He cherishes no doubt whatever in the real existence or actual birth of the Buddha on this planet Earth. *He has an unshaken faith in the Buddha's virtue, including his enlightenment. He has a firm faith in the Dhamma, which by its nature will protect the aspirants, preventing them from falling into evil ways or into realms of woe.* All these characterise the Stream-winner's absence of doubt.

3. **SILABBATTAPARĀMĀSA.** This refers to the attachment through superstitious belief to the ascetic practices, assuming that they can result in the divine, supernatural powers. In other words, this implies the attachment to the superficial value of various rites and ceremonies, with the self-hypnotising belief that such practices, supplemented by fervent prayers and litanies, will bring about the desired result. All these are without persistent struggle and efforts. A Stream-winner has abandoned the beliefs and practices in such magic and mysticism.



A Stream-winner has nothing outstanding that makes him, or her, different from other worldlings. This level of Noble Disciple can marry, raise a family and have an honest way of living like other ordinary people. They may sometimes be associated with some rites or ceremonies, since they do not want to be different from or the focus of attention of other people in that place on such occasion. They prefer not to contradict anybody since in most cases the act of contradicting others is based on a stubborn and arrogant view-point. Instead, *they habitually look at other people with Mettā or goodwill and a sympathetic understanding like grown up people looking at the children playing dolls, which to the children are real, living beings.* It is therefore most difficult for ordinary worldlings to judge whether such a person is a Stream-winner or not. It could be something like a child in the elementary grade of education trying to judge whether this or that person is really a professor or not. After all it is safe to have faith in the above-mentioned principle or criterion that there is a Noble Disciple of the Stream-winner level, both a Bhikkhu and a lay disciple, in all ages and all places, where there is the earnest study and practice of the Dhamma by the aspirants.



4/5 QU : In what way should the aspirants determine their mind so that they can have their minds established in peace and thus attain the condition of *Samādhi* or meditation?

ANS : It should be noted that whatever methods introduced in the scriptures are meant to have the aspirants' minds fixed on a point or a theme. Those who can do so in one point are later on able to move their attention to be steadfastly fixed upon another point. In the normal, day-to-day life of ordinary worldlings, they can also do so if their attention is fixed, although at short intervals, on the subject or the theme of their attention. While, for instance, reading, they have their minds or attention fixed upon the sentences in the book; while working they concentrate on that work; while listening their minds are fixed on the sound or voices; and while driving a car their attention is fixed on doing so. All these require a degree of mindfulness, which is manifestation of *Samādhi* or meditation required for the normal works in normal situation of everyday life.



On a higher level the aspirants may follow the prescriptions described in the scriptural texts such as *Ānāpānasati* or mindfulness of breaths i.e. of both the in-breaths and the out-breaths, be they long or short. This may be supplemented by the mental recitation of BUDDHO, with 'BUD' during the in-breaths and 'DHO' during the out-breaths. Another alternative is to be always mindful of the point which is felt being touched by the in-breaths and the out-breaths. The *Buddhānussati*, on which the virtuous qualities of the Buddha are recollected in detail, is also advisable. In short, whatever is conducive to peace and suitable to the aspirants' tendency is to be selected. According to the scriptural texts, there are 40 methods prescribed as the theme for the development of *Samādhi* or tranquility and peace of mind. This in addition to 72 other themes conducive to Vipassanā or Insight.



4/6 QU : As far as the practices of meditation are concerned, there are some who argue that they belong to the hermits, not to Buddhism. But there are also others who maintain they are the Buddhist methods as well. But they are not conducive to the deliverance or the cessation of suffering. So I would like to know for certain whether or not it is necessary for Buddhists to practise meditation. Also what are the benefits to be derived from meditation while we look forward to the deliverance of sufferings?

ANS : It is to be noted here that all the teachings have realization of the truths as their essential purpose. Some of them had existed before the times of the Buddha. Now, as far as Buddhism is concerned, there are 4 points to be considered as follows :

1. **Revolution.** This is the complete or drastic change of the beliefs and practices prevalent in those days.



2. **Reformation.** This refers to the gentle change or improvement of the manner and methods existing in those times.

3. **Acceptance.** This is the approval of or an agreement with some of the beliefs and practices as decent and right on a specific level.

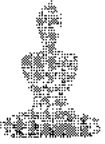
4. **Reconstruction.** This implies the direct results of the Buddha's discovery i.e. through his Enlightenment.

The method concerning meditation or Samādhi is in the reformation category. It is the improvement of those generally practised by the hermits or recluses of those days. The aim or essential purpose is different, also the details. There were some minor items that are accepted in Buddhism, which was called *Samathakam-matthāna* i.e. the practice for the sake of calm and tranquility. In case there is a doubt whatever was made calm thereby, the answer was that the mind is pacified against the distractions i.e. the category of defilements called *Nivarana* i.e. mental hindrances, which are the second kind of defilements, the manifestations of which are not through words and deeds, but through their influence overwhelming the mind. They may be classified



as greed, hatred and delusion of the intermediate kind, being something between the crude and subtle levels. However, *they have the power to disturb and distract the mind in various ways, making the mind restless and agitated. The ability to subdue or suppress them results in peace of mind and is therefore a degree of deliverance from suffering although it is not yet the absolute deliverance.*

The life of ordinary worldlings is as a rule overwhelmed to a more or less degree by any one of those Mental Hindrances. This is true for people of all ages and at all times. The task of subduing defilements is not an easy or a painless one. It requires an arduous and painful struggle on the part of the aspirant who knows that to grow means to struggle. This takes time and persistent, dedicated efforts. In other words, it is the method of *'making haste slowly'*, applying on some occasions the *'querilla warfare'* until the force of defilements are satisfactorily subdued. The aspirants may supplement their practice so far with what is called *Vipassanā* or the practices for Insight, which is the ultimate aim of Buddhism. In one sense there are three steps of practice viz. Sila or Precepts as the starting



point. Then follows *Samādhi* or Meditation as the second step and *Paññā* or Wisdom as the third step. ***Then when the three steps of practice have been perfectly combined the deliverance from suffering can be attained.***

Now a question may arise as to whether an aspirant is able to achieve the aim of absolute deliverance from suffering or not. As a matter of fact, on some occasions where the aspirants have had the storehouse of previous meritorious qualities strong or intensified enough, they can take the step of *Vipassanā* or Insight immediately. But if, as in most cases, they have not yet been developed or mature enough, then it is advisable they should go step by step, as earlier mentioned, "*making haste slowly.*" This requires an impartial self-survey for quite some time. But it is worth noting the truth that Precepts can reduce the force of defilements to a certain degree, whereas Meditation can do so on a higher level. It is *Paññā* or Insight wisdom that can eradicate all sufferings once for all. This requires the perfect combination of the three steps, which, of course, ***requires an indomitable courage and strength of will on the part of the aspirants.***



Such being the case, it is advisable to develop the strength of the three steps with a determined will. Even in the times of the Buddha, there were only few of his disciples who were able to start with the Vipassanā level directly. Most of them had to make use of the Samatha or meditation for a period of time.

In one sense, the activities in Buddhism can be divided into two broad categories viz. *Ganthadhura* i.e. the study of the Buddha's words for an intellectual understanding; and the *Vipassanādhura* i.e. to put into practice what has been studied, with *Vipassanā* or Insight as the prime purpose.

The Truths, it should be noted, belong to nobody in particular. They are universal, being not monopolised by Buddhism or by any hermit and recluse. Whoever has realised them and made use of them is in the position to benefit by that realisation. Buddhism is tolerant enough to accept whatever is beneficial. In case it can be improved, then it must be done. This so that more beneficial results can be acquired. There is, from the Buddhist point of view, no loss of honour or dignity. Such an improvement is sure to display and



verify the Buddha's threefold virtues viz. the Absolute Wisdom, the Absolute Purity and the Absolute Compassion.

4/7 QU : What is the criterion by which to judge that an aspirant's development of Meditation has reached the highest level called Appanā? In case there is a vision or *Nimitta* occurring, what form should it be? And also what size i.e. how large it should be?

ANS : The point of this question is the desire to know the condition of the mind at the highest point of meditation called *Appanā* or the condition of being unshakable. This is the highest point of *Samādhi*, after this it is called the *Appanā Jhāna* i.e. the Absorption or Jhāna through that condition of unshakability.

The mind that has attained to the level of *Appanā* poised unshakably on what is the theme of that *Kammattāna* or meditation practice. It is well-balanced, being not distracted by other thing except that object or theme.



It can be said to be in the condition of voidness, without any interfering thought. It is therefore blessed at all times with peace.

With regard to the Nimitta or visions, this cannot be specifically determined. There are innumerable kinds of vision, and cannot be regarded as small or big. All this depends upon the characteristic and tendency or maturity of each aspirant. It may sometimes be in the shape of the sun, the moon, the star, the light, a jewel, or even a wisp of cotton or a cloud. However, it should be noted that the purpose of Kammatthāna is not to fix the mind or the attention on those Nimitta. In the *Ānāpānasati* or Mindfulness of Breaths, for instance, the focus of attention is the in-breaths and the out-breaths or the spot where the air touches the nostrils. Wherever there appears a Nimitta, the aspirant is advised not to pay attention to it. It comes of its own accord; let it go the way it comes. This is what the aspirant is to bear in mind. Do not treat such a Nimitta as being of any significance.



4/8 QU : In what manner did the Buddha teach his disciples to be mindful of the body? Is it enough to do so once or twice and then stop? What benefit can be derived from doing so? Does *Paññā* or wisdom have anything to do with this kind of meditation?

ANS : This is a question with a wide scope of meaning which cannot be explained in elaborate details here since it would take hours to do so. To make a long story short, mindfulness may be fixed upon any part of the body, be it the in-breaths and the out-breaths, the postures of the body viz. standing, walking, sitting or laying down or, in a more elaborate details, while folding and unfolding the arms and the legs, while stepping forward and backward, while coughing, sneezing etc. Any or all of this is to be done continuously and regularly until it becomes spontaneous, requiring no deliberate intention. Even while moving the hands to catch something while the body in any posture, there must also be mindfulness. Other themes concerning the body include recollection (of the body) as the conglomeration of the four so-called elements (i.e. earth,



water, wind and fire), analysing the body into 32 filthy components and recollection of the corpses in different stages of decomposition.

The benefits to be obtained therefrom are the tranquility and purity of the mind. So said the Buddha in the *Mahāsatipatthānasutta* :

‘It is conducive to the purity of all sentient beings, lifting the mind from the influence of grief, lamentation, and other sufferings. It leads to realisation of the truths concerning all phenomena and then to attainment of Nibbāna.’

So elaborate are the details in the *Mahāsatipatthānasutta* that in one sense it may be looked upon as being the epitome of the Buddha’s teachings, since it also includes the Four Noble Truths, which cover the Noble Eightfold Path. In mindfulness of the body, the peace or tranquility is based on the body. On this level *Sati* or mindfulness takes the leading part, and *Paññā* or wisdom steps in to contemplate the births and deaths, the changes and the declines concerning each part or point of the body. This level of wisdom is called *Sammappaññā* i.e. the spontaneous, all-round, immediate knowledge of the changes in various forms and degrees.



From this point wisdom will be increased in its power to banish the darkness of ignorance with its illuminating light by which the aspirants will be enabled to realise the truth that the body is merely the body, the conglomeration of the four so-called elements not anything worthy to be called or attached to as **'self, beings, man and other suppositions.'** From then on there is merely the acceptance of the fact that the body is nothing but a mere instrument for recollection, being thereby void of self and any other thing to be attached to any more.

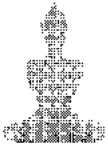


Highlights of the Chapter IV



A superior is, generally speaking, still a worldling, being liable to do something wrong on some occasions. If through our prejudice of love or affection, we always agree with him, no matter whether it is right or wrong, then there is danger when we agree to what he does or says that is wrong or evil. There are often instances of this kind of flattering just for the benefit of one's own interest, instead of that of one's boss or superior.

If the poverty-stricken people are known to be really hard-working and to have tried to help themselves already, there will be many magnanimous people who come to offer their helping hand until those poverty-stricken people can raise themselves satisfactorily from the hand-to-mouth existence.



Bribery implies both sides viz. the givers and the receivers. It is a two-sided affair.

As human beings, who are still worldlings, even though we are not in the position to help others, yet we must not behave in such a manner as to be harmful both to ourselves and others.

Wherever there is the Dhamma and the Vinaya, with the Noble Path still existing, along with the study, the dissemination and the practice or the treading of that Path, then the world would not be void of the four levels of the Noble Disciples.

A Stream-winner has an unshakable faith in the Buddha's virtue, including his Enlightenment. He has a firm faith in the Dhamma which by nature will protect the aspirants, preventing them from falling into evil ways or into the realms of woe.

A Stream-winner habitually looks at other people with *Mettā* or goodwill and a sympathetic understanding, like grownup people looking at the children playing the dolls, which to the children are real, living beings.



Mental Hindrances have the power to disturb and distract the mind in various ways, making the mind restless and agitated. The ability to subdue or suppress them results in peace of mind and is therefore a degree of deliverance from suffering although it is not yet the absolute deliverance.

The truths belong to nobody in particular. They are universal, being not monopolised by Buddhism or by any hermit or recluse.

The body is merely a body, the conglomeration of the four so-called elements, not anything worthy to be called or attached to as 'self, beings, man and other suppositions.'



CHAPTER V

QUESTIONS CONCERNING DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES

5/1 QU : What is the essence or the main principle of Buddhism? Compared with religious peoples of other countries, how strong is the faith of Thai Buddhists? What is there that should be the improvement of the situation?

ANS : The epitome of the Buddha's teachings can in one sense be referred to the three principles as follows : not to do evil, to do good and to purify the mind. This is one way by which to summarise the Buddha's teachings. But, in another sense, there is another Dhamma for practices that is said to be the topmost. This was called by the Buddha himself 'APPAMĀDA' i.e. heedfulness. The reason for this is



that *all the wholesome qualities of Kusaladhamma can be summarised or included into virtue of Appamāda or Heedfulness*. That is why Heedfulness or Appamāda is topmost of all practices in Buddhism.

Compared with other religions, as far as the main principles are concerned, Buddhism is generally regarded as *Atheism*, i.e. the doctrine refusing the divine, absolute power of any being as God or the creator of all things. Buddhism teaches that the world is one of the phenomena that takes birth, exists and dissolves through its own specific causes. Most other religions are *Theism*, acknowledging the divine power of the God, who created the world, all living beings, including human beings. The exception to this is another religion called Jainism.

With regard to the level of practice of morality, although there are vital differences in details, yet they all aim at encouraging a virtuous life for the devotees, which would result in abandoning suffering and promoting a life of peace and prosperity.

The ultimate aim of Buddhism, however, is the extinguishing of all the fire of defilements and



sufferings, whereas Jainism aims at what is called Kevala or Kaival or Nivārana in its sense of the terms. The remaining religions have as their aims the condition of being forever united with God.

As regards the degree of faith of the foreigners or these other religions compared with the Buddhists, it is advisable to study the structure of each religion in particular. As far as Buddhism is concerned, its purpose is to

Do away with all evil desires
Of all people, women and men,
Pulling them out of sucking mires.
That's their Refuge most permanent.

Also point out how defilements
Can be forever extinguished
Wherein all sufferings are absent
That's Nibbāna the highest Bliss.

The Buddha's teachings may be compared to drops of rainfall from the sky. Those on the planet Earth who want to drink or make use of them are free to open their vessels or containers to store them for



use. Now, if they prefer to close their vessels or turn their containers upside down, they just cannot derive any benefit from those drops from the sky, no matter how long or how much it rains. It is for this reason that Buddhism makes no demand or commandment from the people, except when some of them willingly choose to be ordained in the Order of Sangha, in which there are prescribed several rules for them to adhere strictly to. For the people in general, there are only suggestions and instructions so they can be aware of what is right and what is wrong in earning their livelihood. Even in the case of the Five Precepts, the Buddha only pointed out the benefit of their observance and the evils of their violation to the people. Whoever is urged on by the wholesome desire to observe those Precepts is free to do so, either by making known their willingness to a Bhikkhu or by making up their minds to observe them without making it known to anybody. This is why the Observance of Precepts on the part of lay devotees is adopting a resolution out of their own free will, rather than their being forced or commanded to do so without their preference or willingness.

Such being the case, it can be said that Buddhism respects the sovereignty of the mind of each individual,



which is in the position to understand the reason, knowing for itself what is right and what is wrong. The Buddha was thus the pointer of the way to the people, who are free to decide for themselves whether they should believe him and have faith or trust in him or not. However, no matter whether some of them still have no faith in the Buddha and prefers not to follow his advice or suggestion, Buddhism still never regards them as enemies, but as fellow travellers in the vast ocean sharing the same fate of births, illness, old age and deaths, or rather re-deaths. While radiating their *Mettā* and dedicating the fruits of merit or goodwill, Buddhists use the term 'SABBE SATTĀ,' which implies all sentient beings, irrespective of races, castes or religions. This is the outstanding characteristic of Buddhism, which is not 'hungry' for drawing an increasing number of disciples into its fold.

On some occasions during the times of the Buddha, when there was a celebrity of another religious faith who declared himself a Buddhist, taking refuge in the Triple Gem, the Buddha advised that he should have a second thought, not making haste in his resolution. This for the reason that he used to be highly respected



in his status as devotee of that religion. To declare himself a Buddhist might be a loss of his status in his former society. This characteristic of Buddhism allows the disciples to be democratically free, so to speak. No Buddhist is coerced into going to a monastery to listen to sermons. What is done is only a cordial invitation, which a Buddhist is free to decide whether to accept or to decline. But in other religions, particularly in Christianity, Islam and Sikhism, there are stringent control or coercion measures, including individual house calls to draw or drag the disciples to their monasteries. With regard to such stringent measures for the sake of a devoted loyalty, Islam and Sikhism appear to be foremost, next comes Christianity.

The attitude is far different from that of Buddhism, which allows the disciples to be free and independent. It is because of this characteristic of Buddhism that is paradoxically like an attractive magnet to the free spirit of Buddhists, most of whom refuse to abandon the Buddha's teachings to adopt another religious instructions. They realise how they are free to think, to criticise and to decide which part or level of the Buddha's teachings is agreeable to their tendency



and aptitude. However, due to the rapidly changing circumstances of present society, many Buddhists appear to be less sincere and earnest in their belief and practice. This needs an urgent remedial measures, which must be in accordance with the Buddhist manner and method. This includes intensifying their studying and training, explaining to them the value of morality and the application of Dhamma to their daily life and work. Once they have done so for the benefit of themselves, there is no need to feel there is a debt of gratitude to the instructors, whose sole aim is for the sake of peace, prosperity and security of the devotees themselves. This is really the Buddhist spirit based on selflessness.

At present there is a tendency that should be appreciated in that there is a general awareness in this concept. The teachers, lecturers and professors in the schools, colleges and universities have painstakingly and vigorously conducted various campaigns and a variety of activities concerning the application of the Dhamma in such topics as mental exercises, Buddhist ceremonies and rites and culture. All these for the purpose of conserving them as an invaluable treasure for our nation. If there is more cooperation through concerted efforts



from both the government and the private sectors, there will be more satisfactory results to be expected therefrom.

Generally speaking, the Thai Buddhists are intelligent enough to submit themselves to the practice of self-control. Thus they should be encouraged to practise self-discipline in order to be real Buddhists, being able to detach themselves to a satisfactory degree from the luring temptations, no matter whether they are alone or in the presence of other people. These should be a gentle, effective way of treating and leading them to the prime purpose of Buddhism. It should be a better and more effective way than to coerce and enforce them with rules of strict discipline, thus over-stepping their basic rights and making them feel oppressed and unwilling to cooperate. This would be like pressing a toy balloon on one spot. Of course it will be pressed down on that spot, only to swell up on another. With more violent force pressing it down, it could burst and be a balloon no more.

The Buddhist method is therefore not one of rigidity, not one that makes the disciples feel



they have been deprived of their basic human rights.

It is, in other words, the middle way between the extremes of too lax and too rigid or inflexible. It may be compared to the strings of a harp, which will snap when they are stretched too much or cannot produce a musical note when they are not stretched enough.

There should therefore not be the fond hopes that all the Buddhist disciples must go to the monasteries to listen to the sermons or to observe the five and the eight Precepts. There is no need nor compulsion for the Buddhists to do so. *The Dhamma, or the practice of Dhamma in Buddhism, is not confined to the time or the place. An earnest aspirant can derive the benefits of practising the Dhamma anywhere, any time.* It was customary in the ancient times that the devotees had to go to the monasteries, when there was nothing better for them than that. But nowadays there are new, modern ways of disseminating the Dhamma by several kinds of mass media, which have made it unnecessary for the devotees to go to the monasteries especially when they have no time to spare for the purpose, due to other activities that demand their immediate attention. Of course, if they prefer to go there, having no other



business to attend to during that time, they will be blessed with additional benefits such as the opportunity to see the beautiful, serene Buddha images, the pagodas and other holy edifices, including the peacefulness and serenity of the atmosphere that cannot be found elsewhere. All these will strengthen their faith and devotion to practise for higher, more refined spiritual development.

However, as far as the practice of Dhamma is concerned, there is no need for the devotees to attach themselves to the monasteries at all times. Such places are limited in number. Were all the devotees to go there at the same time, there would be not enough place to welcome them and provide them with facilities.

The essential point, therefore, is **how** to accumulate virtuous qualities for ourselves, no matter whether we are dwelling in our home, at school, in the field or in any sylvan retreat such as in the secluded mountains. What is of significance is our own determined will to study the Dhamma and put it into practice to the best of our ability. This with the purpose of the spiritual development during this present



life-span. It is to be hoped that the trend of events in the near future will be in the form of giving more attention to the development of virtuous qualities through the influence of the mass media, which are accountable for the maintenance and preservation of moral qualities for the sake of society and the country as a whole. The Dhamma should be disseminated in the right direction for the benefit of Buddhists and other people who are interested in the Dhamma and wish to study it intelligently as the foundation of their practice.

5/2 QU : What is the meaning of the term 'HETU' and 'PACCAYA'?

ANS : In simplest terms, the former i.e. HETU implies the main or principle cause. For instance, a human life is sustained, among other things, primarily by the breaths. Thus the breaths are the HETU of our life. Moreover, our life also depends on food. Thus food is also a HETU, since without food the body's life will stop. Now the term PACCAYA refers to what is of secondary importance, the lack of some of which will



not affect the body's life. Thus a human being can still be living even if his eyes cannot see or his ears cannot hear or when he has only one hand. This is in one sense like the principles of (Pāli) language. The principles of HETU are the verbs in the form of what is called *Dhātu* i.e. the unconjugated verbs, whereas when it is conjugated, undergoing various forms in accordance with person, tense and voice, this is the PACCAYA. It can therefore be concluded that the HETU is the principle or the basic of the things, whereas the PACCAYA is the supplementary factors.

5/3 QU : What is the meaning of the following passages viz. AVIJJĀ is the cause of SANKHĀRA, which in turn is the cause of VIÑÑĀNA?

ANS : This is the first part of the doctrine of *Paticcasamuppāda* or the Chain of Dependent Origination, explaining the law of nature in connection with the lives of sentient beings. The term AVIJJĀ implies the condition of Ignorance i.e not knowing the truth. This refers to the condition of the minds of sentient beings



that are still influenced by both good and evil, both by meritorious qualities and by the wicked, harmful ones. *With Ignorance still present, whatever is thought, spoken or done is to be always associated in a certain extent with imperfection i.e. some good or some evil.* This, therefore, is the meaning implied by the term SANKHĀRA, which refers to both good and evil, from the crude to the refined or subtle levels. The term, therefore, includes even the *Jhāna* or Absorption that is based on the Formless themes. These are called ARŪPAJHĀNA. All these, including the VATTAGĀMI or the wholesome qualities that are still conducive to re-births and the consequent re-deaths. This in spite of the fact that the mind in the Formless Absorption or ARŪPAJHĀNA is very refined and very subtle.

Now, wherever there is still Ignorance or AVIJJĀ, there is sure to be Kilesa or Defilement although it is in a very refined form. Such is called SANKHĀRA i.e. what is still conditioned by something, which means by a kamma on a very deep or subtle level. It is this mixture or conjunction of Kilesa or defilement and kamma that leads to what is called the PATISANDHI VIÑÑĀNA, the consciousness that, literally,



‘moves out’ i.e. take birth, or rather re-birth, in various realms or planes of existence in accordance with the degree of crudeness or subtlety or the compelling force of the potential defilements. In one sense we can look at the lives of sentient beings through these three component elements as follows :

AVIJJĀ or Ignorance may be compared to the sap i.e. the liquid in a plant that carries food to all its parts.

SANKHĀRA or Kamma is something like the favourable temperature that sustains the life of a plant or tree, maintaining the life of that plant or tree for ever.

VIÑÑĀNA or consciousness may be compared to the seedling that, in itself, bears a quality to grow up, or in other words to take a new birth, should it be nourished by decent, suitable factors.

Just as a seedling thus nourished can grow up and become a new plant or tree, so the life of sentient beings or worldlings whose defilements are not yet absolutely extinguished will have to undergo the endless process of re-births and re-deaths. Thus *the term AVIJJĀ*



here must imply the knowledge that is not yet perfect, being kamma in the deep recess of the mind, including the Formless JHĀNA i.e. ARŪPAJHĀNA ; VIÑÑĀNA here implies what is called PATISANDHI VIÑÑĀNA, literally, the Viññāna or consciousness that moves out to take a new birth. In other words, it is sometimes called linking consciousness.

5/4 QU : There is a paradoxical saying that worldly (or sensual) happiness is a kind or a level of hell. But, generally speaking, many people are of the opinion that such happiness does not cause any problem in life. Such being the case, why should there be a renunciation of such a happiness?

ANS : There are here several levels of meaning to consider. There is, of course, no problem nor any contradiction as far as the elementary level in the eye of the ordinary i.e. most worldlings is concerned. It must also be understood that Buddhism never absolutely denies the existence of the reality of this elementary level. The Buddha also instructed the householders to



maintain this kind or level of happiness through the following practices viz. happiness through having monetary resources (through rightful means), happiness through the wealth rightfully acquired, happiness through not being in debt and happiness through not doing evil, harmful deeds.

Thus the Buddha also regarded this as a level of happiness, particularly for the householders. But, *from the vantage point of the ultimate, absolute truth, it is to be admitted that such a happiness is within the scope of suffering, being thereby a reduction of suffering to a certain extent.* As to the question whether or not it is to be abandoned, the answer is that it depends upon the level or degree of spiritual maturity of each individual. This is to be individually realised; there cannot be any coercion or compulsion from anybody. It is, in other words, through a person's willingness to renounce it for the sake of a higher form of life. This requires other supplementary factors before a person can reach this level that makes him or her willing and earnest to renounce all the ephemeral pleasures. In the case of one who has considerably reduced, or in some cases has disgorged, lust in



sensual pleasure, it is no use remaining in the life of a householder, which to him or her can offer nothing pleasurable, but only suffering. **For such person sensual pleasures are nothing but saliva or a rotting corpse, which is to be left behind without any lingering attachment.**

As for those who are sincere and earnest in the practice of Dhamma, some of them may have attained to the level of a Non-Returner or ANĀGĀMĪ despite the fact that they are still householders like other people. But they have been absolutely detached from all sensual pleasures. If later on they attain to the full-final achievement of being an Arahant, they will have to take no more re-birth and as a result no more re-death. This shows that what is of significance in this matter is the level of spiritual development or maturity of each individual. It is not a compulsion for those whose maturity is not yet enough. Whoever has reached that supramundane point will be able to realise this truth himself : how it is inevitable for him to renounce the world and all ephemeral pleasures for the sake of a life of chastity.



SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THAILAND'S TRI-COLOURED NATIONAL FLAG

The Thai flag is meant to symbolise
The Three Institutions highest.
Which the Thai people can sacrifice
Their lives at the king's behest.

White symbolises purity
Of Buddhism the national religion.
The Triple Gem is most holy
Of the Thai people as their bastion.

Red means the life and blood of all
Willing to give up their blood and life,
Who hearken to the nation's call
So that their country can survive.

Blue points to monarchical colour
Representing the monarchy,
Head of the nation, as it were,
Emblem of the flag of colour three.

These five stripes of three colours
Imply the nation, religion,
And monarchy who are rulers.
All these are three institutions.

(King Rama VI)



Highlights of the Chapter V



All the wholesome qualities or *Kusaladhamma* can be summarised or included into the virtue of *Appamāda* or Heedfulness.

Buddhism teaches that the world is one of the phenomena that takes birth, exists and dissolves through its own specific causes.

The Buddha's teachings may be compared to drops of rainfall from the sky.

Buddhism respects the sovereignty of the mind of each individual. This characteristic of Buddhism allows its disciples to be democratically free.

With regard to stringent measures for the sake of a devoted loyalty from the disciples, Islam and Sikhism appear to be foremost; next comes Christianity.



The Buddhist method is not one of rigidity, not one that makes its disciples feel they have been deprived of the basic human rights.

What is of significance is the Buddhists' own determined will to study the Dhamma and put it into practice to the best of their ability.

With Ignorance still present, whatever is thought, spoken or done is to be always associated to a certain extent with imperfection i.e. some good or some evil.

Wherever there is still Ignorance or AVIJJĀ, there is sure to be Kilesa or defilement although it is in a very refined form.

Buddhism never denies the existence of the reality of the truth on the elementary level.



CHAPTER VI

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE ORDER OF SANGHA

6/1 QU : What is Your Venerable's idea concerning the Order of Thai Sangha, which has been divided into two sects i.e. Dhammayut and Mahānikāya? I am of opinion that it produces more harmful than beneficial results, since it makes the Sangha divided, directly or indirectly. In case you have another idea, kindly explain.

ANS : There should be no question nor debate on whether it has produced beneficial or harmful effects. It has been a thing of the past and cannot be made to go back and start anew. What is of significance



at present is **how** to make the best, or the maximum benefit out of the present situation. Looking at it through the bird's-eye-view, it will be seen that *all religions, after their founders have passed away, are destined to be divided or separated into various schools or sects.* This includes Christianity, Islam and others. It was a thing of the historical past, which we have inherited from our ancestors. When it is inevitably our inheritance, it is our moral duty to extract as much benefit from it, no matter whether it is right or wrong and good or bad. However, realistically speaking, it appears that *there is scarcely any ill feeling or separation between Bhikkhus of these two sects in Thailand.*

At present Bhikkhus of both Mahanikaya and Dhammayut sects study together in the same places, with teachers from both Dhammayut and Mahanikaya sects, there being no feeling of separation whatever. The executive board called the Council of Elders or *Mahātherasamāgama* in Thai consists of Bhikkhus of both sources, who willingly cooperate for the welfare and progress of the whole. There is also an equal number of Bhikkhus in this Council from both sects,



all of whom work with concerted efforts for the benefit of Buddhism as a whole. We regard those in the Mahayana sect or the Northern School also as Buddhists and respect each other sympathetically. With regard to the Elders of both Dhammayut and Mahanikaya, whoever is senior in the ordination period is similarly respected in accordance with the Disciplinary rules by one who is junior as far as the ordination period is concerned. This has been customarily done without the thought of anyone belonging to the Mahanikaya or Dhammayut. Whatever activities are beneficial to Buddhism as a whole is performed with concerted efforts. *We have in mind the benefits to occur to Buddhism, the country and the people. This is what we have been doing with the spirit of harmonious unity.*

To sum up, it is the case of a broken piece of wood, there being no way to make it one piece once again. What must be done is to find the way and means by which to obtain the maximum benefit of it under present circumstances. It should not be regarded now as being right or wrong, or bad and good, since there are always the reasons to support both sides of the matter and there is no one to exercise a definite judgement now.



6/2 QU : Why is not the practice of Dhamma of Bhikkhus in Buddhism determined to follow in the same way?

ANS : Certainly it has specifically been determined already i.e. to follow the course of *Sila* or Precepts, *Samādhi* or Meditation and *Paññā* or Wisdom. In fact the Order of Sangha is the group of people whose duty is to study the teachings of the Buddha and put them to practice. When they have progressed far enough and are able to help other people, they will undertake to teach other people to follow or practise the Buddha's teachings in the same manner as they have done. In another sense the Buddha had established two main principles called the Dhamma and the Vinaya, the former referring to the teachings as they are generally understood, whereas the latter, literally the Discipline, implying the rules and regulations concerning the behaviour that is decent and appropriate to the circumstances. This was laid down for the Bhikkhus. However, it is worth noting that *people are far different in their tendencies, aptitudes and also their degrees of maturity which each individual had accumulated*



in the past i.e. in their former lives. (It is impossible, therefore, to have all of them choose the same theme or manner of practice and progress at the same rate.)

However, Bhikkhus are members of a society. In a morally uplifting society those Bhikkhus from such a society are sure to be well-behaved as a rule. But when society i.e. lay society is in a state of confusion and chaos, those people as members of such a society who come to be ordained are to be more or less affected by the condition of society of which they used to be members. But as far as the manners of practice are concerned, although there have been prescribed a variety of methods, yet the essential purpose is the same. In one sense, there are forty themes of *Samatha Kammat-thāna* i.e. practices for the sake of tranquility or peace of mind, whereas there are seventy-two themes for the sake of *Vipassanā* or Insight, each and all leading to the same achievement. The differences, therefore, should be looked upon as the starting place of each individual aspirant, which is sure to be at different locations. This is due also to the fact that each individual aspirant has various different levels of tendencies, aptitude and degrees of maturity he or she has accumulated from former lives. In other words, *each has also different*



times of being ready and willing to start on this long journey of spiritual development. Even in the case of the Noble Disciples, they are also divided into four kinds or grades due to the level of achievement of each of them.

6/3 QU : It appears that the condition of disunity in the Order of Sangha at present stems from the rank or echelon. Can this be banished?

ANS : This is an all-inclusive, exaggerated idea based on a pessimistic concept. There are several other factors that are conducive to the feeling of disunity or schism, particularly the manners of behaviour, of practice and of beliefs, which are called the absence of similar standard of Precepts i.e. *Silasāmaññatā* and also the absence of similar standard of views or wisdom i.e. *Ditthisāmaññatā*. What is called the rank, or status or echelon is therefore of little significance. It is graciously bestowed upon Bhikkhus by His Majesty the King. There is no desire or craving on their part for this; nor is there any feeling of disunity based on this matter. What used



to occur on some occasions was something like an accident, which was soon forgotten. There is no question on this matter, which, according to some people, should be abolished. But it must not be forgotten that in a society, especially a large one, there must be a superior or head of a section with a number of juniors under him. Also there must be those who are assigned different kinds of work on different levels of responsibility. For this purpose there must be Bhikkhus whose duty is to look after the affairs within the scope of their responsibility. This is how there are the ecclesiastical rank, title and status. As a matter of fact, *there used to be this system of administration even during the times of the Buddha, the difference being that they were not called by the same names or titles and ranks as at present.*

In every society there is to be a classification of ranks and titles, which is nothing but the 'division of labour', with each person being responsible for what is his or her assignment. Supposing, the Army, Navy or Air Force is full of field-m Marshals or all generals or all privates, all being equal in rank, status and title, what would happen in the armed forces, with



all members being equal in all respects? In the same manner, should there be in a school all teachers teaching the same subjects, with the same scope of responsibility then what would happen in that school? This necessitates some differences or inequalities for each to share the responsibility for each assignment so that the armed forces or the school can be so called.

To come back to the ecclesiastical rank, titles or status, these can be abolished. But after that there must be something with another name being introduced in its place. This may be seen in the case of Thai history some time in the past, when the high-sounding titles bestowed upon the government officials were abolished, for the reason that they were intoxicated by such super-human titles heaped upon them, thereby making them look upon ordinary citizens as something subhuman. Thus they were abolished, but they were classified instead as being of the first of elementary grade, the second or intermediate grade, and the third or advanced grade, with the special grade as being topmost of them. Later on this system was abolished, for the same reason that it was a divisive force creating the feeling of separateness and disunity among the



people. In its place, government officials are classified into various C grades viz. from C-1 to C-11. All these show that after all *there is to be difference of some kind or another for members of society in order to determine the scope of duty and responsibility of each of them.* Without such a difference of grades and ability how can people live together in peace and harmony? Even within a family, were all of them, i.e. parents, offspring, relatives and servants to be similar in status and rank, being thereby the xeroxed copies of one another, how can that family or that home function? *All such concepts of equality in all respects are merely fanciful dreams and cannot in actual reality exist.* Even in the Communist countries where there is supposedly no distinction of grades or status, the fact is that there are in them more classifications of grades than what exists in non-communist countries. They are said to have been classified in very elaborate details. But after all, each person has his or her own range of duty and responsibility, more or less and high or low, in accordance with the significance of those responsibilities assigned to each of them.



6/4 QU : There are Bhikkhus who smoke cigarettes, accumulate much wealth, have their meal in the afternoon (especially the Bhikkhus in the northern provinces). Are all these actions the offences against the disciplinary rules? If not, should they be allowed to go on like that?

ANS : These are to be separated, to be considered case by case, not all at the same time. After all, there must be a criterion by which to judge whether an action is right or wrong. Here we refer to disciplinary rules or the Vinaya. Now, smoking was not mentioned as a prohibition for Bhikkhus in those times. The drugs or intoxications mentioned as being prohibited were alcoholic liquor. Smoking, however, is less harmful than alcoholic liquor, so there was no prohibition mentioned. Here the social attitude or sense of value also has a place in the judgement. The Thai society does not regard smoking as an evil, so there are some Bhikkhus who smoke. But after all there are only a small number of them. In some countries such as Myanmar and Sri Lanka, smoking is treated as a kind of intoxication like alcoholic liquor, so Bhikkhus in those countries



do not smoke, since they will be treated with contempt by the lay disciples there.

The accumulation of wealth must be considered from various angles. In case it is accumulated for a project that requires a considerable sum of money, then it is to be appreciated, and the Bhikkhu who is in a position to do so should not be blamed for his doing so, which is not for his own enjoyment. In case, for instance, there is going to be the funeral rite for the *Upajjhāya* or Preceptor within the period of ten months or one year, it is now necessary for the Bhikkhu who is to be the host to start accumulating the things to be used in the rites, together with a sum of money for the purpose. At present this has been a tradition that cannot be neglected or abandoned. If the accumulation is done for one's own sensual pleasure, then the Bhikkhu who does so should be sternly reproached.

As regards the eating of food in the afternoon or in the evening, there is as yet no confirmation of the accusation. However, in case it is true, it is of course an offence against the disciplinary rule. This offence is



in the *Pācittiya* category for Bhikkhus and a violation of the sixth Precept for lay disciples who observe the eight Precepts.

6/5 QU : Is it against the Bhikkhus' disciplinary rules for a Bhikkhu who is reputed to be able to implant the magic powers in the good-luck charms or the Buddha images? In some cases it is known that Bhikkhu does not say that he can do so.

ANS : The process of implanting the magic powers into something is the belief on the part of the people who assume that the Bhikkhu can do so and so. As a matter of fact, the Pāli passages to be chanted in the process are nothing but salutation passage praising the virtues of the Buddha. It should therefore be called *Buddhābhiseka*, since those passages are the description in details how the Buddha had for aeons accumulated the store-house of merit. There are some things like the summary salutation passages starting with ITIPIISO BHAGAVĀ, which all Buddhists have committed to memory. As far as the process of praising the Buddha's



virtues is concerned, there is nothing to be blamed. But when those charms or Buddha amulets and images are treated as the merchandise to be sold for profit, it is then a wrongful means. *Those salutation passages, however long and detailed they are, contain nothing that has the mythical powers to grant the wishes or prayers of the people without their own efforts.* They are in the same category as the chanting passages in the morning and in the evening for Buddhists to do so daily, the difference being that they contain far more elaborate details as a means by which to encourage the aspirants to follow the Buddha's exemplary life.

But, as it is generally believed and practised today, the essential purpose in most cases has been diverted from the noble and lofty one to the commercial or business affairs, with material, financial gains instead of their being the true source of spiritual encouragement and development of the people, so that they may be blessed with the inspiring and profound belief in following the footsteps of the Buddha's exemplary lives, both in the past and the final one.



6/6 QU : Is it true that to offer things to a Bhikkhu can be done by throwing? In what day did it occur for the first time?

ANS : There was nothing of such a matter in the Pāli Canon. There was nothing explained in detail showing exactly **how** to do so, since it was a matter of commonsense already. However, since a Bhikkhu was regarded as being in a higher or nobler state than the lay disciples, the giving was generally to be done with the attitude of respect, which later on became established into a fixed form concerning the position or posture of the body, becoming thereby a tradition or social etiquette. As a matter of fact, the essential purpose was nothing but to prevent the Bhikkhus from taking what was not yet given to them such as what was intended to be offered to the ghosts.

The throwing of things was mentioned in the later texts called *Atthakathā* or Commentaries. But it was not the throwing of things to the Bhikkhus. This was on the occasion of what was called *Devorohana* on the last day of the Rains Retreat three-month period.



There were so many people on that day. It was difficult, therefore, to distribute food to all of them. So the food was wrapped up i.e. covered or enclosed in soft or flexible material such as banana leaves bound by a length of thread. These were thrown to those who were some distance away, who were unable to come closer and receive that food from the givers' hands. This was what had been recorded in Scriptural texts that were not the original Pāli Canon. There was no mention that it was the throwing of those things in an offer to the Bhikkhus. Thus it should be done among the group of lay disciples or when the givers were on a high place and the receivers on a low one or vice versa. In such cases, when both sides were not too far away from each other, there was no other way of giving except by throwing.



6/7 QU : Is it permissible that the lay disciples should sometimes teach and instruct Sāmaneras and Bhikkhus?

ANS : There is nothing evil in doing so. What matters is in the use of words and the attitude of mind, such as when it is an exchange of views or suggestions for a project that is to be jointly launched with concerted efforts. So this does not mean that Bhikkhus are super human beings that nobody can advise or teach. Even in the case of the Buddha himself, there used to be some villagers who gave him their suggestions whenever there was a problem or a difficulty arising. This means a friendly exchange of view and concerted efforts to improve and correct some deficiencies. All these through the spirit of goodwill and compassion or *Mettā* and *Karunā*, as opposed to the intention to grasp the opportunity to insult or find fault with the Bhikkhus. It appears that at present the lay disciples, particularly the teachers in various schools and universities, have a tendency to find fault with the Bhikkhus, often using harsh and insulting words against the Order of Sangha as a whole. This despite the fact that there are only a small number of Bhikkhus who are evil-doers.



6/8 QU : Bhikkhus in the countryside are almost totally ignorant of the Dhamma. What they can do is only to chant the salutation passages. They cannot give sermons. Thus they cannot be good examples for anybody. Sometimes they are invited by the schools to give a sermon, but they are unable to do so. This proves how even Bhikkhus cannot instruct the people in the Dhamma. What then is to be expected of the teachers?

ANS : This is the teachers' misunderstanding. The teachers are educated and trained with the purpose of being teachers and spent more time than the Bhikkhus. Many Bhikkhus are not like that. Some of them were ordained just a few days or a few weeks ago. Just think how many years the teachers have undergone different levels or grades of the training courses, which last more than 8 years. Bhikkhus newly ordained have only 3 months of study and practice. They come direct from the fields and farms, *their legs still bespattered with mud and dirt so to speak*. What can be expected of them more than that? While Bhikkhus finish the sixth



year of elementary level, teacher has passed the sixth year of the secondary level. After that the teachers continue their training course for seven more years. This while most Bhikkhus have passed the fourth year of the elementary level before being ordained for just three months. How can both be compared? *It is truly a sadistic and pessimistic attitude of mind. Let us, therefore, train ourselves to look at the truth and the brighter side of things.*

This shows how the foundation of knowledge of Bhikkhus and teachers are far different. In case a Bhikkhu has been ordained for a long time and has been trained well enough, then it will be a close match. The deciding element here is whether the ‘flight hours’ of one will match those of the other or not.

6/9 QU : What is your opinion of the Bhikkhus who are involved in politics?

ANS : Man is a political creature in all aspects of his life, more or less depending on an individual view-point and situation. Since he is a social creature,



all his movements are to be associated with politics in one way or another, either directly or indirectly. He is not in a position to live a life of seclusion, not having anything to do with society and politics. *Sometimes a person may say that he is not involved in politics, but politics always has something to do with him in one way or another.*

Such being the case, the Bhikkhus' role concerning politics must be considered and carefully analysed. *As long as it is not divorced from religious principles being based on reason and decency, so long should it not be shunned or blamed.* This means that his attitude must not be harmful to any political party, not creating an enemy thereby nor taking side with any party. This is the meaning of decency or reasonableness. Of course, Bhikkhus must not take part in an election campaign supporting or opposing any political party, thereby flattering one party and creating the feeling of hatred on the part of another party. It is therefore impossible i.e. impracticable to prohibit the Sangha from being absolutely free from the society of which the Sangha is also a significant part. The range of politics covers the action of all citizens in its executive,



legislative and judicial branches, there being no citizen that can avoid the power of those three administrative affairs.

6/10 QU : It appears that the Order of Sangha is at present left to its own fate, without any attempt for improvement or correction. Is there anybody, or any organisation, that is accountable to this unhealthy trend?

ANS : To say so is an over-statement or an exaggeration. The Order of Sangha is not apathetically indifferent like that. There are active movements of one kind or another in its four executive branches as follows :

1. The Public Utility Branch : This concerns the construction and the repairs of monasteries. In the countryside, our Bhikkhus have devoted their efforts in this kind of development. It is also to be noted that the monasteries are not the property of anybody in particular. They belong to the nation and the religion as a whole. Everybody can go to them and make use of



them in their doing meritorious deeds. Besides these, there are other aspects of development undertaken by the Bhikkhus such as building schools and roads, digging canals and giving counsel for choosing a career.

2. Education : There have been attempts to revise and formulate the education plan particularly for the Bhikkhus under present circumstances. This does not mean we have to follow the lay people's educational plan in every detail, since there is no need to do so. Even the lay students are not able to know and be experienced in every subject for learning. They choose the branch they prefer in accordance with their tendencies and aptitudes. Thus there is nobody who is the all-knower. Each, therefore, chooses the subject that he thinks is most suitable to him.

As far as the Bhikkhus' education is concerned, it has been expanded into the university level that has produced more than thirty classes of graduates. However there are still some people who regard ours as illegal,*

* In B.E. 2540 (1997), the Mahaclulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Act and the Mahamakut Buddhist University Act were enacted, thus resulting in both Buddhist universities becoming state universities.



but the fact is that this university was established by the Royal Command of King Rama V and was regarded then as a law by His Majesty's Command. What is significant is the fact that our university has produced quite a number of qualified and talented graduates. Some of them, having left the Bhikkhuhood, are accepted as able and honourable members of society. Those who remain in Bhikkhuhood are similarly helpful members of the Sangha Order and are able to shoulder various painstaking tasks.

Moreover, the study of the Buddha's teachings in Pali language has been to a great extent improved and expanded. There are also more Sunday schools initiated by the Bhikkhus. Thus it can be said that *Bhikkhus are not the 'lazybones'; nor does the institution of Sangha 'die a living death' as many people who prefer to look superficially think so.*

3. Dissemination section : This section is arranged in various forms to be mentioned together with the Mental Development Unit. There are tens of thousands of Bhikkhus who are responsible for these assignments. However, the Bhikkhus' manner of working



is quite different from that of government officials. They are not bent on publicising or propaganda activities. Most of them, therefore, remain 'behind the scene', as it were. They follow what is expressed in the famous song entitled 'The Highest Dream' that it is their moral duty

To right the wrong with a determined will.
Our life for the nation we sacrifice,
So that our task may be fulfilled;
Though our task is not publicised.

They realise how to do good for the cause of good. All the good having been done is their reward. They do not look forward to being publicised, with their painstaking task being made known to the public through the mass media.

Another factor to be taken into account is the trained personel. If the total number of Bhikkhus is supposed to be one hundred percent, then sixty-five percent of them are temporary members, being ordained at some time or another all the year round. These Bhikkhus cannot be given any assignment, since they are ordained for a short period, some for one week,



or two weeks, and others for one month or three months, still others for one year or two years. However, this is the undertaking they have willingly done to alleviate the burden of the Ministry of Education and the universities, which do not stress the teaching of morality, which is after the guidelines for the development of life in the right direction.

Now that, as earlier mentioned, the sixty-five percent of Bhikkhus are still newcomers not sufficiently equipped with knowledge and training to teach and train others, the burden falls upon the shoulders of the remaining thirty-five percent of Bhikkhus all the time. It is therefore these Bhikkhus who are to be the permanent teachers for the beginners. Some of them, having been taught and trained for a period of time, left the Bhikkhuhood, leaving the thirty-five percent to take responsibility as before. Moreover, of the thirty-five percent there are about ten percent who are aged Bhikkhus, who cannot be expected to perform such active, heavy works as the younger Bhikkhus can. This is like in a large family there are sure to be the elders who cannot work like the younger generation. The same is true in the case of the aged Bhikkhus, who, although



they cannot do manual work like the younger ones, yet are in the position to be the source of faith and respect for the lay devotees, also to give instructions and encouragement to those devotees better than the younger Bhikkhus. *This means this number is still able to render the service to society in another form, which cannot be directly included in any of the four branches of activities in which there are already Bhikkhus with their own specific assignment and responsibility.* The service rendered by these aged Bhikkhus is generally what may be called 'behind the scenes', not being obvious as that of the educational branch or the construction works.

All these show how a small number of Bhikkhus have to shoulder the great responsibility covering various phases of development throughout the country. These Bhikkhus are associated with various government agencies although their service is not as obvious as the government officials.

In the countryside a Bhikkhu is the leader of the villagers, being thereby abbot of a monastery. On the sub-district level, he is the ecclesiastical sub-district leader. The same is true also on the district level. They coordinate and cooperate with the government officials in order to achieve the same target. Thus *they are the*



connecting link between the government officials and the people. At the same time they are morally bound to create a cordial relationship between those officials and the monasteries. All this for the sake of development of the country.

The essential point generally overlooked by the people is the fact that the Bhikkhus are those who work without salary for their contribution. As a matter of fact, the people whose service the Bhikkhus have rendered and those who patronise them are different group. Those who are travelling preachers are also 'in the same boat'. They may be classified as follows :

1. The DHAMMADŪTA Bhikkhus. These Bhikkhus have the responsibility of propagating Buddhism on behalf of the Council of Elders (i.e. Mahāthera Samāgama) both within the country and in foreign countries in accordance with the time schedule in the country, which is during the months of March, April and May.

2. The DHAMMACĀRIKA Bhikkhus. Their responsibility is the same as those mentioned above, but they work under the support by the Department of



Public Welfare. Their task is concentrated on the northern hill tribe people.

3. The CARIYĀNIDESAKA Bhikkhus. These are those who have graduated from both Buddhist universities. They are charged with the responsibility to teach people and students and propagate the Dhamma under the patronage of the Department of Religious Affairs. They are provided salaries all the times until they leave the Bhikkhuhood or retire from the service assigned to them.

4. The DHAMMA VIDYĀKARA Bhikkhus. There are volunteer Bhikkhus being assigned the task of teaching Buddhism in the schools in Bangkok and its adjacent provinces by the Student Committee of the Mahamakut Buddhist University in accordance with the course recommended by the Ministry of Education. They teach the pupils and students both in the elementary and secondary levels in response to the requests from those schools.

5. The Phra VIDYĀKARA Bhikkhus. Generally, this kind refers to the Bhikkhus who are invited to



preach or to give Dhamma lectures in various places on various occasions. Sometimes they are also assigned the task of teaching Buddhism in the schools like the above-mentioned DHAMMA VIDYĀKARA category.

As far as the statuses of the two Buddhist universities are concerned, they were formally recognised the status of university in B.E. 2540 (A.D. 1997). At present they are state universities, being granted to offer the courses from the Bachelor to the Doctorate degrees, also with the colleges under their supervision.

There are several other forms of dissemination of the Buddha's teachings. These include arranging the seminars and conducting training courses in various provinces. Some government departments and ministries also embark on several campaigns for the same purpose, such as determining the syllabuses, training courses for the teachers who teach morality and Buddhism, together with the programs for educating the people in morality. Bhikkhus also take part in these arrangements by instructing and teaching the pupils in schools, colleges and universities, along with the penitentiary i.e. the prisons. All these show they are not loitering about doing nothing and leaving things at the mercy of fate.



Administration. There is a problem to a certain extent in this aspect. The system of administration appears to be too conservative, with no attempt to keep pace with the changing circumstances. There are several reasons for this, the most significant being the structure of the Administrative Act concerning the executive branch, which is the hindrance restraining the flexibility of the undertaking to be ventured on. In some cases those responsible for this task is too busy with other activities. They are in the position of being highly venerated as the holy ones. This makes them always preoccupied with endless invitations or receiving an endless stream of guests. As a result they are often exhausted after receiving a few guests who come to pay their reverence to them and thus need a long rest instead of paying attention to the tasks under their responsibility. All these are what has become a hindrance retarding the progress and development of the Order of Sangha as a whole. Thus there should be an improvement initiated by the executive branch. As for the education branch, together with the public utilities and the dissemination sections, there should be able Bhikkhus with specific abilities who are courageous enough to do what is already their moral duty, without waiting for an order



or command from 'the above'. They should regard these tasks as being natural or 'inborn' with their birth as bhikkhus. It is through this inborn cooperative responsibility, instead of 'passing the buck' so to speak but the willingness to say that 'the buck stops here' as it were, that the embarrassing situation may be improved.

6/11 QU : How do the Thai Bhikkhus in the Thai monasteries in foreign countries disseminate the Buddha's teachings? What result has been accomplished so far? What is the plan for the future?

ANS : Generally speaking, the purpose of the Thai Bhikkhus in the monasteries in foreign countries is not to draw those foreigners and convert them into Buddhists. Never is such an idea our goal or purpose. It is our wish to be the source of refuge for the Thai, Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese Buddhists who live there. It should be noted that, ever since Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam were under the Communist rule, there has been a rapid increase of the construction of



Buddhist monasteries in various parts of the free world, especially where there are quite a number of Buddhists from those countries who evacuated there. For the Thai people, it appears to them as if they were in Thailand. Once a while, there were some 'farang' or white people coming to visit the places and conversed with the Bhikkhus there. After an exchange of views, they were interested and wished to test the truth of the Buddha's teachings by starting to practise. However, we did not try to convert them, never requiring them to change their former religious faith, since *Buddhism is not hungry for converts not aiming at drawing people into its fold. It is our duty to explain to them the principles of the Buddha's teachings.* In case they are Muslims we teach them to be good or virtuous Muslims. In case they are Christians, we teach them to be good or virtuous Christians. *This means no matter whether or not a person professes any religion, let him, or her, be the good or virtuous disciple of that faith.* Our main purpose is for the sake of the Thai people dwelling there. But while staying there, we became the focus of attention of the 'farang' Buddhists there, since there were already Buddhists who are European, American and Australian. They used to read and study the books on



Buddhsim; their number is always increasing. Then there are also the educated people in those countries who are increasingly interested in Buddhism. This is therefore a healthy trend of events for Buddhism.

In England there are at present more than 170 Buddhist associations. In the United States there is an ever-increasing interest in Buddhism. This trend occurred some time before in Australia, New Zealand, Germany and France, where there are at present both the Mahayana and Theravada Bhikkhus working diligently to such an extent that there is a saying that in the near future *the sun (i.e. Buddhism) might rise in the West.* This means Buddhism will flourish to an unexpected degree in Europe and America, instead of in Asia. This causes a suspicion on the part of some people, who are afraid that the Asians might not be able to preserve Buddhism in their lands as before. This after all is not an impossibility when we look at the trend of practice today. Many 'farangs' are seen to dress themselves in Thai silk, and sing Thai songs, whereas a number of Thais sing the 'farang songs'. This may be the manifestation of the law of impermanence or change, which in Buddhism is called *Aniccatā*. Those people have been



accustomed to such things from their birth and find them boring. This change results in such a queer phenomenon. However, *if we Asians can preserve our Buddhism, which is really our invaluable treasure, then the 'sun' will rise both in the East and the West.*

6/12 QU : Did the All-Enlightened Buddha ever lay down some rules and regulations regarding the construction of Uposatha and Vihāra (main and secondary convocation halls), multi-purpose pavilion (Sāla), Bhikkhus' cells and other forms of construction works? Is there anything concerning solicitations for donations in various projects for the Sangha?

ANS : It appears that this problem occurs most often in the Northern provinces such as Chiang Rai and Pha Yao. Regarding Bhikkhus' living quarters or Senasana, there was mentioned in the part of the Pāli Canon called *Senāsanakhandhaka* to the effect that such construction, including the construction of the convocation hall and the pavilion, was one of the responsibilities of the



Bhikkhus. This had occurred ever since the times of the Buddha. The construction of the Jetavana monastery in the city of Sāvatti was said to cost 54 Koti, which was equal to 2,050 million rupees or, in Thai currency, approximately 2,000 million Baht. However, in those times the construction projects were initiated by the kings or the multimillionaires so there was no need to solicit donations from the people as at present. It should be noted that even in the times of the Buddha there were still quite a number of people who were not Buddhists. But in Thailand about ninety-five percent of the population are Buddhists. Due to this fact to solicit donations from the people has become a tradition of the Thai with the conditional clause that, if a devotee donates a sum of money alone, he will be blessed with the wealth of money, but if he undertakes to invite other people to join him in his meritorious deeds, he will be blessed with the both of money and of retinue.

That the solicitation for donation has become a problem today is due to the fact that the country is at present beset with the economic crisis and this has become a nuisance for some people. However, there is a principle to be considered as follows :



If we have Saddhā or Faith and can spare part of our income, then we are willing to donate within our means.

If we have no faith, also with no part of income to spare, then we are free **not** to donate anything.

If we have enough to spare but has no faith, then we are free **not** to do anything, either.

But if we have faith but have not enough of money to spare, then we are also free **not** to give anything.

To sum up, we should donate within our means in case we have both the faith and part of our income to spare for the purpose.

For the truth is that the effect of doing meritorious deeds is happiness.

Another fact to be noted is that *the monasteries are the common property of all. They do not belong to any individual person.* There is no bequeathing them to anybody in the manner of the wealth of lay people. This is to be considered with a tolerant, sympathetic attitude of mind. Do not find fault with the solicitation for donations from the people. It is for the purpose of joining forces to do a meritorious kamma together from our fellow Buddhists. If we are not ready, we are free



not to cooperate. There are also several others who are not ready and who do not participate in that undertaking. This is due to the fact that to do such a meritorious deed depends upon both the strength of faith and the amount of money that can be willingly spared. This is opposed to do so as a show-off of one's status, which is beyond one's means and causes unnecessary suffering afterwards.

The construction of Bhikkhus' living quarters was also undertaken by the Bhikkhus themselves even in those ancient times. This was through the cooperative efforts of lay devotees. However, there were on some occasions where some Bhikkhus at present appear to overdo their legitimate function and undertake to control the monetary resources themselves. As a matter of fact, those buildings are the property of the religion as a whole. When a Bhikkhu is revered by the people of that location, he is then the legitimate leader of them and can request the cooperation of those lay devotees who respect him, being thereby the connecting link in such useful construction projects such as road building and others.



All these activities are by no means unbuddhistic. They are within the scope of Buddhism. What has made it elegant and ornate is the influence of culture, arts and sculpture which have been inserted in accordance with the Thai tendency in this respect. It is therefore our inborn nature that a monastery or a royal palace must be made as beautiful and elegant as possible. But, compared with the same things for the same purpose in both Christianity and Islam i.e. their churches and mosques, it will be seen that our monasteries cannot be compared with those of both religions in both the size and ornate styles of their decorations.

It is therefore advisable not to look at the things, especially our own things and activities, with a fault-finding eye, exaggerating their fault and thus making a mountain out of a molehill. After all, the monasteries, with all the buildings therein, are religious property as a result of the selfless sacrifice of pious Buddhists. They are not the property of any individual. This is unlike the homes of people, which in some cases are the grand edifices with ornate decoration not less than those of the monasteries.



ROYAL PROCLAMATION OF KING RAMA VI (King Vajiravudh)

“Our country is possibly the only country in the world that has the people of the same stock professing the same religion i.e. Buddhism. It is therefore our sacred duty to preserve Buddhism to the best of our ability, preventing the Buddha’s teachings from being lost.

“We must at the same time preserve our identity of being Thai i.e. independent. This along with Buddhism in the same manner as our ancestors have done so for us.”

From His Instructions to the Scouts.



Highlights of the Chapter VI



All religions, after their founders have passed away, are destined to be divided or separated into various schools or sects.

There is scarcely any ill feeling or separation between the Bhikkhus of two sects in Thailand.

Whatever activities are beneficial to Buddhism as a whole are performed with concerted efforts. We have in mind the benefits to occur to Buddhism, the country and the people.

All people are far different in their tendencies and aptitudes, and also their degrees of maturity which each individual had accumulated in the past i.e. in their former lives. It is impossible to have them choose the same theme or manner of practice and progress at the same rate.



Each individual has different times of being ready and willing to start on this long journey of spiritual development.

In every society there is to be classification of ranks and titles, which is nothing but the 'division of labour', with each person being responsible for what is his or her assignment.

All the concepts of equality in all respects are merely fanciful dreams and cannot in actual reality exist.

The salutation passages, however long and detailed they are, contain nothing that has the mythical powers to grant people's wish or prayers without their own efforts.

A person may say that he is not involved in politics, but politics always has something to do with him in one way or another.

Bhikkhus in the countryside are the connecting link between government officials and the people. At the same time they are morally bound to create a

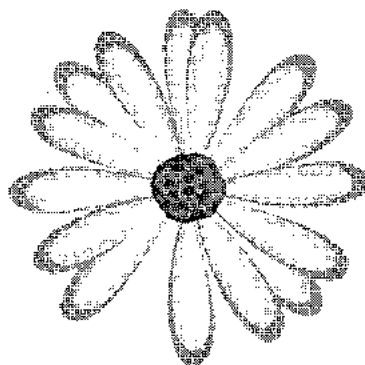


cordial relationship between those officials and the monasteries.

Buddhism is not hungry for converts, not aiming at drawing the people into the fold.

In England there are at present more than 170 Buddhist associations. In the United States there is an increasing interest in Buddhism. This trend occurred some time before in Australia, New Zealand, Germany and France.

The monasteries are the common property of all. They do not belong to any individual person. There is no bequeathing them to anybody in the manner of the wealth of the lay people.





CHAPTER VII

QUESTIONS CONCERNING VIÑÑĀṄA (CONSCIOUSNESS)

7/1 QU : Is Viññāṇa the same as Opapātika?

ANS : Not so. In Buddhist terminology, Viññāṇa can be classified into 3 categories viz.

1. VIÑÑĀṄA KHANDHA. This implies the awareness or consciousness of the *Rūpa* or form through the eyes, of sound through the ears, of smell through the nose, of taste through the tongue (or palate), of touch through the body and of what occurs in the mind.

2. VIÑÑĀṄA DHĀTU. This refers to the seed or the source of awareness or knowledge, within our own mind, the difference being the degree or magnitude of each individual.



3. PAṬISANDHI VIÑÑĀṆA. This is called the linking or rebirth consciousness i.e. one that takes birth in various realms of existence, due to the kamma of each.

The term OPAPĀTIKA refers to the invisible beings in various realms viz. hellish beings, demons, hungry ghosts, celestial beings, and beings of more advanced realms than ordinary celestial beings; these are called Brahma, all of whom have spontaneous births, never having to pass through the condition of infancy and childhood. Thus it can be said, from the scriptural records, that those of the Opapātika birth also have Viññāṇa, but not Viññāṇa in its pure, natural form. It is Viññāṇa still associated with Kilesa or defilements and Kamma or defilement-based actions. It is these two factors viz. kilesa and kamma that create the *Patisandhi Viññāṇa* i.e. the linking or rebirth consciousness, taking birth in various invisible realms due to their store-house of kilesa and kamma, each being different from others. Such being the case, Viññāṇa is like the base of a thing, whereas Opapātika is the compound or mixture of form i.e. body, sensation or *Vedanā*, perception or *Saññā*, mental formations or *Sankhāra* and consciousness or *Viññāṇa*. That is why the pure Viññāṇa is part of the



Viññāṇa khandha, while those of the Opapātika birth have the form i.e. body, Vedanā, Saññā, Sankhāra and Viññāṇa. This is how one is the basis or source and the other is the formation by means of that basis or source.

7/2 QU : How can we teach the subject of Viññāṇa to the children so they can understand it well enough, since most of the teachers cannot yet understand it?

ANS : Viññāṇa is fundamentally nothing but the awareness or consciousness through sense-organs. First of all, the teachers should start with the *Cakkhuviññāṇa* i.e. eye-consciousness; then he should go on to the ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness. These are what all of them can understand.

But in another sense we have in Thai language the idiomatic use of Viññāṇa in such phrases as the Viññāṇa of teachers, the Viññāṇa of soldiers and the Viññāṇa of the policemen. In these cases the term



Viññāna means 'ideal' in the sense of being perfect in quality. When it is used with the noun 'teachers', it refers to the teachers who devote themselves to their teaching, working selflessly in their capacity as teachers. The same is true when it is used with the nouns 'soldiers' and 'policemen'. Those people with such a Viññāna in this idiomatic sense are sincere and earnest in doing their duties, being always reliable in connection with the students and their superiors. In short, they work with the spirit of real *Mettā* or goodwill and *Karuṇā* or compassion to all concerned.

Such is how the children should be made to understand the meaning of the term Viññāna used in the scriptural texts. However, there is much more to be studied and explained point by point or little by little. It is impossible to make them understand the full meaning at once, especially when they are young children. It is only when they grow up beyond the elementary grade to the secondary or advanced grade that they should be taught in more elaborate details.

Just think of ourselves while we were children. At that time we used to read Thai classical stories such as *Rāmāyana* and others. We were able then to



know and understand whatever was described in those books, but could not derive any benefit or lessons to apply to our life. When we grew up and read those stories once again, we may be able to see beyond or behind the characters of those mentioned in the dramas and then to apply them as lessons concerning morality and warnings for our life. This shows how *an individual's viewpoint can change and develop stories in their right perspective, being thereby able to inculcate instructive lessons as the beacon light for his life.*

7/3 QU : There is a problem now concerning the curriculum for the students of the secondary grade in which it is prescribed that there must be Bhikkhus participating in the study of Buddhism. What are the principles by which this problem can be promptly solved? This is because it is very difficult to find out the teachers who are willing and ready to do so.

ANS : This problem is under the responsibility of the executive branch. We must conduct training courses consisting of counselling ability and arranging the meetings of teachers. As for the educational aspect,



there is to be a special course for this purpose. At the same time we should give them a helping hand with regard to material apparatus such as textbooks and handbooks and some other instruments. The teachers of this subject must be trained to understand the fact that *the teaching of Buddhism is the teaching of man to be human, then to be humane or virtuous human beings, to be pundits, scholars and finally to be Noble Disciples rising beyond the mundane sphere.* All these to be achieved through the assiduous and skilful teaching, show the students **how** Buddhism can be fruitfully applied for the purpose for themselves.

Obstacles and hindrances during the course of work there are sure to be. This depends on the joint efforts of the co-workers to overcome and surmount them. It may be somewhat discouraging at the outset, but with persistent and dedicated efforts, there will soon be found a way by which they can gradually be reduced and then removed. This, of course, needs a determined will since those hindrances cannot be immediately overcome. As far as the practical aspect is concerned, the teaching of morality should not be the responsibility of any teacher in particular. The teachers



should bear in mind that, besides the specific subject they are assigned to teach, morality is also a supplementary subject they are associated with, although indirectly. This implies explaining to the students the principles or fundamentals of religions as the foundation stone of morality. This covers the behaviour, the honour and the dignity of both the schools and the students themselves, including also the students' parents. The value or worthiness of a human being rests upon his own good and evil deeds, the former referring to those with moral or virtuous qualities as the fundamentals of his thoughts, words and deeds, thereby always making them beneficial to others in one way or another. Now the latter i.e. the evil manifests in a variety of harmful ways to others. This is the point to be stressed for the children or students, with the teachers being always aware of their responsibility to make their children or students good law-abiding citizens of the country.

Of course, all these require the joint and harmonious efforts of all concerned, who must sympathetically cooperate for the improvement or correction of the situation. There is nothing impossible or beyond their joint efforts here. What is of significance is whether



or not and how much they are willing and earnest in doing so.

7/4 QU : The study of Buddhism as one of the subjects to be studied in the branch of Sociology is fixed to be twice a week. Is this too much or too little, in your opinion?

ANS : But, as far as I have known, it is only once a week. It appears nowadays that all kinds of knowledge in the world are being heaped upon the young shoulders of our children. This without thinking how much they, or rather their brains, will be able to absorb such a variety of subjects. It must be noted that the children in the elementary level are not yet ready to learn and know all things. They cannot be the 'all-knower,' so to speak. Some teachers stress the knowledge of physical health; others the discipline; still others religion, culture and individuality. What do they think the children are? All these must be gradually, and one by one, inserted into their curriculum. This is in one sense like the attempts to count the number of innumerable leaves of one tree, being more idealistic than



realistic. If only we can equip the children with Right View, what results therefrom will be the satisfactory degree of respect for the national tradition and culture, including the respect for disciplinary rules and national traits or identity. *There is no need to over-burden them in such a manner, especially in the elementary stage. Those other subjects may be gradually or systematically added later on.* This is the way for the fulfilment of our aim at last.

7/5 QU : Why is not the moral education treated as a compulsory subject in the school curriculum?

ANS : Why is not the moral education treated as a compulsory subject, not merely as the supplementary element in other subjects? There is a trend to make the study of Buddhism a compulsory subject throughout all courses of education i.e. from the kindergarten level to the highest i.e. the university level including vocational kind. As for the university level, there have been joint efforts with the purpose of inserting it as a compulsory subject in the universities. However, on this level the



proposal has met with a storm of oppositions. This is due to the fact that most academicians are graduates from foreign countries. They have been estranged from Buddhism for a long time and are thus inclined to belittle the value of Buddhism. Nobody knows, therefore whether or not the 'ship' of Buddhism, faced with this cyclonic storm of vigorous opposition, will survive and come out with a crowning victory. However, there are also supporting voices which strongly call for the inclusion of Buddhism throughout the courses and kinds of education. This is based on the fact that, as long as we are human beings who cannot live a life of seclusion by separating ourselves absolutely from society, so long will there be the prime necessity of conducting ourselves along the line of a religious teaching. This includes both the study and the practice to apply those teachings to our life and work. This implies, as mentioned above, the unavoidable necessity of religious teaching for the security and prosperity of society as a whole.



7/6 QU : In what way is the teaching of Buddhism different from that of morality or moral education?

ANS : There is as a matter of fact not so much difference. Moral education deals specifically with the Dhamma : how to behave decently in accordance with the law of morality. Buddhism has a wider scope of teaching than that. It deals with the historical life of the Buddha, together with the history of Buddhism, then with the Dhamma or the Buddha's teachings, along with the history of the Order of Sangha, also the accounts concerning the Dhamma and the Vinaya i.e. the Norm and the Law. In short, it teaches the students to have a bird's-eye-view of Buddhism and of the Pali Canon. This is the overall view of Buddhism as if looking from a distance or from above. There are no elaborate details to be studied, except when there are some points that must be specially stressed or when the Dhamma can be applied into the students' life and work. While studying the facts about the Sangha, for instance, the virtuous qualities and the manners of practice of the Bhikkhus will be explained so that the students may regard it as



the guiding beacon for their life. This is nothing but to put to actual practice the Buddha's Dhamma or teachings, which can bestow upon the students themselves the effects that they can see for themselves. If the students accept this truth as a result of putting the Dhamma into actual practice, they will be willing to perform or fulfill the causes that they believe will produce the desired effects.

7/7 QU : What is the reason for the change from teaching morality to teaching Buddhism?

ANS : Both are inter-related. In the past we were taught the moral principles from a number of books composed for the purpose of teaching morality such as The Characteristics of Cultured People, The Conduct in Accordance with the Dhamma, Morality, The Duties of Good Citizens. Later there was the course of moral education. It may be seen that all these depend upon the words used rather than the purpose intended. When we use the term morality, which in the vernacular is Sila and Dhamma, it is limited to the Dhamma as the focal



point. But if we use the term Buddhism, the scope of meaning is wider than that. However, even in the past when the subject of morality was studied, there was also added something concerning the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha although it was not in elaborate details. The study of Buddhism must include the doctrine, the disciples, the religious places, the religious material resources in other aspects and the religious rites and ceremonies. This so that the students may have a correct overall view of Buddhism.

7/8 QU : In the biography of Angulim'la, the Finger-necklaced robber, there was mentioned the name of a religious teacher of those times viz. Vājacarva, who proclaimed his doctrine that it was not an evil to kill human beings. Was this a kind of morality? Were killing to be regarded as an evil, there would be no robber who dared to be a killer or slaughterer of human beings. Kindly give your explanation based on the truth of Anatta or Non-selfness.



ANS : Such a doctrine had been proclaimed even before the times of the Buddha. Other religious teachers who cherished the same idea as this were *Pakuddha Kaccāyana*, *Ajita Kesakambala* and *Makkhali Gosāla*. In the (Hindu) text called *Srimat Bhagavat Gita* it was explained that the human body was composed of the assemblage of various conditions of materials (*i.e. earth or solid, water or liquid, fire or warmth and the air or breaths*). Thus during the process of killing, both the killer and the killed, including even the weapons used in killing were just one kind of matter going into another. There was therefore no evil associated with such an act. This is obviously ***the philosophy of robbers or plunderers and of those who made a religion of warfare, taking delight in plundering and slaughtering others to satisfy their sadistic nature.*** In case there is still a question whether or not such an attitude of mind is a kind of morality, the answer is that it certainly is *i.e. it is the morality or moral principles of those sadists, who are free to propose and declare the law of morality of their own standard.*

Here it should be noted that Buddhism does not use the term '*Cariyadhamma*' but uses instead the term *Dhammacariya* and *Samacariya*, meaning the behaviour



or conduct that is in accordance with the Dhamma, with sincerity as the foundation. That the teacher Vājacarva declared his doctrine in that way was the result of his belief based on his sadistic nature. However, the comparison of such sadistic doctrine with the Buddha's teachings, particularly the doctrine of Anattā or Non-selfness cannot be done by any means, since the doctrine of Anattā consists of the two grades or levels of looking at the truths. *Both, therefore, cannot be equated with each other by any means or any degree whatever.* The two levels of looking at the truths in accordance with the Buddhist viewpoint are as follows :

1. It is true on one level that, as Vājacarva said, a human body is formed by the assemblage or conglomeration of various kinds of matter and energy i.e. the solid, the liquid, the warmth and the air i.e. the breaths, together with what may be called Viññāṇa, here meaning the mind. When those parts come together in a proper proportion, then a human body or the body of an animal is created. Such a body is to be nourished by food and temperature that are appropriate to its existence.

2. The theme of Anattā or Selflessness is another level of truth declared by the Buddha for the sake of



reducing and then removing the attachment to the concept of 'self' in that conglomeration of matter and energy called body and mind or name-and-form (Nāma-rūpa). With such an attachment comes the desire or craving due to the wrong view, a manifestation of delusion, which makes human beings and animals calling to it as 'self'. This is the second level of the truth.

The first level is called *Sammati Paññatti* : the truth through supposition or the relative truth, which in the mundane level or sphere is to be accepted and not violated. *It is true on the mundane or worldly sphere and must be obeyed since the body's life is always cherished and nourished as the most endeared thing by every being in this sphere*, including, as a matter of course, the teacher Vājacarva himself and other sadistic teachers who, with the heart of stone, made a religion of killing. Moreover, it is an inviolable right of worldlings to refuse to be deprived of their body's life, being still attached to it as their 'self'. This level is called *VATTAGĀMĪ* i.e. one leading to the endless cycle of rebirths and redeaths.



In short, *the body's life is the worldlings' life.* It belongs to them as their birth-right. Nobody can therefore violate this right of theirs by depriving them of what is most endeared to them. This is true also on the part of those killers, who in the same manner and degree just cannot help being attached to the body's life as their life, thus betraying the same fear and dread of death as that of those killed by them. This attachment is therefore the inviolable right of every living being.

On the level of VIVATTAGĀMĪ i.e. one beyond the endless cycle of rebirths and redeaths, the Noble Disciples have realised the truth that the Five Aggregates of Existence or what is called Name-and-Form or body-and-mind are ownerless and selfless i.e. without self, being thereby not under the command or the wish of anybody. Having been dissolved at the moment of death, they are empty or void of owner, there being no abiding principle in them. This realisation results in the destruction of the three groups of defilements viz. greed, hatred and delusion. *This means that the realisation of the truth of Anattā in the Buddhist sense must be the result of the extinction of those defilements. It cannot be forced upon others by those sadists, who have a*



heart of stone. This is diametrically opposite to those Noble Disciples, who have a heart of gold. With such realisation on the part of the Noble Disciples there is no thought whatever to do harm to anybody, let alone to kill others i.e. to deprive others of their most endeared body's life. All these illustrate the two levels of the truth of the *Anattā* doctrine, the highest one of the Noble Disciples being beyond the attachment and the desire to do harm to anybody by any means.



Highlights of the Chapter VII



An individual's view-point can change and develop to a more or less degree when he grows up and sees things in the scenes of those stories in their right perspective, being thereby able to inculcate instructive lessons as the beacon light for his life.

The teaching of Buddhism is the teaching of man to be human, then to be humane or virtuous human beings, to be pundits, scholars and finally to be Noble Disciples rising beyond the mundane sphere.

The children in the elementary level are not yet ready to learn and know all things; they cannot be the all-knower, so to speak.

Nobody knows whether or not the 'ship' of Buddhism, faced with this cyclonic storm of vigorous oppositions, will survive and come out with a crowning victory.

The Anattā doctrine as philosophy of robbers and plunderers and those who made a religion of killing and warfare to satisfy their sadistic nature cannot



be equated with the Buddhist doctrine of Anattā by any means or any degree whatever.

The truth through supposition or the relative truth in the worldly or mundane level or sphere is to be accepted and not violated, since the body's life is always cherished and nourished by every being in this sphere.

The body's life is the worldlings' life. This is true on the part of those killers, who in the same manner and degree just cannot help being attached to the body's life as their life, thus betraying the same fear and dread of death as that of those killed by them.

Realisation of the truth of Anattā in the Buddhist sense must be the result of the extinction of defilements. It cannot be forced upon others by those sadists, who have a heart of stone. This is diametrically opposite to the Noble Disciples, who have a heart of gold.



CHAPTER VIII

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF THE DHAMMA

8/1 QU : Mr. A is the pig-slaughterer, Mr. B buys pork to prepare food to be offered to Bhikkhus. There are now two questions viz. a) Do the Bhikkhus who eat that pork commit an evil kamma? And b) Which of the two i.e. the pig-slaughterer and the buyer of pork has committed more evil than the other?

ANS : This is an irrational question, since it is logically obvious that the person who commits an evil act is only the pig-slaughterer. Why should there be an evil to befall the pork-buyer unless he has ordered the pig to be slaughtered specifically for him? According to



the question, it is understood that the buyer has not done so. It is the pork generally available in the market place.

As for the Bhikkhus, there is no question to be asked here, since they have no connection with the slaughtering of the pigs. They live on the almsfood offered them by the lay disciples. Unless those things have been prohibited in the Vinaya or Code of Discipline they are free to partake of them, without any fear of being involved in the killing. In this case, it is obvious that the Bhikkhus have not seen nor heard nor have any reason to doubt that the pigs were killed specifically for them. There are ten kinds of prohibited meat for the Bhikkhus. Thus in this case the Bhikkhus have committed no evil kamma at all.

8/2 QU : Does to kill an ant produce the same degree of evil as killing a human being?

ANS : Certainly not. The degree or intensity of evil in killing is to be based on three principles as follows :



1. **Quality.** This depends on **how much** is the quality or the usefulness of the object, i.e. an animal or a human being to be killed.

In case of animals, whether it is useful animals such as elephants, cows and buffaloes or harmful ones such as white ants, and mosquitoes.

In case of human beings, whether they are virtuous ones such as monks or one's own parents or vicious ones such as criminals.

2. **Purpose.** This refers to whether it is the killing based on the intensity of greed, hatred and delusion. The stronger the defilements, the more evil or *Pāpa* is produced thereby.

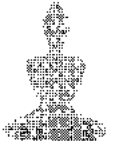
3. **Efforts.** This means whether it is a deliberate, pre-meditated killing together with torturous methods or the killing in self-defence during the critical moment.

Such being the case, there is a great difference of evil or *Pāpa* produced by killing an ant and a human being. The *Cetanā* or will or the reason for killing is also different, followed by the difference of efforts involved.



8/3 QU : Your Venerable says that abortion is an evil or Pāpa. Now, if we do not do so and allow the child to be born and later he has to experience sufferings in various forms such as to be in a destitute condition, often tortured by hunger and troubles due to deformities and inferior complex. That child will be detested by everybody in society. Is not this an evil on the part of parents who have done so?

ANS : Abortion is a method of killing. It is in itself an evil. To deprive a living being of its life, no matter what that living being is, is always an evil although there is, of course, a difference in the degree of evil i.e. in **how much** evil it is. This depends on various supplementary factors involved (*see answer to Question One*). The argument that to let it come out into the world is to let it experience various kinds of sufferings is *absurd and senseless*. Birth is by its very nature a manifestation of suffering. It is the responsibility or the destiny of the life in the womb itself. We have no right to interfere with its destiny and cook up a self-centred reason to justify that killing. This planet



Earth is not a heavenly realm. Every life on it is to face and endure sufferings in various forms, which include the natural kind i.e. old age, illness and death, together with those to be occasionally experienced such as grief, lamentation, disappointment and others. Never is there any life here that has not faced and endured any suffering at all throughout its life-span. From the vantage point of the ultimate truth, life is nothing but the mass of suffering. That is why there is a saying in Buddhism :

“It is only suffering that takes birth, exists and dies away. All the arising and extinction are manifestations of suffering.”

Thus if we should maintain that to allow a child to take birth in this world is to let it face sufferings, then there would be abortion in all cases. What, then, would be the fate of human race on this planet Earth, which would soon be the late planet in the cosmos. That a person may be shunned or detested by society is nothing but another self-centred reason. There is no need for a person to regard the social attitude as the divine law in all cases. What we must take into account is only the attitude and view-point of the virtuous



people. *If we should try to please everybody, then we could please nobody at all.* Since we should have deprived ourselves of the legitimate rights to make any decision for ourselves.

Never do virtuous people blame those who give birth to the infants. On the contrary, they gravely censure those who perform abortions, which are undoubtedly an evil or Pāpa. *The most absurd reason is to regard parents who allow their offspring to be born as having committed an evil kamma.* Were birth to be considered an evil, there would be no one on this planet, including our parents and grandparents and ancestors, who gave birth to their offspring, including ourselves, to be considered free from this absurd evil kamma. Where is, then, the moral or virtuous quality of theirs that had allowed us to be born to this world without doing harm to offspring in their wombs in any way? Having allowed the offspring to take birth, they also willingly shoulder the responsibilities in their capacity as parents, as what is called in Buddhism the Brahma, the first teachers of their offspring. Why, then, should all these painstaking efforts on their part be considered an evil kamma?



Such being the case, there can be no comparison whatever as to which is a greater evil : to perform abortion or to let the offspring take birth. Both are poles apart, being far from each other as the earth is from the sky. To compare things in that way, both must be evil kamma. Then we decide, by various standards or criteria of judgment, which one is more evil than the other. In this case to give birth to the offspring is by no means an evil; it is the willingness to shoulder the responsibilities as a result thereof. In case we do not want more offspring, then it can be done by various means of birth control or by controlling our own sexual desire, not submitting ourselves unconditionally to the defilement of lust. This is the rightful solution to the problem. But when a child is born in the womb, the best way is to allow it to take birth and willingly shoulder the responsibilities as good parents. What evil should there be in this case?



8/4 QU : Kindly explain how a religion can build up or ensure the security of a nation so that this may be the guideline for instructing the youths later on.

ANS : The term 'security' of the nation is generally understood to imply both the security and the economic situation at the same time. However, the term may refer to various other aspects as follows :

1. Religious security. This manifests in the form of religious people, religious doctrine and religious places.

2. Social security. This implies the harmonious cooperation of the members of society who live together with the spirit of unity. There is no widespread criminal offences in various forms resulting in a harrowing fear for the loss of life and property, as is generally experienced today.

3. Economic security. This refers to the situation in which most people do not have to face the harrassing problems of unemployment or of the expenses not balanced with the income. In short, this is to prevent the people from the destitute economic situation.



4. Political security. To achieve this aim there must be the able and competent politicians to administer the affairs of the country. Moreover, those people must also be virtuous ones, seeking wealth and fame by devious means through their political power.

5. Military security. This is associated with the 'life and death' of the country. The personnel responsible for this task must be courageous in their decision, always willing and ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their country.

6. Psycho-social security. This is the result of the above-mentioned aspects of security. With those aspects of security achieved, there will be as a result the psycho-social security, being beneficial to the country as a whole.

So the term 'security' may imply any or all of the above-mentioned meanings. This depends on from what angle it is approached.

As far as religious security is concerned, this can be said to be the foundation of other aspects of security. Economic security, for instance, without religious counterpart, would soon collapse, since there



would be everywhere various kinds of malpractices such as corruption, exploitation, taking an unfair advantage of others, squeezing blood and sweat out of workers, extortion and profiteering by various means. If, however, the members of society are diligent and intelligent, following the Buddha's instructions concerning the economic security, then there will be economic security as a result. The Buddha's instructions in relation with this aspect of security are as follows :

1. The benefits to be obtained in this life for the householders are of four kinds viz. happiness from having a sufficient monetary resource, from spending economically the monetary resource thus acquired, from not running into debt and from earning livelihood by honest means.

2. There is another set of principles called the pathway leading to wealth accumulation as follows :

a) to be always diligent i.e. hard-working and devoted to one's duty and responsibility;

b) to know how to save the wealth or the income obtained for the 'rainy days';

c) to associate with virtuous people, and

d) to cooperate with such virtuous people in their campaigns and projects for the benefits of society.



It should be noted that the social problems at present stem from the people's violation of the Five Precepts. This results in a variety of heinous crimes widely prevalent in our country today. These are the crimes against the life and the property of the people, sexual crimes, and crimes of telling lies such as cheating, swindling and setting one party against another, then the crimes associated with intoxicants and other habit-forming drugs.

At present about 160,000 people are enslaved by those intoxicants and drugs. These people spend about 50 Baht a day on the average. This means we have lost more than 10,900 million Baht a year. This amount of money could have been spent for the construction of several colleges for the students, but now it has been woefully wasted by those people just for the sake of gratifying their morbid desire. At the same time they have become the nation's cumbersome burden in that the government has to take care of them and deal with them in a variety of ways, each and all adversely affecting both economic and social security of the country.

In case the people are virtuous, strictly abiding by the law of morality, there will be no such crimes



violating the Five Precepts viz. crimes associated with life, then those associated with property, with sexual affairs, with cheating or swindling in various ways (*according to the statistics in the court of justice, in the year 2523 (1980) the crimes involving the dishonoured or the returned cheques amounted to 40 % of all the other kinds of criminal cases.*) This shows how there are so many liars who did so to satisfy their avarice. And then the last are crimes associated with habit-forming drugs or intoxicants.

It will be seen from the above fact that the observance of the Five Precepts will be something like a panacea or almost a cure-all for the economic and social problems facing the country now. As regards the political and military security, which are nothing but the development of the people's qualities, there is a saying of the Buddha summarising the required or indispensable qualities of the personnel as follows :

“An assembly without the *Sappurisa* (i.e. the virtuous people) cannot be called an assembly, whereas any one who speaks without Dhamma cannot be called a *Sappurisa*, either.”



Such being the case, a *Sappurisa* must be endowed with the seven characteristics, which we teach the children to study and practise. It is the Dhamma that can create the required moral qualities, that create a human being in the real sense of the term and that is the creator of the projects which are beneficial to society as a whole. In short, it can be said that the Buddha Dhamma is the solid and substantial foundation of society. If there is no Dhamma i.e. no religious security, the result will be, as described by a hermit in a classic Thai story that

Without religious foundation

The world would be plunged into anarchy.

To prevent this volcanic phenomenon

Goodwill and compassion are necessary.

This shows how the country will survive, without any volcanic upheaval, by means of the people following the religious instructions. With such faith in religious teachings, whenever we are faced with economic problems, we must follow the Buddha's above-mentioned principles of practice for the benefits obtainable in the present life. As long as we are members of society, so long shall we adhere to the five laws i.e. the Five Precepts.



Whatever duty or responsibility we are charged with, we must do our best to prove how we are competently qualified for that position. This may be looked upon like the structure of a building, each component part of which is of high quality and is put in its right place and position. The security of society is also like that. It is to be composed of the component parts that are strong, being also of good and reliable quality in order to face and solve whatever problems and hardships come its way.

8/5 QU : What is the truth in the prevalent belief of Buddhists that a son is to be ordained a Bhikkhu at least for a period of time so that his parents may take hold of his yellow robes as medium leading them to a realm of bliss or heaven?

ANS : Such a belief originates from a *Jātaka* story i.e. the story about the former lives of the Buddha. This *Jātaka* is called *Subindakumāra*, whose father was a hunter, with his mother being also involved in the



killing. His father was re-born a *Peta* or hungry ghost after his death. Soon after that his mother also died. The son was ordained a *Sāmanera*, dedicating the fruits of his merit to his deceased father. When his father came back to have a share in the meritorious deeds, and appreciated the fruits of the merit so shared to him by his son, he was delivered from the realm of hungry ghosts. His mother, however, also committed many evil karmas, so she was re-born in a hellish realm. However, seeing the colour of the flames in hell like that of her son's robes, she immediately recollected her son's robes. This made her safe from the burning power of the fire of hell and no danger could befall her. She then appreciated the meritorious deed of her son in having been ordained. After that she was re-born in a realm of bliss. This is the origin of the belief mentioned above. It is to be understood in the metaphorical sense, which implies the mental kamma or sincere appreciation of the merit done by others, not in the literal sense, which would mean the physical kamma of taking hold of the son's robes and floating in the air. (see also Voltaire's concept in Chapter I Question No 1/6)



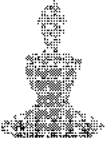
In the metaphorical sense the son is said to be like a magnet drawing his parents into the monastery, thereby inspiring them to do good in various ways such as to dispense charity, observe Precepts, and appreciation of the virtues of others. Of course, it is true that a person is to reap whatever kamma he has done. Now, in this case, the parents have also done a good kamma in appreciating their son's ordination and the fruits of merit shared to them. This is therefore a mental wholesome kamma on their part, which they have 'sown' and therefore have a right to 'reap' to a certain extent at least. However, it should be noted also that the parents must sincerely appreciate such an act of their son. Should they be drug addicts, always being intoxicated by such habit-forming drugs, then there would be no opportunity for them to 'take hold' of the 'son's robes', whether in the literal or metaphorical sense of the term.



8/6 QU : Is the security of a country conducive to some extent to the security of a religion?

ANS : All aspects of security (as referred to in Question 8/4) are closely inter-related, each being supplementary to the rest. Thus a society or a nation can be looked upon as a house, each part or point of which is to be secure in its nature and position. We may have a secure and reliable foundation or infra-structure. But if the various parts on the super-structure are not correspondingly secure, then the house is sure to collapse sooner or later. If, on the contrary, it is vice versa i.e. all parts of the super-structure are secure but the infra-structure is weak, then the house or the building will again crumble.

In our country the term 'security' most often implies only the economic aspect. But the term may refer to several other aspects viz. military security, socio-psychological security and political security, each being charged with several different tasks and composed of several other smaller sections. If each aspect of



security is reliable in its assignment, then it will support one another and become inter-related. Referring to the question, it is plain to see that when the political security is achieved, it will go a long way towards building social, economic, psychological and religious aspects of security as a result.

Starting from another aspect i.e. beginning with religious security, we shall see that, whenever the people intelligently take the Triple Gem as their highest refuge, firmly establishing themselves in accordance with the law of morality and sincerely responsible to their duties, be they farmers, merchants and government officials and so forth, this will be a long way to ensuring social security. Within such a society, be it great or small, there will be no violation of other people's rights, no doing harm to others' life and property. This will result in a peaceful and fruitful living of all in all walks of life. This is nothing but economic security. Such is **how** the manifestations of security are inter-related. This, again, may be looked upon as a car running along a highway. Its security is based on several factors combined viz. the quality of the highway, the mental condition of the driver and the driver's obedience to the



traffic rule. In case any one of these conditions is deficient i.e. the car is not roadworthy, the driver is drunk and often violates the traffic rules, cutting in here and cutting out there, irrespective of the dangers from doing so and finally causing the traffic jam, there will be the wastage of time and of the gasoline. All this illustrates the fact that there are several factors involved, both in doing good and doing evil. Understanding this truth gives rise to the understanding of the fact that the things and phenomena in our life are closely connected with one another. If we want the results that are on the positive side i.e. are wholesome and beneficial we must be courageous to build up the causes that are conducive to those effects. This so that it may insure the security we look forward to. Such causes of security are, in one sense, the awareness of the value of morality, along with the determination or force of will to shoulder one's responsibility to the best of one's ability.



8/7 QU : As far as the level of morality in Thailand today is concerned, what should be the best way by which to upgrade it? At which level should it be started : the executive branch or the children? This so that the overall situation of morality can be upgraded satisfactorily.

ANS : The remedial measures must be started and enforced *at all levels at the same time*. This is the 'spiritual nourishment' to be administered at all levels in all aspects, covering wholesome thoughts, emotions and behaviours for the sake of the refinement of thoughts, words and deeds. A society consists of members of all ages and people in all walks of life, each and all being the source of problems without their knowing it. In one sense we must take into account the fact that if the children are raised within the environment of morality and responsibility, they will naturally be bent on following such an exemplary life and behaviour. Human beings are a social creature. They, at least most of them, will readily follow the exemplary life of their chief or leader. Regarding this fact, there is the following saying of the Buddha.



“While crossing a stream, if the leader of the cows swims straight, the rest will follow him. If he goes in a zigzag manner, the rest will similarly swim in the same way after him. This is like in a society of human beings. If the chief or leader of a group is well-behaved, his retinue will follow suit. If, on the contrary, he is ill-behaved, surely his retinue will follow in the same manner.”

Such being the case, emphasis must be laid on the leader or the chief first of all, since it is he, or she, who gives advices and instructions and is a living example to be seen by his subordinates. This is true in the case of a family, a school, a monastery, including other places as examples to be witnessed. Such people are the living examples and source of encouragement for their retinue or subordinates as far as the practice of self-discipline and self-restraint is concerned.



8/8 QU : It is seen that in the present society many so-called Buddhists have estranged themselves from Buddhism. Have you any measure for the improvement of this situation, thus drawing them back to Buddhism? This so that they may have their minds more peaceful and purified.

ANS : There are quite a number of relevant factors to be taken into account as follows :

1. *The society's sense of value* always changes with the lapse of time. The ancient past can be called 'The Golden Age' of religions, since the people were keenly interested in religions, trying to progress spiritually through the religious teachings, being convinced of the harmful effects of evil and devoting their time and life in every possible way to create the atmosphere of peace and friendship. Such a society was always ready and willing to put to practice the religious instructions for the sake of peace and security. But at present, the social sense of value has undergone a drastic change, making a religion of matter and material development. In our country there has been a crazy fad



for the Japanese and Western tradition and culture. They treat the Buddhist teachings and our culture and tradition as commonplace or valueless, at the same time extolling those of Japan and Western countries to the skies.

2. *This as a result* produces the drastic change of the people's attitude including the society's sense of value. Formerly the value of a person was based on his virtuous qualities, no matter in what status of society he was in. Such people were accorded reverential respect. Later on the respect shifted to anybody who was member of a high society, with his behaviour or moral qualities relegated to the second place.

3. *At present* the sense of value has undergone something like a revolutionary change. It is directed at the wealthiness of a person, no matter **how** that wealth was acquired, by rightful or dubious and devious means. Such people may be criticised to some extent when they were not yet successful in their attempts. But when they have become millionaires, there is no more suspicion on **how** they have come to be as they are. Most people are ready and willing to admire and respect them openly. As a result, therefore, there occur very



often, almost every day, the news reports of arresting those people who are involved in the trading of intoxicating, habit-forming drugs such as heroin and others worth hundreds of millions of Baht. Such people have never stopped doing harmful evils on a large scale to their fellow country-men. They are just interested in **how** to raise their status in society through the wealth acquired by doing so. This is the most harmful effect of misled society.

4. *The ineffective, malignant educational structure* is also a great problem. The educational plan at present aims at teaching the students to be the all-knower, which implies the knowledge about foreign countries, space, the sun, the moon and other heavenly bodies i.e. planets, stars etc. At the same time they know very little about what concerns themselves viz. the history of their own country. Even what happened in their country decades ago they are still ignorant of. This even though they are studying in the advanced grade. This stems from the purpose of education which emphasises the knowledge of others, but little of our own country, culture and tradition. Theoretically, our educational system is divided into four sections viz.



a) *Intellectual education.* There are several departments responsible for this.

b) *Physical education.* There is a department responsible for this.

c) *Manual education.* There are several groups being assigned in this section.

d) *Ethical or moral education.* This is but a small group within the Religious Affairs Department. It has no part in drafting or planning anything.

This means the ethical or moral education is of no significance whatever, despite the fact that it is the ingredient creating human beings to be humane, creating ordinary human beings to be pundits or scholars and creating ordinary human beings into the Noble Ones in Buddhism. What is worse is that it is the fact that any teacher who is unable to teach other subjects is assigned the task of ethical or moral education. This means one who knows a most nothing in other subjects is assigned the most difficult department of education.

That moral education is difficult is because it concerns what is abstract, not concrete, things. This is unlike intellectual, physical and manual departments of education, which are concrete or tangible in nature and



can therefore be proved or confirmed in the concrete or tangible realm. Moral education, however, is abstract in nature. This requires the teachers' tact and wit to explain and exemplify those moral principles into the concrete or tangible form.

5. *Bhikkhus have now been deprived* of the opportunity to participate in the educational system of the country. This despite the fact that they are valuable resources of the country that can be made use of in various ways. In the older times, their service to the country was multi-purpose, since they were teachers, skilled craftsmen, physicians, judges, lawyers, attorneys etc. *without payment or salary* from the government. This was because they were patronised by villagers. There is at present this valuable human resource, numbering tens of thousands. We can mobilise them and make use of them in what suits the most i.e. teacher in moral education for our youths. Unfortunately this opportunity has been overlooked so far.



8/9 QU : The economic crisis of the country at present has estranged many people from religion and monasteries. As a result they have become aggressive, arrogant and callously indifferent. Such attitudes of mind are the cause of social problems in a variety of ways. Do you, who represent Buddhism, have any method to reverse such an unwholesome trend without having to go to the monasteries, since most of them may have no time to do so?

ANS : As a matter of fact, the socio-economic problem is a permanent one for human beings, in all places and at all times, more or less depending on such variables as over-population and others. It is irresponsible or an over-statement to cite only *one* aspect and conclude that it is the source of *all* things, making the people abandon all the virtuous qualities and plunging the country into a grave crisis.

Of course, it is most desirable to instruct and educate the people to be humble and modest but not weaklings, to be strong but not aggressive, and to be



nature but not egotistic. But it is unreasonable to point an accusing finger only at a religion, arguing that Bhikkhus are to represent religion. All Buddhists are to be also regarded as four groups of the Buddha's followers viz. Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male lay disciples and female lay disciples. Bhikkhus are therefore like one leg of a four-legged chair.

The task must therefore be based on the joint efforts of the four groups of Buddhists. The children have their parents as their first teachers, who are accountable to implanting the moral qualities into the minds and behaviour of their offspring. At school the teachers have come to take responsibility for this task. There must be the teaching, the examination, the marks obtained in proportion to the pupils' understanding and conduct : *how much* they can apply the rules of morality into their daily life. Now comes society, which is to take the responsibility of creating good examples for the children to see and follow. All these must be in harmony with one another. What is detrimental to this is, for instance, the children are taught in the schools to abstain from various causes of ruin, but when they come back home, they find their fathers or other



relatives being alcoholic addicts. Or they often see in the TV shows news reports of drinking alcohol in various festivals or ceremonies in honour of some celebrities or other important occasions. These are obviously in conflict with what they have been taught at school to abandon. The children will be confused seeing this state of contradiction between what they are taught at school and what they see in real life at home and other places. As a result they are perplexingly confused, not knowing what is right and what is wrong, what is decent and what is indecent. Thus there is to be a close cooperation on the part of grownups in this respect so the children can be sure and follow the good examples they have seen in their real life.

The institution of Sangha, of course, regards the task of developing the human resources as its principle aim in accordance with the Buddha's teachings. For this purpose there have been arranged various forms of propagating the Dhamma in various places such as to wander as pilgrims, being something like '*Dhamma ambassadors*'. These Bhikkhus take pains to associate with lay disciples, giving them advice and suggestions to individuals in accordance with each situation.



Other activities include distributing the pamphlets with information for various purposes and occasions. All these are sure to produce some desirable changes, which may be short-term or far-reaching ones.

As matters stand today, it is obvious that there is scarcely anybody who is willing to take responsibility in this respect, with each section 'passing the buck' to the others. Each wishes to see an immediate change, looking at the Bhikkhus as if they were divine beings with supernormal creative power to grant or create anything to anybody at will i.e. without any effort on the part of people or those concerned in the matter. As a matter of fact the Bhikkhus used to be lay disciples before. Once they have become Bhikkhus, they must spend their time studying and practising before they are able to instruct and train others. This undertaking, therefore, is to be the responsibility of all concerned, especially the teachers who, next to their parents, have a close relationship with the pupils and the students for quite a long time. According to the present educational system, the children are to be under the teachers' guidance for at least six years. In some cases it may be 12 to 15 years. This is a period long enough for the



children to study, practise and absorb the moral qualities from the teachers who can devote themselves to this honourable undertaking. It is therefore also the teachers' responsibility to shoulder this task with devotion for the sake of the children. This is supplementary to the Bhikkhus' attempts whenever they are allotted this honourable assignment. However, there is still less opportunity for the Bhikkhus to be in close and direct relationship with the students as their teachers. It is therefore the teachers, in cooperation with the Bhikkhus and the parents, to devote themselves in this task for the sake of our children and our country as a whole.



Highlights of the Chapter VIII



Religious security can be said to be the foundation of other aspects of security. Economic security, for instance, without religious counterpart would soon collapse, since there would be all kinds of malpractices and corruption everywhere.

At present about 160,000 people are enslaved by intoxicants and habit-forming drugs. These people spend about 50 Baht a day on the average. This means we have lost more than 10,900 million Baht a year. This amount of money could have been spent for the construction of several colleges for the students.

An assembly without the *Sappurisa* (i.e. virtuous people) cannot be called an assembly, whereas anyone who speaks without Dhamma cannot be called a *Sappurisa*, either.



Without religious foundation

The world would be plunged into anarchy.
To prevent this volcanic phenomenon,
Goodwill and compassion are necessary.

Morality based on religion

Serves to elevate people's minds,
Turning the world into heaven,
A realm of bliss for all mankind.

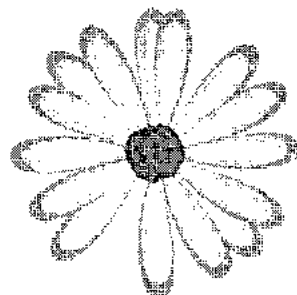
The children are taught in the schools to abstain from various causes of ruin. But when they come back home, they find their fathers or other relatives being alcoholic addicts. These and others are obviously in conflict with what they have been taught at school to abandon. They will be confused seeing this state of contradiction between what they are taught at school and what they see in real life at home. As a result they are perplexingly confused, not knowing what is right and what is wrong.



SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF BUDDHISTS



1. **Gatisampatti** : to be born as human beings;
2. **Kālasampatti** : to be born within the period when there still exists the Dhamma of the Buddha;
3. **Padesasampatti** : to have a good opportunity to be in a locality where Buddhism is highly revered by the inhabitants of that place;
4. **Kulasampatti** : to be born in a family with Right View, thereby professing Buddhism;
5. **Upadhisampatti** : to have the body endowed with health;
6. **Ditthisampatti** : to be blessed with Right View, based on Wisdom.





CHAPTER IX


QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE ENDLESS CYCLE OF REBIRTHS AND REDEATHS



9/1 QU : What is the difference between the terms VIÑÑĀṄA and CITTA, VIÑÑĀṄA and ghosts, VIÑÑĀṄA and knowledge or consciousness and also in what part of the body does VIÑÑĀṄA dwell?

ANS : The terms VIÑÑĀṄA and CITTA refer to the same thing. The mind or CITTA that is aware or conscious through the sense-organs is called VIÑÑĀṄA. However, sometimes VIÑÑĀṄA implies the action of the mind that has the function of 'knowing' within. It is called VIÑÑĀṄA DHĀTU, literally the Element of



Viññāṇa. At other times, when the CITTA takes birth in various realms in accordance with its accumulated kamma, it is also called PATISANDHI VIÑÑĀṆA : the rebirth or the linking Viññāṇa or consciousness.

There is in fact no connection between Viññāṇa and ghosts. They are generally used, and mixed up, in the vernacular, referring to the deceased people, who are sometimes called Viññāṇa and at other times ghosts. However, the deceased must have taken birth, or rebirth, somewhere, with Viññāṇa, as a matter of course. Without Viññāṇa there can be no life. In conclusion, it can be said that the ghost must have Viññāṇa, although it is not itself a Viññāṇa. This is because it i.e. the ghost must have both Rūpa and Nāma or Name-and-Form. Viññāṇa is itself a Nāma or 'Name' i.e. the abstract or non-material. However, its function as being aware or conscious of anything is dependent on the Rūpa or Form i.e. body.

It can be said that Viññāṇa and knowledge is similar to a certain extent, the difference being that what is called 'knowledge' on the level of Viññāṇa is still primary, not yet refined. It is on the level of *Paññā* that knowledge has become subtle and refined. It



is also sometimes called *Ñāṇa* or Insight. However, both cannot be separated, since they are supplementary and complementary to each other, the difference being in the quality or the depth of each.

In what part of the body does Viññāṇa dwell?

This cannot be pinpointed since Viññāṇa is an energy. However, according to the text called *Visuddhimagga*, it was stated that the heart was the dwelling place of Viññāṇa, whereas according to modern science, it is situated in the central nervous system in the brain, which has the function of being conscious of the phenomena outside. But Viññāṇa is an energy, being rapid in its function and movement. It was mentioned in the scriptural text that it dwells within the cave i.e. the body. The term used is *Guhāsayam*. Most likely, it should be in the brain, which looks like a cave in its structure. This can be supported to a certain extent in the fact that, whenever we are absorbed in deep persistent thought for a long time, we shall feel a tension or a pain in the heart and then in the brain. It is therefore possible that both organs of the body should be closely connected with Viññāṇa, being somewhat like the seat of Viññāṇa. This, however, is what



was later assumed or imagined. What the Buddha mentioned was that it dwells within the cave i.e. the body.

VIÑÑĀNA vs. ghosts. This is an interesting subject for most people. But it must be understood that Viññāna is only the function of the mind. According to the scriptures, it was classified as follows :

VIÑÑĀNADHĀTU : the so-called element of Viññāna, functioning as 'knowledge' or consciousness, being the subtle part of the mind.

VIÑÑĀNAKHANDHA : the Aggregate of Viññāna, implying the mind that functions as consciousness through the eyes, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind itself. They are called Cakkhuvīññāna, Sotavīññāna and so forth.

PATISANDHI VIÑÑĀNA : This implies Viññāna that is associated with kamma and kilesa i.e. defilement, that takes birth, or rebirth, in various planes of existence in proportion to the quality of that mixture or association. This is the difference between the ghosts



and Viññāṇa, but the ghosts must also have Viññāṇa in them. However, in the vernacular they are all mixed up, thus causing misunderstanding and confusion. The term 'ghosts' is sometimes meant to include even the angelic beings of various levels such as those dwelling in the trees, and in the air, and also the Brahma on the advanced realms. In the scriptures there is the term 'Pisāca', which refers to the beings in realms of woe such as the hungry ghosts and the demons.

9/2 QU : What is Your Venerable's idea concerning recollection of former lives? Is it possible?

ANS : There is no question i.e. no doubt whatever in this matter. The ability to recollect events in one's former lives is the result of the Insight or *Ñāna*, which again is the result of the mind being particularly trained in that direction. This is called *Pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*. However, there are a number of cases who can spontaneously recall part of their former lives. Such cases have been strictly tested and systematically recorded in various books by scholars. Such cases include disciples



of **all** religions with more than six hundreds that have been confirmed by collaborative and irrefutable evidences. Since all of us have been born for countless times, it is to be expected that there should be some who are able, by some means or another, to recollect what used to occur to them in one or some of their former lives.

**9/3 QU : What is the meaning of the term
'SAMBHAVESĪ' ?**

ANS : Formerly it was understood to imply those who are seeking for a plane of rebirth or *Bhava*. After having studied places in the scriptures, we now come to know that it is not so. Formerly it refers to the deceased who could not be reborn anywhere. But according to the scriptures, it implies all sentient beings, from ordinary worldlings up to the Non-Returner (Anāgāmi) disciples, who, however noble, have to take birth only once again, since they have not yet absolutely done away with defilements. However, they do not have to come back and take birth *here again*, since they are able to progress from their advanced planes to Nibbāna because they have not yet extinguished their *Tanhā* in the most



subtle form called *Bhavatanhā*. All these, including ordinary people like ourselves, have to take birth once again and again as long as we have not yet attained to the state of the extinction of *Bhavatanhā* or the desire to BE.

9/4 QU : What is the characteristic of the dream of the category called Pubbesannivāsa or one associated with the soul-mate i.e. the person who used to be one's spouse in a former life? At what time of life should it happen?

ANS : This is a strange, peculiar question never heard of nor imagined before. The answer, therefore, is certainly negative. There are, according to the scriptures, four kinds of dream viz. one inspired by angelic beings, one caused by the disturbances somewhere in the system of the body, one caused by *Nivarana* or mental hindrances and one on the verge of entering into the sphere of unconsciousness i.e. before sleep. The subject matter called *Pubbesannivāsa* i.e. one associated with, or predicting, the meeting of one's soul-mate or spouse is quite another matter. According to the Buddha, during



our innumerable lives in the Odyssey of endless rebirths and redeaths, *there is no one who was never related to us in some way or another*, — the relationship could be friends, enemies or brothers and sisters as fellow travellers in the shoreless ocean of births and deaths. The feelings or emotions concerning those other people were usually kept in a deep-freeze, so to speak, after the dissolution of the body. In some cases it may be deep and inspiring, whereas in others it may be commonplace and had no permanent effect on the mind.

In a rebirth, we shall be associated with some other people as friends or relatives if our kamma and theirs are not so much different, being more or less of the same kind and degree. If it is not so, they are strangers, having no influence of any kind upon our mind. This fact may be seen once a while in some cases when we happen to come across some people who are complete strangers to us, but there occurs within us a strange feeling of friendship, along with the desire to make friends with her or him. This despite the fact that such people have nothing outstanding at all. But we just cannot help feeling as if we used to be related to each other in one way or another at one



time or another. On the contrary, there are some people who, surprisingly enough, have aroused a feeling of disgust and irritation despite the fact that such person has nothing ugly or repulsive as far as his or her physical feature is concerned. Then there is another type of people towards whom we have no feeling at all, be it love or hate. All these result from the causes of some kind or another in the former lives, which could be in the near past or in the dim, remote one.

To cut the long story short, so to speak, we may shorten the time-span, making it occur with this lifetime. Supposing there is a person with whom we used to be an intimate friend with the feeling of warm affection and attachment, but that person had gone away on some business for decades without any connection whatever. Now, it happens that we have come across him by accident. We may not remember him or her, since his or her physical features have changed so much. Nevertheless, we cannot help being drawn by a feeling of warmth and affection. This is an instance of the feeling of friendship and affection in the depth of the subconscious mind. It is true also in the case of a person with whom we used to shun and detest his



companionship, which can be seen and felt in our daily life some time or another. It also applies, in the case of affectionate feeling, to the result of the *Pubbesannivāsa* or having been soul-mates in a former life, where both sides are being drawn, as if by a powerful magnet, to each other irresistibly. The meaning of this *Pubbesannivāsa*, therefore, is not limited to the feeling of love as husbands and wives. But it covers both the inward, irresistible feeling of freindship and hate towards other people in general.

Another kind of dream is called *Devanimitta*, literally the vision inspired by angelic beings, of which vision could be an ill omen or a sign of success and prosperity. An instance of this can be seen in the cases of the dream of King Naresuan of Thailand and that of the Maha Uparaja of Burma before they came face to face with each other in a duel on the elephants' backs in Thailand. The former's dream was an auspicious sign, whereas that of the latter forboded his disastrous defeat.

The third kind of dream is called *Cittasanharana*. This implies the mind that is overwhelmed by an



uncontrolled thought or worry, imagining that the things or events should occur in that way. This results in the dream caused by excessive care and worry.

The first and the second kinds are almost similar to each other, being caused by worry and fear. They are then self-created through one's own emotional imagination, whereas the fourth kind is believed to be fairly reliable as a kind of precognition. However, it is not always reliable, being sometimes created by imagination and uncontrolled thought and emotion rather than a real signal of future happenings.

9/5 QU : Where is Viññāṇa or soul after the body's death? Is it true that those who practise magic can communicate with the soul of the deceased and thus can converse with them?

ANS : As to the question about the soul or mind after the body's death, the answer is simple : that it goes on in accordance with its accumulated kamma before death. But *it is profoundly simple in that it is*



to be determined also by the various kinds of kamma having been done during its life-span. In some cases there may be more evil than virtuous kamma, whereas in other cases it is vice versa. Thus the sum total of the deceased person's kamma will send him to take birth, or rather rebirth, on a realm most suitable to him at that moment of death, which may be a realm of woe or a realm of bliss, which could imply the advanced realm of Brahma. All these depend on individual cases, there being no fixed rule without studying or surveying whether the good kamma would outweigh the evil one or vice versa. As for the general rule in this matter, there is the Buddha's saying as follows :

“Some beings take birth in the womb. The evil-doers are destined to a realm of woe. The virtuous ones depart to a realm of bliss. Those without Āsava (potential defilements) attain Nibbāna.”

For this reason the Viññāṇa (i.e. the soul or mind of the deceased) will go to the most appropriate place as a result of their own kamma. In the case of the



ability to communicate with the deceased, it should be understood first of all that the souls or Viññāṇa who come to communicate with the mediums might be celestial beings on various planes or in other cases it might be the lower beings such as the ghosts and the demons. *These are cases of fraud as well as those of real communication.* This depends upon each individual case to be tested or checked carefully. Generally speaking, it can be said that there are more frauds than reality. In the cases where the mediums can really do so, it could be the communication through the development of Samādhi or meditation to the level or the depth sufficient for the purpose. This is true also in the cases of the earlier mentioned dreams, in which there are more cases of sheer imagination than those of precognition. There are at present so many people who take advantage of those who believe in this matter and thus establish themselves as accredited mediums fleecing gullible people by means of their tricksters' performances.

Now, it must be understood that even in real cases where angelic beings really come into contact with people in this world, *they have no divine power to create everything in response to our requests. There*



is a limit of their power to help some of those who can be helped, to the extent that they (i.e. those people) can be helped.

9/6 QU : Are human beings to be reborn after death? What is the cause of this? Is there any truth concerning the coming of the future Buddha by the name of Sri Arya*? What can we do so as to be reborn as contemporaries of the Sri Arya Buddha?

ANS : Buddhism teaches that whether or not and where a person is to be reborn depends upon his own kamma, which is the determining factor of all sentient beings. That people are diversified is also due to their own kamma they have accumulated so far. Rebirth is therefore inevitable for sentient beings whose causative factors of rebirths have not yet been extinguished. This means that whoever has not absolutely done away with defilements, sometimes doing good deeds whereas at other times evil ones, cannot avoid

* a short form of 'Sri Aryamettreyya'



having to be reborn somewhere, which may be a realm of bliss or one of woe, depending on the sum total of kamma having been accumulated before the dissolution of the body.

As regards the future Buddha by the name of Sri Arya, it is to be noted that the original name is the Sanskrit language. What should be also noted is that Buddhism accepts the existence of a future Buddha, who will come after the present one. But it is a period of ten thousands of years or even more than that. This is to occur when there is in such a period nothing of Buddhism remaining, with the total loss of the institution of the Sangha for quite a long time. Then a person whose virtuous qualities have been developed and purified to the same extent as the present Buddha will take birth to become another Buddha teaching the same doctrine as our present Buddha. His name, however, is not of any significance. What is important is that there is certainly that time, which is sure to be quite a long time from now, perhaps aeons, before the coming of another Buddha.



Now, it must be noted that the Buddha, no matter whether he is the present or the future one, has no supreme power to grant anybody's wish or prayer according to his whim. What he can do is to teach the doctrine of his discovery, which he has acquired through his Self-Enlightenment i.e. self-efforts. Whoever is mature enough and is susceptible to his teachings will be inspired to put those teachings into practice with persistent and dedicated efforts and will thereby reap the full benefit from the Dhamma he has taught.

It is for this reason that we Buddhists at present, having known and realised the value of the **present Buddha**, are inclined to look forward to the **future Buddha**, **neglecting thereby the supreme teachings of the present Buddha**. *It would be something like throwing away a sum of money already in their possession in order to grasp at the same sum of money to be obtained in the far future, which is something like 'building the castle in the air' instead of devoting their efforts to building it here and now.*

As a matter of fact, the accounts concerning the future Buddha by the name of Sri Arya appear to be a



fanciful legend or work of fiction rather than a true story or reality. It appears to be imaginary and wishful thoughts or day-dreaming. In other words, it is a Utopian fantasy rather than a truth or a possibility. Most people who look forward to this future Buddha are bent on gratifying their sensual desire without doing anything worthwhile. They always dream of ephemeral pleasures rather than dedicating their efforts to renouncing them as the present Buddha and his Noble Disciples have done. *These people are blessed with the good opportunity to be born in the time and place when and where the present Buddha's teachings are still studied and practised in the world. But they overlook and despise it and instead look forward to the days when they do not have to do anything but enjoy the sensual ephemeral pleasures to their hearts' content.* Should they be really born in the times of the future Buddha, it would again be impossible for them to hope for him to grant their wishes without dedicated and persistent and selfless efforts on their part.



9/7 QU : Is there any truth in the teaching of rebirth? How can we know it for sure?

ANS : This question has been asked *for countless times by countless number of people*. It has been on the minds of people from time immemorial. Although the Buddha has explained to them in elaborate details in a variety of ways, yet there are at all times those who are still in doubt of this truth. Although the Buddha had shown the way and manner of practice by which persons can realise this truth through their own Insight wisdom, this is still a question unanswerable to those who have not experienced the 'taste' of his Dhamma that his Noble Disciples had achieved through their firsthand realisation. However, some explanation will be explained theoretically as follows :

Take a seedling of a tree and ask yourself whether or not this seed will grow up and become another tree in future. The answer will be whether or not there is a sufficient amount of sap remaining therein or whether or not its shoot has been destroyed.



If the answer is in the positive in both cases and if it is planted in the fertile soil with appropriate temperature, it is sure to grow and develop into another generation of that tree. In the absence of any of those factors, then it certainly cannot grow up. This is true not only for that seedling, since there will be quite a number of other seedlings of same kind that might grow up within suitable circumstances for them.

The same is true for human beings. The main factor leading to their rebirth is their kamma, both good and evil, they have accumulated during their sojourn here. Wherever a kamma is referred to, it spontaneously implies the presence of Kilesa or defilements (*the action of an Arahanta is called kiriyā or just reaction, not kamma*). With such kamma present, there will occur spontaneously the Patisandhi Viññāṇa or rebirth consciousness, leading sentient beings, both human beings and animals, to the realms suitable to them at that moment of the dissolution of the body.



How or by what can this be known? This can be known, or rather realised, firsthand through putting into practice the Dhamma of the Buddha along the course of the Noble Eightfold Path until the Path, together with the Fruition, is attained. Then there will occur the *Pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*, the Insight by which the Noble Disciple will be able to recollect former lives. If, however, the aspirants cannot yet achieve that attainment, they will have to depend on the study of records of the systematic research by those interested in this matter which are available in abundance now. Many of those who undertake to investigate in this field also were doubtful in this aspect, but they have devoted their time and efforts for this research until they have enough evidence and reason to believe that at least this truth cannot be categorically denied. For us, who have not yet attained to the Noble Path and Fruition, it is better to 'play safe' by not entirely ignoring this Insight and brush it aside as valueless. It was declared by the Buddha as one of his Insights. *What wrong is there when we, as Buddhists, should cherish our trust and confidence in his All-seeing Eye of Enlightenment?*



As far as the difference in various aspects is concerned, there are quite a number of inexplicable puzzles as follows :

Birthplaces. Why should people take birth in the localities and statuses far different from one another? Some, for instance, are born in a palace or palatial mansion, whereas others take birth in the wilderness or secluded, mountainous areas, or in the fields, or in slum. There must be something or some causes behind this puzzle.

Family. Why should some be born in a high, aristocratic family and why should others in a middle-class family, still other in an impoverished one?

Features. There is no one whose faces are exactly alike until they cannot be identified. This despite the fact that there are in this world more than 4,000 million people. Even in the case of identical twins, they are not in all respects like each other. Their parents are able to distinguish one from the other.

Intellectual level. Even though the children grow up and are educated within the same environment, yet there is to be a difference in their aptitude, taste and tendency. One may have a head for one subject, whereas another prefers another one, and still another is inclined



towards another subject. The cause of this, according to Buddhism, is the influence of their own kamma having been accumulated in the former lives of theirs.

Thus one who is born with attractive features and complexion is because of his or her wholesome kamma in the past. On the reverse aspect, others who are born with deformities are reaping the fruits of what they had formerly sown. Those who prove to be geniuses in any subject are the proof of their own preference and their own intensive training in any of their former lives. Such knowledge and experience have been embedded within their subconscious minds, thus producing a surprising and extra-ordinary effect here. There are some who, even at the age of six or seven, can play the piano as well as those who have to be trained for decades or can compose sentimental and impressive poems that few trained scholars can do like them. Should there be only one life-time here this time on this planet Earth, then there would be no answer to this puzzle, except to maintain stubbornly that they are the products of chance or by accident. Thus what is behind, or under, this amazing abilities is nothing but their own store of merit in the past. This can imply even to the case of a wealthy man, who is blessed



with so many monetary resources giving him every convenience. However, there are always some who stubbornly refuse to accept this truth. Such people are hopeless; they cannot be made to understand and admit the truth in any way. They deplorably lack the following qualities viz.

a) they cannot yet develop their Insight concerning recollection of events in former lives;

b) they cannot bring themselves to have faith in the Buddha's teaching;

c) they refuse to exercise their wisdom power to consider the matter intelligently.

d) As a result, they prefer to maintain that nagging doubt.

Buddhists who are wise are those blessed with the attitude of mind which is beneficial to them in the long run. They know how it is profitable for them at least to accept this Insight as a working hypothesis in honour of the Buddha, who has profounded this level of teaching. There used to be an aged celebrity who definitely concluded that this Insight of the Buddha just could not be true. This went on for fourteen years. Later he went to stay in a western country for a period of time. After returning home in Thailand, he went to



pay homage to an elderly Bhikkhu in the countryside and asked him whether this Insight could be literally true. He questioned the Bhikkhu whether or not there could be the world of the hereafter, the truth of rebirth concerning heaven and hell and the kammic effects, both of good and evil aspect, that survive the dissolution of the body.

That elderly Bhikkhu did not bother to explain and reason. He just cut the long story short, saying, *“I am sure the Buddha did not tell us a lie.”*

Such being the case, this kind of subject-matter depends on a person’s free will to mountain his doubt or to have faith, or confidence, in the Buddha’s teachings. To prove it firsthand or conclusively, the aspirants must practise the Kammatthāna i.e. meditaion and Insight to the depth, or rather the height, where they will be able to have a firsthand experience themselves, not having to depend on the Buddha or anyone else. Such a doubt and uncertainty will be absolutely banished from their minds.



9/8 QU : While delivering a sermon, some Bhikkhus stress the existence of the realms of heaven and hell in the hereafter, whereas others strangely emphasise that there is no heaven nor hell in the hereafter. Then a question is that :

a) Which kind of beliefs as earlier mentioned by two Bhikkhus should be the truth and which is false to be brushed aside as non-sense?

b) The Order of Sangha should consider this theme carefully, making it clear and irrefutable, and ordering the Bhikkhu not to contradict each other like this.

ANS : The questions concern the hereafter i.e. the realms of heaven and hell, which are the results of the Buddha's Enlightenment. During the thirty-five years before his Enlightenment the Buddha might not have known clearly about them. Having developed this Insight he had painstakingly preached to the people about their real existence, along with the principle and the methods by which the aspirants would be able to realise this truth themselves. The disciples who persistently followed his instructions were rewarded the same Insight. It may



be said that all the Arahanta disciples except perhaps the kind called *Sukkhavipassaka**, had realised this subtle truth as their firsthand experience. The teaching about heaven and hell in the hereafter is therefore *not concocted to delude the people to the Buddhist fold*. The existence of the realms of heaven and hell is therefore a truth by itself, no matter whether there will be anybody believing it or not. *It is the truth existing at all times*, irrespective of anybody's belief or disbelief of this Insight of the Buddha. As a matter of fact, the Buddha did not declare this truth very often, except when there was somebody questioning him and when he saw that those people were mature enough to accept this truth.

In fact the truth about the realms of the hereafter is the absolute truth of nature. In one sense, it is like the seedling of a tree or a plant. As long as there is an amount of sap therein or there is shoot of it in good condition, it will certainly grow up provided there is appropriate food in the soil and congenial temperature outside. Then it is sure to grow and produce more fruits or seedlings and shoots without end.

* A kind of the Arahanta disciples, that is called 'a dry-visioned Arahanta' or 'a bare-insight worker'.



The life of human beings is much the same way as that. As long as there is still an amount of kilesa or defilement, however small, it means whatever action is to be called a kamma or defilement-based action. In fact there is no evil in having confidence in the Buddha's teaching in this respect due to the fact that we have no microscopic Insight as he had. This, therefore, is an earnest warning out of goodwill to Buddhists some of whom may be hesitant whether to have faith in the Buddha's microscopic Insight or not. We have no such refined instrument as the Buddha had, and the Buddha had never desired for any gains or fame to be heaped upon him by doing so. His mind was absolutely purified, along with his Insight Wisdom and his untrammelled compassion. *His teachings are therefore a warning to prevent the people from being lured into a bottomless abyss.* There were the passages for recitation we used to recite when we were children to the effect that

“The Buddha has pointed out the Path to reduce and remove sufferings, along with the Nibbāna, which is the deliverance from sufferings. This is the fivefold Eye, the brightness of which enables us to realise the nature of things, both far and near, in all respects.”



What is both far and near implies what exists in the hereafter and what can be experienced within this life-span. The Buddha was blessed with the five kinds of eye, not only the material eyes of this psycho-physical organism or mind-and-body on this planet Earth. Some things, or in fact many things there are that are beyond the efficiency of the physical eyes. Blessed with the five kinds of eye, the Buddha was able to see and know what is invisible and intangible to us with his other eyes such as the Divine Eye (Dibbacakkhu), Wisdom Eye (Paññācakkhu) and the Buddha-Eye (Buddhacakkhu). This shows how he had all kinds of instruments whereby to 'see' all things in the cosmos, material and non-material, while we as worldlings have only one i.e. the physical eye, the efficiency of which is still very limited. We cannot see, for instance, what is beyond the colour spectrum i.e. the infra-red and ultra-violet; we cannot hear the sound that bats can etc. This should therefore be a warning for those whose viewpoints are based on the tangible and the visible and dare contradict the Buddha's teachings.

Now what should the Sangha do to correct this deplorable situation?



This is the point being now considered. We have to admit the fact that there are at present quite a number of 'black sheep' i.e. those who deviate from the standards of behaviour of their group. Many there are who, having been ordained, are inclined to over-estimate themselves, being thereby egotistic and self-centred. They openly declare that they are the Buddha's slaves. The Buddha is their master. But in practice they establish themselves as a *Satthā* or founder of the religion, and insert their distorted views in explaining the Buddha Dhamma, caring nothing of what the Buddha had said. They forget that they, as members of the Order of Sangha, cannot be another founder of Buddhism by re-establishing the Dhamma and the Vinaya i.e. the Norm and the Discipline arbitrarily, only to suit their own preferred viewpoints and manners of practice. Bhikkhus are morally bound to devote their efforts and even their life to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, following thereby what has been established as tradition and disciplinary rules.

Of course, religion is to be conservative. Without this attitude how can a religion exist as such? The simple way is to disrobe any Bhikkhu who cherishes a



heretic or an extremely wrong view. In case we are not willing to believe or to obey, let us not contradict nor behave in conflict with other members; *nor incite others to follow suit and cause a schism in the Order*. This is a twofold evil, which hinders the meritorious kamma both of oneself and others. As long as there is a widespread disbelief in the existence of heaven and hell *in the hereafter* i.e. after the dissolution of the body, so long will it be useless doing good, avoiding evil and purifying the mind. Equally useless is the practice of mind development through Samatha (*for the sake of calm and tranquility*) and Vipassanā (*for the sake of Wisdom or Insight*), since this life on earth is the first and the last, there being nothing i.e. no good nor evil effects of kamma to follow anybody in the hereafter, which is but an illusion. *Life, therefore, ends on the cremation pyre*. There is no difference, then, between an Arahanta and a criminal. What, then, would be the result of this *perverse doctrine*, which is supposed to be modern and in accordance with science? After all, it cannot be a shameful attitude if we prefer to base our faith and confidence on the Buddha's all-inclusive Insight that the Buddha achieved on the night of his Enlightenment.



**9/9 QU : Kindly explain the term ‘Opa-
pātika’ and the function of what is called
Patisandhi Viññāṇa (rebirth or linking conscious-
ness). When can this Viññāṇa take birth after
the staying together of father and mother?**

ANS : The term Opapātika implies beings who spontaneously grow up at the moment of birth i.e. without having to undergo the period of the infancy. At death there is nothing left as remains. There are some western films concerning aliens from other planets or from other universes in which we shall see that the concept of the producers of those movies are quite the same as that of Buddhism. In case they are killed, they will be lost altogether, like being changed into air. This is called Opopātika, which is one of the four kinds of *Yoni* or manners of birth. In the realms of woe, there are also animals which take birth in the same manner. Other kinds such as hellish beings, ghosts, demons, angels or celestial beings and Brahma are also included in this term Opopātika. The kinds of birth other than this are included in any one of remaining three categories.



When, or how long, can the Patisandhi Viññāṇa take birth? This cannot be said or fixed, since this depends on material variables. If father and mother come together at the ripening time of the egg in the ovum, it should be about 7 days after that. This is the readiness on the material plane. When there is what is called *Gandhabbo* present during this period, there is Viññāṇa taking birth therein. The term *Gandhabbo* means the collection or combined group of kamma, kilesa (defilement) and Viññāṇa to take birth in material form in the material world with the vitality of life as a result. Thus the life of beings in the mother's womb, but there is no fixed time for this, since it depends on the material condition as earlier mentioned. The mother's menstruation with its egg cell will ripen about seven days after that. It is during this period that Viññāṇa can take the material form as foetus in the mother's womb. However, this is looking only at the biological aspect, since there can be several other variables involved in the process. However, there are three main principles viz. the coming together of father and mother ; it is the ripening time of the mother's egg cell and the presence of Viññāṇa waiting to take birth appropriate to its kamma.



This is also the method of calculating the age of a youth to be ordained as a Bhikkhu, which must be at least twenty years old. Now, if after birth he is only 19 years and 4 months, he can add the period in his mother's womb, which is 8 months. This will enable him to be ordained as a Bhikkhu. However, to be on safe side, only the period of six months in the womb was allowed for the youth to be ordained.

This matter is also associated with abortion, which some people think is not an evil, since there is no life in the mother's womb. But Buddhism regards it as a deliberate killing, which is tantamount to killing a human being, since the embryo therein already has life of its own and is thus a living being already. The term 'abortion', however, includes the taking of medicine in order to kill the foetus or embryo in the womb as well, since during this period there is already the breathing of life within the womb.



9/10 QU : It is said that the Buddha and Venerable Moggallāna used to see the Peta or hungry ghosts. What then is the meaning of hungry ghosts? What kind of animals are they?

ANS : The hungry ghosts or Peta are one of the four creatures of the realms of woe. Those four are a) Niraya or hellish beings ; b) Tiracchāna or animals; c) Pittivisaya i.e. hungry ghosts ; and d) Asurakāya i.e. demons.

Of the four realms of woe, there is one that is visible to us i.e. Tiracchāna or animals. The term Peta means the deceased, referring to the dead ones whose evil is not intensive enough to plunge them into hell or into an animal sphere. At the same time their store of merit is not yet sufficient to lift them to the lofty realm of bliss nor back to the world of human beings immediately again. In its general sense the term is used to refer collectively to those who have died. In a more specific sense, it means the invisible beings who are invisible to ordinary human eyes. But they can be seen by those who are endowed with clairvoyance power.



This may be looked upon like the visions or pictures existing **everywhere** around us. But with the help of a TV box we are able to see and know numerous things including the peoples and events around the world. Thus the Peta or other kinds of invisible beings, whether in a realm of bliss or of woe, are like that. They can clearly be seen by those who have developed their clairvoyance power to tune in to those vibrations on those other dimensions. Of course, on some occasions they may appear visible to human eyes when there is something very important to make known to human beings. But this is a very rare occasion.

According to the scriptures, there are twelve kinds of Peta, each with a characteristic and an interesting background of its own. Above all, it is to be noted they are one of the deceased beings in one of the four realms of woe.



9/11 QU : Can human beings be reborn after death? If not, there is nothing to make known. But if they are to be reborn, what can they take with them to the world after death?

ANS : This is the question most people ask most often. According to the Buddha in the *Sanyuttasutta* in the *Sanyuttanikāya* and the *Mahātanhāsankhayasutta* combined, we learn that, the period of menstruation of the mother and the presence of what was called *Gandhabbo*, the latter term being not explained but in the *Mahātanhāsankhayasutta*, it was described as the combination of kamma and kilesa or defilements, which created the Patisandhi Viññāṇa i.e. the rebirth consciousness in any one of the four categories of birth viz. to be born in the womb, in the eggs, in filthy matter and as the *Opapātika*, the nature or condition of which has already been explained in the fore-going question. These, according to the Buddha, are the causative factors which are the kamma and the kilesa or defilements, which create the rebirth consciousness. This was compared to planting a tree. Kamma is like the field or the condition of the earth, Viññāṇa is like



the seedling, and Tanhā or desire is like the sap within that seedling. This also includes other defilements, which are also the sap within the seedling which has an amount of sap sufficient for its growth, along with the temperature and quality of the soil. Then there will come out the shoot or Viññāṇa. This is the process of rebirth. It is the law of nature. As long as we cannot raise ourselves i.e. our minds beyond this law of nature, so long will there be rebirth in the plane of existence most appropriate to us at the moment of dissolution of the body.

**DECLARATION OF HIS MAJESTY KING
BHUMIBOL ADULYADEJ (King Rama IX)**

“I hold that the Buddha image entitled Phra Buddha Navarājabophit is the foundation of the Triple Gem, which is most highly revered. It is also the symbol of unity for Thailand and the Thai people.”

**ROYAL DECLARATION OF KING RAMA IV
(King Mongkut)**

“This country has been the region of Buddhists so far. It does not belong to another religion. Those of other faiths coming from other countries have no right to be irritated through being envious of Buddhism.

Thailand is not their country.

It is inappropriate and unbecoming for those of other faith to grieve, lament and be envious of this attitude of ours towards their own insatiable avarice.”

(The above declaration was formally announced on His Majesty's donation of a great diamond to the Emerald Buddha image.)



Highlights of the Chapter IX



The ability to recollect events in former lives is the result of the Insight or *Nāṇa*, which is again the result of the mind being particularly trained in that direction.

There are at present more than two thousand cases who can spontaneously recall events of their past lives. This has been recorded in various books by scholars whose integrity is unquestioned.

Such cases included disciples of **all** religions. Thus there is no doubt about this ability although, of course, there may be some cases of frauds.

According to the Buddha, during our innumerable lives in the Odyssey of endless rebirths and redeaths, there is no one who was never related to us in one way or another, — the relationship could be friends, enemies or relatives.



The term *Pubbessannivāsa* is not limited to the feeling of love as husbands and wives. It covers both the inward, irresistible feeling of friendship and hate towards other people.

Where a dying person should go after his body's death is determined by the various kinds of kamma having been accumulated also within that life-time.

There are at present so many people who take advantage of those who believe in rebirth and thus establish themselves as accredited mediums fleecing gullible people by means of their tricksters' performances.

These angels or celestial beings, however advanced they are, have no divine power to create everything in response to the requests of everybody. There is a limit to their power, which enables them to help those *who can be helped and to the extent that those people can be helped.*



It is a pity that we Buddhists at present are inclined to look forward to a future Buddha, neglecting thereby the supreme teachings of the present Buddha. This is like 'building the castle in the air' instead of devoting their efforts to 'building it' here and now and on a sound basis or infra-structure.

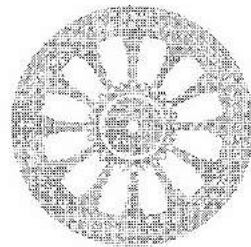
We are blessed enough to be born in the time and place when and where the Buddha's teachings are still studied and practised. Instead most of us look forward to the days of the Sri Arya Buddha, when people do not have to do anything but enjoy the sensual, ephemeral pleasures to their hearts' content.

What wrong is there when we, as Buddhists, should cherish our trust and confidence in the All-seeing Eye of the Buddha's Enlightenment?

A Bhikkhu who dares deny the Buddha's sayings has deliberately falsified his doctrine, being thereby unpardonably treacherous, aggressive and arrogant. He should be called a heretic rather than a Buddhist or a Bhikkhu.



We cannot see, for instance, what is beyond the spectrum of colour i.e. the infra-red and the ultra-violet rays. We cannot hear the sound that bats can etc. This should be a warning for those whose viewpoints are based on the visible and tangible and dare contradict the Buddha's teachings.



A P P E N D I X



POETRY

(Based on the nine chapters of Thai Buddhism : Questions and Answers)

Siri Buddhasukh

OUR INVISIBLE NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOURS



Many Thais believe in 'Phra Phoom Chao Thee'
As their friendly next-door neighbour.
Their existence a reality
Although their dimension differs.

Although they are invisible,
Yet they can on some occasions
Give man a help that is subtle
If we don't treat them as villains.

They were mentioned in our Scriptures
As beings of various levels :
Some are humans; some hellish creatures,
Some are angels; others bestial.



Thus they are all sentient beings;
Fellow travellers in the Odyssey
Of births and deaths like all worldlings
Subject to sufferings to some degree.

Let us radiate our Metta;
They may be devils, demons or ghosts.
We don't worship them as Buddha;
Nor as our refuge uppermost.



TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA



The Buddha is the Path-finder,
Showing us the Noble Truths Four
That we are here as sojourners,
Moving ceaselessly to Death's door.

His Dhamma-Eye is All-seeing
Knowing the realms of bliss and woe
The hereafter of human beings,
Angels and ghosts above and below.

Just in one sense a religion
May be looked upon like a tree.
Many things therein to be given
To various kinds of devotees.

Some may want bark ; others want core;
Still others fruits or flowers.
For them the tree always has in store
Because each devotee differs



In his or her maturity.
Suppose a tree has but its core,
It is a dead one certainly,
With fruits, flowers and bark no more.

It is also a conical figure
Useful to many at its flat base,
But to a few and small number
Of devotees who dare to make haste

Looking forward to attainment
Of the highest, final level
Yet they are results magnificent
Being the fruits lofty Noble.

They prolong the life of religion,
Living exemplary life of Dhamma
Beyond ordinary, beings human
Following strictly foot-steps of Buddha.



MEAT EATING : A MOLEHILL MOUNTAIN



Some teachers found a bone to pick
With Lord Buddha and his Bhikkhus.
This was the meat-eating conflict
A bone-of-contention issue.

They made a mountain of molehill,
So said Buddha to Jivaka,
Nothing that bad was there until
A person ate it with Lobha*.

Those fault-finders are extremists,
Accepting not the middle way.
They take delight being sadists,
Thus their own jealousy betray.

They were malicious fault-finders,
Creating faults that were not there,
Blind to the virtues of others,
Extolling their own everywhere.

* greed for taste



The extremists emphasize WHAT,
But Lord Buddha laid stress on HOW.
The mind's attitude they cared not,
Just bent on kicking up a row.

Prohibition and allowance
By Buddha are conditional
Meat-eaters not always villains ;
Nor are meat-abstainers angels.

Here there is nothing absolute;
Other factors come into play;
Each has a part to contribute
In this Lord Buddha's middle way.

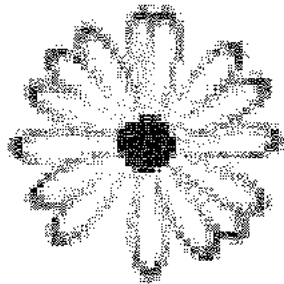
It's mindfulness Buddha advised,
Also wisdom as ultimate
So that Buddhists may then realise
How they must not pamper the palate.

Meat or no meat : - this is but WHAT
The stress is on matter, not mind
It's pity many have forgot,
Leaving the 'HOW' to eat behind.



In Buddhism vegetarian
Is voluntary, not compulsion;
It's by no means the criterion
Nor passport to being enlightened.

For more details see the Discourse
The Buddha gave the physician,
So that Buddhists may not get lost,
Muddled by that **'molehill mountain'**.





DIFFERENT RELIGIONS



Religions may have similar aim
But their beliefs are far different
Though each of them may assert a claim
To lead aspirants to attainment.

Their practices also vary
To such an extent that nothing
Can bring them to accept and agree
To join and merge as one teaching.

The best way is to *'live and let live'*
As friends and neighbours with *Metta**
With conscientious, upright motive
Following the foot-steps of each *Satthā.***

No founder of any religion
Ever cherished hatred or envy
To him there was never a question
Of treating others as enemy.

* good will; Loving-kindness

** religious Founder



But their disciples are otherwise.
They are bent on being green-eyed.
They foster friendship in disguise.
Their motto is "*Live and let die*".

Let's follow our Founder's example
So his teachings can also be "seen".
Such is the gift lofty and noble
Leading to peace solemn and serene.

The concept of one religion
In all the world is wishful thinking.
It's delusion, illusion
Although it is most appealing.

In many ways men are different
They can't be forced to '*toe the line*'.
They want to be free, independent.
Such is the nature of mankind.

There is no religious founder
Who can achieve that lofty aim.
They must be allowed to differ
They can't be "*xerox-like*" the same.

Each of us is a heterodox
With something special of our own
He or she can't be "*xeroxed*"
In other words, man can't be "*cloned*".



EDUCATION SYSTEM



“Subject to change are worldly things,
They are always impermanent.
That is why there are sufferings
Potential in their development.

If it's a change for the better
Due to changing circumstances
It must be allowed to go further
To avoid the state of decadence.

Of course, there will be criticism
From those who just can't understand
Being inclined to pessimism,
Burying their heads in the sand.

Thus there must be no dread nor fear
While attempting to blaze a trail
Such is nature of a pioneer,
Who cannot be feeble nor frail.



A sermon on Buddha's teachings
 Must not be mixed with obscenity
 Just to satisfy ordinary worldlings
 And have it filled with lustful orgy.

It is to explain the Buddha Dhamma;
 Not a basic for joke-cracking.
 Such is to promote *Nandi-rāga**
 Which is the most detested thing.

There is a great difference between
 Bhikkhus and ordinary teachers.
 The former's task is Herculean
 In going against worldlings' nature

To make people resist the temptations,
 Which overwhelm their untrained minds,
 To bring them out of the dungeon
 Of defilements of various kinds.

The chaos and confusion today
 Are caused by lack of self-control
 In whatever one does and says,
 Overacting one's duty and role.

* indulgence in sensual pleasure



EXECUTIVES & SUBORDINATES



A Stream-winner knows the MĀYĀ*
Which could lead him to realms of woe
The Triple Gem is his SARANĀ**
Prevent him going down below.

Unshakable is his SADDHĀ***
Both while enjoying and suffering,
He always knows how they all are
But dream and mirage with nothing

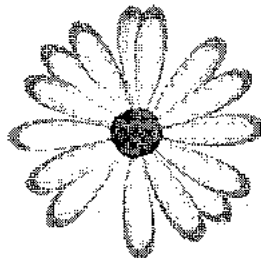
To be attached to as his own.
They are self-less and ownerless.
So he prefers to leave them alone.
His wisdom is the real brightness.

* mirage
** Refuges
*** Faith



His success not yet full-final,
But he will never step backward.
His deliverance may be partial.
Yet his security the perfect standard

He is guaranteed against downfall
With his Insight not declining
Some Fetters he's destroyed once for all
Releasing him from ordinary worldlings.





THE ORDER OF SANGHA



All great religions have one thing
Which to them is inevitable,
Especially for those worldlings
Who are their own disciples.

After their founders have passed away,
Different opinions would occur
Until at last there was no way
Except to separate for ever

Into various schools and sects,
Each defending its own practice,
Maintaining its own as perfect,
Branding others' as going amiss.

People have different tendencies.
They can't progress at the same rate.
They can't be all xeroxed copies
Of others on different grades.



Thus they are free to choose the theme
Suitable to their maturity,
Which they think will fulfill their dream,
Thus making them secure and happy.

To make people in all respects
Equal is a dream of Utopia.
They cannot be made all perfect,
Especially in the mundane sphere.

Bhikkhus are not the 'lazybones'.
They work mostly 'behind the scene.'
So their selfless work is unknown.
Yet they always remain serene.

Buddhism is never hungry
To draw people into the fold.
People are allowed to be free.
There's no coercion or control.

The 'sun' of Buddhism is said
To be now rising in the West.
The Dhamma is going to spread
Over there with a crowning conquest.



THE DOCTRINE OF ANATTĀ



Buddhism teaches man to be humane,
Promoting his spiritual ascent
From worldly to supra-mundane,
Which is full-final attainment.

The 'ship' of Buddhism is now
Faced with a storm of opposition.
It is doubtful whether or how
Dhamma will survive this phenomenon.

The Buddhist teaching of ANATTĀ
Was misinterpreted by those
Who were overwhelmed by AVIJJĀ,
Being thereby but human ghosts,

Who conclude that there was no evil
To deprive beings of their life;
There was nobody killing or killed
Since there were just Aggregates Five,



Which are empty, void of owner,
Since there is no 'self' anywhere.
There is therefore no evil whatever.
Such is their belief doctrinaire.

The body's life is worldlings' life
Both are always inseparable.
With untrained mind in the Aggregates Five,
They die a death like animals.

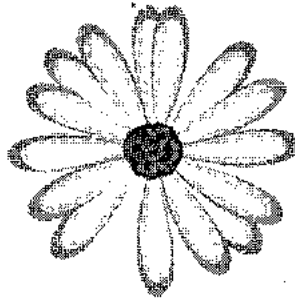
They did not stop to think.
What would be their own reaction?
What, then, would be their suffering?
How they would be so much frightened?

When they are point to be killed
Like those helpless victims of theirs.
Lacking compassion and goodwill,
They would be caught in their own snares.

The Buddhist doctrine of ANATTĀ
Is to be realised after defilements
Have been destroyed by Vipassanā*
And thus have died the death permanent.



**Those sadists have a heart of stone.
The Noble Ones have a heart of gold.
To the former mercy is unknown;
To the latter Dhamma is their soul.**





THE PRACTICE OF THE DHAMMA



Abortion is no doubt a killing,
Violation of the first Sila.
It is against the Buddha's teaching.
Certainly it must be a *Pāpa*.*

It is the child's right to take birth
And then face its own destiny
Waiting it on this planet Earth
During their long, endless Odyssey.

Beings here are but sojourners
Limited by their short life-span,
Embarking on diverse adventures,
Serving their terms as best they can.

Religion is the foundation-stone
Of other aspects of security.
Material development alone
Will plunge the world into anarchy.

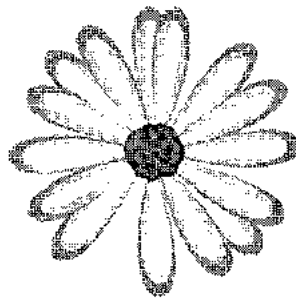
* evil



Morality based on religion
Serves to elevate people's mind,
Turning the world into heaven,
A realm of bliss for all mankind.

Parents, Bhikkhus, also teachers
Must live an exemplary life.
So they can be living mirrors
So that their children can strive

To follow in the right direction,
Not misled into evil views,
But guided by wisdom and reason,
With their future glorious and secure.





RECOLLECTION OF PAST LIVES



Recollecting past lives' events
Is not at all impossible.
There have been several documents
Proving how so many people

Can accurately remember
What had really occurred to them.
They saw them really as pictures
With smallest details and items.

This had occurred spontaneously
To them, while in their childhood days.
To them this is reality
No matter what others will say.

But when they grow up later on.
Most of them most often forget.
Their memories forever gone.
Their thoughts and bodies over-set.



This is one theme the Buddha preached
After achieving Enlightenment.
Through his own Insight did he teach.
It was his Wisdom permanent.

Buddhists who dare contradict him
Have done an ominous evil.
Their fate is foul, gruesome and grim.
They can't be Buddha's disciples.

This rebirth and redeath cycle
Is an ocean vast and shoreless.
Sentient beings have to struggle
In this blinding, cyclonic tempest.

Without Dhamma of the Buddha
They have to swim desperately
Through their defilement of Avijjā*
With Moha** guiding their destiny.

Let us Buddhists muster courage
To free ourselves from tenacious bonds,
Hearken to the Buddha's message
And strive for the horizon beyond.



Science worships body and matter
To produce their life's security,
Thinking it would be a nectar
To guarantee their life for eternity.

Do not neglect the role of mind
Of which the body is composed,
Regarding its function behind.
That's why they are like hungry ghosts.

The more they have, the more they desire
Only the crude things of matter
Racing blindly to the sucking mire
To gratify their sensual pleasure.

Our sense-organs are limited
Confined by their inefficiency.
Thus we are often deluded
By evidence prima facie.

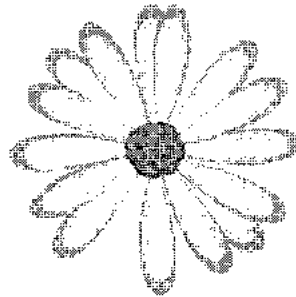
* Ignorance

** Delusion



Science knows much of material things
And regards them as if their God.
But they cannot banish sufferings
With which our life is always fraught.

These are old age, illness and death,
Grief, lamentation and distress.
So at the hour of their last breath,
They will be hopeless and helpless.





EPITOME OF THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

Buddha's teachings can be summarised
Into the virtue of Heedfulness
Or they can be epitomised
Into three kinds of self-conquest :

To do good, not to do evil
And then to purify the mind.
And that makes the Buddha's disciples
Become human of the noblest kind.

ATHEISM

Regarded as Atheism,
Denying existence of God,
Such is the teaching of Buddhism,
Not accepting the Supreme Lord,

Who created human beings,
The worlds and all the universe.
Buddhism maintains that all things
Are all phenomena that take birth



All of themselves by their nature.
They exist as such and then they die
Without any God the creator,
Who dwells in any place sky-high.

FREEDOM

Buddhism is never hungry
To draw people into its fold.
A Buddhist aspirant is free.
No one is ever coaxed nor cajoled.

Buddhist aspirants are not forced
To go against their tendency.
There is for them no dominant boss
That compels them always to agree.

IGNORANCE

Wherever there is Ignorance,
That means knowledge is not perfect.
Defilements are still in dominance,
There is still something to correct.

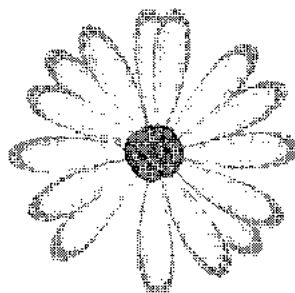


THE MIDDLE WAY

Buddhism accepts all levels of truth
As true on its respective plane.
Some are meant for spiritual youths
Whereas others for the supra-mundane.

On the plane of relativity
They must be accepted as true.
On supra-mundane they must be
Treated as having no value.

This is the Buddha's Middle Way
Steering clear from both extremes.
Let aspirants not go astray
But tread the Buddha's Path supreme.





THAI BUDDHISM

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



About the Author

Name : Most Venerable Phra Dhammamedhabhorn (Rabaeb Thitanyano)

Educational Background

- Pali study, Grade 6
- Dhamma Study, Grade 3 (highest)
- B.A. in Buddhism & Philosophy, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Bangkok
- M.A. in Pali, Banares Hindu University, India

Present Incumbencies

- Assistant Abbot, Wat Borvoranivesvihara, Bangkok, Thailand.
- Secretary-General, Buddhism Promotion Centre,
Wat Borvoranivesvihara, Bangkok

Administrative Experiences

- Former Vice Rector, Propagation Affairs, Mahamakut Buddhist University
- Former Director of Mahamakut Buddhist University Council

Buddhism Propagation Experiences

- Delivery of lectures, panel discussions, debates on Buddhism for more than 50 years all over the country

Literary Works on Buddhism

- Great Reply to the Global Problems
- Thai Buddhism : Questions & Answers (Thai & English)
- Writing over 100 titles on Buddhism (in Thai)
- Writing over 1,000 articles on Buddhism published in magazines, news papers and other periodicals.



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1/4-5 BaromRajchaChonnani 119 Rd. Thaviwatthana Bangkok 10170

Tel. [02] 441-1588, [089] 210-5133 Fax. [02] 441-1464 www.thammasapa.com