

NOBLE LIVING

BUDDHISM

BY VEN. K. DHAMMANANDA THERA

Buddhism is the religion of the majority of the inhabitants of Asia. There are over 550,000,000 Buddhists in the world which is nearly one quarter of the world's total population.

Many Buddhists are not aware of all the good teachings of their Master, the Omniscient Buddha. If one is to follow Buddhism properly and wishes to be called a good Buddhist, one must study the life and teachings of the Buddha.

All the difficult problems of life will be understood more easily if one learns Buddhism. The Buddha's approach to this subject was straight forward and scientific – hence easy to understand.

The Buddha did not keep his knowledge to himself and order his followers simply to listen to his teachings. He did not promise to take any one to heaven simply because they were his followers. If he had done so it would have been a false promise because no one can take another to heaven or hell. One can gain admission into heaven or avoid hells by one's own actions. An outsider can only help by giving guidance as to the path to follow.

Therefore the Buddha advised his disciples to follow his teachings and his pure examples. He proved to them what he preached was true, for they will be able to actually enjoy the good results of their meritorious deeds. This fact which was proved then holds good even today and will hold good in the future too.

The Buddha practiced loving-kindness towards all beings – gods, men, animals and ghosts and this is called Universal Love. If the Buddha wanted to find happiness for himself alone, he could have done so long before the time he actually attained the eternal happiness of Nibbana. He could have attained that with much less difficulty also. What he thought was that entering into that eternal happiness alone while so many were suffering would be like an unkind mother enjoying a delicacy alone while her hungry children were looking on. So, the Buddha, out of compassion for all living beings, plunged himself into the suffering Samsara (round of birth and death) and took the longer and more hazardous route to reach the farther shore. He had to live many lives and the number of lives that he spent in his self imposed "training course" is incalculable.

The Buddha's compassion and love towards all living beings was so great that he undertook the sufferings of Samsara without the least hesitation. When we read the Buddhist scriptures, we learn many of these facts. It is only with firm determination, a great deal of energy and high wisdom that one could continue practicing good thought, words and deeds for so long. By such diligent practice any one may become a Buddha for it is not the monopoly of a particular person or being.

You could become a Buddha, I could become a Buddha too. Buddhas encourage that spirit in others who would aspire to become Buddhas similarly. Although a myriad Buddhas may come into being there still will be unfortunate beings who have not taken the path to reach the eternal bliss of “Nibbana” because their shroud of ignorance is too strong for them to tear off.

Every one of us has a grain of the Buddha-spirit within us. It will not come into full bloom if we forget all about it. We should take the necessary steps to cultivate that spirit until that is brought to perfection and crowned with Buddhahood.

Now how are we going to make this seed of Buddhahood grow into a big and strong tree and bear the fruit of Buddhahood? Just as any other plant needs to be well looked after, watered and fertilized with more and more good deeds in this life and the lives hereafter. Then there will be a day that we will succeed gloriously in our efforts.

However, it is not an easy task to become a Buddha. A Buddha is one who possesses the greatest wisdom and loving kindness. He is free from all passions and defilements. He is one who is able to understand fully all the aspects of life’s various problems and also matters relating to before and after life. He is able to preach and convince others of the way to find the solution to their problems.

Due to the difficulties of attaining Buddhahood, there is a Buddha in the world but once in a long while. Hence the teachings of One Buddha are invariably forgotten in the world by the time the next Buddha appears. Therefore, it always becomes a mighty task for a Buddha to attain Enlightenment unaided through his own efforts. There is none from whom he could receive instruction in the right system of thought that leads to perfect knowledge. It is only after his heard-earned Enlightenment or attainment of perfect knowledge that one becomes known as a Buddha and is able to go forth to proclaim the truth to the world.

People live in the darkness of ignorance by not knowing what is right and what is wrong. They are struggling in the mire of worldly evils. They think that the few fleeting moments of pleasure that they may enjoy in this world are permanent; though in reality, they are impermanent. By not understanding this glaring fact people become engrossed in pleasures of short duration and get themselves entangled in them more and more, becoming enslaved to them and thereby totally blind to reality.

Even when this is explained to them they turn a deaf ear to the truth. In short they become so callous in not knowing what is right that many are emboldened to say: “I do what I think is right.” If everybody followed that rule then what would become of the world? In no time virtue would disappear from the world and vice and evil would prevail instead and there would be confusion and untold misery.

It is at the beginning of such a state of affairs that a Buddha is born into the world and he puts it right for the time being. After some time again evil predominates and should it go beyond correction, even a Buddha would not appear because an evil world is not prepared to listen to good advice. The evil-ridden world would have to face devastation before a better world could appear.

To be wise among the ignorant, to be strong of heart among the weak-hearted, to be patient among the impatient, to be sober among the passion-intoxicated, to be kind

among the haters, are some of the almost unattainable achievements in the world. Yet, there have been such unique personalities as the Buddhas who attained all these and many more qualities which are beyond description. There will also be Buddhas in times to come and when conditions are suitable with their messages of truth.

We should start cultivating good qualities in us from now on, so that we may be reborn into the world when such an all-compassionate and all-awakened Buddha appears. To be reborn in such favourable conditions is not easy and we must exert ourselves from this very moment with a firm determination and all the energy at our command.

For our guidance in the upward journey, we should make use of the knowledge that has been given to us by Gotama Buddha who lived only twenty-five centuries ago and which has come down to us through the several generations of his faithful and devoted disciples. The path shown by the Buddha is quite free from danger and is beneficial to all who tread in it as well as to those who stand by it.

The upward journey in the spiritual life may be regarded by the beginner as difficult but if one makes the first step forward, employing one's energy with the little knowledge one has, then half the difficulty is overcome. We should remember that the top of Mount Everest was not reached with one step but with continued steps, surmounting greater hardships in each one of them. Similarly for the attainment of Nibbana, one has to work hard, step after step until the goal is reached.

No one can hope to reach the goal in one life, however long that life may be. So it is necessary that one should accumulate merits in early life in order to reach final perfection. Great oceans are only drops of water which have collected together. Buddhahood is a great collection of everything that is good. In other words it is the absence of everything evil.

While one is going in the quest of this highest goal, spending more lives over a very long period, there may come to pass a time that one can meet a Buddha face to face. By this time, that person would be full of merits that he had accumulated. And, if he so chooses he could become a disciple of that Buddha and attain Enlightenment as a disciple under him. That would of course be overlooking the great mass of suffering worldlings, but one who desires liberation from the turmoil of Samsara (round of birth and death) would have gained the desired goal which is **NIBBANA** – the eternal Blissful State.

HOW TO PRACTISE BUDDHISM

BY VEN. M. PANNASIRI THERA

Buddhism is not a religion of faith; it is a religion based on knowledge. It commands respect from the world because it allows reasoning for wider knowledge while it dispels blind faith.

Some Buddhists may think going to the temple and offering flowers at the feet of the image of the Buddha, lighting a few oil lamps and burning some joss-sticks or incense in the temple means everything. They may rest satisfied that their religious duties have thus been fulfilled. But according to the teachings of the Buddha, one should not be satisfied with such simple acts or imagine that they are sufficient for one to be called a Buddhist.

By proclaiming and propagating his noble teachings, the Buddha did not wish to have vast numbers of followers who would simply be venerating a dignified image of him. What he wanted was to see a civilized, cultured and peaceful society of intelligent people striving for the attainment of Nibbana – the cessation of Universal Suffering.

Unfortunately, some of us forget these fundamental principles of our great heritage. It is very sad indeed that we thus fall into the group of those who merely follow rites and rituals. It should be clearly understood and remembered that we pay homage to the Buddha only as a mark of respect and gratitude to our path-finder and teacher, whom we regard as the true “Model of Perfection.” It is he who thought out and preached the way of a noble and happy life here (in this world) and the attainment of eternal happiness in this life as well as hereafter. It is he who also found the way to the final and noble goal of Nibbana, which is the state of complete cessation of suffering – the only eternal form of deliverance.

No matter how much or often we may worship at the feet of the Buddha, it is not the correct way of following Buddhist life nor is it possible to obtain the highest benefit in this way. In order to be a true Buddhist, one must follow strictly the basic principles of the Buddha’s teachings. Those who are acquainted with Buddhist literature vouchsafe to the fact that Buddhism maintains many noble principles which are not found in other religious systems, and for this reason, many non-Buddhists so highly praise Buddhism.

If it is asked which religious system leads mankind to peace, to the development of good morals, reasoning and logical thinking, it may without doubt be said that Buddhism ranks first. Moreover, Buddhist doctrine is the most authoritative source from which the correct answers to all questions that arise in a man’s mind can be obtained. It is the only doctrine in which the realities of the nature of life have been explained in plain and undisguised manner. Without exaggeration it may be asserted that as far as the spiritual upliftment of mankind is concerned, Buddhism remains unchallenged.

IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTIONS

BY VEN. ANANDA MANGALA

Education is an essential pre-requisite towards progress. Education builds up muscles and sinews of intelligence. Elementary education removes illiteracy. Secondary education prepares the ground towards economic security in a basic manner. University education further enhances the stature academically and leads towards professional or commercial avenues. Great pains are taken to channel the children as constructively as possible towards success. However, without spirit of restraint the sensual human personality seeks greater privileges and more amenities rather than channel the talents towards a sense of obligation and sacrifices. In quest of pleasure one meets with discontentment. The Vocational Ideal of the human spirit often surrenders at cross-roads of academic success. Education though assuming giant strides seems to be slipping towards Materialism rather than attaining contentment through Spiritual Restraint.

Therefore, Religious Education alone can turn the tide of selfish materialism towards the goal of selfless dedication towards an ideal of service to the State, Humanity and Home. The laurels of Religious Instruction belong to the inner spirit of the human personality. Faith, Charity, Love, Forgiveness, Morality, Restraint, Compassion, Understanding, Tolerance, Fellowship survive in the climate of religious background. Young children in their formative stages need to learn reverence, respect, gratitude and charity towards parents, elders, and possess a sense of fear and shame. The transitional phases of the Adolescent Age needs the counselling of youth in an environment of Compassionate Understanding fitting into the temperament of the spirit of Youth.

Buddhist Education holds a unique position in the field of religious instruction. Buddhist Instruction breathes a greater air of freedom and enjoys also more scope for greater reason. Parochialism, narrowness born of tradition and custom and fanaticism rarely find space in the class of a Religious Instructor. There is no exclusion of the wisdom and goodness of others. There are no prohibitions but friendly persuasion towards voluntary abstinence. There are no compulsions only pure instructions. The Teachers point the way – show the way – the pupils go their way – each according to his capacity.

Once the Blessed One, the Buddha, asked his young son Rahula: “What do you think what is mirror for?”. Rahula promptly replied: “For the purpose of reflecting Lord”. The Most Enlightened One continued: “In just the same way, Rahula, you must reflect again and again in doing every act, in speaking every word and in thinking every thought when you want to do a thing. You must reflect whether it would be to your harm, or to the harm of others, or to that of both yourself and to others, and so is an act productive of pain and entailing suffering. If reflection tells you this is the nature of the act contemplated, assuredly you should not do it. But if reflection assures you, there is no harm but good, you may do it. If while you are doing that act, reflection tells you it is harmful to you, to others or to both and is a wrong act productive of pain and entailing suffering – abandon it. But if reflection assures you there is no harm but good in it – then you may go forward with it. And the same holds for speech and for thought also. Train yourself, Rahula, by constant reflection to win purity in thought, word and deed. Joy and gladness will be yours as you train yourself by day and night in things that are Right”.

Whenever the young are sent to Dhamma Classes – it is this awareness this sense of reflection – they are trained towards.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

BY THE VEN. NARADA THERA

“There are four fields of merit”, says the Buddha.

“They are:

1. The Buddhas,
2. Arahants,
3. Mothers,
4. Fathers.”

The Buddhas are the flowers of humanity. Rarely do they arise in this world. It is during such Buddha-cycles that saintly disciples flourish. But kind mothers and fathers are common spectacles in every home. Veritably they are fertile and easily accessible fields of merit for the dutiful and grateful children. What little, with care, is sown on those rich fields bears fruit in abundance. Blessed, indeed, are those fortunate sons and daughters who are graced with the presence of their dear parents on whom they could bestow their unflinching love and overflowing gratitude.

According to the Buddha, children are so deeply indebted to their parents that they cannot sufficiently show their gratitude to them even if they were to carry their mother on the right shoulder and their father on the left, ministering to all their needs for a period of a hundred years.

Children can neither repay their debt even if they had the power to place them on a heap of jewels, waist-high, and bestow on them the sole sovereignty of the whole universe.

The Hindu Scriptures also pay a glowing tribute to the parents by stating that one religious teacher is worth ten secular teachers, one father is worth a hundred religious teachers, but one mother is worth a thousand fathers.

Why parents are so highly praised by the Buddha is obvious to all. The reasons are not far to seek.

Kind-hearted fathers give their best to their children. They forget themselves and see to their comfort and happiness. They liberally spend their hard-earned wealth on their education. Their sole delight is to see their children prosper and live in peace and happiness. Dear mothers at times risk their precious lives in their prime womanhood without seeing the face of their innocent child. They feed them with their own blood. They spend restless nights for their sake. Indescribable are the sufferings they undergo in nursing them. Children’s pain is their pain. Children’s happiness is their happiness. Children are a part and parcel of themselves. They are their valuable treasures, and are

their main sources of delight and happiness. Without them they feel desolate, unhappy and miserable.

Is there any way to repay their great debt to the dearly beloved parents? Yes, there is. It is by dissuading them from evil, by inducing them to be good and do good, by living as ideal children, and by providing them not only with fleeting material pleasures but also with substantial spiritual treasures.

Good children, ever be obedient to your parents who are your best possession in the world. Reverence them daily. Respect their wishes and never hurt their feelings. Be a blessing to them and never a curse. Maintain their honour by your refined manners and noble demeanour. Show by your character that you are the worthy children of your worthy parents, especially in their absence. Do nothing to bring discredit to their honourable name even after their death.

Children do not often realize the amount of affection showered on them by their kind and self-sacrificing parents. As a rule parental love is far greater than filial love. Well, one cannot expect immature inexperienced children to be as dutiful and loving as their own grown-up parents. Until they themselves become parents they do not fully realize what parental love is. Here is an appealing illustrative story.

Prince Ajatasattu, instigated by Devadatta Thera, attempted to kill his father King Bimbisara and usurp the throne. The unfortunate prince was caught red-handed. The compassionate father instead of punishing him for his brutal act rewarded him with the coveted crown.

The ungrateful son showed his gratitude by casting his father to prison in order to starve him to death. His mother alone had free access to the King daily. The loyal Queen carried food concealed in her waist pouch. To this the Prince objected. Then she carried food concealed in her hair-knot. The Prince resented this too. Later she bathed herself in scented water and besmeared her body with a mixture of honey, butter, ghee and molasses. The King licked her body and sustained himself. The over-vigilant Prince detected this and ordered his mother not to visit his father.

King Bimbisara was without any sustenance, but he walked up and down enjoying spiritual happiness as he was a Sotapanna Saint. Ultimately the wicked son decided to put an end to the life of his unfortunate father. Ruthlessly he ordered his barber to cut open his soles and make him walk on burning charcoal.

The King who saw the barber approaching thought that the son realizing his folly was sending the barber to shave his long grown beard and hair and release him from prison. Contrary to his expectations he had to meet an untimely and ghastly death. The barber mercilessly executed the inhuman orders of the barbarous Princes. The good King died. On that day a son was born unto Ajatasattu. Letters conveying the news of birth and death reached the palace at the same time. The letter conveying the happy news was first read. Oh, indescribable was the love he cherished towards his first-born son. His parental love penetrated up to the marrow on his bones. Instantly he cried – “Run, release my beloved father quickly”.

His father had closed his eyes forever

The other letter was then placed in his hand. Immediately he rushed to his mother and questioned – “Mother, dear, did my father love me when I was a child?”

“What say you, son. When you were conceived in my womb I desired to sip some blood from the right hand of your father. This I dared not say. Consequently I grew pale and thin. I was finally persuaded to disclose my inhuman desire. Joyfully your father fulfilled my wish, and drank that abhorrent portion. The soothsayer predicted that you would be an enemy to your father. Accordingly you were named Ajatasattu – unborn enemy. I attempted to effect a miscarriage, but your father prevented it. After you were born I wanted to kill you. Again your father interfered. On one occasion, child, you were suffering from a boil on your finger, and nobody was able to lull you into sleep. But your father who was administering justice in his royal court, took you into his lap, and caressing you, sucked the boil. Lo, inside the mouth it burst open. O, my dear son, that pus and blood, Yes, your good father swallowed these out of love for you.”

Ajatasattu shed hot tears.

Parents can as a rule, comprehend the inner working of a child under all circumstances, because they also passed through that juvenile stage. This is the reason why they are so sympathetic and generous towards their erring children. They are always ready to bear and forbear their wrongs. Knowingly or unknowingly children hurt their feelings. Through some misunderstanding they may be ungrateful to them. Due to childish impatience they may disappoint them. They may indiscreetly follow a course contrary to the pre-arranged plans of parents designed for their well-being and happiness. Despite all their shortcomings, omissions, commissions and errors the sympathetic parents will readily forgive and welcome them. In time of adversity, even without their appealing for help, they will voluntarily come to their succour. If their favours are resented, they will assist them indirectly.

Such is the benevolent attitude of kind and enlightened parents.

But, can children understand the feelings and responsibilities of their parents towards them?

They cannot because they have not yet attained that stage of parenthood, it is only a father or a mother that can really understand what genuine parental love is.

It is the duty of parents to see to the welfare of children. In fact the dutiful and loving parents shoulder the responsibilities with pleasure. Although at times some ungrateful children forget the invaluable service rendered by their compassionate parents and insist on rights, neglecting their bounden duties, yet parents, with a few exceptions, frequently attend to all the needs of their offsprings not only during their custodianship but also after they have left their homes.

During their embryonic period, and after their birth, until they get married, parents tend them with the greatest care and try to bring them up as ideal children.

Parents certainly desire to see their children grow up as ideal ones. They would be happy if they surpass them in every way or at least emulate them. They would surely be disappointed if they fall below their standard. To lead children on the right path parents should first set the example and lead ideal lives. It is impossible to expect worthy

children from unworthy parents. Apart from the Kammic tendencies children inherit from their previous births, they invariably inherit the defects and virtues of parents too. Responsible parents should take every precaution not to transmit undesirable germs to their progeny.

YOUTH AT CROSSROADS

BY THE VENERABLE ANANDA MANGALA THERA

The blossom time in life takes place during the transitional stages of development of the child towards adolescence. It is during their formative age that the Youth cultivate the qualities of manhood. This period helps the Youth to experience the varying spheres of their evolution both physically and mentally. It is during this time that the State, Home and Religion get mixed up a great deal in the common anxious effort to create the best environment for them to bring about the maximum results within this minimum period. Age old traditions, outdated customs and sectarian attitudes of the Elders often come in the way of the Youth. Home places high ambitions, the State fixes higher targets and Religion watches with feverish expectation to channel the restless mood of the Youth towards the Calm. It is during this period that the State and Religion make a desperate bid to claim superiority, while the Home stands willingly to make any moderate compromise. The problems of Youth are vitally belonging to them personally and therefore, have to be dealt with individually. The task is too important to be taken on a mass scale in a mechanical manner. There is no doubt that the Youth are made to stand critically at Crossroads at such a great moment in their inexperienced young lives.

The Age of the Youthful Spirit embraces the climate of the natural air of freedom, equality and opportunity. It is allergic to interference and unyielding to patronizing moods. The powers of the critical eye is stronger although there is a lack of practical experience. This is the age of sensitivity to circumstances and environment. Youth yearns to be involved in experiencing things personally and directly rather than through third parties or indirectly. The sweet innocence of the Age hides the clouds of ignorance. The intelligence of Youth rarely see their own selves and therefore cannot detect the huge mass of contradictions. The external physical progress and intellectual prowess do not immunise the Youth from the inner struggles of their prejudices and complexes. Amidst the pious features of Youth there might grow the seed of irreverence. Behind the cloak of moral leanings there might creep in the dagger of secret wrong-doing. In the mood of external obedience there might be the undiscovered inner defiance and arrogance. In the atmosphere of ambitious idealism there might appear the sudden mood of despair and frustration. The brawn in the youth might lack the brain or the brain in the youth need the brawn. Youths could easily fill in a gap or become a source for greater drifting. This age becomes the most constructive force towards character building or be a force for dissipation. Youth could be channeled wisely towards loyalty, towards state and religion or be exploited by agencies of worldly pursuits and violent political influences. Youth can prove themselves messengers of peace and prosperity or harbingers of insecurity and misfortune. They can become the crowning glory of their aged parents or the bitter shame of their elders. They carry with them the potentiality of conviction or the possibilities of utter restless disbelief. The

unpredictable period of “blossom time” needs expert guidance and care so that the fruit of wisdom in them become the happy fruit of a State, Religion and Home.

It is the experience of youth counsellors, whether in the field of academic pursuits or in the arena of sport, to discover the inherent features among youth towards stability and willingness to subject themselves to any scrutiny or test provided the proof of the pudding is in the eating of it. Youth need the confidence of those who guide them. Before the abstract ideals of religious philosophy are handed over to them for the purpose of testing, the Youth should be confronted with tangible methods such as social and cultural programmes. This being the age of idealism in them, those who take upon themselves the mantle of Leadership or Guidance must live within the convictions of their own statements both in the home and among the public. Those who take upon themselves the responsibility of guidance should acquire a sense of detached attention towards the problems of youth and their short-comings. Over-anxiety on the part of teachers and parents can lead to tension in the minds of Youth. This could prove most detrimental because of the sensitiveness of the age. It is best for elders not to lose sight of the memories of their own youth. It should not be forgotten that the Youth are their own children and would have to succeed them. It is an important point to be remembered that just the way the elders have grown up the Youth too have grown and would be growing still more towards maturity. Both State and Religion should not cramp the growing mind of Youth lest this lead them to rebellious intentions. Great patience, perseverance, tolerance and understanding are essential pre-requisites to become worthy of the love of the Youth. The Youth are more eager to see before them, precept and example rather than mere muttering of puritan views. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for reformers, priests, monks and parents to put themselves into order before making any attempt to deal with the problems of youth.

In turning over the pages of the “Dhamma”, one meets with important facts leading to the guidance of the young. The elders should guide the young towards the goal of accumulating deeds of Perfections. “Dana”, “Sila” and Renunciation are essential targets. Wisdom, Energy, Patience, Truthfulness, Determination, Loving-kindness and Equanimity must be cultivated. This means that these qualities should be visibly detectable in some proportion within the capacity of each individual before one launches on a drive to lead the young. These targets are no mere pious speculations but within the reach of human achievement in lesser or greater degrees. These Perfections are also known as the Ten Paramita or Pre-requisites.

The Youth should also be exhorted to become skilled to achieve the Seven Noble Wealths, such as “Saddha”, “Sila”, “Hiri”, “Ottappa”, “Suta”, “Caga” and “Panna”.

Buddhist Youth should be helped towards an environment of “Saddha” (Faith), The young should be directed towards taking refuge in the “Buddha”, the “Dhamma” and the “Sangha”. They should come within the knowing of the law of Cause and Effect. Faith through investigation and enquiry should be encouraged. Blind faith should be discouraged. The elders, the teachers and parents must be able to display in some small measure in a practical way what they mean by Faith.

The practice of “Sila” (Morality) – the observance of the Five Precepts should start at home. The parents by their precept and example should guide their children. The young should be afforded ample opportunity to witness in their teachers and parents the joy of moral living. Moral and virtuous living should adorn the home.

The awareness of the sense of “Hiri” (Shame) in wrong-doing should guard the conscience of the old, so that the young, through conviction, follow in the footsteps of their elders. One must acquire a natural taste towards the sense of shame in matters dealing with day to day life. “Ottappa” (Fear) in facing the consequences of wrong-doing should become an attitude in the mind of the old and the young. One should scrupulously achieve a mood of fear and shame in not living up to moral standards of a thinking person. One must become conscious of the fact that wrong cannot go unpunished here or even here-after.

“Suta” (Hearing of the Teachings of the Buddha) must become a routine in the daily occupations of a home. Facts pertaining to be Four Noble Truths and the Eight-Fold Way should become an essential requirement in the progress of the young. They should have such books in their personal library. The parents should create an interest to the listening of the “Dhamma” at regular intervals. The elders should hold happy discussions in matters relating to the Teachings of the Buddha. Ample opportunity should be afforded to the young to ask questions freely, so that their doubts may be cleared or the knowledge of Buddhist Texts made more clear.

“Caga” (Charity) must begin at home as between parent and parent and as between parents and children, and also as between master and servant. The home must resound with vibrations of selfless benevolence. The inborn traits of excessive craving should be diminished by becoming charitable in thought, word and deed. One must display a sense of great charitableness towards the failings of others, and more so towards the young. One must show charity to the less fortunate ones.

“Panna” (Wisdom Truth) should be identified as greater than riches, education and rank. To be skilled in the conduct of exemplary living and to live within the qualities of truthfulness, honesty and integrity contributes towards the attainment of Wisdom. Kindness, Reverence and Understanding pushes one to the portals of Wisdom. The habit of restraining oneself from doing wrong and the ability to perform good and meritorious deeds, the eradication of craving, ill-will and ignorance usher the young and the old into the happy shores of Wisdom and Contentment.

The importance of religious education needs extra stress these days, when the forces of materialism are gaining ground in the young minds of youth. The Sunday Dhamma Class is a reservoir of goodness, whoever drinks from it will find life peaceful and happy. Buddhist education holds a unique place in the field of education. Instruction in Dhamma Classes breathes the air of freedom from fanaticism, bigotry and dogma. There is no exclusion of the Wisdom and goodness of others. There can be no prohibitions save friendly counsel towards voluntary abstinence within one’s own capacity. There are no threats, compulsions and commandments but mere wise instructions. The Buddhist Educator is like a beacon of light to the Youth at Crossroads. He does not force the way but merely points the way. It is most befitting for teachers, elders and leaders to approach the YOUTH always the Buddha Way through “Metta” (Loving-kindness) and “Karuna” (Compassion).

May the Old and Young bridge the gap in the cause of Love and Peace.

TO THE PARENTS

BY VEN. K. DHAMMANANDA THERA

Buddhism is a doctrine of truth. It is a way of life which leads to knowledge of the true facts of life. It is an ethical method for escaping the misery of the life by the practice of self-control which leads to self-enlightenment; to man's deliverance from all suffering.

Buddhism is the most scientific religion in the world today. All educated and cultured people all over the world will respect The Buddha as a spiritual teacher and appreciate his teaching as the most rational doctrine. The voice of the Buddha is the most powerful voice heard in support of the dignity of man.

The Buddha says "Not by hating does hatred cease; hatred ceases by love alone". Such was the Buddha's rebuke to those who preach doctrine of antagonism. Let us live happily by following the teaching of this great teacher who lived 2500 years ago.

European historians, like H.G. Wells, have admitted that Buddhism has done more for the advance of world civilization and true culture than any other influence.

Pandit Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, says "The path that the Buddha showed us is, I believe, the only path humanity must tread if it is to escape disaster."

If we were asked, what religion has best promoted peace in the world, it is plain that a candid survey of history would compel us to say "Buddhism". If we were asked what religion has most effectively taught the great lesson of religious tolerance, the answer would be "Buddhism".

The Buddha advises us how to live happily and let others to live happily. As a matter of fact, he is the moral and spiritual illuminator. His teaching and message have their effect on all people, whether they believe in religion or not. If we can understand even a little of these ideas of the Buddha, then it will bring good to us and the world.

Be proud of your great religion and you are very fortunate to be born in a Buddhist family.

BUDDHIST CHILDREN

As in other Buddhist countries, Buddhist children in Malaya have no facilities to learn their own religion. I doubt whether they have any religious atmosphere at home. When they grow up some of them may embrace other religions because of the ignorance of their own religion, while others will remain without practicing any religion. They are the people who disobey their parents, give unnecessary trouble to innocent people and endanger the freedom of others. Given proper religious education, either in the school or in their homes, they would never behave in this manner.

How many parents are worrying today due to their children's misbehaviour? How many parents have lost their wealth, property and lives due to their disobedient children? If

your children are ungrateful to you, you are to be blamed. If you have not train your children to respect and express gratitude to others, how could you expect them to be grateful to you? You should remember that simply upbringing the children, feeding them and finding suitable jobs for them, would not be sufficient; they should also be taught to live as good citizens.

We, therefore, earnestly request parents to take keen interest in the spiritual upliftment of their children and not to neglect religious education. Please remember not to forget the fundamental principles of our great heritage.

YOUTH AND RELIGION

Every child of Buddhist parents will grow up in a Buddhist atmosphere, following the Buddhist way of life. So also must our young adults do. Youth is the age of hope and seeking, the time of idealism, or vivid imaginations and dreams, of profound optimism, of hope and inspiration. Young people are attracted by all that is lofty and noble. Their eyes are wide open and their faculties fully awake.

Young people constitute the world's most priceless possession because the future of the world depends on them. Their lives must have provision for the pursuit of culture, which is not a luxury but a necessity.

It should be our duty to protect our young folks from the temptations that beset them on all sides, demoralising and depraving them. Our failure to look after them has already produced disastrous results – distraction, confusion, and the absence of a proper sense of values. They seem to have no use for their religion which they seem to regard as some antiquated fossil, fit only for a museum.

Buddhist parents must realize that it is their duty to give religious knowledge to their children. A school or home must attempt to build up in the first place, a Buddhist environment for the growing child. One of the elements of this environment must be simple ritual such as honouring the Buddha by placing flowers before the Buddha Image and the daily recital of the Five Precepts. Another is the regular habit of visiting the Temple on Full Moon and New Moon days. Habits such as these create in the young mind an enthusiasm or rather a religious sentiment. These sentiments are most valuable because in early years one's character is built by the formation of sentiments. It is towards this that parents and teachers must work.

Care should be taken not to let the children mix with bad company.

If we were asked what religion has succeeded best in inculcating among its followers regard and obedience towards parents and respect for the aged, it will point to Buddhism.

The spiritual development of man is even more important than the attainment of his material welfare. History has taught us that we cannot expect human welfare and happiness, unless and until man lives according to certain religious principles. If men and women throughout the world can be made to realise the value of devotion, and practice of the ideals of Truth, Service, Justice, Charity and Love so universally

proclaimed by all religions, the task of internal government and the solving of conflicts will be rendered very much easier.

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

BY VEN. VINITA

In other respects the aims of men vary; but in this – the search for happiness – the aim of all mankind is as one. But all too often it becomes a will-o'-the-wisp, pursued by everyone, but found by only a few.

The average man places his happiness in things external to him – in property, rank, wife, children, friends, and the like. The moment he loses them or finds them disappointing, the foundation of his happiness is lost. There is no denying the fact that these external objects add to one's happiness in a small measure; but, impermanence being their very nature, they ultimately lead to unhappiness.

Happiness is not of the body. The healthy man flushed with the gift of physical well-being can be discontented and unhappy. The healthy body is no guarantee of happiness. At the opposite extreme even when the body is sick, even then he may still be happy. Happiness is not in possession. You can possess the whole world and yet be unhappy for all that. It is not to be found in achievement for you can reach your furthest objective and yet miss happiness. You can find fame, fortune, and success and still lose the gift of happiness.

Let us take the case of John Rockfeller of America. He was the richest man in the world with a daily income of over a million dollars. Was he happy? No. When he made a big profit he would dance in his room. But when he lost money he was ill. He never insured his goods. That cost him money. Once he shipped some goods worth a considerable amount to a distant port. The ship was caught in a storm. When the news reached him, he lost his head. He at once summoned his assistant and asked him to take out an insurance, if it was not too late. It cost him only 150 dollars. But when he returned to the office he found Rockfeller in a worst state of nerves. A telegram had arrived in the meantime. The cargo had landed safely from the storm. He was sicker than ever now for they had wasted the 150 dollars. In fact he was so sick that he had to go home and take to bed.

Now think of that – the richest man in the world with a daily income of over a million dollars making himself ill over 150 dollars! His condition became serious. All the best doctors in America were summoned to his bedside but in vain. He lost his appetite and had to be fed on human milk. Strangely enough his hair was swept away and even the eye-lashes. Finally the doctors told him the shocking truth. He could have his choice – his life or money. When the doctors finally undertook to save him, they gave him advice which he carried to the very letter for the rest of his life. 1. Never to worry. 2. To relax.

When he stopped worrying about money he was better. This man who was given up as dead at the age of 53 was 98 when he died a few years ago. Now that was an instance where a millionaire risked his life because he did not know how to control himself in times of adversity.

The world is full of disappointment. Things do not happen as we wish them to. This being so we must train ourselves to face any situation with fortitude. We may not be able to change them but certainly we can change ourselves. If a thing is unalterable then there is no alternative but to submit to it or in other words maintain a happy resignation to the inevitable. This does not mean that we should simply bow to all the adversities that come our way. Not in the least. That is mere fatalism. As long as there is a chance that we can change a situation in our favour let us try; but when common sense tells us that we are up against something that is so, and cannot be otherwise, then let us not be worried about. A modern poet puts it very nicely when he says:-

“For every ailment under the sun,
There is a remedy, or there is none;

If there be one, try to find it,
If there be none, never mind it.”

There are many who keep their balance when everything goes well. But let disappointments come, business failure, sickness, death in the family – they lose their balance. We become elated or depressed because of ignorance. The wise man controls his own reactions in moments of success. This does not mean that we should be gloomy fellows who do not laugh or smile. Far from it. When control has been acquired in times of success, it becomes possible to exercise it in times of distress as well. In times of distress one must bear in mind that he is not the only person involved. There are many others who face similar problems. Maybe that his troubles are nothing when compared to those of others. The fact that others are in the same position as he is may not solve his problems, but he can gain a sense of relief from the fellowship of adversity.

There cannot be true happiness in a changing world. We have only to look around to be convinced of this truth. Which is the home that has not mourned the death of a near and dear one? Who is the person who is free from sickness and old age? There may be some at this moment who are free from any great trouble of both mind and body. But very soon the law of impermanence will lay its cruel hands on them. And then all youth will end in old age, all health in sickness, all strength in impotence, all beauty in ugliness, and all life in death. Nothing can stop this – not even regal power, wisdom or wealth.

What then should be our attitude to this changing world? Weeping is vain. That will make matters worse. Understanding the true nature of the world let us face life bravely. Let us remember the advice given by the Buddha to Nakulapita. Nakulapita, in his old age, broken down and sick, visits the Buddha, and the Buddha tells him, “Though sick of body, **mind shall be healthy**. Thus should you train yourself”.

Happiness is a state of the mind. It is not what happens but our reactions to what happens that determine our degree of happiness or misery. Circumstances have power to disrupt our peace of mind only as we let them. Events are things of the external

world. Happiness belongs to the internal world. It is not what happens without but the reaction within that counts.

“It is easy enough to be pleasant
When life flows along like a song;
But the man worthwhile,
Is the man who can smile
When life goes dead wrong”.

WHY I BECAME A BUDDHIST

BY THE LATE MR. S.W.R.D. BANDARANAIKE

Prime Minister of Ceylon

The requests made to me to deliver addresses and write articles on this subject have been numerous. I have been very reluctant to accede to these requests, because a man's religious convictions are surely one of those very personal matters that he shrinks from exposing and parading before the public gaze.

However much a man's life may be public, there are always certain hidden recesses of his mind and heart that he likes to keep to himself.

But I suppose there are rare occasions when the veil may be rent from before the holy of holies, and it is in that spirit that I proceed to a dissection and analysis of the innermost workings of my mind and heart on this time. I hope to conduct that operation in as dispassionate a manner as possible.

Baptised

My parents being Christian, I was duly baptized into the Christian faith. I cannot recollect that my wishes were consulted in the matter; indeed, it is open to doubt whether at the tender age of a few weeks I would have been able to express an intelligent opinion, if I had been asked.

I went through the usual training of the average Christian child. But even at an early stage I suffered from a peculiar disability. While acquiring for Christ a sort of personal affection as towards a kind elder brother, to whom one could pour out one's troubles, I never was able to attain a conception of God the Father. My prayers were all really addressed to Christ. God had no real meaning for me.

This trouble, far from disappearing, increased with the growth of my mental powers, until, about the time that I left school, I was in sore straits. I now realized that the foundation of Christ's teaching was the love of, and complete surrender of oneself to, a personal God, and through the love of Him the love of one's fellow-man. Now, I was able to love Christ as a man, but I found myself utterly unable to accept or surrender myself to this God. But could I believe in Christ, and not believe in his God? That was my dilemma.

I even gave up going to Church, as I felt that, in the circumstances, it would be hypocritical to do so. However at this time I was content merely to drift, without actively seeking a solution of my difficulties; my mind was not yet sufficiently mature.

Religious Idea

Desultory reading at Oxford tended to confirm, rather than dissipate, my doubts. I became convinced that the idea of God was really subjective and not objective; that man created God, not God man. Added to the usual arguments that are adduced in support of this view, I was powerfully influenced by the history of the growth of the theistic idea, as I conceived it.

The Rationalist view that religion originated in a fear of the unknown is no doubt partially true, but it is not the whole truth. We have, in my view, to go to Life itself for the real reason. Not it is a scientifically provable fact that Life is continually devising and adopting means of protecting and fostering itself – the sexual instinct, the maternal instinct, the protective colouring of animals, and many more examples will readily occur to the mind.

Of all living things that in many ways have so much in common, it is significant that man alone possesses the religious idea. For man alone possesses a mind that apparently makes some sort of religion necessary for the comfort, happiness, and progress of the human race. He sees various phenomena about him, which he cannot understand.

Being gifted with imagination and a highly developed power of reasoning, he cannot rest satisfied unless he finds some kind of explanation for these things. Moreover, these phenomena, which he can neither cause, control nor prevent, yet wield a great influence over his prosperity and happiness. He brings his thinking mind to bear on the subject, and tries to devise some method to effect control as would enable him to use them for his profit. Lastly, as the natural tendency of man is perhaps well expressed by the saying "homo homini lupus", if the great powers of the human mind are brought to bear, without any check, on the task of mutual destruction, humanity would soon disappear. Religion in some measure provides that check.

To sum up human life has evolved the religious idea for its own protection and furtherance just as animals have evolved a protective colouring.

This does not mean that religious belief need necessarily be false, but that, owing to the subjective element in it, there is a probability that certain beliefs at least, are false, and that we must each, individually, submit any particular belief to the test of such reasoning power as we possess before accepting it. It may, of course be urged in favour of blind faith, even on the rationalist principle, that what is important is not so much that a thing is

true, but the belief that it is true. And doubtless this has enabled religions to jog along fairly comfortably hitherto. I do not consider it necessary to pursue that argument further.

Idea of God

Let us pause now and see how the arguments mentioned above apply to the origin and development of the theistic idea.

Early man, seeing certain things happen about him – the sun shining, the rain falling etc. – which might, in certain circumstances, be beneficial or the reverse to him, tried to discover a method of controlling them, to his own advantage. The method he found was magic.

Later, as he grew in power and security, and began to realise his superiority to the other living things around him, he probably argued in this wise: “there are many things that I can do that animals, for instance, cannot do. I can build a substantial house to protect myself from the elements, I can fashion weapons, I can till and cultivate fields. But there are certain things that even I cannot do. I cannot make the sun shine or the rain fall. These things, therefore, must be done by some being superior to myself, and as man is the greatest living thing I know they must be done by beings like myself but with superior powers”.

That, I should imagine, was the age of polytheism. Later still, with the development of the village-community and city-state, the conception of an ordered State of Gods arose. An example is Homeric theology, with the idea of a chief and chieftainship of the community, the blacksmith and other artisans, and so on. The final stage was the conception of a single omnipotent Being. But here too, it is significant, as Bernard Shaw points out in his “Black Girl,” that this Being gradually developed in the Bible itself, from a wrathful, jealous, tyrannical God to one who, in the Gospels, is all-merciful and all-loving.

Three Courses

When I reached this point in my thinking, three courses were open to me. I might, as some Christians do, have slaved my conscience by twisting Christian doctrine to suit my point of view, and continued nominally to call myself one. I was too honest with myself to do that. Another alternative was to declare myself a rationalist. This I was unable to do for the following reason. Although I could not believe in a personal God, I did believe in some kind of continuance, a struggle, evolution towards a final goal. Just as higher bodily forms have evolved from lower ones through millions of years, there surely is a similar evolution of the spirit or life-essence, or whatever one like to call it.

The history of mankind itself, the painful and laborious struggle forwards and upwards, out of the dark abyss towards the sun-lit heights above, through aeons of time, leads one to this belief. All I can say is that I personally was and am convinced of this continuance. Thus, while disbelieving what is the foundation of theistic religion, the existence of God I believed in a vital ingredient of all religions, the fact of some continuance. My third course was to find a religion that satisfied my peculiar needs.

Buddhism alone has been able fully to do so. Its doctrine that there is no need for man to be dependent on the will of a God, whose favours he had to seek and whose wrath he had to fear; that man must work out his salvation himself, appealed irresistibly to my own mentality. Similarly, the continuance and evolution contemplated in the Dharma exactly coincided with my own views. Although these are the most important, there are certain other reasons that attracted me to Buddhism.

It will have been observed that although I could not love a God, I could love a man, and the Lord Buddha was just a man like the rest of us. Indeed he was very human; how touching is his reluctance to look on his new-born son, once his great resolve was made, lest the infant might close his little fist about his heartstrings and pull him back.

Again Gotama's approach to his problem had a strong appeal for me. All fine spirits throughout the world's history have been conscious of the sorrow that lies forever at the heart of the world. If I may mention two names at random, Virgil was conscious of it, and so was Hans Anderson, who by a strange irony wrote stories for the delectation of children. For, as George Gissing says of him beautifully, "Every page is touched with the tears of things, every line melodious with sadness".

Gotama realised the fundamental truth of the existence of this sorrow, and ultimate goal as its removal. In expounding his doctrine for this purpose, he makes no extravagant claim on our faith, but wishes every teaching to be tested by the reasoning of each before acceptance.

It is only left for me to say that the Buddha Dharma has emerged triumphant from the test of my reasoning.

I have now torn the veil from before the holy of holies of my mind. If those, who peer inside, see anything there of profit or help to themselves, I shall consider myself amply rewarded.