

สำนักหอสมุด



สำนักหอสมุด

WHEN RELIGION DERAILS

Suchitra Onkom

สำนักหอสมุด มหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร
วันลงทะเบียน..... - 2 ก.ย. 2563
เลขทะเบียน..... 1031795
เลขเรียกหนังสือ..... BL
65

.p7
S942 w
2011

ISBN 978-616-550-016-6

Enquiries may be directed to :

Dr.Suchitra Onkom

33/45 Romsai Garden Ville

Karnchanaphisek Road, Soi 3, Laksong, Bangkhae

Bangkok 10160, THAILAND

Tel: 089-0444 728

Fax: 02-445-5407, 02-899-6675

Http://www.sudassa.com

E-mail: suchitra-ok@yahoo.com

Copyright©2011 by Dr.Suchitra Onkom

First Edition 2011

Baht 300.-



All Right Reserved. No part of this work be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing by the writer.

Printed in Thailand by Horatanachai Printing Ltd.,part.
33/28 Soi Phetchburi 5, Kwang Tungpayathai, Khet Ratchathewi,
Bangkok 10400, THAILAND
Tel: 02-215-9681
Fax: 02-216-9465
E-mail: horatanachai@yahoo.com

PREFACE

This book is written with a purpose to call for an end to all the existing injustices as found in the contemporary political, social, economic and religious systems in many parts of the world. The emphasis here is on religious intolerance, deviation and extremism, all of which are the major factors in turning this globe of ours into a topsy-turvy world of dreadful violence: violence in religions, politics, society and many other spheres of life.

There is no hesitation in pointing out that blast of burning fire that sweeps across the masses of extensive wild and dry grass land. Chapter Three and Chapter Six are set to deal with religious problems in particular.

The book offers a sound solution for solving the world's problems. The emphasis is on the developing of right view and the avoidance of extremism, both of which are in line with Buddhist concept of moderation-treading the Middle Path of the Buddha.

It is only when humankind has ceased to become the slaves of our own desires and cravings then only will we all be truly free. This brings us back to the opening lines of the first paragraph of the first chapter which mention Jim the runaway Negro slave, set off on a raft down the Mississippi together with Huck Finn, in a daring bid for freedom from the Negro's white master.

The author started her writing in 2006 and completely finished in 2009. She also spent more than eight months in proofreading.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My meditation practice at Wat Ambhavan in Singburi Province where the most Venerable Phra Dharmasinghapurajarn (Jarun Thitadhammo) is the resident abbot, has led to my constant reflection on the contemporary events which seem to be turning our world upside down or inside out. Many of my ideas have been most impartially formed through my own reading, observing and experiences.

A number of people have contributed substantially to my scope of worldview and religious outlook. I have been much enlightened by Venerable Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto) for his concept of Buddhist economics and Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu of his impartial regard for all religions. I am most particularly grateful to Venerable Dr. J. Ratananando Bhikkhu, a former graduate from the Cambridge University and a linguist, for his valuable assistance in matters of language and proof-reading.

I have been much impressed by Charles Kimball's impartiality so clearly manifested by his assessment of the world's main religions in his book 'WHEN RELIGION BECOMES EVIL'.

I dedicate this book to my beloved parents and my teachers. May all beings who are subject to birth, old age, disease and death, be happy.

Suchitra Onkom

27 March 2011

INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the new millennium was celebrated with great pomp and hope for a better future by people all over the world, but just a few years into the new century a series of events brought home the sober reality that the world is still very much a chaotic place. Our problems have become so complex that it will be no simple task for us even to trace the root causes of the troubles we are facing, let alone find the right solutions. The complexity arises because our problems are always interrelated. This is especially true when we take into consideration of the fact that how globalization is shaping our present world. Globalization necessitates interdependence between nations. The prosperity of countries may bear close connection to that of others. Similarly, the grievances of one nation may lead to some unpleasant impact toward another. Even within one single country, problems of many kinds are inevitably interrelated. Economic disparity may lead to general discontent and social ill which in turn will bring about political unrest and upheaval.

The September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center of New York city and the Pentagon had added an even more complicating problem of an extremely grave nature and serious worldwide impact (Kimball, 2002, p.2). Religious extremism is the major worry of the new century. The whole world stared at the television screens with disbelief at the occurrence of such an appalling event. The nineteen hijackers were devoted Muslims, but why did they embark on such an un-Islamic mission? Did they hate the

Americans or the American government so much that they were even willing to become suicidal attackers? Why the hatred? Does Islam advocate such a senseless and brutal act? These are obvious questions for which there are no simple answers.

The following years saw a series of events taking place in other parts of the world : the killing between Christians and Muslims in some Indonesian islands, the bombings at Bali, the violence between Hindus and Muslims in India, the Iraq or Second Gulf War, the bombing at London, the riots of the Muslim immigrants in France and the renewed shooting between Hindu Tamil Tigers liberation fighters and the Buddhist Sinhalese government of Sri Lanka and also the outbreak of Muslim insurgency in Southern Thailand. (Kimball, 2002, pp.126-127; 166-169)

All those events point to one fact: religions have become a forceful factor for the outbreak of violence. It is odd that while religions are meant for the nurturing of the most noble aims of human life, they have somehow become associated with the most unacceptable side of human behavior. Why do people adhering to religion get swept up in such ferociously zealous fervor and seemingly abandon even the most basic teachings or principles of their religion to the extent that they are prepared to commit cruel and appalling acts? Are religions failing us? Have religions become deviated and a problem? What constitutes a healthy religion? What must we do to save the world from religious chaos and carnage?

The researcher has spent some time considering and reflecting over these questions. Thus the aim of this research is to look deeper into the problems with religions or religious adherents and special references are made with regard to Islam and examples of religious deviation as well as the non-violent nature and profound wisdom found in Buddhist teachings which could particularly benefit the present world. The more chaotic the world gets, the more urgent is the need for sober contemplation and reflection. It is only a clear and sober mind that can function properly and wisely.

There is always a tendency for adherents of one religion to reject the teachings of other religions, especially in the case of those people who maintain a narrow religious view. They often regard the teachings of other religions as flawed. "You will go to hell if you do not believe in our God!", one believer of a religion may say to another who belongs to another religion or has no religious beliefs at all. Sometimes a religious adherent may proclaim out rightly: "It is only in my religion that you can find Absolute Truth!" Such notions and claim only help to reflect upon the adherent's state of mind and level of understanding with regard to religions. It is a narrow-minded point of view. A person who adheres life will find it unacceptable that God will send him to hell just because he does not believe in Him or in the existence of an almighty God.

To be too inflexible in the understanding of religious texts or scriptures can present serious problems. The things written in the Genesis can be interesting and

purposeful, but many people cannot help asking, “Was the world literally created in that way? Why don’t we resemble Adam and Eve in the slightest bit physically? Could the serpent really talk? Could there be such a tree as the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden? Was there really a Garden of Eden after all?”

Rigid adherence to the literal interpretation of religious dogmas often leads to misguided understanding of religious teachings and fundamentalism, religious deviation and extremism. The nineteen Muslim hijackers of September 11 were said to have been religiously misguided; but most of us do not know what was exactly in their mind when they set out to implement their carefully arranged plan. (Kimball, 2002, p.106) They might be some political motives involved as many people did not hesitate to conclude, but they were clearly very staunch adherents of Islam. However, it would be unfair to blame Islam for all the Muslim terrorists’ acts of violence which have been occurring almost on a daily basis in various parts of the world. After all Islam does not really regard violence as a much-desired means of solving problems or setting disputes. Religions only encourage believers to love, tolerate and respect one another. Thus religions do not actually form a problem, it is only when religious teachings or principles have been either intentionally or unintentionally distorted, misinterpreted or misunderstood that problems begin emerge. When religious adherents do not keep an open mind and try to understand in the right perspectives their own religion as well as those of the others, and when they happen to fall into the hands of unscrupulous religious or

political leaders, troubles are certainly in the building up. In a case like this, religion is said to be a problem, but many people would argue that it is not religion or religions that become the problem, it is those religiously misguided adherents and unscrupulous leaders who form the problem and supply all the troubles which are simmering in various parts of the world.

For the misguided, their particular version of the religion they belong to is the only true path to heaven. Other religions are simply false. A comparative study of religions will be of great benefit as it helps us to broaden our scope of views with regard to the origin, historical circumstances, similar ideals or principles and noble purposes of the world's existing religions. A study of the history of religions will help us to know how religions had or have been made a tool for satisfying human beings' selfish and even evil desires. The Crusades, for example, were expeditions made in the eleventh century for the supposedly 'noble' purpose of reclaiming the Holy Land of Jerusalem from the Seljuk Turks; but the Crusaders committed such horrific savagery even before they could set off for the enemies of Christ, were mercilessly killed by the Crusaders in Germany. It was said that piles of heads, hands and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. (Kimball, 2002, pp.162-163)

The Church in Rome stimulated people of the crusading period to join the Crusades with promises of forgiveness of sins and even the possibility of the acquisition of land. Here we could perceive the working forces of

political, religious and economic factors combined to make the Crusades a justified war. For most of us, the Crusades were just something of a distant past, to be read from history textbooks or watched from a movie or television screen, but to the Muslims, Jews and Oriental Orthodox Christians, the crusades certainly stay deep in their psyche. With so much brutality and barbarism involved, how could there be any justification for calling such wars 'Holy' especially when one recalls the fact that Jesus Christ himself was against the application of sword or any form of violence or deceptive act. The western colonization of many Middle-Eastern countries and the influence of the present day powerful nations over those countries are an unpleasant reminiscence of the old crusading period though now the conflicts are taking a different form. Resentment of western domination and manipulative influence runs deep in the psyche of the Middle East largely Muslim population.

History reveals the ugliness and evil of wars even if it was or is called a 'holy war.' (Kimball, 2002, p.164) What people did during and even after the war was extremely 'unholy' and inhumane as recorded in history. The notion of a war being 'holy' is a most regrettable mistake; but some politicians like to play with the idea of stirring up religious sentiments for political purposes. Ill-informed religious adherents thus become a tool for manipulation in their political game. The September 11 event had, at the initial stage, shocked the whole world and later it aroused fear, disgust, disturb and even hatred for Islam and Muslims in some parts of the non-Muslim world. That makes life rather difficult for some Muslims

for some time. However it also sparks the urge to know and understand Islam in its true nature and also to present Islam to the world community in the right perspectives.

The major challenge for many countries in the world now is religious diversity, especially in multi-cultural societies. We need to adopt a very tolerant and flexible attitude with regard to other religions and make some attempts to understand their principal teaching in the right perspectives. We ought to seek similarities within all the diversity while at the same time understanding, respecting or at least tolerating the differences with good will. Religious teachings do not harm us so long as they are truly sound, healthy and right. It is misguided teaching that poses the danger, leading to corrupted views and deviation or extremism, which explains why the Buddha emphasized the importance of developing Right View in His Noble Eightfold Path or the Middle Path. The essence of the teaching on the Middle Path is to avoid the extremes and to seek harmony with ourselves, our fellow human beings and the world of Nature (Suchitra Onkom, 2007b, pp.9-10).

Our near-insane drive toward industrialization and materialism has clearly upset the harmonious balance of the world ecological system. Now we know we have gone to the extreme in the exploitation of Nature, we cannot stop ourselves because of our unsatisfied wants or greed. It is undeniable that a lot of us still put the quest for material gains above many other things - it is our primary concern.

Strictly speaking, the two Gulf-Wars were not fought over religious matters. Economic considerations were the underlying factors though the U.S. tried to downplay these hidden motives (Kimball, 2002, pp.166-170). In a hundred years' time perhaps, much of the world's vast natural resources, particularly oil, will have been used up thus we need to think about the future generations and pave the way for a future world of not only economic sufficiency, but also religious harmony and political peace. So now we need to create a culture of peace or a peace-loving culture which cherishes mutual tolerance, respect, concern, unselfishness, love and compassion for one another.

“An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” (Thai Holy Bible (Matthew 5:38), 2004, p.8) is not what a healthy religion would want its adherents to practise. The Buddha had great compassion for His disciple Devadatta who tried to kill Him on several occasions. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakam Vol.7,1995,p.189) Jesus Christ told his followers to *“love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”* (Thai Holy Bible(Matthew 5:44),2004, p.8) The Buddha teaches us to overcome anger by non-anger, evil by good, stinginess by giving and false speech by true speech. (Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā Vol.5,1999, p.95) Gandhi, while struggling for India's independence from the British, had never hated his colonial masters. (Kimball,2002, p.153) The exiled spiritual leader of the Tibetans, the Dalai Lama, knows not how to hate the Chinese. He advocates the need of choosing a 'Middle Path' for a setting Tibet's problem with China. It can be obviously seen that good and healthy religions always aim for the noblest human

qualities. People who truly practise their religion will be able to lift themselves above all prejudices, narrow interest and selfish tendency. Those who commit appalling acts against humanity in the name of religion are in actual fact acting against their own noble religious principles.

What really matters most about a religion is its concern for and teaching about the spiritual well-being of humankind. Rites, rituals, images or statues and sacred sites are just something external which should not become reasons and causes for controversy and violent conflicts. The Indian Hindu extremists and Muslims' conflict over the sacred site in Ayodhya where the Babri mosque once stood resulted in the deaths of more than one thousand religious adherents in 1992. It was really tragic that people simply lost their mind over such matters about the so-called sacred or holy sites. There is no justification at all to do harm to one's neighbors in the pursuing of a religious cause or a righteous cause which has after all, been twisted to suit the political and religious climate of the day. (Speath, 2002, pp.14-18)

The fact that Buddhists prostrate in front of the statue of the Buddha is merely a sign of respect and gratitude for His teaching. It is not to be taken as idol-worshipping, and yet in 2001 the Talibans ("the students" of Islam) destroyed vast statues of the Buddha at Bamian for they simply failed to recognize the Buddhists' sense of gratitude toward the long-deceased Buddha and identified rather absurdly, the Buddhists' practice with idolatry. (Kimball, 2002, p.105)

Today we live in a globalized world that is culturally, socially, economically, politically and religiously diverse. There is no short supply of differences and disagreement. The challenge for humankind now is to find what we must do to cross the boundary of these differences and reach the unity that is so much lacking, and it must be a unity that accommodates diversity. Terrorism is clearly and definitely not the answer to our problems. No one would want to embrace Satan unless he is misguided and deviated. There is thus a vital need to discover what noble aims all religions have in common rather than what they have in differences. People of the world need to realize, tolerate and eventually respect as well as accept all the diversities to ensure a harmonious co-existence. Even Islam advocates unity in its own way as is evident in the following verses: *“O people of the Book, let us come to a common word between us and you, that we worship none but God, and that we associate nothing with Him, and that none of us take others for lords apart from God”* (Qur’an3:64 cited in Kimball, 2002, p.201). This is a call for unity under one almighty God. When Jews, Christians and Muslims realize that in reality they are worshiping one and the same God, they should also realize that it is time for conflicts and violence to end.

To the late Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1990, p.18), a very scholarly and wise monk of Thailand, Dharma was his God. Dharma is the truth of life and natural truth of the world and universe. So, it is really up to us to face and accept the real Truth and God’s (or Dharma’s) message of peace that our present chaotic world is so urgently and absolutely in need of.

CONTENTS

Preface	(3)
Acknowledgements	(4)
Introduction	(5)
<i>Chapter One</i> Silent Reflection - From Huck Finn to September 11	1
<i>Chapter Two</i> Peace, Science and Technology	16
<i>Chapter Three</i> Deviation in Religion	27
<i>Chapter Four</i> The Buddha and His Teaching	42
<i>Chapter Five</i> The Buddha's Teaching of Karma	61
<i>Chapter Six</i> The Question as to Whether Religion has Become a Problem	81
<i>Chapter Seven</i> A Buddhist Solution to a Topsy-Turvy World	97
<i>Chapter Eight</i> Education and Economics in the Buddhist Context	105
<i>Chapter Nine</i> Miscellaneous	116
Conclusion	133
Suggestion	136
Bibliography	139
About the Author	145
Appendix	151

CHAPTER ONE

Silent Reflection -

From Huck Finn To September 11

In hiding from his drunken and tyrannical father, Huck Finn escapes to Jackson's island, where he meets Jim, a runaway slave. Together the boys set off on a raft down the Mississippi, in a daring bid for freedom from so-called 'civilization', so go the lines printed on the back cover of one of the Penguin Popular Classics 'Adventures of Huckleberry Finn'.

Mark Twain's Huck Finn lived in a time when Negro slaves were still owned by their white masters in the Southern States of the U.S. Thus Jim, a Negro slave, was running away from his owner for fear of being sold to strangers while Huckleberry Finn was running away from his oppressor – a drunken and tyrannical father. Both ran away to look for freedom.

Many years have lapsed since Mark Twain wrote his masterpiece (the book was published in 1884). America and the whole world have changed to the extent that Mark Twain would not have recognized or dreamed of ; but one

thing remains unchanged : like Huck Finn and Jim, many people all over the world of this modern time are still in search of freedom amidst the 'civilization' they were born into. Freedom is indeed a rare 'commodity'. A lot of people have not been able to enjoy the freedom they yearn for : freedom from tyranny or oppression ; freedom from political and religious persecution; freedom to speak, write and act and freedom to attend school, to vote or even to drive a car!

Apparently our human world is still far, very far indeed from being perfect. After all the tumultuous events of more than ten decades, perhaps it is time for us to sit down and do some impartial reflections on our own trends of thoughts, behaviour and actions or deeds in relation to this earthly world of ours.

Just over a few hundred years ago, the only rich people on earth were a small number of monarchs or rulers, some landlords, nobles and merchants. Life in most parts of Europe was as much difficult as those people who lived in China or India. Then the beginning of the Industrial Revolution brought about the invention and utilization of new machines which enhanced both industrial and agricultural productivity, unleashing an explosive growth in continental economy. When the rest of the world catches up with industrialization, the result is the migration of millions of peasants moving to seek for jobs in coastal towns or cities (as in the case of China) creating an urban culture and problems of its own.

The progress in science and technology led to the creation of sophisticated weapons and even atomic bombs

of a horrifying and destructive capacity. Thus the last century had witnessed the occurrences of the World Wars, the holocaust, the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the Americans' nuclear bombs, the creation of Israel, the Korean War, the defeat of the Americans in Vietnam War, the death of Mahatma Gandhi, the assassination of John F. Kennedy and later that of his brother Robert, the Cultural Revolution of Chairman Mao Tze Tung, the fall of Communism in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, the Tian An Men Square's Students' Riots, the Kashmir War, the Khmer Rouge genocide of their own people, the first Gulf War, the death of People's Princess Lady Diana, the spreading of AIDS, starvation in Africa and the list goes on till the first few years of this century when we bore witness to the shockingly tragic event of September 11, 2001, the American invasion of Afganistan and the second Gulf War, the fall of Saddam Hussain and the death of his two sons, the Bali Bombing, Tsunami that killed thousands of lives in Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka, Birds' Flu, Madrid bombing and the recent bombing in London. The list will of course continue in the course of time for the rest of the century. But enough tragic events had happened that should make us pause for some serious reflections on an apparently topsy-turvy world.

The end of the Second World War saw the consolidation of the world's communist regimes in countries like the former Soviet Union and China. There was much political and ideological rivalry between the capitalist United States of America and the Soviet Union. The rivalry had never turned into another World War because

both powers realized the unthinkable consequences of a nuclear war. Thus it never became violent but cold war developed. When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Kremlin, his policy of 'glasnost' or 'opening up widely' and 'perestroika' meaning 'new structural adjustment' led to unexpected changes within the Soviet Union itself and also in such Eastern European nations like Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, East Germany and even Romania.

Poland, in particular, was blessed with the election of a Polish Pope, the late John Paul II who took charge of the Vatican until death in April 2005. John Paul's election posed an implicit challenge to Poland's Soviet-backed regime. He told his fellow countrymen not to be afraid and supported Lech Walesa, an electrician of Gdansk shipyard turned leader of the new solidarity free-trade union movement. The Pope was also in contact with the Polish leader Wojciech Jaruzelski. He wanted to ensure a political change in Poland without any blood spilling. By 1989, communism fell in Poland and soon other Eastern European nations struggled themselves free from the claws of Soviet communism. "Everything that happened in Eastern Europe in these last few years would have been impossible without the presence of the Pope and without the important role-including the political role-that he played on the world stage," so wrote the former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

With the demise of European communism and with the Soviet Union falling apart, the U.S. becomes the only super power left on the world's political stage. Has the end of the Cold War brought much peace and happiness

to the world? Upon reflection, we have to say that it has boosted the morale of free nations with capitalist democracy, but there are still many other spots in the world where troubles are boiling.

Some optimists argue that there is still hope for the world to improve as we have the United Nations Organization to handle world conflicts and other social issues such as food and health, and that there are international courts to bring war criminals to justice as well as a World Trade Organization to look into trading matters. However, one may ask, upon reflection, how effective is the U.N.? Did the U.S. president take the U.N. resolution not to launch the Second Gulf War seriously? Could the International Court of Justice bring Osama bin Laden to face criminal charges? Has the World Trade Organization really done a fair job in boosting international trade and helping the power nations? These are questions whose answers have already been given by what have actually happened in the world's political, social and economic stage, but nevertheless they are questions with answers which require some deep reflections as to whether things have been going on in the right or wrong directions.

Though communism is no longer a threat to world democracy, the world is still very much divided. In a true democracy, there must be some proper form of liberty, equality and fraternity for the people to exist in harmony. In a country like the U.S. where people enjoy a high degree of freedom and equal rights, there is still not enough of fraternity among the people as can be seen from the conflicts and distrust they have because of race, color,

customs, religions and sexual orientation (problems concerning gays' rights). The world actually suffers from a lack of true fraternity. Wrote the Venerable P.A. Payutto, a leading Buddhist scholarly monk in Thailand, "*There is hardly a country in the world whose population is made up entirely of one race.*" That is true because most countries do have a population composed of people from different races who speak different languages, believe in different religions and practise different customs, and these differences became the breeding ground for potential hatred, injustice and conflicts or even wars. Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn and Jim the runaway Negro slave were characters formed against an America torn by controversy over the slavery problem of that era which finally broke out in a civil war.

The world had in fact witnessed too many instances of racial and religious conflicts. Hitler's hatred for the Jews led to the appalling holocaust, for example. While Jews, Christians and Muslims are all monotheists and share a claim in God's blessing, their relationship is not a very warm and peaceful one. Even people of the same race become enemies of the most staunch kind because of ideological differences. The North and South Koreans had fought bloody wars, so had the Vietnamese. Till now the mainland Chinese are still at odds with the Chinese of Taiwan over ideological and political issues. Where is the sense of fraternity or brotherhood? Without this sense of fraternity, there will be no love among us. The lack of this essential human quality is a very great obstacle to peaceful human relation and existence. With modern means of transport

and communication, the world is becoming a globalized village and we are becoming one people or one community; 'We are the world' as the song goes, but without fraternity or brotherly and sisterly love between all of us, we will remain divided, disunited and at war with one another. It is time for us to reflect upon the fact that how much love we have given to our fellow human beings and how much hatred still exists among us.

Social injustice is still widely prevailing in our human society. There is the existence of such a thing as citizens being intentionally divided into first, second, third and fourth class citizens. In India, a country recognized as having the largest democracy on earth, the caste system still thrives as it did even before the Buddha's time. This very undemocratic system categorizes the Indian people in a strict hierarchy according to class and job for 3,500 years. The Dalits, who belong to the untouchable caste, are at the very bottom of the system. They live in huts made of mud, cardboard and even plastic bags. Very often they became victims of harassment, rape and violence from the upper-caste landlords, and yet the world has never paid any attention to their plight which is no better than the former apartheid of South Africa. In northern Karnataka, parents from the low caste give their daughters to local temples like some kind of 'human offerings' to 'serve' the Gods or Goddesses. The girls are known as 'devadasi' and they live in the temples. Often they become sexual servants or concubines to the villages' upper caste men. The untouchable girls suddenly became touchable when they are on beds with men. India has never seriously tried to

shake off this most cruel tradition of its caste system. What is the use or purpose of having the 'largest democracy' on earth when such injustice prevails till the present days? The untouchables are no less human beings than the upper-caste people. They are entitled to the same treatment as everybody else. Where are the democratic or civil rights of the Dalits in a land that boasts about its largest democracy?

In the remote desert villages of Pakistan, tribal laws are applied to settle disputes or differences. In June 2002 the village elders of Meerwala had ordered the raping of Mukhtar Mai by four volunteers. Her crime : her twelve-year-old brother was seen walking with a girl from the higher Mastoi case, and thirty-year-old Mukhtar Mai had to pay for her brother's crime. She was to be raped by four male volunteers. Mai brought the case to court later. Six men were sentenced to death for ordering and carrying out the gang rape. The government compensated Mai with a sum of \$8,300 which Mai used to open a village school. However, the verdict was later overturned by an appeals court, citing the lack of evidence and a poor investigation by the prosecutor of the six men accused, five were released and one was sentenced to life imprisonment. Mai was saddened and worried for the family's safty. When justice has been brought to such a disgrace is there any hope for the oppressed like Mukhtar Mai? What kind of legal laws and moral principles the village elders were adhering to? Are there many more cases of such injustices occurring in that part of other parts of the world that have not been brought to the attention of human-rights groups?

Besides social injustice, there are many other problems which make life as miserable as it could be. Poverty and starvation are widely common especially in the African continent and some parts of Asia. In spite of the abundance of food production, millions of people in the world are starving. Globalized economic policies seem to enrich only the already rich. Extreme poverty may lead to widespread discontent which in turn may turn into strong political forces that can destabilize ruling government. The rich and the powerful simply cannot ignore the voices of the starving poor because global instability will be further enhanced when millions of people all over the world live below the poverty line.

Poverty is of three kinds : 1) extreme poverty ; 2) moderate poverty ; and 3) relative poverty : The World Bank defines extreme or absolute poverty as having an income of less than 1 U.S. dollar a day and is thus unable to meet the basic needs of life. People in this category of poverty lack proper health care, safe drinking water, good sanitation and cannot afford to send their children to school. They have poor shelter and are always hungry.

Extreme poverty is common only in developing countries. Moderate poverty relates to those people whose incomes range from 1-2 U.S. dollar a day. Their basic needs are just barely met. Relative poverty is defined as having an income below a given proportion of the national average and cannot afford to have things which people from the middle class take for granted. Out of the six billion people of the world total people, nearly three billion are poor.

As though poverty alone is not enough to make life miserable. Diseases, floods, drought and civil wars are adding to the list of ravages suffered by the poor. AID in particular, is a silent killer that looms over many countries such as South Africa, India, China and even Russia. In fact by the end of this decade, both India and China would have about 40 million HIV-positive people. ('A Deadly Passage To India' – Newsweek's report Nov. 25, 2002 p.42). In South Africa six hundred people are dying each day from AIDs.

In the early April of 2003, severe acute respiratory, syndrome or SARS viruses, known as coronavirus, have been causing a panic among the world community. The virus could mutate and develop new strains. Since it is spread by droplet infection, it is thus a contagious disease. In fact within a number of weeks there were 4,800 reported cases of SARS in 27 countries and 293 deaths. The virus is said to have originated in the Guangdong province of China.

On January 26, 2004 a boy from the village of Ban Ya Pad in the province of Kanchanaburi died in Bangkok's Siriraj Hospital after two weeks of coma. He was the first victim of Avian Flu in Thailand. This flu virus known after its genetic make-up, H5N1, could mutate and mix with human viruses, and proves to be deadly. The Avian Flu in Asia or Southeast Asia has claimed the lives of thousands of chickens and ducks and a number of human lives. Right now it has spread to as far as Siberia in Russia.

The rapidity with which people, animals and goods can now move around the globe makes it possible for microbes or viruses to travel from one country to another in a matter of fewer than 24 hours. Modern travelling definitely can help the spreading of diseases widely. Travellers sometimes arrive home with diseases they have picked up abroad. A report had been written by the Harvard Working Group on New and Resurgent Diseases that in 1991, all of the 1173 cases of malaria reported in the U.S. were contacted abroad. So in these days of speedy transportation, even microbes go 'globalized'. The SARS viruses had travelled from China to as far as Vietnam and Canada.

The more globalized we get, the smaller is our world and the faster contagious diseases can get spreading around the globe. No country can afford to be dishonest about its health problem especially when the problem is likely to become a serious epidemic such as in the case of SARS and Birds' Flu. The value of human lives should always be placed above whatever political and economic interest or consideration a government may have in mind. No responsible government should hide a vital health issue or crisis from its people and the rest of the world. When the mad-cow disease, or Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) broke out in England, Canada and the U.S., the respective governments did not hesitate to acknowledge the world of the uninvited disease. Strict measures were enforced to prevent whatever health disasters that might be incurred. Of course it affected the cattle industry profoundly. The U.S. have a beef exporting business of 4.3

billion U.S. dollars, but what is it compared to the importance of the health and well-being of world consumers? Just imagine what the consequences would be if consumers were to eat beef from cattle infected with mad-cow disease. Thus economics activities simply cannot afford to conclude ethical consideration because ethics and moral values have much to do with our mental well-being.

Nowadays the world economy is getting more and more globalized. Producers are encouraged or enticed to consume. We have developed a culture of consumerism. In the present global economic system, enormous power is being concentrated in the hands of some global corporations, and the main objective is to make money in massive quantities. Thus corporations which invest in real assets often try to maximize short-term returns to shareholders by restructuring their operations such as downsizing, streamlining and automating their operations by using advanced technology to eliminate the necessity of employing hundreds or thousands of workers. This brings about an economic growth at the expense of making a large number of people out of job. Nowadays almost every country faces the problem of a labor surplus, especially in the Third World countries. Even Germany has a record number of 4 million unemployed work force. Meanwhile when unemployed people outnumber job opportunities, wages are pushed downward to the lowest level as people compete for jobs.

Some governments like to release the latest figures for Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to impress the public with the country's volume of production and consumption.

It is assumed that GDP is a standard measure of progress in economy, which is grievously wrong. In the words of two San Francisco-based economists Ted Halstead and Clifford Cobb, the GDP is “basically a measure of total output, and it assumes that everything produced is good by definition... it does not differentiate between cost and benefits, between productive and destructive activities, or between sustainable and unsustainable ones. It is a calculating machine that adds but does not subtract. It treats everything that happens in the market as gain for humanity while ignoring everything that happens outside the realm of monetized exchange, regardless of its importance to well-being.

Just because total output goes up does not necessarily mean everyone's life is better. A big rise in GDP (adjusted for inflation) and a small increase in personal income does not actually mean that people will be better off because real wages actually drop by a percentage which diminishes people's real purchasing power, GDP also does not take into account the depletion of natural resources. For example when a timber company cuts down the trees of a jungle for commercial purpose, and when the trees or wood are sold at a good market price, then the GDP rises by the market value of the wood, but it does not take into account about the economic, environmental, social and ecological costs in the loss of the forest or jungle.

Therefore the declaration of a huge increase in GDP does not actually mean genuine progress. It is a statistical facade used by some political leaders to cover up the true impact of their own people, upon the environment and

the future generations. Something else like GPI or Genuine Progress Indicator which takes into account factors ignored by GDP, could perhaps be a better alternative.

Science and technology have improved our standard of living immensely but it is often being used by powerful nations in matters of economy in such a way that it only succeeds in making the rich richer in a continuing cycle of growth while the poor are getting poorer.

The closing of the twentieth century left the world still torn apart by all the conflicts which have been simmering for years. Ethical and religious differences have taken on a political dimension. The mostly prickly and dangerous of all problems is that of religious fundamentalism and terrorism. Perhaps it would not be over exaggerating to say that the attack on New York's World Trade Centre and the Pentagon marked the beginning of a new world disorder. It opens the gates to a hellish world of religious fanaticism and terrorism. It calls into question the inherent nature of Islam and signifies a political reality : the fury of radical Muslim zealots with regard to the attitude and policies of the West, namely the U.S.. The whole tragic event was just like an unexpected and undeclared war launched with furious vengeance but little justification. People asked themselves in an unbelievable manner: How could people who profess religion bring themselves to commit such a hideous, barbarous and evil act? What was the use of having a religion if believers resorted to killing the innocent as a way of manifesting their displeasure with the U.S.? Does

Islam encourage such 'brave' acts of religious zealotsy? Is September 11 event a declaration of Islam against the West and all the rest?

History has shown us that violence cannot solve any problem at all. Mahatma Gandhi led India into independence through non-violent means. Nelson Mandela forgives his white captors who imprisoned him for twenty-seven years, and even the great Muslim warrior of the Crusades' period, Salahudin, knew how to spare his enemies' lives. Immediately after the horrible event of September 11, there was an immediate denial of extreme or fanatical brand of Islam by the mainstream adherents of the faith.

Religions are supposed to be the lights that dispel the darkness of our unenlightened mind. They have been with us for more than one or two thousand years and are supposed to have brought us peace, and yet we never seem to have achieved any lasting peace on earth. Have religions failed us? Or have we failed to live up to the religious teachings of great sages? In this very modern and bustling world of today, we are so engrossed and lost in our struggles and competition for wealth, power, status and pleasures that we do not seem to have the time to think and reflect upon the purpose of life in relation to this earthly world of ours. So, amidst the busy-bustlys and noisy rhythm of our hecive life, let us pause to make some silent reflections upon our deeds and see if we have been behaving wisely or acting like fools.

CHAPTER TWO

Peace, Science and Technology

Among all the many precious things in life whose values some of which can be measured in monetary terms while some are simply too invaluable to be weighed by any worldly scales, peace is perhaps one of the most priceless items most sought after since the beginning of recorded human history. Peace is sometimes defined as “a state of an absence of war.” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1987, p.756) It is, in the political context, a state of friendly relation or reconciliation; or it may mean a mental state of tranquillity and calmness. So peace implies harmony, serenity and bliss. To achieve reasonable social security and economic prosperity, we need to establish political peace on one hand and to train ourselves in moral disciplines on the other. Hence peace essentially consists of both the external and internal peace. In Buddhism, peace is synonymous of Nibbāna – a state of supreme calmness in which the mind is free from the manipulative influences of all mental defilements and remains no bias. (P.A. Payutto, 2003, p. 66)

In the words of the Venerable Khemanando (1996, p.19), a Buddhist scholar monk in Thailand, “real peace comes from within and only from within can social peace be achieved.” Thus external peace is the manifestation of each individual’s inner or mental peace. An aggressive-minded political leader is most likely to bring his nation into war with another nation since his mind has no room for peace and that he tends to act on impulses rather than reasons.

Sadly enough, in spite of all sorts of progress we have made in various fields of knowledge, our human world still lacks lasting peace. Wars are still being fought in many parts of the world: in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Sudan and between the Israelis and Palestinians. Sometimes peace-keeping forces are being sent by the United Nations Organization to enforce peace on warring factions but that is not a long-term solution any way because when the peace-keeping forces depart, conflicts and wars may flare up again.

Thus the sensible thing for us to do is to give support to peace-building or peace-making. In the process of reconciliation and peace-making, both disputing parties should be genuine in their willingness to negotiate with real sincerity. Both sides must be prepared to forgive one another and ready to make some sacrifices. Having reconciled long-term peace, based on understanding and tolerance, can thus be built upon.

History has shown us that the application of violence is by no means the best way of setting dispute. Mahatma

Gandhi (1869-1948 A.D.), led India into independence through his non-violent movement. He used words, not guns, to move his followers and so touchingly honest and sincere were his words that they pierced through the conscience of his listeners, including his colonial masters. (So Sethaputra, 1997, p.298) Martin Luther (1483-1546 A.D.) was another example of non-violent civil rights leader who fought for a just cause. His untimely death saddened the hearts of all well-intentioned Americans. The deaths of the two great charismatic leaders are indeed a great loss to the world. Nelson Mandela had to endure twenty-seven years of lonely imprisonment before he could gain history over the apartheid policy of the white government of South Africa, and Aung San Suu Kyi is still resisting peacefully against the tyrannical Burmese military oppressors in her own country. It is the world's hope that her persistent peaceful resistance will some day yield the fruit which she has long deserved. (Kimball, 2002, p.193)

According to the Buddha, "*Natthi santiparami sukham – there is no higher happiness than peace*" (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepitakam Vol. 25, 1995, p.42) Indeed there is much truth in the words of that great sage. How could one possibly be happy if there were no peace in one's own mind? If someone could remain happy in spite of a very disturbed mind, then that one must be bird of a rare specie. For ordinary people like us, no peace of the mind means no happiness. *True* peace comes with the *true* liberation of the mind. People who are unfortunate enough to live under great oppression, will remain miserable until they get liberated. Some political groups or organizations

love to adopt the word 'liberation' such as "People's Liberation Army" just to give some legitimacy to their cause, but very often the methods they use to liberate always turn out to be violent, and after the so-called 'liberation', the 'liberated' people often find themselves falling into the hands of a new group of dictatorial masters. False liberation does not bring true peace and happiness.

Most unlikely too will it be for a man who goes hungry for five days out of seven to be happy and maintain a profile of feeling at peace with himself and the world. Physical discomfort often has the most contagious capability of arousing mental agony and anguish. Emotional upheavals are certainly no factors for building or developing peace and happiness. Before any real peace could evolve, the mind must be free from all negative mental states such as greed, hatred and delusion, for examples. Ideological and corrupt religious indoctrination can hamper and obstruct the progress of peace development because of the bias nature of the views and dogmas which deprives a person of the freedom to think intellectually. With prejudices in the mind, one is incapable of attaining true insight and right wisdom which are vital for our reaching a balanced conception of all things and phenomena. After all, mind is said to be the master of the world and the world is led by mind. So, the mind should be allowed to have the right kind of freedom – the freedom to think and judge, the freedom to speak and the freedom to move or act all of which have to be confined within a properly balanced perspective and scope of a worldview rooted in sound and righteous moral concepts.

By embracing peace, Gandhi set India free from its colonial masters. By treading the path of peace, the Buddha set himself free from the bindings of cravings and desires. By resisting peacefully, Nelson Mandela managed to put an end to the apartheid policy of the white government of South Africa. Peace-loving hearts make people great. So, it is now quite obvious that there is a close interrelation between freedom and peace. Real peace depends on real freedom. A religious fanatic, for example, does not enjoy real peace because he lacks the freedom of thought since he is biased in his perception and understanding of religious teaching. In the western world, freedom is often associated with democracy. It is a western idea. Freedom in a democracy is confined within the scope of laws which are thought to be democratically fair and just as in the case of the United States of America.

However in spite of the liberty and democratic rights that the Americans are enjoying, many Americans still live in great unhappiness. Divorce and suicide rates are high. Crimes abound. Homeless people roam the streets of some big cities and there is still poverty in the world's No.1 superpower nation. Mental depression is not uncommon. The American mind is restless. People live a good material life on the whole, but not a few of them live in anxiety due to pressures of all sorts. There is no peace of mind.

The tragic event on September 11, 2001 and the future possible attacks by Muslim zealots have cast a dark shadow over the American psyche and it affects not only the Americans but also decent people all over the world

because it is no longer an American problem, it is the world's problem. Similar tragic event can happen anywhere in the world so long as there are political or religious extremists who seek to manifest their anger and frustration through such monstrously violent means. The tragic event of September 11 may not have exactly sown the seeds of vengeance, but America's declaration of the War against Terrorism has somehow provoked many Muslim religious zealots in many corners of the world. Global peace is being threatened.

The incredibly rapid progress made in science and technology has enabled the globalization of world economy and cultures. The world has been reduced to a global village. Transport facilities have reduced time required for traveling long distances into a matter of a few hours and minutes. People are drawn closer by televisions mobile phones and internet. Shopping malls are mushrooming all over the world with more goods or products than money can buy. We are living in an age of consumerism. Free market economy stimulates competition. The result is more goods on the shelves to satisfy our needs and desires which are myriad in numbers. We have drawn on the limited natural resources of the planet to produce things to satisfy our unlimited wants. The toxic waste we produce has contaminated the atmospheric and water system of the world. Living beings or creature, including plants or trees, used to exist harmoniously by the laws of Nature, but we now have upset the whole order of the natural world by our own actions. We have disturbed the harmony of Nature by greedily consuming its resources for our own interest.

There is no peace in Nature any more. We have upset the balancing forces in it. Already we are beginning to feel the effects: global warming. Our aggressive and inconsiderate exploitation of Nature may some day lead to our own extermination. Thus we need to adopt a more 'peaceful' and considerate attitude towards Mother Nature for the sake of all living beings on earth.

It seems odd that great achievement in science and technology has not led us anywhere nearer to a 'paradise on earth.' Instead we seem to be creating more hells than heavens on earth. Take a good look and you will see conflicts every where: conflicts with friends or neighbors, conflicts between nations and conflicts within one's own self. Wars, something which should belong only to the past, are still being fought to this day; and the weapons used are not bows and arrows, spears and swords. In their places are the very modern guns, grenades, missiles and even biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction. Some countries are trying to build nuclear bombs of their own. A few have already openly admitted to their possessing nuclear bombs, which helps only to heighten tension with their neighbors. It clearly shows how foolish we are in using our valuable resources in the pursuing and fulfilling of such destructive purposes. The arms race poses a real threat to world peace and human survival, which explains why it has to be curbed.

The threat is all the more real when countries with irresponsible leaders manage to produce nuclear weapons of their own. In the wake of the horrifying event on

September 11, the American president warned the world of potential nuclear danger coming from two of the three countries that he categorized as 'axis of evil' (Iran and North Korea, the third country is Iraq). North Korea makes no secret of its possession of nuclear weapons but Iran, which is in the process of developing its nuclear power facilities, insists on its peaceful intention. George Bush may be wrong in his categorizing of Iran and North Korea, but the world certainly will not sleep well with stockpiles of nuclear weapons stored up on both the Iranian and North Korean soil. Humankind can be easily exterminated in a matter of a few seconds by the evil application of science and technology. Thus it is up to us to apply our wisdom with regard to this matter.

Malthus, the economist, was worried that world population would exceed food production and many people would starve as a result. However the modern agricultural technology has proved Malthus wrong for the world food production has been greatly enhanced by our new technology; and yet a lot of people, especially those in the Third World, are suffering from malnutrition or starvation. (Malthus, 2005, p.35) The World Bank reveals the fact that there are about 1.1 billion people living in extreme poverty. Asia leads in numbers but Africa leads the largest proportion: nearly half the continent's population live below the poverty line. People in the millions live on less than 1.00 U.S. dollar per day and about 8 million people die each year because they are too poor to survive. (Gates, 2000, pp.42-43)

Though food production is abundant as a result of advanced agricultural technology, the new global economy with its emphasis on the production of cash crops for export, place the world's food supply under the mercy of those corporations which set or control the price at which they buy the import and sell the produce. Many governments often set rules which only facilitate and benefit those big corporations at the expense of small farmers who find it hard to survive the 'invasion' of new global agribusiness. To make matter worse, the U.S. had passed a law in the 1960s allowing plant breeders the right to patent seeds, thereby effectively blocking others from selling the same variety of crops. With the passage of GATT, farmers have to stick to the U.S. style law and pay royalties to companies which hold patents in the genetic material they or their forefathers have helped to shape. As a result big agricultural corporations managed to gain billions of dollars on seeds developed in U.S. laboratories from germ plasm that farmers from other countries had cultivated over generations.

It is actually a form of genetic piracy and yet it has been given a sophisticated name-intellectual property right meaning the entitlement of the right to protect the new genetic innovation of seeds. Thus big corporation control the supply of seeds or varieties of plants' seeds and exerting control over different stages of food production process. The increase in the price of crude oil has added even heavier burden to small family farmers who have to bear higher costs of farming while the big corporations harvest the profit, ending up in making the rich richer and the poor poorer. Often large areas of wild forest can be cleared



in a matter of days or even hours for the purpose of growing export crops, thus causing much damage to natural resources and upsetting the ecology of the world. Farmers can be so poor that often they cannot afford to buy fertilizer for their crops, as it is discovered in the rural areas of undeveloped countries.

BL
65
P7

Clearly advanced production technology has not solved the world's starvation problem because of the exploitive and unfair global economic policies of developed countries. When people are hungry, how could there be peace in their mind? How is it possible for them to be happy when they are starving? Therefore what really matters here is the introduction and also implementation of some good or sound economic policies. There is a need for the adoption of truly beneficial economic measures to help the farmers in need. Science and technology is responsible for high yields of agricultural products but to see that people are well fed is the responsibility of the government. Besides organizing a good and efficient government, we need to explore the depth of science and technology, realize its potentials as well as limitation.

S942W
2011

Being the most intelligent living beings that walk on the earth, we tend to think that we have already known quite a great deal about Nature, and that we conceitedly make the claim that we have conquered Nature, when in actual fact, we still know too little about the secrets of Nature as found in this planet. What about the other planets of the entire universe? We often fail to realize that we are still very much at the mercy of Nature itself. Our

scientific knowledge and technological equipments or tools have their limitation. Can we stop an earthquake from happening? Can we stop the coming of another giant Tsunami? The most regrettable and sad fact is that we have not even been able to conquer ourselves, let alone the entire Nature and universe! Therefore, the key to human peace and happiness is to learn how to conquer our own selves to begin with, and this can be done through proper moral guidance and restrain.



CHAPTER THREE

Deviation in Religion

The word 'religion' often tends to conjure up images of people praying in either temples, churches or mosques. In the book titled Comparative Religions written by Suchitra Onkom (2002, p.2), gives the meaning of religion that:

Religion is the teaching of the founder to spread, to teach, to analyze or to reveal human beings to abstain from evil and to do good. That teaching may be the dharma in nature to which the founder has attained and brings to teach; or may it be God's revelation that the founder has brought to teach.

In fact, religions originally are meant to be the principal moral guidelines aimed at nurturing a life of good and morally decent behavior for all humankind. No responsible founders of a good religion would want his followers to commit sins or evil deeds. Therefore the ancient sages and prophets simply drew a distinct line between good and evil. Some believers, however, either

out of blind faith or concern over self-interest, tend to blur the dividing line by misinterpreting, either on purpose or unintentionally, certain aspects of religious teaching, bringing about a grievously wrong understanding of the religion itself and adding more conflicts to the already much topsy-turvy world of ours.

Slightly over a year and a half into the beginning of the new millennium, there was an outburst of religious violence across the world. The turbulent forces lashed out by religious zealots had shaken the world communities, especially those in the west. The September 11, 2001 attack on World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon seems to be marking the beginning of a 'new' kind of war waged by furious Muslim extremists against nations they regard as enemies. From retrospective observation, this so-called 'new war' is not actually new. It is a simply a continuation of a pattern of violent attacks on targeted enemy nations. The attacks became more sporadic in the closing years of the last century. For examples in 1983, 299 people were killed in the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut; 270 people died on Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988 while 224 people lost their lives in a bomb blast that took place in the American Embassy at Nairobi in 1998. (Ephron, Husenball and Hirsh, 2002, p. 17)

On February 27, 2002, a mob of Muslims in the little Gujerati town of Godhra in India, set fire to a train coming from Ayodhya carrying Hindu pilgrims home, killing 58 people, mostly women and children. On the following day, Hindu mobs burned Muslims' houses,

demolished mosques and killed at random. More than 300 people died, mostly Muslims. (Speath, 2002, pp. 14-18)

On October 12, the beautiful island of Bali experienced its first bomb, planted by members of a fanatical religious group. On November 3, 2004, a series of bombs exploded in Madrid's railway stations during the rush hours, killing 200 and injured more than 1,500. (Leowenberg and Walter, 2004, p.20-24)

On July 7, 2005 bombs finally exploded in London, killing quite a number of people and causing many injuries to many passers-by. All these bombings and killings were the work of religious zealots or fanatics whose understanding of religions had gone astray. Whatever motives they might have in their mind, it could be easily discerned that they had actually deviated from the right path of their religions which after all, never encourage such senseless killing. (Elegant, 2002, pp.11-21)

What are the reasons and factors behind the chillingly senseless and barbarous bombings and killing? Many so-called expert analysts put political anger and frustration as well as social and economic grievances as the main causes for such violent action. Some put the blame on religious extremists who preach a distorted version of religions to serve their own interest.

If anything could be called evil, then the incredibly shocking and tragic event of September 11 was indeed the result of an evil deed. The world is never the same since

that fateful day. According to Charles Kimball, a leading religion and Middle East expert, no one may never know for sure what was in the hearts and minds of the nineteen men who hijacked the four planes that changed the world on that day, but the ring leader Muhammad Atta left a five-paged handwritten letter expressing a religious worldview attempting to justify their monstrous deed. (Kimball, 2002, p.2) Doubtlessly the event had been meticulously planned in advance for a considerable period of time, and it was effectively carried out not by any ordinary hijackers but by some very intelligent people who were willing even to die for their cause. What made them so determined? Why did such intelligent people do such a terribly senseless thing? Who could be the mastermind behind all these horror and tragedy? Which or what aspects of their religious disbelief drive or motivate them to embrace death in such an appalling manner? Was it God's wish that they should kill so many people, including they themselves, or was it that of the Satan? Is religion becoming a problem?

Again let us quote Charles Kimball's words:

When zealous and devout adherents elevate the teachings and beliefs of their tradition to the level of absolute truth claims, they open a door to the possibility that their religion will become evil...people armed with absolute truth claims are closely linked to violent extremism, charismatic leaders, and various justifications for acts otherwise understood to be unacceptable. (Kimball, 2002, p.44)

Kimball cited the murder of Dr.David Gunn and Dr.John Britton as typical victims of religious extremism. Michael Griffin was an anti-abortion activist. So strong was his feeling that on March 10, 1993 he shot Dr.David Gunn to death outside an abortion clinic in Pensacola, Florida. Fourteen months after the murder of Dr.Gunn, the Reverend Paul Hill who, like Griffin, regarded abortion as a slaughter of the innocents, murdered Dr.John Britton and his traveling companion James Barret as they arrived at the same clinic in Pensacola on the morning of July 29, 1994. (Kimball, 2002, p.45)

Hill belonged to a Christian organization called the Army of God which perceives abortion as legalized murder. He was convinced that as true Christian, he must take direct action to stop abortion which he saw as the wicked killing of innocent lives. So he committed the murder. Doctors who perform abortion stand the risks of becoming targets for murder by religious zealots of Hill's kind. (Kimball, 2002, p.45)

Religious teachings tend to entail divergent interpretations. Most believers have the tendency to regard their own religion as the only one that contains and propagates the elements of 'absolute truth'. People do not always agree with one another over the issues of 'absolute truth'. Specific conceptualizations of certain aspects of religious teachings may lead to rigid and narrow interpretation of the essence of the religion.

When people are bent on insisting that their religion is the only religion which embraces the 'absolute truth', there is always a danger that they may turn fanatical and even evil. Remember Jim Jones and his Peoples Temple? Jones was an eloquent and charismatic leader whose outlook was much influenced by Pentecostal church and also socialist and communist ideals. He was born in the most difficult years of the Great Depression in 1931 in the state of Indiana. (Kimball, 2002, p.75) He had no theological training in the formal way. His progressive preaching and commitment to radical equality and social justice had made him the outstanding Christian leaders. By 1972 members of his Peoples Temple increased in numbers. Jones was ordained by the most liberal Protestant denominations, the Christian Church (the Disciples of Christ). After moving his Peoples Temple to California, Jones found himself becoming a target of controversy and public scrutiny as he became more and more communistic. That brought about his withdrawal. By 1974 he had acquired a piece of land in Guyana in the midst of the South American equatorial forest. He then moved to Guyana together with his followers a few years later. There they started living a communal life. (Kimball, 2002, p.76)

Jones liked to preach about an impending nuclear war that would end the world. He lived with fear of an external attack, so he placed guards around the compound. The guards could also keep an eye on members who might want to run away. Members' relatives back in the U.S. were becoming alarmed at Jones' activities. Meanwhile Jones began to deviate from biblical Christianity. He called

himself the socialist worker God. As he became more and more erratic, his followers began to realize their own mistakes but then it was too late. They were literally trapped in a distant land, totally isolated from the rest of the world. Nevertheless, members still obeyed the order of Jones. They had lost their ability to think for themselves. Finally an official fact-finding congressional mission headed by Leo Ryan was sent to Guyana to find out the truth about the situation of Jonestown. Ryan and his delegation were murdered just before their departure from the eerie settlement amidst the Guyanan jungle. Jones then ordered the mass suicide. Members were made to drink a purple liquid mixed with cyanide. Those who refused were forced to drink the liquid by Jones' armed guards or shot to death. By the time when investigators arrived at the scene, they found 914 bloated dead bodies scattering in the compound of Jonestown. Of the corpses, 638 were adults and 276 were those of young children. (Kimball, 2002, p.78)

An equally tragically bizarre event involved the Branch Davidians which was a separated branch of the Seventh-Day Adventists. This sect had established a community called Mt.Carmel near Waco, Texas. The founder leader was Victor Houteff. When he died, his wife took over the leadership. She predicted the doom of the world and beginning of a new era on April 22, 1959, and it did not happen as the foretold. Many members left the sect. The centre was later shifted to a site some ten miles away from Waco and survived without making much news. Then Vernon Howell, an ex-professor of mathematics, joined the sect in 1981. He later became the leader and

declared himself the chosen “Lamb of God.” (Kimball, 2002, p.92) He regarded himself like sort of ‘Messiah’ and changed his name into David Koresh (after the Israelite King David and the Persian King, Cyrus or Koresh who defeated the Babylonians at Jerusalem).

David Koresh talked about Armageddon and preached that Apocalypse would occur in the U.S. instead of Israel or Palestine. He claimed to have the right to have sex with all the women in the community since being the ‘Lamb of God’, his ‘seeds’ were pure. Oddly enough all members of the community, including husbands and wives, did not object to his claim. Meanwhile he began to accumulate food and stockpile weapons as though in expectation of a great catastrophe. When the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms took steps to intervene, conflicts broke out resulting in the deaths of David Koresh himself and 75 of his followers of whom 21 were young children. (Kimball, 2002, p. 93)

The American constitution guarantees the right or freedom to religious beliefs. Why did the government interfere with David Koresh? It was because of the threat the highly apocalyptic sect posed to the society. Do not forget the fact that David Koresh and his followers were well-armed. The second reason was the possible abuse of children within the compound. The government had the right to investigate the welfare of children to make sure that they were not abused. (Kimball, 2002, p.93)

Modern Japan sees the emergence of a number of religious sects or cults many of which pose no danger or threat to the Japanese social and cultural life. However, one strange cult called 'Aum Shinrikho', founded by an equally strange man named Asahara Shoko, did terrorize Japan on one chilly morning dated March 20, 1995. Asahara ordered his faithful followers on that morning to release a deadly nerve gas known as sarin gas during the rush-hours in sixteen central Tokyo subway stations crowded with commuters. This crazy and deadly assault had deeply shocked and stunned the entire nation. Twelve people were killed and five thousand were injured. (Kimball, 2002, p.71)

Asahara drew his teaching from Buddhism, Hinduism and even Christianity but in his own version, of course. He taught that 'freedom from Karma and Karmic effects' could be made possible by adhering to a policy of 'regular and intense yoga practice' and through some bizarre magic rituals. He also preached about a Utopian land of 'Shambhala', ruled by the Hindu God Shiva. It was said that only people who had grasped the truth of the universe could enter that land. Asahara himself was reborn into the human world to be the messiah.

Like Jim Jones, Asahara envisioned a world of communal living in which all things and needs would be met and shared. Typical of many cult leaders, he also preached about the coming of Armageddon which would result in the death of $\frac{1}{4}$ of the world population. Twenty-five Aum Shinrikyo centers were established in Japan. There

were also some believers in Russia. Asahara's followers believed he was truly enlightened, therefore they faithfully obeyed his orders. His cult members later engaged themselves in many criminal deeds such as kidnapping, drugging and even murders. In 1990 parliamentary election, members from Aum Shinrikyo contested twenty-five seats and all lost. (Kimball, 2002, p.81) Some people in Japan regard Asahara as a deeply delusory man on the edge of madness while some think he is just a swindler, but the fact that he has ten of thousands of followers in both Japan and Russia is a proof that a man like Asahara is not to be underestimated and ignored. He is probably a mixture of an off-balanced and egoistic fanatic and a shrewd or cunning opportunist who loves both money and power.

It seems to be a pattern that cult leaders tend to emerge as charismatic people in the beginning but towards the end they tend to get more and more erratic to the extent of bordering on insanity. Followers of cult leaders are being very closely and subtly manipulated into joining the cult. It is like brainwashing when cult or even mainstream religious leaders possess great power and influence over their followers, and when that power is being abused, the results can be dangerously devastating. They can command their followers to commit mass suicide, suicide bombing, genocide and other acts of monstrous nature and proportion.

When religions become corrupt and religious leaders choose to deviate from the proper teaching, society will experience no peace. Even greater harm will come when

political issues become entangled with religious matters. The September 11 event is the product of various issues which many Muslims such as Osama bin Laden feel unhappy about with regard to such western power like the U.S. However, no matter what reasons all the nineteen hijackers might have in their mind on that fateful day, there is simply no justification at all for such a horrifying and senseless act. Even Muslims all over the world did not hesitate to condemn such unwholesome action. After all, no responsible religion in the world would encourage its believers to kill innocent people. It would be wrong to say that Islam, or any religion at all for that matter, had become evil. The religion has not turned evil, it is the misled or deviated believers of the religion that have become religious monsters.

The main purpose of religion is to provide moral guidelines for the spiritual and mental well-being of the believers. Thus when people do evil things in the name of religion, and claim legitimate justification for their actions, it is a sure sign of religious corruption which often takes the form of deviation or blind faith. The Buddha teaches that faith must be in accordance with wisdom. Blind faith is in accordance with ignorance. Faith in Buddhism has the same meaning as belief or confidence which there are four kinds. They are:

1. Belief in karma, confidence in accordance with the law of action.
2. Belief in the consequences of the law of actions.
3. Belief in the individual ownership of action.

Mā takkahetu – Be not led by mere logic. Do not believe in what you have told just because it sounds logical. Logic may go wrong sometimes because its data or methods may be incorrect.

Mā nayahetu – Be not led by inference. Do not believe in what you have been told just because it is based on philosophical assumption or hypothesis as the reasoning may be bias and the choice of assumption may be inappropriate.

Mā ākāraparivittakkena – Be not led by considering appearances. Do not believe what you have been told just because it appeals to your common sense.

Mā ditṭhinijjhānakkhantiyā – Be not led by the agreement with a considered and approved theory. Do not believe in what you have been told just because it agrees with your pre-conceived idea or thoughts.

Mā bhābarūpatāya – Be not led by seeming possibilities. Do not believe in what you have been told just because it sounds believable.

Mā samaṇo no garūti – Be led not by the idea, “This is our teacher.” Do not believe in what you have been told just because the speaker happens to be your teacher.

But whenever you realize by yourselves that those things are wholesome, unwholesome, beneficial or non-beneficial, then you should avoid them or practise them. (P.A Payutto, 2003, p.232; Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakam Vol. 20, 1995, pp.241-243)

The Buddha put great emphasis on the last point because he did not want anybody to become the intellectual slave of someone else. There should be no blind faith and hence no blind obedience. One should not allow what one has been taught to lead to blind obedience. One should put it to the test of time and practice. Then finally one would be able to judge wisely as to whether one should believe in it. Which religious teacher in the world had ever given this highest freedom to his disciples and followers? The Buddha put no pressure on his audiences to accept his teachings. A believer has the right to examine and decide for himself. This helps to prevent any believer from becoming an intellectual or spiritual slave of someone else or anyone for that matter.

This discourse, delivered by the Buddha to the Kālāmas is therefore known as Kālāmasutta. The benefits of Kālāmasutta will be dealt with in more details in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Buddha and His Teaching

According to a dictionary of Pāli proper names Volume II written by Malalasekera, the word “Buddha” is a generic name, an appellative – but not a proper name – given to one who has attained Enlightenment; a man superior to all other things, human and divine, by his knowledge of Truth (Dhamma). (Malalasekera, 1995, p.294) In a Dictionary of Buddhism written by Venerable P.A. Payutto, the nine virtues of the Buddha are mentioned. These nine virtues are:

- 1 *Arahant* : holy; worthy; accomplished,
- 2 *Sammāsambuddho* : fully self-enlightened,
- 3 *Vijjācaraṇa - sampanno* : perfect in knowledge and conduct,
- 4 *Sugato* : well - gone; well - farer; sublime,
- 5 *Lokavidū* : Knower of the worlds,
- 6 *Anuttaro purisadammasārathi* : the incomparable leader of men to be tamed,
- 7 *Satthā devamanussānam* : the teacher of gods and men,

8 *Buddho* : awakened,

9 *Bhagavā* : blessed, analyst. (P.A. Payutto, 2003, p. 222; Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakaṃ Vol.12, p.67)

In this book, the word 'Buddha' is defined as "One who knows things by himself" or "the true knower of things and phenomena." In fact the whole world takes this word for granted the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism whose personal name is Siddhattha. This Buddha was born as Prince Siddhattha of the ruling clan of the Sayans whose kingdom was established at the Himalayas which is present day Nepal. The capital was Kapilavatthu. (Sathienpong Wannapok, 1995, p.1)

Prince Siddhattha was much moved by the many unpleasant but inevitable aspects and phenomena of life such as birth, old age, disease and death. India at that time was thriving with many devout Brahmin and Hindu spiritual seekers of truth. Thus Prince Siddhattha himself decided to abandon his royal palace, his wife and his child and went out to the wild forest, cut off his hair and donned a robe. Then, he started the wandering life of an ascetic, seeking knowledge wherever he could. (Suchitra Onkom, 2002, p.51)

Having spent some time with Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, the two renown spiritual teachers of those days, Prince Siddhattha, the Buddha – to – be realized that the knowledge he received from them could not free him from the binding of all suffering. Thus he went into seclusion to meditate under the shade of tree called

'Assattha' later known as 'Bodhi', meaning 'Enlightenment, Supreme Knowledge'. It was the tree of Enlightenment. The site was by the bank of Neranjara River in the district of Gaya, the state of Magadh. On a full moon night he became enlightened. He realized that human suffering is caused by an unceasing desire to acquire and possess. It is a desire without limit. The sensual pleasures and comforts which human beings strive for form the causes for their suffering. The Buddha experimented with self-mortification but he realized it was a senseless and needless torture of the physical body and it would end up with meaningless waste and death. To be truly liberated, one has to be able to raise oneself above the mundane level of desires and cravings. Thus Prince Siddhattha resumed normal life of proper intake of food. Finally after successive meditations, he attained his Enlightenment after having realized the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. He became a Buddha that he knew the true nature of human suffering and became enlightened by himself through his own effort. (Suchitra Onkom, 2002, pp.54-55; Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakam Vol.4, 1995, pp.18-19)

The Buddha realized how subtle and refine the natural truth of life he had come to understand could be and as such, he knew it would not be easy for most people to grasp its essence. However, upon deeper contemplation, he also began to see that there might be some people whose minds were opened to reasons and facts and could attain the maturity of thoughts in the right way. Some of them in much the same way as the lotuses in the pond, which would

burst into full bloom when kissed by the golden rays of the morning sun, would be able to understand the Buddha's teaching concerning the truth of life once the dark part of their mind was lit up by the Dhamma. Then there were some who, like the lotus just beneath the surface of the water but would soon emerge above it, would also be able to understand the Buddha's teaching some time later. There were yet some, who like the lotus stuck in the mud with no chance of emerging above the surface, would never be able to understand and absorb the teaching of the Buddha. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepītakāṃ Vol.4, 1995, p.11)

Thus the Buddha embarked on a mission of teaching Dhamma, first to the five ascetics who used to attend upon him while he was engrossed in the practice of self-mortification but eventually left him when he abandoned the meaningless and health-destructive practice. To the five ascetics, self-mortification seemed to be the only path toward Enlightenment, so they regarded Prince Siddhattha's return to a normal way of eating and drinking as a kind of corrupted self-indulgence. Losing their confidence in the prince, they departed to dwell in the deer park of Isipatana. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepītakāṃ Vol.4, 1995, p.15)

The Buddha managed to deliver his First Sermon to the five ascetics on the full moon day of Asalha which was the eight of the lunar month by that name. The sermon was called Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta or "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth." (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepītakāṃ Vol.4, 1995, p.15) One of the five ascetics, Koṇḍañña,

was the first to obtain “the eye of truth”, realizing that whatever is by nature to be born is by nature to be extinguished. In the sermon, the Buddha taught that the right way of practice is to avoid the two extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification. After having avoided the two extremes, then practise the Middle Path of the Noble Eightfold Path: Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. (Suchitra Onkom, 2002, pp.138-150; Syāmaratthassa Tepitakam Vol.10, 1995, pp.348-350)

Right View is the first step leading to the cessation of suffering. Right View means to perceive things as they really are. For example: to perceive suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. If we had Right View, we will not hold wrong view for it makes us perceive things as they really are. Thus we will not attach to them because we can realize them as impermanence, painfulness and not-self. We will try to perform good causes for good results. Whenever we are disappointed in something, we will not suffer. Right View helps us select the right way to lead our lives.

Right Thought means the three wholesome thoughts. They are: the thought free from selfish desire, the thought free from hatred and the thought free from violence. Right Thought helps us improve our mind to think only of the righteousness.

Right Speech means the four kinds of wholesome speech. They are: abstention from false speech, abstention from tale-bearing, abstention from harsh speech and abstention from vain talk. Right Speech makes good friendship, good mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual understanding.

Right Action means the three wholesome actions. They are: abstention from killing, abstention from stealing and abstention from sexual misconduct. When we have Right Action, we will hold no evil conduct in act and will not be harmful to others. Our lives will be safe wherever we go because we have no enemies.

Right Livelihood means to earn our livings in the right way and avoid five kinds of trades. They are: trade in weapons, trade in human beings, trade in animals for meat, trade in liquor, alcohol or intoxicants and trade in poison. When we have Right Livelihood, our lives will be blameless and flawless.

Right Effort means the four kinds of wholesome effort. They are: the effort to prevent the evil that has not yet arisen, the effort to abandon the evil that has already arisen, the effort to cultivate the good that has not yet arisen and the effort to maintain the good that has already arisen. When we have Right Effort, we will be able to cultivate or develop our minds in the righteous way.

Right Mindfulness means the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. They are: contemplation of the body,

The Buddha teaches about the Four Noble Truths concerning human suffering. (Piyadassi Thera, 1981, pp.65-66; Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakaṃ Vol.4, 1995, pp.18-19) The First Noble Truth is suffering. Human life is bound to be associated with suffering which comes from such phenomena as birth, old age, sickness, death, association with the unpleasant, dissociation from the pleasant and not to receive what one desires. In brief the five aggregates of grasping is suffering. The Second Noble Truth is the cause of suffering namely craving. There are three kinds of craving: sensual craving, craving for existence and craving for non-existence. These three kinds of craving often drive humankind into immense suffering and misery of varying degrees. The Third Noble Truth is the cessation of suffering. It is the complete cessation of that very craving, giving it up, relinquishing it, liberating and detaching oneself from it. The Fourth Noble Truth is the path leading to the cessation of suffering which called the Noble Eightfold Path as mentioned above. This path leads to the life of supreme calmness and peace or Nibbāna.

Many people often develop wrong view and hence take the wrong action which leads to terrible mental anguish, misery and suffering. Many of them kill themselves just to put an end to their suffering. If a man makes a big mistake because of his greed and then kills himself, he is said to have died needlessly. It is his greed that brings him pain and suffering, so what he must kill is his greed, not his physical body or his own life.

The Buddha points out that to solve a problem and thus get rid of our suffering, we must always find out the root causes of our problem and suffering. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepītakam Vol.4, 1995, p.20) Therefore we must learn to be able to recognize our suffering and distinguish the cause leading to it before we can set about eliminating it in the right way. When you happen to have a toothache, what needs to be done is to have the tooth treated, not the brain or the heart. If it is your jealousy that lands you in trouble then what you have to destroy is your jealousy, not your body. In short, you have to find out rightly the cause or causes of your suffering and seek a proper way to extinguish it.

The Buddha tells us to avoid extremism and choose a middle path between the two extremes. The middle path is known as the Noble Eightfold Path. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepītakam Vol.4, 1995, p.18) Right View is of most special significance as it determines the consequences of our actions. Wrong view may bring about wrong or disastrous consequences. In fact when human thinking has strayed into the wrong path, the results can be unthinkably catastrophic. History has proved to us how dangerous and appalling the consequences of wrong views which lead to wrong deeds could be. Adolf Hitler(1889-1945 A.D.), for example, had such a way of thinking that turned out to be appallingly destructive to the peaceful co-existence of humankind.(So Sethaputra, 1997, p.343) Anyway, he did not have a good ending, did he? Thus the basis for right deeds or right actions is Right View.

The Buddha also teaches about the impermanent nature of things and phenomena which are subjected to changes. The Five Aggregates of Existence, namely corporeality, sensation, perception, mental formations and consciousness which give rise to the notion of 'self' or 'being self', are in reality subjected to ceaseless changes which in real fact, only helps to illuminate their non-self or selfless. (Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto), 2006, pp.15-31) However in our everyday life, we tend to cling to these Five Aggregates as some kind of a 'self'. As long as the Five Aggregates are in perfect condition, it is understood that the 'self' is consequently perfect. In the case of a body falling into unconsciousness, for example, the 'self' is practically gone. This is a clear indication of how important the body alone is to the concept of 'self'. The Five Aggregates work harmoniously as one whole unit, enabling a person to feel conscious of his or her own self. Therefore in the normal everyday language, we regard the collection of those Five Aggregates as 'self' without which there would be nothing for reference. Hence, there arises a very strong attachment to the Five Aggregates as a 'self' and hence the prefix clinging is being added to the word aggregates, forming the words "aggregates as seats of clinging."

Things and phenomena in life keep changing. A new life is being born, it grows, it matures and it becomes old, then it starts to decay and eventually dies. Happiness and sorrow never remain permanent. They arise and they disappear. There is not a 'self' in them to which we can cling to, and the problem with human beings is that we

love to cling to them. We get attached to our own feelings of like and dislike. Beautiful things, for example, attract us and we want to acquire and possess them. When we lose them, we get upset and become very unhappy. Similarly we are repelled by ugly things. We become attached to our sense of dislike for ugly things, events and phenomena. Thus when we are faced with an inevitable situation of having to accept ugly things or events, we become extremely unhappy too.

Once a lay Buddhist approached the Buddha and requested him if he could summarize his teaching in one phrase. Thus replied the Buddha "*Sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*" which means "*Nothing, whatever it is, should be clung to.*" (Syāmaratṭhassa Teṭṭakāṃ Vol.12, 1995, p.464) This one single sentence forms the core of Buddhism. To cling to something is the cause of our mental anguish and unhappiness. In other words, let there be no clinging to our everyday life. It is our clinging to our happiness, sorrow, like, dislike, love, hatred, fame, honor, anger, material possessions and we suffer. All our craving and mental defilements can be varied in nature but they all fall under three main categories: greed, hatred and delusion. (Syāmaratṭhassa Teṭṭakāṃ Vol.25, 1995, p.264) These three categories in turn can be gathered into one – that is, the delusion of the sense of being "I" or 'mine' is the predominant motivating factor that gives birth to suffering.

When our sense organs come into contact with forms, sound, odor, flavors and touch, the contact

stimulates the arising of sensation. This in turn leads to the arising of craving. Craving leads to clinging. The sense of clinging develops itself into a state of becoming and this becoming gives rise to birth. With birth come all the stages of one state of 'becoming' or 'being' leading to another state of becoming or being is known as 'Paṭiccasamuppāda' or Dependent Origination which implies that the arising of one thing or phenomenon depends on the arising of another. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakāṃ Vol.4, 1995, p.1)

There are two kinds of Dependent Origination: direct and-reverse.

The direct Dependent Origination has twelve factors as follows:

- 1.-2. Dependent on *ignorance* arise *kamma-formations*.
3. Dependent on *kamma-formations* arises *consciousness*.
4. Dependent on *consciousness* arise *mind and matter*.
5. Dependent on *mind and matter* arise the *six senses-bases*.
6. Dependent on the *six senses-bases* arises *contact*.
7. Dependent on *contact* arises *feeling*.
8. Dependent on *feeling* arises *craving*.
9. Dependent on *craving* arises *clinging*.
10. Dependent on *clinging* arises *becoming*.
11. Dependent on *becoming* arises *birth*.
12. Dependent on *birth* arise *decay and death*.

There also arise *sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair*. Thus arises this whole mass of suffering.

The reverse Dependent Origination also has twelve factors as follows:

1.-2. Through the total fading away and cessation of *ignorance*, cease *kamma-formations*.

3. Through the cessation of *kamma-formations*, ceases *consciousness*.

4. Through the cessation of *consciousness*, cease *mind and matter*.

5. Through the cessation of *mind and matter*, cease *the six sense-bases*.

6. Through the cessation of the *six sense-bases*, ceases *contact*.

7. Through the cessation of *contact*, ceases *feeling*.

8. Through the cessation of *feeling*, ceases *craving*.

9. Through the cessation of *craving*, ceases *clinging*.

10. Through the cessation of *clinging*, ceases *becoming*.

11. Through the cessation of *becoming*, ceases *birth*.

12. Through the cessation of *birth*, cease *decay and death*.

Also cease *sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair*.

Thus comes about the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. (P.A. Payutto, 2003, pp.252-255)

The clinging to craving is bound to end up in anxiety, anguish, worry, disappointment and immense suffering of all sorts. So, the advisable thing to do is not to allow dependent origination arising to take place. One should cut it off right at the moment of sense-contact so that no feeling of like or dislike can take place. With no feeling, there will be no craving for and clinging to whatever one takes to be 'I' or 'mine'. The sense of being 'I' and 'mine' is caused by the arising of craving and then clinging. Thus if one is able to stop at contact and not allowing other feeling to develop and take control, then there is no way that this attachment to 'I' and 'mine' will arise and there will be no unnecessary suffering for one to experience.

It is of course very difficult for the average or ordinary people to experience contact without allowing feeling to arise. As soon as there is contact, the feeling of pleasant or painful is bound to emerge, though sometimes the feeling may be of a neutral kind (neither pleasant nor painful) (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakam Vol.18, 1995, p.287) What one should do to let the feeling arise and pass away. Realize the feeling but do not allow it to manipulate further. Do not give it the chance to develop till it becomes craving away by the feeling of wanting or desiring to have or to possess. If the feeling emerges is that of painful, then the craving that follows is a desire to eliminate, to destroy or to kill. A mind which is pre-occupied with such strong desire will be restless. It will not be a peaceful mind.

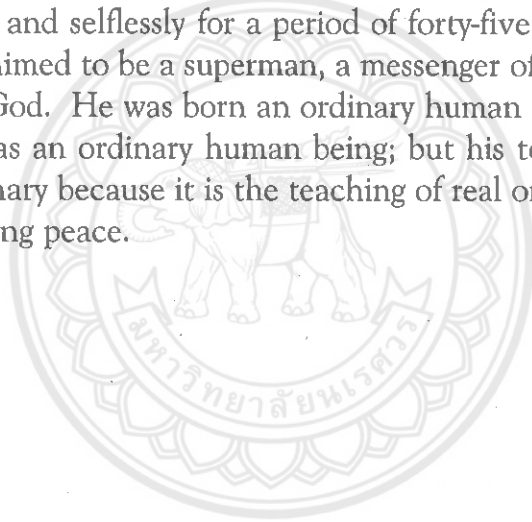
The arising of each craving leads to a new birth. When the Buddha talks about birth, what he means is not

the birth from a mother's womb only, he also means it to be the birth in a spiritual context, such as the birth of the attachment to all material and non-material things and the birth of mentally egoistic notion of 'I' and 'mine', that is, the birth of various states of being or becoming. Thus there may be tens or hundreds of births in a day of an average person's daily life. When the 'I' or 'mine' arises in each birth, it stays for some time and then it gradually fades away and disappear. When a new craving arises, a new birth brings about a reaction that carries over to the next. This is what is known as 'karma' of a previous birth ripening in the present birth. 'Karma' simply means act or action. One needs not actually experience a real physical death in order to experience a rebirth. This is how we should interpret rebirth. When 'birth' stops, one becomes detached from this sense of clinging to the notion of 'I' or 'mine' and the mind becomes clear, calm and peaceful.

Therefore it is obvious that clinging can give rise to much suffering, and yet there is a very great tendency for all of us to get attached to something in our lives. People cling to their religious beliefs or political ideology even though in some cases the beliefs or views may be very wrong. Sometimes people cling so fiercely to their views or beliefs that they simply cannot tolerate people who do not conform to their own beliefs. Buddhist teaching encourages the complete relinquishment of the attaching to 'self'. There are four main kinds of clinging that we need to relinquish if true freedom of thoughts were to be attained. They are: clinging to sensuality, clinging to views, clinging to mere rules and rituals and clinging to the ego-belief. *Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakaṃ* Vol.11, 1995, p.242)

suffering. According to him, human beings should overcome anger by kindness, evil by good and stinginess by giving. That victory only breeds hatred, for the conquered or defeated one is bound to be unhappy. Never in the world can hatred be ceased by hatred, it can only be stopped by love.

Thus the Buddha had never waged only 'holy' war against anybody or nation. He walked from place to place to preach his Dhamma or spread his message of peace tirelessly and selflessly for a period of forty-five year. He never claimed to be a superman, a messenger of God or a human God. He was born an ordinary human being and he died as an ordinary human being; but his teaching is not ordinary because it is the teaching of real or true and ever-lasting peace.



CHAPTER FIVE

The Buddha's Teaching of Karma

Karma is very essential teaching of the Buddha. With His teaching of Karma, the Buddha becomes the pioneer of humanism. We can say that His teaching is a declaration of human freedom; humankind can determine their own destinies through their own actions (karma), and no longer have to resort to the gods or the supernatural forces to which, up till then, they have looked for refuge. With the shift to human self-determination and responsibility, karma comes into play.

Karma (Pāli: kamma) literally means "action;" correctly speaking it refers to the wholesome and unwholesome volitions and their concomitant mental factors which cause rebirth and shape the destiny of all beings. Karmic volition is expressed in wholesome actions in body, speech and mind. With regard to karmic volition, the Buddha says:

*Cetanāham bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi
Cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā*

Volition, O monks, I say is karma.

Having intended, people commit actions through body, speech or mind. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakam Vol.22, 1995, p.464)

Thus, karma specifically refers to all actions done with volition, and does not include unintentional acts.

Actions committed through the body are called bodily karma; those committed in speech are called verbal karma, and those committed in mind are called mental karma. However, all actions, even those expressed through the body or speech, are invariably rooted in mind, because intention, the essential factor in all karma, is a mental factor. Deeds are called bodily karma when they are expressed in bodily actions; they are called verbal karma when they are expressed in speech. There is only one kind of karma which entails neither physical actions nor speech, and that is mental karma, such as thinking of someone else with hatred, or indulging in thoughts of jealousy or envy. These examples are unskillful mental karma. Examples of good mental karma are thoughts of goodwill to others, spreading loving-kindness to all beings and thoughts of forgiveness. (Suchitra Onkom, 2002, p.87)

Thus, it can be seen that intention, or the mind, is the most important factor in the creation of karma. As the Buddha says:

*Manopubbamgamā dhammā manosetṭhā
manomayā,*

*Manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karoti vā,
Tato namī dukkhamanveti cakkamva vahato*

padamī.

Mind precedes all actions; mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought.

If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox. (Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā Vol.1, 1999, p.3)

Manopubbamgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā,

*Manasā ce pasannena bhāsati vā karoti vā,
Tato namī sukhamanveti jhāyāva anupāyinī.*

Mind precedes all actions; mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought.

If with a pure mind one speaks or acts, happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow. (Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā Vol.1, 1999, p.33)

On the basis of the nature of human volition, human actions are classified as good or wholesome and bad or unwholesome. When volition is determined by greed (lobha), aversion (dosa) or delusion (moha), the threefold roots of unwholesome action, the resulting actions are unwholesome or impure. Conversely, when actions are free from the three roots of unwholesome action, by means of meditation and insight into the Four Noble Truths, they are said to be wholesome. It is also said that as long as actions (good or bad) are done with desire, they are bound to bring (good or bad) results. The effects of actions so done will in time produce results. From another angle, actions are said to be of three types: “*Threefold, however, is the ripening of karma : ripening during the present*

lifetime, ripening in the next life and ripening in a further life.” Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakaṁ Vol.21, 1995, p.63)

According to the Catukkanipāta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakaṁ Vol.21, 1995, p.321), the Buddha classified karma or action into four distinct kinds, corresponding to their nature and results :

Four kinds of karma, O monks, I have realized by my own wisdom and then made known to the world. What are the four? They are black karma which gives black results, white karma which gives white results, black-and-white karma which gives black-and white results, and neither black-nor-white karma which gives neither black-nor-white results and leads to the cessation of karma.

This classification of karma into four categories is made according to their qualities and results: good, evil, both good and evil, and neither good nor evil.

In black karma, the Buddha is pointing to any form of hostile action performed through body, speech or mind which is aimed at bringing trouble, injury or disadvantage to other living beings. Unwholesome actions, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and false speech, are counted as “black” or bad karma. Black karma also includes the five heinous crimes, which are said to bring immediate results: matricide, patricide, killing an Arahant (a fully enlightened being), wounding a Buddha, and causing a schism in the monastic Order.

According to Buddhism humankind's existence is largely determined by their karma. A person's actions will always reflect on his personal life. If the consequent fruition of actions does not arise in the present life, it will surely come in a later one. A person who indulges in black karma will surely suffer the result of those actions.

The second category of karma is the opposite to the first. It is white karma, which produces white results. White karma means good or meritorious actions (*kusala kamma*) performed through body, speech or mind.

According to the Law of Karma, the effect is always determined by its cause. The manifestation of karma consists in essential likeness between action and result, cause and effect. This is why the Buddha says:

*Yādisaṃ vāpate bijaṃ tādisaṃ labhate phalaṃ,
Kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ.
As the seed so the fruit: the doer of evil begets
evil, the doer of good begets good. (Syāmaratṭhassa
Tepiṭakaṃ Vol.15, 1995, p.333)*

Likewise, meritorious actions will always yield their appropriate results, such as happiness or physical and mental comforts.

Now we come to the third category of karma, "black and white karma." This type of karma is a mixture of good and evil actions. According to Buddhism, if good and evil actions are performed together, happiness and

suffering, which are results of such actions, will also occur together. By “together” is meant in the same span of time, such as a period of life, or in the same life span, since suffering and happiness cannot arise together in the same instant, as there is no possibility for two kinds of karma, good and evil, to produce results at the same time.

In reality, happiness succeeds suffering and suffering succeeds happiness. This is the truth of human life: happiness and suffering are experienced in succession. No one on earth performs only good or only bad actions. Usually our daily lives are made up of a mixture of both, and so we experience a mixture of both happiness and pain.

In regard to the three categories of karma mentioned above, we can conclude in the Buddha’s own words in warning humankind both monks and lay devotees alike, to contemplate everyday that:

*Kammassakomhi kammadāyādo kammayoni
kammabandhu kammaṇṇisaṇṇaṇo yaṃ kammaṃ
karissāmi kalyāṇaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā tassa dāyādo
bhavissāmi.*

*I am the owner of my karma, heir of my karma.
My karma is the womb from which I have sprung, it
is my lineage, my refuge. Whatever karma I perform,
whether good or evil, I will be the heir thereof.
(Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakaṃ Vol. 22, 1995, p.82)*

The last category of the classification of karma is neither-black-nor-white karma giving neither black-nor-white results. The “neither black-nor-white” karma refers to actions which cannot be considered as good, evil, or both good and evil. From the view point of results, suffering is caused by black karma, happiness by white karma, and a mixture of suffering and happiness by black-and-white karma. The either black-nor-white karma does not lead to such consequences, but to the state beyond suffering and happiness, to the exhaustion of all karma, to Nibbāna. Nibbāna is precisely the state of true peace which all individuals can experience directly by themselves through the Noble Eightfold Path.

The neither-black-nor-white karma, however, should not be confused with the actions of a liberated one, or Arahant. The actions of an Arahant are not referred to as karma but as kiriyā (movements), since the defilements (kilesa) which condition volitional actions have been absolutely up-rooted in such a person.

Considered from the absolute standpoint, this last sort of karma cannot be counted as either black karma or white karma, but viewed from the relative standpoint, as it does not generate painful or unprofitable consequences, it may be regarded as a good kind of action. To this interpretation a distinction should be clearly made that while an ordinary good action leads to rebirth, this last category of action leads directly to the cessation of birth. This may be the reason that the Buddha does not include this sort of karma in the white category. He says:

What, O monks, is the neither black-nor-white results, and leads to the exhaustion of karma? The volition which is set forth for refraining from performing black kārma giving black results, white karma giving white results, and both black-and-white karma giving both black-and-white results, I call neither black-nor-white karma with neither black-nor-white result, which leads to the exhaustion of karma. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepītakāṃ Vol. 21, 1995, p.314)

As an example of this kind of karma, the Buddha points to the Noble Eightfold Path, the Buddhist principles leading to the cessation of suffering and to Nibbāna. The Noble Eightfold Path, when properly and fully developed, will directly lead to emancipation or Nibbāna, a state beyond both suffering and happiness. Black and white karma will always lead to the formation of new karma. When a wholesome action, for instance, is performed, a certain type of good karmic result is brought about.

According to Buddhism, existing in the cycle of suffering and conflict will never come to an end as long as craving, the root cause of bondage, is not eradicated. So, for a real, sustainable world peace to be possible, craving must come to an end, on an individual and societal basis. This craving can be uprooted only by following the Noble Eightfold Path, which is described as neither-black-nor-white karma. It is this karma that is said to lead to the arising of contemplative insight, which in turn eradicates craving. When all craving is eradicated, emancipation is

accordingly won and the cycle of suffering and conflict is thereby broken. The extinction of mental suffering is realized in this very life through liberation, though physical suffering will last as long as the body lasts. But physical suffering, however strong it may be, will never overcome the mind of an Arahant (one who has attained Nibbāna, complete liberation). All suffering is totally extinguished on the dissolution of the body and the Arahant is at that very moment merged into the final release or Parinibbāna, a state beyond birth and death, beyond suffering and happiness in the worldly sense, even beyond the capacity of reason and language to express, a blissful state which justifies every effort for its attainment.

Venerable Buddhagosa (an Indian Buddhist monk who was born in 1499 A.D. in a village near Bodhgaya, the place where the Buddha has attained his Enlightenment), the writer of the *Visuddhimagga*, or Path of Purification, collected the concepts of karma in the Tipitaka and classified them into three groups, each consisting of four kinds of karma. Altogether they are known as the twelve kinds of karma. (Buddhaghosa, 1964, pp.601-602)

Group One: Classification according to the time of ripening

1. *Diṭṭhadhamma-vedanīya-kamma* : Karma to be experienced here and now, or karma ripening during this lifetime. It means karma bearing fruit in this very life. It gives result in the same existence as it was committed.

2. *Upapajja-vedanīya-kamma* : Karma to be

experienced on rebirth or karma ripening in the next birth. It means karma bearing fruit next to the present becoming. It gives results in the existence after that in which it was committed.

3. *Aparāpariya-vedanīya-kamma* : Karma to be experienced in some subsequent lives or karma ripening in later rebirths. It means karma bearing fruit in some successive existence other than either the present existence or the next existence. It gives its result in the future as opportunity arises, for however long the round of rebirths continues.

4. *Ahosi-kamma* : Lapsed or defunct karma. It means karma of which it must be said, "There has been karma, but there has not been, is not and will not be result."

If the kind of karma that gives results in the present lifetime cannot give its result in this very life, and the kind of karma which gives results in the next lifetime cannot give its result in the next life, then they are called "lapsed karma." Only the karma that gives results in further lives never becomes lapsed karma.

Group two: Classification according to function.

5. *Janaka-kamma* : Productive karma. Herein, what is called productive is both profitable and unprofitable. It produces the material and immaterial aggregates both at rebirth – linking and during the course of an existence.

6. *Upatthambhaka-Kamma* : Supportive or consolidating karma. This kind of karma cannot produce results, but when results have already been produced in the provision of rebirth – linking by other karma, it consolidates and extends the pleasure or pain that arises.

7. *Upapīlaka-kamma* : Frustrating karma. When result has already been produced in the provision of rebirth – linking by other karma, frustrating karma obstructs the pleasure or pain that arises and does not allow it to last.

8. *Upaghātaka-kamma* : Supplanting karma. This karma is itself profitable or unprofitable and it supplants other, weaker karma, preventing its arising and usurping that karma's opportunity in order to cause its own result. But when the opportunity has thus been furnished by the other karma, it is the supplanting karma's result that is said to have arisen.

Group Three: Classification according to the order of ripening.

9. *Garuka-kamma* : Weighty karma. When there is both weighty and unweighty karma, it is the weightier, whether profitable (such as that resulting in the exalted spheres) or unprofitable (such as matricide or patricide), which takes precedence in ripening.

10. *Bahula-kamma* : Habitual karma. Likewise, when there is habitual and unhabitual karma, the more habitual, be it good or bad, takes precedence in ripening.

11. *Āsanna-kamma* : Death-threshold karma. Karma remembered at the time of death. The karma remembered at the moment of death will condition the rebirth.

12. *Katattā-kamma* or *Katattāvāpana-kamma* : Stored-up karma. This is often-repeated karma that is not included in the foregoing three kinds of karma. It brings about rebirth-linking if the other kinds fail.

The succession of karma and its result in the

twelve classes of karma is only clear in its fullness to the Buddha's knowledge, not the Disciples', because it is a specialty of the Buddha, a province of the knowledge that is not shared by the disciples it is called "not shared by the disciples." That is why it can only be known in part; it cannot be all known because it is not the province of such knowledge. But the succession of karma and its results can be known in part by one practising insight. That is why this explanation of difference in karma is given in brief.

Venerable Buddhaghosa (1964, p.621) also explained this in his work, the Visuddhimagga as follows:

This is how one man discerns mentality-materiality by means of the round of karma and the round of karma-result, applying this twelvefold kamma classification to the round of karma.

When he has thus seen by means of the round of karma and the round of karma-result how mentality-materiality's occurrence is due to a condition, he sees that as now, so in the past, its occurrence was due to a condition by means of the round of karma and the round of karma-result, and that in the future its occurrence will be due to a condition by means of the round of karma and the round of karma-result. This is karma and karma-result, the round of karma and the round of karma-result, the occurrence of karma and the occurrence of karma-result and the continuity of karma, the continuity of karma-result, action and the fruit of action: Karma-result proceeds from

karma. Result has karma for its source. Future becoming springs from karma, and this is how the world goes round.

This is why the Buddha says, "*Kammunā vattatī loko - All sentient beings are determined by their karma.*" (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepitakam Vol.13, 1995, p.648) Karma here includes the Law of Karma.

The Law of Karma is described in the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, where the Buddha, according to the Sutta, dwelt in Jetavana, the monastery offered by Anathapindika near the city of Savatthi. There a young Brahmin named Subha approached him and put to him these questions about the disparity of qualities among human beings:

What, Revered Gotama, is the reason, what is the cause, that among human beings there are found both deprivation and excellence? Why, O Gotama, are human beings both short-lived and long-lived, sickly and healthy, ugly and beautiful, weak and powerful, poor and wealthy, born in low stations and high stations, stupid and intelligent? What is the reason, Revered Gotama, what is the cause, that among human beings there are found both deprivation and excellence?

The Buddha replied,

Kammassakā mānava sattā kamma-dāyādā

*kammayoni kammabhandhu kamma-paṭisaraṇā
kammam satte vibhajati yadidaṃ hīnappanītatāya.*

Owners of their karma, O young man, are all beings; heirs of their karma are they. Their karma is the womb from which they have sprung; their karma is their friend, their refuge; karma it is that marks off living beings as deprived and excellent. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepītakāṃ Vol.14, 1995, p.376)

In this same sermon, the Buddha continued to explain the cause of karma and the result that is always determined by its cause, which can be concluded in fourteen cases or seven pairs as follow:

1. Killing living beings leads to a short life; non-killing leads to longevity.

2. Harming others leads to sickliness, non-harming leads to a healthy life.

3. Irascibility, anger and hatred lead to unpleasant features and a bad complexion; non-irascibility, non-anger and non-hatred lead to pleasant features, beauty and attractiveness.

4. Envy leads to lack of influence; non-envy leads to influence.

5. Selfishness leads to poverty; alms-giving and generosity lead to wealth.

6. Haughtiness leads to low social status or birth in a low class; humility or gentleness lead to high social status or birth in a high class.

7. Lack of interest in acquiring new knowledge leads to stupidity; keenness in acquiring new knowledge leads to acuteness, high intelligence. (Suchitra Onkom,

2002, pp.93-94)

The workings of the Law of Karma are so intricate that it is not always possible to attribute a specific cause to a specific result. The Law of Karma does provide answers to the mysterious problems of human differences, as far as the ability of our rational thinking can reach, but, as we have pointed out previously, the function of karma is very complicated and mysterious, and it is therefore not possible for all of its aspects to be fully comprehended. There are still some delicate problems which require very careful consideration.

According to Buddhism, the same evil karma may produce different results in two different people. This depends on the mental qualities of each individual, which condition the power and efficacy of karma in rendering consequences. This point of view is clearly discussed in the Tipiṭaka or the Pāli Canon. According to this source, the Buddha is reported to have explained to his disciples that it is possible for a person who does some slight deed of wickedness to be born in Hell, while another person doing the same action, instead of being led to Hell, reaps the fruits in his present life. When the slightly negative karma of the latter produces its fruit, one will experience lesser fruition than the actual result which that karma would have generated. To this the Buddha explained:

What kind of individual, Bhikkhus, is it whose slight deed of wickedness brings him to Hell? Whenever, Bhikkhus, an individual is not proficient in the training of his body, is not proficient in

concentration, is not proficient in wisdom, is of limited quality and bounded, and abides in what is finite and of lesser consequence, such an individual, O monks, is he whose slight deed of wickedness brings him to Hell. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepitakaṃ Vol.14, 1995, pp.389-390)

The Buddha continued to explain that if, on the contrary, an individual is well-trained in morality, concentration and wisdom, and is not limited in quality, nor bounded, and also abides in the universal (here means, “to have unlimited loving-kindness and compassion towards all living beings”), he, having done the same slight deed of wickedness, expiates it in his present life, and when his deed does produce fruit, he will be less affected by it.

This indicates that a person’s inner good qualities can be a condition in the fruition of unwholesome karma. It means that if an individual who performs a slightly evil action possesses little or no virtues, that negative karma has enough power to send him to Hell. But if another individual who has enormous good qualities does the same evil deed, the power efficacy of that deed in producing results is reduced, i.e., its power is strong enough only for bearing fruit in this present life and becomes exhausted, being not strong enough to lead to rebirth in Hell. The Buddha explained this difference with the simile of salt and water.

In the first case, the Buddha compared the person with less or no good qualities, who performs a slightly evil

action, to a small cup of water into which a lump of salt is placed: the water quickly becomes salty and undrinkable. This is because the water in the cup is of small quantity. The second case, the person of very good quality who performs a slightly evil action, is compared to the water in the Ganges River into which a lump of salt is placed: the water is virtually unaffected by the salt.

Buddhism states that although evil karma will surely give results, it does not mean that one can do nothing about it. A person with evil karma can counteract that karma by improving themselves in the way of goodness. The more meritorious karma is accumulated, the stronger and better adapted one becomes for facing the results of one's previous evil actions. The intensity and the destructive power of unwholesome karma can be diluted only by wholesome karma, just as strong acid can be diluted with water. Thus, according to Buddhism, it is never too late to do good, and anyone who is guilty of wrong doing but turns towards goodness is always capable of attaining virtue.

The manifestation of the Law of Karma consists, as we have seen, in an essential likeness between deed and result, cause and effect – “as the cause, so the result.” Karma in its moral sense is retribution, a moral law, the working of which cannot be escaped. It is only by its consequence that karma can be accounted as good, evil, both, or neither. The Pāli Canon's classification of karma into black, white, black-and-white, and neither-black-nor-white karma is surely made according to its result. Karma

and its due consequences are therefore inseparable and knowledge of this is made possible only when it is studied in the way of a cause and effect relationship.

From the above, it can be seen that although the Buddha taught the Law of Karma over 2500 years ago, it is still very relevant to the present day. The Dharma, the teaching of the Buddha, is said to be "timeless". The subject of karma conforms with modern knowledge. It is a belief that is extremely appropriate to people of the modern age. When the Law of Karma is studied and clearly understood, we see how individual behavior has its effect on human society. To take an example that is very relevant in Thailand today, the destruction of the forests, which is rooted in the greed of specific individuals, creates effects that have a bearing on society as a whole, leading to depletion of rainfall, floods, and an increase in air temperature. If those individuals had studied the Law of Karma from the first, they would be more restrained in their destruction of the forests. Thus, the study of karma must be done initially on the mental level. The mind or intention is where karma begins, just as an intention based on greed is the cause for the destruction of the forests.

Although the Buddha's teaching of karma is very important, it's a pity that not so many people understand the verity of karma though they are destined by it. Karma, according to Buddhism is the same as nature. Nature is all things that arise because of causes or conditions and degenerate because of causes and conditions. When there is a cause or condition for its arising, it arises, and when

there is a cause or condition for its decline, it ceases. Therefore, everything in this world is nature, because everything is born from conditions. Buddhism teaches that all things occur through cause or condition.

That is why those who don't believe in karma and the result of karma will be punished "naturally". It is very important for Buddhists to believe in karma as well as the Law of Karma because karma is nature and the Law of Karma is the law of nature. If one does not believe in karma, it is not suitable for them to be a Buddhist, for they lack faith in one of the fundamental concepts of the Buddha's teachings.

Though most people imagine that karma refers only to evil or unwholesome actions, the Buddha's teaching that: "*Kammunā vattatī loko - All sentient beings are determined by their Karma*" (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepitakaṃ Vol.13, 1995, p.648) means the doer of evil begets evil, the doer of good begets good and one who harms begets harm, for karma arises out of the agent of action, just as rust arises from iron. If there is no agent, there is no karma.

Buddhism gives an opportunity for individuals to choose their own karma. The wise will choose to perform good or wholesome karma, while the fool will choose the opposite. In this case wisdom is very essential because only the wise can attain peace. In reality, we choose and therefore create our own karma. Although we cannot choose to create our previous karma, because it is past, our duty in this very lifetime is to expiate it. Further, we choose

to create our present karma. Some people do not understand this, so they simply accept the way they are, rather than trying to better themselves. An example would be a drunkard who goes on drinking because he thinks his karma has made him that way. This is only an excuse, because if he wants to give up, he can.

Another example is a person who is born poor because in a previous life he was mean and never gave anything to anyone else. If he thinks that he is poor because of his karma, and therefore lazily gives up the struggle for a better way of life, then he will be born poor forever. The right thing to do is for him to work hard to accumulate good, new karma. As for his previous bad karma, he has expiated it by being born poor. And if he becomes rich but is still mean, never giving anything to the poor, then he will be born poor again in a future life. (Sudassa Onkom, 2007, p.82)

The Buddha taught Karma and the Law of Karma over 2500 years ago, but it seems to have forgotten by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike in this new millennium.

CHAPTER SIX

The Question as to Whether Religion has Become a Problem

If we were to take a good look at our human history, it would not be difficult for us to realize that we human beings, in spite of the great progress we have achieved in various fields of knowledge, have still failed to bring true peace to the world because of our different views, opinions and concepts over political and religious matters in particular. Wars were waged in the name of religion since as early as the medieval time in Europe when kings, barons, knights, bishops and commoners joined in the expeditions known as the Crusades to recapture the holy land of Jerusalem which fell into the hands of Seljuk Turks. The Crusaders derived their name from the Latin word for 'cross' which is 'cruz.' (So Sethaputra, 1997, p.171)

During the eleventh century, the Seljuk Turks, a tribal group who originally came from Asia proper and were hired as mercenaries by the Abassid caliphs at Bagdad, overthrew the Caliphs and took complete control of the Caliphate, expanded their power southward into Syria and

Palestine till they captured Jerusalem in 1085. They also moved westward and defeated a Byzantine army at the Battle of Manzikert in Southeastern Asia Minor in 1071. Facing potential threat from the Seljuk Turks, the Byzantine emperor made an appeal to the western Christians for help. His plea was initially unheeded. With the fall of Jerusalem, the Pope and the European Christians were angered and worried by the presence of the Muslim Turks on the sacred soil of the holy land. Their presence was not to be tolerated. There were also some people particularly those younger members of the feudal landlord families, who hoped to achieve some economic gains from the expeditions while the Crusades also provided a chance for the peasants to escape from a whole life of servitude to their landlords. Thus at the end of the Council of Clermont in 1095, Pope Urban II called for a holy war in the holy land. The Pope persuaded all those who joined the Crusades remission of sins and to all who died for the holy cause an immediate entry into heaven. Later he urged the barons to stop their petty quarrels and fights and instead channeled all the energy into the holy war. He also hinted at the possible chances of getting feudal fiefs, lands, wealth, power and fame, all at the expense of the Arabs and the Turks whom he said could be easily defeated by Christian forces. His speech touched a great many hearts and thousands of people pledged themselves to go on the Crusades. (Kimball, 2002, pp.161-165)

The first real Crusade started in 1096 and ended in 1099. There were about ten major crusades. For about

two hundred years, Christian soldiers from every part of Europe joined expeditions to fight for the Church, God and Christendom. They won the battles but never kept the victories, they pushed back the Muslims but never really conquered them. Their struggle, suffering and sacrifice ended up with a magnificent failure. The Turks finally took over Constantinople in 1453 and that ended the Byzantine Empire.

The old enmity and distrust between the Christians and Muslims should have died down since then but it never really does. Just years shortly before the end of the last millennium and since the beginning of this new century, world politics seem to be taking a dramatic twist.

The Cold War is being replaced by religious wars of a new face and nature. The flame of religious conflict is being lit up again in many parts of the world and is generating more heat to the already very topsy-turvy world political stage. The contemporary world political concern is the increasingly wide spreading of religious violence. Religions get mixed up with many controversial political issues. Violence and deaths have taken place in India because of the conflicts between radical Hindus and Muslims. In Sri Lanka, unlike in Aceh where the catastrophic Tsunami of December 26, 2004 had somehow helped to pave the way for peace-making between the Aceh freedom fighters and the Indonesian government at Jakarta, the Hindu Tamil Tigers freedom fighters are still literally at war with the Buddhist Sinhalese government at Colombo. During the 1990 A.D., wars were

fought between the Muslims and non-Muslims in Bosnia, Kosova, Macedonia, Chenchya, the Philippines, Sudan and Nigeria.

The post World War II saw the creation of Israel as well as the violent conflicts between the Israelis and the Palestinians that continue to this day. The Muslims in the Middle East are not only fighting the Jews, sometimes Muslims also fight with their fellow Muslims. Iraq, for example, attacked Iran in the 1980. Iraq also invaded Kuwait which later led to the Americans' launching of the First Gulf War. The return of Ayahtollah Komeini to Iran brought an end to the Shah's rule and helped to unleash a revolution of Islamic fundamentalism. Meanwhile the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to a call for 'Jihad' or holy wars. Muslim fighters from many Islamic nations and even non-Islamic countries responded to the call by flocking to join the resistance movement in Afghanistan. By 1989 the Soviets withdrew while many foreign Mujaheddin fighters either remained in the country or returned to their home countries only to breed their own brand of Jihadis movement. What is most disturbing is that the religious zealots turn to terrorism as a means of making their grievances heard and known. Thus planes were hijacked or attacked resulting in the deaths of many innocent passengers. Some religious zealots sacrificed their lives for their cause. The suicide bombers are a common example of such horrible suicidal acts. (Kimball, 2002, pp.166-170)

The resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism has spawned a considerable number of Muslim extremists who

are prepared to be terrorists to cause havoc to both non-Muslim nations and even Islamic countries too. Western imperialism and domination of the Muslim countries in the past had led to a generation sense of grievance, resentment and hostility toward the West. The American support for Jewish Israel and some ineffective Muslim governments and the launching of the First and Second Gulf Wars against Iraq have invoked some resentment among many Muslims who see themselves as the underprivileged and exploited. Religious differences, tribal and political divisions are also factors within the Muslim world that bring conflicts among the Muslims themselves. Besides, autocratic Muslim rulers tend to make life more difficult for their own citizens by depriving them of their democratic rights. Different schools of thoughts in Islamic teaching have further divided the Muslim, deepened their conflicts and weakened their unity. What is even more dangerous is the emergence of some very fanatical Islamic leaders who manage to win the confidence and faith of Muslim zealots, persuading them to commit appalling acts of terrorism. The attack on World Trade centre at New York and the Pentagon at Washington on September 11, 2001 is a clear evidence of a well-planned offensive organized by some Islamic organization headed by some very shrewd, dangerous and yet highly persuasive leaders.

Now the violence has spread to many parts of the world. England has the misfortune to have experienced its own terrorists' bombing in August 2005; and even in the Muslim dominated nation of Bangladesh, three hundred small exploded one after another within thirty

minutes' lapse of time in the capital city and other towns of the country. The Chenchya Islamic seperatists' attack on a school at Beslan in Russia had ended with the tragic deaths of many school children and has shaken the whole nation.

Violence in the name of religion is not something new, as we know from the Crusades and other wars or conflicts fought in the past, and it is not confined to Islam alone. But why do people who profess religion choose to commit such violent acts? Why do they resort to killing as a way of retaliation or manifestation of their anger and discontent? Have religions become a problem, Islam in particular? There is clearly an urgent need for clarity about religions' connections to the way of the sword.

True enough there are some verses in the Koran which condone acts of turbulent force such as beheading; but that is in the heat of a battle. Most Muslims understood that the application of the sword was made in the context of the events taking place in the time of Prophet Muhammad : that to fight back with a sword was the natural response to those who were attacking Muslims of those days: Many Muslim scholars take pain to emphasize that Islam never sanctions the wanton murder of civilians. Prophet Muhammad himself prohibited the killing of noncombatants such as women, children, a hermit and a farmer ploughing his field or a person who is not carrying a weapon against you. Thus, in the aftermath of September 11 event, many world Muslim leaders did not hesitate to condemn the senselessly brutal deed of the 19 hijackers.

The gruesome beheading of hostages of different nationalities by the insurgents in Iraq has also been condemned by most Islamic scholars and experts all over the world. If all young Muslims take as instructors deviant Muslim leaders of Islam, the world would surely never have peace.

The ancient sages or prophets normally spoke a language that should not always be taken at the literal level. There is always a danger that many believers tend to be trapped by the rigid claim of absolute as they choose to interpret from their sacred texts. The problem is that believers often take the words in their sacred texts literally and it paves the way to misunderstanding of the religion. That in turn may lead believers toward religious fundamentalism.

Hassan Butt, a twenty-four-year old British Pakistani who was a former Lahore spokesman for al-Muhajiroun, an extremist group based in Britain, says there is no way to interpret the Koran other than literally. He sees no room for moderation. If Allah says fight, you fight! How can anyone take a moderate view of this?; asked Butt and his main goal in life is to restore the rule of Islamic authority over as much of the world as possible. Butt is clearly immersed in an Islam that is in its most toxic and intolerant form which is not the Islam that all sensible and responsible Muslims in the world would accept.

In religions, if words are taken at literal level and interpreted rigidly all the time, misunderstanding of an

extremely dangerous nature is bound to follow. It is the point when believers can turn evil and then religious become a problem. However, upon deeper reflections, one may argue that it is not the religions that pose a problem to the society as a whole, rather it is those deviant or misled believers themselves that become a problem to human society because of their fundamental views with regard to religion.

The late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu of Thailand, in the delivery of his Dhamma discourse on the topic of 'No Religion,' talked about two kinds of languages : the ordinary language of people in general and the 'Dhammic language' which means language at a spiritual level of religions. For example, if someone says, "If you live a sinless life, you will go to heaven after death." The 'heaven' here is not intended to be taken in a literal sense. The message implied here is that if one were to live a sinless life, one would feel truly happy and peaceful. The state of having a truly happy and peaceful mind is equivalent to the state of being in heaven. Thus one needs not experience real physical death and yet is able to go to 'heaven' while still dwelling on this earthly world. To experience true mental or spiritual peace is just like being in heaven where there is supposed to be no suffering. It does not actually imply that one can go to heaven in the literal sense.

In our everyday language, we know what 'birth' means. It means a new life that comes physically into the world from a mother's womb, or, in the case of a chicken, from an egg. On the other level of our human language,

that is in the language of Buddhism at least, the word 'birth' implies the arising of the egoistic notion or concept of 'I' and 'mine' that keeps occurring in our daily life. Each time when the idea of feeling of 'I' or 'mine' arises in our mind, it is a birth. So, 'birth' can take place many, many times a day. For example, when a normal guy starts thinking or behaving like a mad fellow, then he is being 'reborn' at that very moment as a mad fellow. As soon as his 'madness' is gone, he is again being 'reborn' to become a normal guy, so he experiences another 'birth'. When he becomes greedy, the normal guy in him dies away, and he is again being 'reborn' to become some as greedy as, perhaps, a pig.

Now we come to the word 'man'. We all know the word 'man' refers to a male human being ; but in language of another level, the word implies some special qualities expected of a male human being. For example, when a woman shouts at a person of the opposite sex with such words as "You are not a man", what she actually means is that the latter does not live up to the expectation of what a 'real' man should be, that is, that poor fellow probably lacks some manly qualities such as bravery or responsibility as is expected of him. So, in ordinary language, a 'man' refers to a male human being while in language of a higher or more 'spiritual' kind (Dhammic language), it implies some higher mental qualities associating with the state of being a male human being.

When we mention the word 'hell', a picture of a place somewhere under the earth may be conjured up in our mind. We normally think of hell as a place guarded by

a hell-keeper who drags the souls of the dead in to be subjected to all kinds of punishment; but in the Buddhist Dhammic language, 'hell' refers to a state of great mental anguish or anxiety which burns like fire or strikes chilling fear into our mind.

In the ordinary language, the word 'God' refers to a celestial being with an al-mighty power of creation and destruction who looks down from somewhere high up in the heaven; but in the Buddhist Dhammic language, the word 'God' is a natural and profound power that is impersonal. It is a law of Nature that governs and has power over all things, both living and non-living. It is simply called Dhamma and is the truth of the entire universe.

When we learn about religions, we have to understand them through this kind of higher level of language. So, when God says, "Fight or kill thy enemies," it could be taken to mean that God wants us to fight or kill our own weakness such as greed, aversion and delusion which can cause us immense suffering. Very often our enemies are always our own weakness.

Truly good religious teaching should send us good message that are only conducive to the spiritual well-being of the believers. We need to interpret religious teachings in a truly constructive way so that what we get from religion is something which benefits the entire world, then only will we be able to dwell upon this earth in peace and harmony, and religion or religions for that matter, will not become a problem for all of us.

Religious Zealots tend to take the words from the religious text very literally. Very often they would have the interpretation of whatever religious texts to be made in their version so as to serve their own interest or justify their own actions or deeds. In August 2004 Muhammad Fawazi, an Egyptian held hostage by the Iraqi insurgents, was beheaded. Just before he was beheaded, an insurgent stood over him and quoted verses from the Koran : "He who will abide by the Koran will prosper, he who offends against it will get the sword," then the insurgent pushed the poor man to the ground and chopped off his head.

On August 20, 2004, the Iraqi insurgents or extremist group Ansar al-Sunna took twelve innocent Nepalese migrant workers as hostages. They slit the throats of the hostage and held up his severed head before they went on to shoot the other eleven hostages in their heads. The crime that those poor Nepalese men committed was that they had traveled thousands of kilometers "to work with the crusading forces of the American government and to support the war against Islam and the holy warriors." If those twelve Nepalese were truly working against Islam, they would never in the first place, travel to an Islamic country like Iraq to earn their daily bread. The deviant Islamic insurgents who simply kidnap and kill innocent people have clearly turned religion into a loaded gun or head-chopping sword. Obviously it is not the religion that gives the world the problems we are facing now. It is those deviated believers who fail to grasp or understand the true essence of well-intentioned religious teaching that have turned the world upside-down.

Religion becomes a problem when its adherents either intentionally or unintentionally wrongly interpret and spread its message. It poses a danger and threat to the society when it rejects the most basic principle of modernity itself - religious tolerance and place unhealthy religious identity above all other political, economic, cultural and social values.

Religions are the results of humankind's attempt to search for the truth of life. Each religion comes up with its own concept of truth but there is a general similarity between most religions in matters concerning moral conduct. As for the concept of 'truth' or 'absolute truth', differences in perspectives have been existing since the ancient days. The Kālāmas of the Buddha's time were so confused that they had to approach the Buddha for his advice with regard to this matter about truth.

Most religions rely on faith as a means of preserving or keeping their adherents. In many cases blind faith is simply demanded from the believers by the religious leaders. However, in Buddhism, the emphasis is shifted from faith to wisdom. In the Kālāma Sutta, the Buddha instructed that

*Be not led by report, by tradition, by hearsay,
by the authority of texts, by mere logic, by inference,
by considering appearances, by the agreement with
a considered and approved theory, by seeming
possibilities and by the idea 'This is our teacher'.
(P.A. Payutto, 2003, p.232; Syāmaratṭhassa
Tepiṭakam Vol.20, pp.241-243)*

The Buddha advises the Kālāmas to learn to know and understand things and events or matters through experiences. When one learns that something is not conducive to a healthy state of mind, then it should be given up. If it were conducive to our mental well-being, it should be put into practice. The Kālāma Sutta or the Kesaputtiya Sutta is not meant for people to become unreasonably obstinate. The purpose is to stimulate wisdom so that one does not believe in anything blindly.

The principles in Kālāma Sutta do not contradict with scientific principles too. The principle which states that one should not believe in something just because it agrees with one's pre-conceived idea simply points to the fact that scientific theories have to be supported by experiments and proofs. In science, one simply cannot afford to believe in an empty or hollow concept without proving its validity. Similarly, the Buddha did not want us to believe in people's words blindly. Therefore the principles of Kālāma Sutta help to prevent us from becoming fools or intellectual slaves of whatever doctrines, theories and concepts fed to us.

The Buddha encouraged people to develop wisdom before belief and faith. Truly right view needs to be developed before faith could be established. Faith or belief which comes from wisdom or right view and understanding is certainly safer than one that is based on false view. Blind faith often tends to lead to unreasonable or senseless behaviour, and yet people have a tendency to develop blind faith. Obstinate obedience to blind faith can result in

fundamentalism, extremism or fanaticism. The principles of Kālāma Sutta thus act as a check to the perils of sticking to blind faith.

Even in economic matters, the Kālāma Sutta can be of great value to us. In these modern days of consumerism, lots of people become victims of all sorts of commercial advertisements. People who believe easily in advertisements often make purchases of things or goods which are in reality not necessary at all for their lives. It is a sheer waste of money. Some products can even be harmful to their health. In this technologically highly advanced age of ours, economic activities are very competitive and it is not uncommon to find a lot of dishonesty, cheating and exploiting going on everywhere in the world. An inexperienced businessman who misplaces his faith or trust will have a lot to regret later. Therefore the principles of the Kālāma Sutta will be of a good help to him.

Try to look more profoundly at the essence of Kālāma Sutta and we will realize that it will lead to a true kind of spiritual freedom. Some people may argue that, by this Sutta, the Buddha instilled in people's minds the tendency not to believe in anything at all. That is not true of course. The Buddha's aim is to free us from being intellectual slaves.

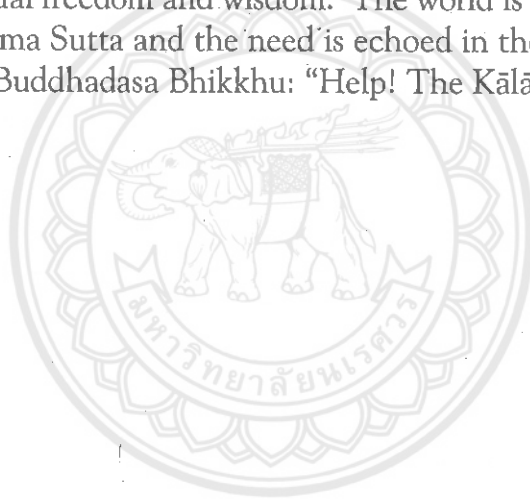
Let us take the case of a vegetarian diet for example. People have been making a big issue out of eating vegetarian food and meat. The Buddha never said decisively about the need to take only vegetarian food or food consisted of meat. For a Buddhist, there is neither meat nor vegetables;

both are only natural constituents in the world of Nature. That we should take meat or vegetarian food depends largely on our liking, but to be wise, we should belong into consideration matters relating to our own health. We should not blindly follow other people in so far as our eating preference is concerned. Here again, the principles of Kālāma Sutta prevent us from following unauthorized advice. We have the chance to make our own independent judgment based on right view and proper information.

It is generally claimed and believed that the most ideal system of government is that of a democracy. Would you believe that totally? What if some very clever, shrewd, cunning and selfish people happen to win the election and take over the power in a democratic government? They will probably try their best to enhance their power and fill their coffers with all the money they can lay their hands on. People will be exploited and the government will be no better than a dictatorship. In a case like this, it will certainly help if we were to apply the principles of the Kālāma Sutta in forming our own judgment as to whether we should believe in this kind of democracy.

In the field of religious beliefs, Kālāma Sutta is of vital importance because its principles will certainly help to prevent the emergence of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism since the main aim of the Sutta or discourse is to promote wisdom, not rigidly blind faith. If all religious adherents understand and accept the principles of Kālāma Sutta, there would be a great deal more of wisdom and intellectual freedom prevailing in this world.

As time slips by, our concepts of values have more or less changed. In many cases, we simply fail to make the right decision or the right choice. Many of us do not know about the Kālāma Sutta. Even if we know, we simply do not pay any attention to its message. So we allow this world to turn topsy-turvy. Many of us have been acting in the most senseless way which helps only to hinder peace and nurture evil forces. It is time that we turn our ears and hearts to the Kālāma Sutta which is meant for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike because it promotes true intellectual freedom and wisdom. The world is in need of this Kālāma Sutta and the need is echoed in the words of the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu: "Help! The Kālāma Sutta, help!"



CHAPTER SEVEN

A Buddhist Solution to a Topsy - Turvy World

The more scientifically and technologically advanced the world has become, the more problems we seem to be facing. Due to better transport and communication, the world is becoming a globalized village. As such, what happens in one corner of the world may affect another corner of the globe too. The beginning of the new century has not brought us much hope for a peaceful and harmonious human existence. In fact the threat of a nuclear war is not over. There are now more countries than before that possess nuclear weapons. Religious and political terrorism seems to be the norm of the day. Hatred and distrust rule many of our human hearts or minds. There is a rapid depletion of the world's natural resources too. The rising oil prices have adversely affected global economy.

The Venerable P.A. Payutto, a renown scholarly monk in Thailand laments that "*the enormous amount of natural resources on this planet amassed over hundreds of*

millions of years have mostly been consumed by humanity in a period of only one or two hundred years..." (P.A. Payutto, 1998, p.64)

People are blinded by their greed and concern over personal or self-interest. To make matters worse, we are all still very much divided over our ideological, political and religious view points. The result is more and greater topsyturvy.

The Dalai Lama emphasizes that "outer disarmament comes from inner disarmament. The only true guarantee of peace lies within ourselves." Indeed it is within ourselves that our enemies lay hidden. These enemies take the abstract form of selfishness, greed, lust, delusion and many other kinds of human weakness. Selfishness is something that comes from the instinctive sense of 'self'. If unchecked, it can be a very serious problem not only for other people and society as a whole, but also for we ourselves. It exists in every society. People do improper things out of selfishness. Big and powerful nations may exploit or take advantage of smaller nations on account of selfish motives. A clever but cunning politician may exploit whatever loopholes of the laws to reap benefits for himself while at the same time knows the way to avoid the laws. A selfish teacher will not be truly concerned over the performance and well-being of his students and a selfish policeman will find plenty of ways to engage in corrupted practices. A selfish monk will never be a good monk. He cannot even save his own 'soul', how could he possibly save the others?

Buddhism advocates the destruction of this selfish or egoistic 'self'. Many of our problems take roots in this matter of 'self'. Lots of people are selfish and self-centred. People put self-interests above every other thing. In this age of materialism, consumerism and information, life becomes competitive, oppressive and sometimes even unbearable. The more competitive it gets, the more selfish people become. *Upādāna* or the sense of clinging to this 'self' or the feeling of being 'I' or 'mine' is still very strong among the vast majority of people in this world. The result is ever increasing selfishness and self-centredness, all of which lead to conflicts. Thus one may hear someone proclaiming: "I am a Hindu, I can't allow Muslims to build a mosque here;" or "I am a Muslim, I will have nothing to do with those Hindus." So, people are still very much divided by this sense of being 'I' or 'mine'.

To tackle a problem, we have to start from the root cause. Right education forms the basis of a just, harmonious and peaceful society. Thus we have to begin from education. Something is missing or lacking in our present system of education. Children are forced to learn a lot of external things and commit into their memories a lot of facts and figures, but they know little about obligation, gratitude, modesty, filiality, parental, graciousness, fraternity and decency. Young people are getting more and more self-centred and even selfish. We, therefore, need to have an education that helps to diminish selfishness and promote a spirit of unselfishness and mutual concern. We need an education system that provides the Right View and Right Understanding as well as the right kind of spiritual guidance

so that children will not grow up to be intolerant religious fanatics and selfish citizens.

We should not blame science and technology for the ills of today, because after all, we are the ones who create and develop it. If we use it wisely, it is sure to benefit us; on the contrary, if we apply it for the wrong purpose, then it will bring us harm. Human beings are very intelligent animals, and yet intelligent as we are, we often do stupid things and commit offences or crimes of the most appalling nature. Clearly, just to be intelligent does not necessarily mean that one is at the same time wise. Therefore we need an education that can make us wise. This is where a good religion can make its contribution. Before we set about establishing a sound and right education system, we have to develop some right views in the first place. We must include ethical and moral consideration when forming educational policies ; but do bear in mind that even moral teaching itself has to be of the right kind. It should be one that helps to eradicate selfishness, greed, hatred and delusion. It should be one that sets us free from being slaves to unhealthy religious dogmas that promote intolerance and hostility. It should not be biased and treat people of other faiths and racial origins as inferiors or enemies that deserve to be killed. In short all moral teaching should be based on Right Views. The opposite of Right Views is of course Wrong View or False Views. We cannot really afford to have wrong views to run our lives, can we?

Without right views as the basis of our thoughts, things we do will go wrong. Truth is based on right view. The concept of human rights is not necessarily a natural truth. It is a right demanded on behalf of a human being by the Human Rights Group. That human rights come into the world political scene is due to our attempt to help those who have been unfairly oppressed or treated by their government. Thus it is a human creation based on a humanitarian ground and also a form of 'international justice'. It works only when it is recognized as some kind of 'just'. Therefore it is not necessarily a natural truth and its legality may change in the course of time.

Buddhist principles or the Buddha's teaching take root in the ever-changing nature of all things and phenomena in Nature. The Buddha thus preached Natural Truths of Life. Birth is a natural truth of life, death is also a natural truth, so is old age, sickness, love, hatred and the list goes on. So we have to learn to accept the truths of life and act or react in the most appropriate and suitable manner under any circumstances at all.

The September 11 event in the U.S., the continued violence in the Middle East and all the combings which had taken place in many other countries such as Indonesia and even England as well as the outburst of the anger of France's African community should have sobered us enough to make us realize that the world simply cannot afford to go on in this way. Political and religious leaders alike must re-consider their responsibilities seriously. Nothing in the world justifies indiscriminate violence,

especially when violence is committed in the name of religion because a healthy religion never encourages believers to make wars or to kill, no matter whatever reason there may be.

The purpose of religions is to make human beings the noblest of all living creatures that dwell upon the earth. We must peer or look deeper into our religious teachings for the most profound wisdom that helps to promote tolerance, true compassion and peace instead of intolerance, hatred and wars. All religions contain some truths in common that form the basic foundation for a decent and harmonious co-existence. We should thus deepen and widen these truths in our present circumstances for the purpose of encouraging and supporting tolerance and peaceful co-existence instead of rejecting one another and waging wars. A war can hardly be justified as holy when blood has been shed and lives, even those of the innocent civilians, have been destroyed. Religious extremists love to use the term 'holy war' to give justification legitimacy to their cause, and religious adherents can be eventually persuaded to answer the call for a 'holy' war especially insecure political and social or economic conditions have become unbearable. However, violence begets violence. Holy wars are not the right solutions for the world's problems. We have to resort to most basic religious values to solve our human problems : tolerance, mutual understanding, love and compassion. Make peace, however difficult it may be.

For a future of peace and harmony, we have to provide the younger generations with the kind of teaching that stimulates the love for tolerance, respect for others, unselfishness and non-violence. There must be a true form of democracy in which human rights, real political justice and religious freedom of a healthy nature should be the predominant elements or factors. The world's rich countries should do the best to promote an effective and sustainable economic policy and development for the poorer nations. The United Nation Organization should be a truly strong, just and effective body that can help tackling the world's problems independent of any super-power nation's or nations' manipulation. There must be a genuine effort to halt the manufacturing of nuclear and other highly dangerous weapons of mass destruction. After all, where would more wars lead us to? Have we not learned enough from all those wars of the past?

Many Muslim leaders all over the world denounced the September 11 attack on New York and the Pentagon as un-Islamic and they kept affirming that Islam is a religion of peace. In fact, the vast majority of Muslim all over the world do not accept military meaning of 'Jihad,' the term which the westerners like to define as 'holy war'. The Muslims greet each other with the words "Peace be unto you (salam olayikom) and many chapters of the Koran begin with "In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate..." and there is even a verse in the Koran that says "There shall be no compulsion in matters of religion" (Koran 2 : 256). Clearly in Islam, Muslims are told to seek and have peace.

We live in a religiously diverse world and religions remain a very big and forceful issue in our daily life. Problems have multiplied and become even more complex than before. What many people regard as political and religious terrorists have become martyrs in the eyes of some. This is a topsy-turvy world that has turned very topsy-turvy shortly after the beginning of a new millennium. The world has gone astray. We seem to have lost our way ; but more than two thousand years ago in the land of India, the great peace-loving ancient sage, the Buddha had shown us the most peaceful and harmonious way for the journey ahead. His is a way that seeks harmony with Nature and avoids all forms of extremism. Should we have followed his words, we would have eventually reached our most noble destination – true world peace.

The late Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu of Thailand said, “All religions are different routes which lead to the same destination : spiritual peace.” All religions encourage all of us to cultivate and nurture the noblest and best of human qualities in us. They are basically the same for they are meant the betterment of the spiritual well-being of the humankind. So why fight over a name? Remember : Rose be it any other name would smell as sweet!

CHAPTER EIGHT

Education and Economics in the Buddhist Context

It has been said that a deep sense of insecurity with regard to such natural calamities as floods, fire, earthquake, violence eruption, even thunder and lightning, illness and death lead to the development of religions. Thus religions fill the need for human spiritual quest for truth. Humankind attempted to provide satisfactory answers to questions in their lives since the ancient time. Explanations with regard to natural phenomena were devised on the basis of a complete lack of evidence. Thus we had the fascinating mythologies of the ancient Greeks, Indians and Chinese. Later mythology in the west and also other parts of the world was replaced by monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam which call for the belief in one and only God and each claiming its own concept of truth.

Modern science also looks for truth in its own way – by experimenting through trial and error and finally reaches its own conclusion. The ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions

in science and religions alike are basic to human knowledge, wisdom and truth without which human civilization will see no progress made. However, there seems to be no unanimous conclusion to the human search for God or 'truth' as there are so many ways by which humans have discovered or interpreted the meaning and nature of God or Truth that the world has become more divided instead of united by it.

The 20th century German-American theologian Paul Tillich provided a simple definition of the word 'religion'; he said that "religion is ultimate concern." Martin Luther, the German reformer four centuries earlier, stated that to have a God was to 'have something in which the heart trusts completely,' whether such a God was a supernatural or divine being, or something in the world like wealth, power, career or pleasure. Combining Tillich's 'religion is the ultimate concern' with Luther's notion of 'what having a God' means, suggests that religion does not necessarily have to be involved with shrines, temples, churches or synagogues. It demands no complex doctrines of clergy. It can be anything to which people devote themselves that fills their lives with meaning. Tillich and Luther might have widened the scope of the possible definition of the word 'religion', but at the same time, it paves the way for the entry of unhealthy beliefs, concepts and practice such as deviated cults, religious extremism or even materialism into the sphere of religions which is meant to be for the spiritual well-being of humankind.

In the original Buddhism, there was no recognition and mentioning of a supreme or divine being. The Buddha was mainly concerned with human behaviour that led to endless suffering. Thus he provided us with the right way to live so as to be above all suffering. The emphasis here is on human wisdom that is based on right view while in some religions, the emphasis is on 'belief' or 'faith'. In the latter case, all statements about God or Gods are statements of belief. So if this 'belief' is the key to religion, it is also a problem for religion since very often it simply cannot be verified. For example, no one can ever verify that a Supreme Being actually created the entire world or universe. One simply has to accept that God creates everything. It is a matter of faith. There is no evidence and the belief is not opened to verification. While science seeks to explore, examine and experiment so as to get the real truth out of everything in the universe, it still cannot validly deny or admit the existence or non-existence of God. Meanwhile, religions should not try to deny the true findings of scientific experiments for fear that believers will be swayed into abandoning religions all together.

One major problem for the contemporary world is that religion has become a political tool used by cunning politicians or religious fanatics to achieve their own goals. Deviated religious leaders simply have no concern for tolerance and mutual respect for people belonging to a different faith. Religious intolerance is an ignorance itself. Thus we must get rid of this ignorance by introducing the right kind of religious education.

Religious education consists of schooling in religion and schooling by religion. Schooling in religion means teaching religious subject matter like those children who attend Sunday schools and are taught Bible stories and other lessons. Schooling by religion is an education provided by some religious organizations. The subjects learned include many other academic subject such as history, science, literature, mathematics and social studies for examples, apart from religion.

When religion has become a part of people's culture, it is of vital importance to supply the right kind religious teaching in order to maintain a well-balanced society of religious and political harmony. In a multi-cultural and religiously diversified society, the right guidance in religious teaching is all the more important as it is the key to social peace since it helps to promote understanding, tolerance, respect and unity between different groups of people within the society. The main challenge of the contemporary world is to encourage mutual understanding between different religions and an appreciation of religious diversity. Of an equally vital importance is the need to understand one's own religion in the right perspective. No sensible religion would ever encourage intolerance towards people of different faiths, or support the destruction of human lives no matter what the reasons are or how noble the aim seems to be. Therefore there is not a slightest bit of justification to using religion as a political tool to annihilate our fellow human beings. After all religion is meant for peace-building not war-making. All good religions promote tolerance, compassion and love, not hatred. So all those who kill in

the name of religion should spend more time reflecting upon their own deeds.

We are now living in a shrinking world that ushers us closer to common perils and sufferings. It is not just information that spreads quickly these days, even viruses travel speedily. The virus of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) had managed to make its flight from Vietnam or China to as far a place as Canada and claimed its victim there. The H5N1 virus of the Avian Fly has now reached Europe and even to Nigeria which lacks the necessary infrastructure to trap the viruses brought by the migratory birds. We need a worldwide co-operative effort to deal with the occurrence of such an unanticipated natural peril. On December 26, 2004, the onslaught of the natural disaster the Tsunami had resulted in the loss of 240,000 lives but help had been offered by many countries all over the world; in the U.S. alone \$1.3 billion had been raised to help victims of the disaster. Indonesia, a predominantly Islamic country had received much help from many non-Muslim nations.

We cannot stop a Tsunami or an earthquake; but we can stop poverty and injustice. We can preach tolerance, compassion and love. It is all up to us as to whether we actually want to co-exist harmoniously in this world and make it a truly pleasant place for all living creatures to dwell in. Should we choose to impose our own selfish will, political concepts and religious beliefs on the others with no moral justification, we would be literally creating a hell on earth. At this very moment, life for millions of people

in many parts of the world is compared to life in hell. Extreme poverty and incurable diseases have made life unbearable miserable for them. Why waste all the human talent, valuable economic and natural resources and time in fighting and killing our own fellow human beings instead of promoting mutual understanding, love and peace?

Just as diseases know no frontiers, so should our love and concern for our fellow human beings too. There should be no racial and religious barriers in our strive for the well-being of the entire humanity. In the small globalized world, no one is too far away from another. No one is far away and hence safe from a spreading disease that occurs in the other corner of the world, so now the rich and the poor alike have become likely victims of dangerous viruses. So it will only benefit the world if co-operation exists between the rich and the poor. Some sort of co-operative could be formed to promote mutual help and benefit.

People need to abandon their selfishness for the world to achieve true progress. In fact our human problems spring from our own selfishness – the selfishness to possess both material and non-material things for examples. It is the driving force that pushes us toward the edge of self-destruction because selfishness often leads to greed and greed makes us slaves of both material and non-material things, so much so that we come to worship ‘materialism’ just as though it is a religion. It is happening these days. People have become so immersed in materialism that their main aim in life is to earn as much money as they can and acquire whatever material goods they like.

Actually the Buddha had taught that material needs must be first before spiritual development can actually commence. He gave much importance to the need of material goods. In the Buddhist concept of economics, material goods. In the Buddhist concept of economics, material acquirement is only necessary for facilitating human spiritual development which is to be the main goal in life. Wealth is something to be acquired through right effort, not by cheating or deceiving and exploiting. The Buddha gave the advice that people should not be obsessed with wealth which is something to be obtained through honest means and should be wisely spent not only one's own benefit but also for that of the society as a whole.

Therefore, it can be obviously discerned that when the wealth of a generous and virtuous person grows, society stands to gain from the growth of his wealth as he will do whatever he can to help the others in the right way ; but on the contrary, when the wealth of an unscrupulously cunning and mean fellow grows through ill means or exploitation, society will suffer in one way or another. It is only a matter of time before someone or society as a whole will rise up to get rid of him.

Buddhism emphasizes the need to apply wisdom in matters concerning wealth. We should not be deluded by the power of wealth, nor should we be enslaved by it. We should not only use wealth to meet our material needs in a wise and sensible way, but we should also use it to relieve the society of its problems and bring happiness to all people. An extremely good example is being set by the American

billionaire Bill Gates and his wife Melinda Gates. Both of them have poured over \$six billion into global health with \$258 million go to the commitment to fight malaria. When interviewed by Time's reporter Amada Bower, Bill said he gave preferences to diseases that 'get no attention enough' and he looked at the top 20 and simply wanted to make sure that there would be money for creating new drugs, for delivering 'them and for creating the infrastructure to make sure that lives get saved. Melinda Gates said that "... if you can improve people's lives through health, you improve all measures of society." Clearly, Bill Gates not only knows how to acquire his wealth through proper means but he and his wife clearly also know how to spend their wealth wisely, not just for the benefits of their family but also for the well-being of the entire humankind. The world definitely needs more wealthy people with noble intention like Bill and Melinda Gates.

Buddhism recognizes that poverty and diseases are two main causes of human unhappiness and suffering. Thus a responsible government, no matter what economic or political system it pursues, should see to the needs of the poor and the sick and make the best use of its wealth to ensure that its people are well cared for.

The Buddha himself did not form a political or economic system of his own. Instead he taught about the duties of those who rule and those who are being ruled. He realized that absolute equality is simply not possible, but he insisted that a good government should be one that could ensure the availability of the four main requisites of

life to all its citizens (food, shelter, clothing and medicine). Economic activities should lead to a system of self-sufficiency and not unscrupulous competition to grab profits selfishly. There is nothing wrong with acquiring wealth so long as it is done in an honest and morally sound way, and that the owner of the wealth knows how to use it wisely for his or her own benefit and also for the benefits of society in general. With security established in the material aspects of life, citizens can then have more time to turn to the spiritual development.

India in the Buddha's time, some states were ruled by absolute monarchs while other states were republican in structure, but the Buddha had separate teaching for the rulers of both political systems. Buddhism is not a religion dealing with political ideology but it provides sound solutions to problems of administration. The Buddha was not a romantic man who spent his time imagining an idealistically perfect society. Instead he offered a morally down-to-earth or realistic way of dealing with problems of life to ensure social harmony. The Buddha's concept of an ideal society is not a society in which everybody has an equal social and economic status. It is a society where people with different social, economic and religious background can live together without any conflict and unease. King Asoka was an obvious example of a monarch who adhered to Buddhist principles in the governing of his empire. (Malalasakera, 1995, Vol.2, pp.216-219)

Buddhism regards material possession or wealth as just a base from which efforts are to be made for the

eventual mental or spiritual refinement of each individual. The basic material needs must be met before any spiritual development can actually take place effectively. A man will find it hard to carry out any job effectively when his stomach groans with acute hunger. Hunger is a physical suffering that can severely hamper mental function and progress.

Once the Buddha, through his own psychic power, had sensed that a poor peasant living near the town of Alavi some 48 kilometers away from Jetavana monastery where the Buddha was residing, had the spiritual faculties to understand the Dhamma and be enlightened by it. So the Buddha walked all the way to Alavi where he was warmly received by the inhabitants there. The Buddha intended to impart his teaching to this poor peasant, so he waited for the latter to arrive.

The poor peasant knew about the Buddha's arrival at Alavi but it so happened that one of his cows went missing. Thus he had to look for the cow first before he could go to see the Buddha. By the time the cow was found, the peasant thought that there was not much time left, so he hurried to see the Buddha without taking any meal at all. When he arrived, he was both tired and hungry. Seeing his condition, the Buddha told some people to serve the poor man some food. After having seen the peasant finished taking his food, the Buddha started delivering his sermon. The peasant, after having listened to the discourse, had attained the first stage of enlightenment. Later the Buddha told the monks that when people are overwhelmed and in

pain through hunger and other suffering, they are not capable of understanding any religious teaching.

Thus we can see that the Buddha did emphasize on the importance of meeting the basic material needs but nevertheless he never praised wealth, nor did he denounce wealth. He taught that wealth should be used to support a life of good conduct and human development. A wealthy man who helps the poor is comparable to a large piece of fertile land yielding an abundance of rice to feed hundred of people who do not own the land. After all, "*Nekāsī labhate sukham - One who eats alone cannot eat happily,*" (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakam Vol.27, 1995, p.333)

Thus we may rightly say that Bill and Melinda Gates 'do not eat alone' since they know how to share their wealth with the millions of sick people who suffer from AIDS and malaria by supporting global health researches.

CHAPTER NINE

Miscellaneous

In the course of time, religions tend to break up into a number of sects which adhere to their own particular beliefs and traditions. Buddhism is no exception. A number of sects evolved some few hundred years after the decease of the Buddha. The sect of Theravāda school of Buddhism was founded in Ceylon while another sect which came to be known as Mahāyāna was flourishing in the north and found its way through the silk route to places like Tibet, China, Japan, and Korea. While the Theravāda believers strive to break the bounds of birth and death to become truly liberated ones (Arahants), the Mahāyāna followers try to tread the path of Bodhisattvas in the hope of becoming a Buddha some day. The Mahāyāna adherents tend to regard the Theravāda followers as limited in aspiration and somewhat lacking in compassion.

In fact, the Mahāyāna sect gives a lot of emphasis to compassion and the monks belonging to the sect are strict vegetarians. While the Mahāyāna believers tend to

regard the Theravāda adherents as self-centered people who seek enlightenment only for themselves and are confined to a narrow scope of Buddhist teachings, the Theravadins themselves regard the Mahāyāna followers as worshippers of non-Buddhist deities who keep inauthentic vows and revere inauthentic texts.

The American journalist and veteran of the American Civil War, Henry Steel Olcott was the first to try to unite the various Asian forms of Buddhism into a single organization. Though he did not live long enough to see it, but his effort bore fruit long after his death when the first world Buddhism organization, the world Fellowship of Buddhists was formed in 1950 A.D. While Olcott was busy in trying to restore true Buddhism in Ceylon, a young Singhalese named David Hewaviratne, who, in 1881 A.D. changed his name to Anagarika Dharmapala meaning "Homeless Protector of the Dharma" and took it as his task to convert the Untouchables of south India to Buddhism. In 1891 A.D.; he founded the Maha Bodhi Society with the intention of wresting Bodh Gaya, the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, from the control of the Hindus, and turn it into a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists all over the world. Dharmapala did not live to see his goal achieved. It was years after India became independent that Bodh Gaya was finally returned to the Buddhists and since then it has become a meeting place for Buddhists from every corner of the world. (Lopez, 2002, pp.15-16)

Dharmapala, like Olcott, regarded the Theravāda school of Buddhism as the true Buddhism, while many

Buddhists from China and Japan such as Yang Wen Hui (1837-1911 A.D.) and D.T. Suzuki and his teacher Shaku Soen insisted that Mahāyāna Buddhism was the real Buddhist teachings. However, in this present modern era, many Buddhist intellectuals seek to take refuge in a Buddhism that is free from sectarian concern. There is a strong feeling prevailing among them that the original Buddhism has been corrupted by rites, rituals and other cultural influences in such a way that it has become deviated from the original teaching of the Buddha. Christmas Humphreys (1976, pp. 11-12) advocated a world Buddhism that transcends all sectarian differences. There is a need to distinguish what is the original or essential from what is a later addition of cultural, traditional or superstitious beliefs. There is also a committed belief that centuries of Buddhism's blending with local cultures could be undone by a proper education in Buddhism so that Buddhism that is neither Theravāda nor Mahāyāna emerges to assume the role of a universal Buddhism. It is only in this context that Buddhism could become a universal religion acceptable to this modern scientific and technological age. At present Buddhism that prevails in the Asian and Southeast-Asian countries, be it Mahāyāna or Theravāda sect, is too full of and mixed up with superstitions and ritualistic practices that people often wonder what Buddhism really is.

Buddhism is a religion of reasoning aimed at ending suffering which includes not only suffering entailed by birth, old age, sickness and death, but also suffering brought by economic disparity or poverty, political suppression and

social injustice. It advocates of detachment from sensual indulgence and obsession with material possession. The objective is true freedom - to be truly free from the enslavement of craving. Thus Buddhism emphasizes on the need to avoid the extremes or extremism in any form. It serves to remind us of the ethical aspects of our human activities in relation to nature. In his book entitled *Toward Sustainable Science*, the Venerable P.A. Payutto (1998c, pp. 67, 104), Thailand's most respected scholar monk, warns us that:

Mankind must realize that if he continues to seek happiness from the destruction of nature, he will not find the happiness he is looking for, even if nature is completely destroyed. Conversely, if mankind is able to live happily with nature, he will experience happiness even while developing the freedom from suffering.

The objective of Buddhist practice is to attain highest good and an understanding of truth of nature. Even before the objective is reached, there is correction of problems and progress in human development.

The Buddha seeks knowledge through his own experience by experimenting with his own feeling of fear, hunger, thirst; and so on. (Suchitra Onkom, 2009, pp. 53-54) He tries to discern the inner mind and see how it acts and reacts to our craving. He is not particularly concerned with the presence of a divine being or an

almighty creator; instead he believes in a universe that operates through the forces or mechanisms of causation. Thus Buddhism becomes a religion that is most compatible with science and it is more appealing to the western world where more and more people from the younger generation tend to embrace science fully while keeping religion at a distance.

However, in spite of its compatibility with modern science, Buddhism still differs from science in some ways. It seeks to convey an ultimate truth which is all-embracing with regard to all aspects of life while science involves a process of answers which may not necessarily be the final truth. Science investigates the external world while Buddhism not only discerns the physical world, it examines the inner conscious mind, scrutinizing whatever craving there is in the mind and discerns the nature of human suffering.

Hence Buddhism (or all religions for that matter) provides an immediate answer, and a sound answer it is, to the questions about life, while science goes about systematically at its own pace in its search for facts. What is worse is that science does not assume responsibility for how it is being used by human beings instead it leaves the matter to religion. Thus it opens itself to abuses. People with no high science of morals would abuse it for their own selfish purpose. For example, a nuclear scientist who lacks scruples may sell his knowledge of nuclear secret concerning nuclear bomb-making to a politically aggressive regime for the sake of money or some other reasons.

Therefore scientists should have moral values and ethical concern and responsibility for whatever they do in the scientific field, be it unclear matters, cloning or stem-cell research, for examples. Consideration should be given to human moral values in so far as scientific researches and achievement are concerned. Again the Most Venerable P.A.Payutto (1998c, pp.103-104) says that:

One value which is of prime importance to humanity and its activities is happiness. The value of happiness lies deeply and subconsciously behind all human activities and is thus an essential part of ethics. ... To correct our definition of happiness means, in brief, to change our social values, on longer trying to find happiness in the destruction of nature, but instead finding happiness in harmony with nature. In this way we can limit the manipulation of nature to only what is necessary to relieve human suffering rather than to feed pleasure-seeking.

So now we have come to a point which tells us that our happiness is related to Nature and that to live a happy life, we need to be in harmony with nature. Otherwise there will be only suffering - endless suffering. Some people believe that the source of danger and human suffering comes from supernatural forces and that it is God's will that humankind should be either punished or rewarded; but in Buddhism, the Buddha teaches that human suffering or happiness is a matter of causes and effects. The Buddha says: "Yādisamī vapate bījamī tādisamī labhate phalamī kalyānakārī kalyanamī pāpakārī ca pāpakamī - As the seed

so the fruit: the doer of evil begets evil, the doer of good begets good” (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakam Vol.15, 1995, p.333)

Ignorance of this nature process of law and effect is the main cause of our suffering. Because not knowing the causes of our suffering, we are most likely to resort to incorrect means in tackling our problems and trying to end our suffering. There are people who turn to superstitious belief and practice as a way out, while others consult a soothsayer or even an astrologer. Few pause to contemplate on the actual cause of their own suffering. It is a clear sign of an ignorance of the natural process of causes and effects of the Law of Nature.

Some simply declare that it is the will of God that they should suffer. So have faith in God. Some day he will lift you above all suffering. So, faith is what people rely on. But in Buddhism, the Buddha has shifted the reliance on faith to wisdom. Human beings should endeavour to end their suffering through their own wisdom by understanding the process of cause and effect and set about tackling their problem according to the knowledge they possess. So the emphasis here is on human endeavour and wisdom, not reliance on a divine being or supernatural force. This makes Buddhism a unique and realistic religion for it acknowledges the Law of Nature and advocates the dependence on true wisdom instead of faith.

What is the Law of Nature then? Truth is the Law of Nature. It is something that exists naturally. With or

without the Buddha, it is there anyway; but that was the Buddha who happened to discover this truth more than two thousand years ago. For happiness or suffering to arise, there must be the right cause and conditions to bring about their birth. Therefore to rid off suffering, one must understand the cause and the conditions as well as other accompanying factors which cause it to surface. Hence Buddhist wisdom is the supreme knowledge of annihilating human mental defilement that brings much suffering. The Buddha realizes the potentials of the human mental faculties which could be developed to a totally enlightening state. The Buddha himself was just the most ideal example of how human mental faculty could be free from suffering and achieve happiness through our own effort.

As such we need to learn the truth about happiness and suffering. While true happiness is a rare commodity, suffering is never in short supply. In fact we always seem to be living in suffering for the most part of our life. We worry a lot over problems of all sorts, we feel anxious and never seem to be contented. We try to seek happiness through the acquisition of material wealth, fame, honor and even power. For those who manage to get what they want often end up in misery. This kind of happiness is fickle and never lasts long. Moreover, in the attempt to acquire wealth, people have to compete with each other. This often leads to conflict of interest, sour relationship, much bitterness and unbearable suffering.

People with a well-trained mind seek a different kind of happiness – a happiness that does not rely on external

factors such as material possession or sensuality. It comes from the depth of a peaceful mind. This kind of happiness is more subtle in nature. The most refined and reliable kind of happiness is the happiness resulting from a true and total liberation or enlightenment of the mind. Such happiness is so subtle that it is more like an inner calm that is both deeply tranquil and unfathomable. In fact the highest value of the human race is something even higher than happiness – it is the peace of the mind.

Our mind finds it hard to remain still or peaceful all the time unless we make the effort to train and rein it. The human mind tends to cling to something that it likes or even dislikes. We cling to those things as though they are permanent when in reality they can never be ours in the ultimate sense. This attachment to things both materials and non-materials, moulds our thinking and dictates our action or deed. Thus our mind is never free or independent. It is always a slave to our feelings of attachment to things and phenomena. For example, both the feeling of love and hatred can enslave our mind, rendering us blind to everything and lead us into doing something absurd, silly or even dangerous and destructive. Not only hatred can be dangerous, love itself can sting or hurt too, especially when it becomes excessive. Excessive love for someone can lead to jealousy. Excessive zeal for a religion will lead to intolerance of other religions, and that is dangerous. Therefore we need to restrain ourselves.

The Buddha has shown us a way to liberate ourselves from being slaves to our own craving to whatever mental

defilement there may be in our mind. Through insight or vipassana meditation, Prince Siddhattha or the Buddha-to-be finally became the Fully Enlightened One. (Sathienpong Wannapok, 1995, p.52) Practising meditation can help us to develop our mental faculties. That will help us to discern and comprehend the cause and conditions which lead to all our actions or deeds, and hence our happiness and suffering. Meditation generates mindfulness needed by us to observe how ethical and unethical behaviors are being motivated by our own mental qualities. It enables us gain an insight into the true nature of all things and phenomena, including our feeling of likes and dislikes and our action which can be either ethical or unethical.

Venerable P.A.Payutto (1998a, p.82), says: "*With meditation, we gain perspective on our motivations; we sharpen our awareness and strengthen free will.*" We can therefore be a fair judge to our own inclination and motivation. We can also better resist the temptation to commit selfish and wrong deeds and choose instead a morally sound course that aims at the true well-being of our own selves and also that of the others. In this way we will be able to make the most appropriate decision in all matters. What is most important of all is that through meditation, we will eventually attain true insight and real wisdom which will actually liberate us from the enslavement of all craving and the subsequent suffering, thus rewarding us with a real joy and peace that flows out from a truly tranquil mind.

Buddhist meditation provides a most convenient way of learning how to restrain ourselves, especially this insight meditation which is a meditation based on the regularity of our own breathing. Since breathing is a natural occurrence whether one is awake or asleep, it is thus the most convenient way to observe ourselves. So sit down silently with your own breathing. Observe it and you will learn more about yourself and the world or nature as a whole. Also, you do not have to pay for the air you breathe in and out. Proper instruction or guidance is all that you need, perhaps.

There have been serious efforts made in trying to return Buddhism to its original form. In the words of Donald S. Lopez (2002, p.XL):

The silent practice (of meditation) allowed modern Buddhism generally to dismiss the rituals of consecration, purification, expiation and exorcism so common throughout Asia as extraneous elements that had crept into the tradition in response to the needs of those unable to follow the higher path.

In Thailand, the most prominent monks in the drive to return Buddhism to its original teaching are the late Venerable Paññānanda Bhikkhu and the late Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. The former is active in preaching against superstitious belief and practice in Buddhism while the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (2000, pp.100-153) called for a true understanding of the core of one's own religion, a mutual understanding between all religions in the world

and a need to get out of the excessive influence of materialism. In Singburi province, the Venerable Phra Dharmasinghapurajarn (Jarun Thitadhammo), formerly Phra Rajsuddhinanamongkol of Wat Ambavan, Singburi Province, has embarked on his project of providing meditation teaching and practice as well as facilities for his large group of Buddhist followers. His teaching centers on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. (Phra Rajsuddhinanamongkol, 2001, pp.113-141) The Venerable Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A.Payutto) scholarly monk who holds a most balanced view in so far as Buddhism is concerned. He is a prolific writer whose writing provides the most illuminating insight into the Theravāda School of Buddhism. His famous book entitled *Buddhadharma* (2006, 1145 pages) is very well-known among Buddhist scholars of the world.

In Japan, Zen Buddhism has helped to transport silent meditation to places outside Japan, particularly in the West. Zen is described as a special transmission outside the Scriptures; no dependence on words and letters; direct pointing to the soul of man and seeing into one's own nature (Humphreys, 1976, p.222). Zen meditation is an experience. It reveals of the things as such and phenomena. In other words, it shows the way things are. It is not mysticism. Silent meditation has enabled Buddhism to transcend rites, rituals and scriptural instruction which require form and language. It transcends even the sectarian differences and turns Buddhism into an experience. This transcendence over the sectarian differences is most particularly important when we bring into consideration

retrospectively of how religious zealots fought or even killed one another because of the uncompromising attitude they held with regard to sectarian differences. An example is the conflict between the Protestants and the Catholics in Northern Ireland some years ago; another is the present Iraq where the Sunni and the Shiite Muslims do not seem to get along well. The result is we have succeeded in “creating hell” on earth. See how the Muslims and the Christians are killing one another in the Indonesian city of Ambon. (Suchitra Onkom, 2007b, p.26)

Our human conflict is a clear sign of our mindfulness. Therefore each individual living mindfully is the only strategy to world peace. The Venerable Phra Dharmasinghapurajarn has taught vipassana meditation for a long time and he emphasizes that:

Vipassana meditation is not a technique for closing the eyes and seeing magnificent sights or attaining psychic powers. It is the study of life and how to eradicate suffering from one's own life. It also solves the complex problems of life and leads to perception of the truth. The way to practise this is to look into one's own life, to notice the movements of body and mind, to notice whether there are wholesome or unwholesome thoughts in the mind. The more we reflect on our life and the more we learn about our own problems, the more can we reach a solution totally and clearly by ourselves, within our own minds. (Phra Dharmasinghapurajarn, 2007, p.23)

In her International Award Winning Essay entitled "Creating Sustainable World Peace," Suchitra Onkom, one of the Venerable Phra Dharmasinghapurajarn's disciples, points out that:

Having practised, we truly assist the world to sustainable peace. The turmoil, the conflict, the obstacles to our own inner peace reflected in our outward behavior, are manifested in the outside world. Without inner peace there can be no world peace. The war to end all wars is the struggle within ourselves. The enemy is within, not without. In struggling with and being victorious over our own enemy - greed, hatred and delusion - that is within each of us, we can actually, realistically, effectively contribute to world peace. (Suchitra Onkom, 2007b, p.135)

The Buddha laid down the right strategy over 2,500 years ago in India. The Ultimate Strategy, the method to end our individual conflict and chaos, and in so doing help bring about lasting, sustainable world peace, is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakam Vol.10, 1995, pp.325-351)

So, mindfulness is the very vital factor in guiding us toward a wholesome life. Very often we fail to realize that we are our own enemies. The tendency is for us to blame the others for our problems. When the mind is set to a limited scope of outlook or view, frustration, discontent, anger and even violence may be the result. To ensure a

peaceful co-existence, we need to have an open mind that is filled with love, tolerance, compassion, forgiveness and a genuine willingness to cooperate for the sake of human well-being.

Take a good look at those small insects such as the bees and the ants. Those insects live in colonies. They have no written laws, no constitution, no police, nothing; but they know their responsibilities, each going about its work diligently without needing to be told about its duty. They live by the laws of nature, and in the case of bees, nature has provided them with myriads of flowers from where they could extract their honey and while in the process of doing so, they help to pollinate the flowers, thus ensuring the formation of seeds and a continuation of the species of plants or trees. Nature reveals to us the intimate relation and interdependence that exists between living beings on earth. *The force of nature is something remarkable, we human beings, we have constitutions, we have law, we have a police force, we have religion, we have many things. But in actual practice, I think we are behind those small insects.*" So says the Dalai Lama. (Lopez, 2002, p.222)

Religion should be the cure of a troubled heart or a restless mind. Therefore there should be no element of violence in it. The world is now sliding more and more to the extremes in almost every respect of our lives; be it in the economic, social political or religious field. Many of us seem not to have realized that we are drifting away from the wisdom of moderation which is the very core of

Buddhism. Nature itself has shown us in a rather obvious way that all living beings or all lives thrive well in moderate climatic conditions where there is enough sunlight, sufficient rainfall and fertile soil. Not many trees and animals flourish in the extreme weather conditions of deserts or the north and south poles of the globe. Thus in Buddhism, we are told to avoid extreme action or deed. Human emotions and activities should be harnessed by the Middle Path as laid down by the Buddha so that there will be a balance or equilibrium in our lives.

Knowing the perils of the extremes, the Buddha has wisely laid down the Middle Path for all humankind to tread. However, nowadays there have been a lot of distortions made upon religions by dangerously selfish or deviate people just to meet or satisfy their personal motives and interests. The most regrettable fact is that many people succumb to distorted views and therefore we see the rise of fundamentalism, fanaticism and worst of all – terrorism. Plenty of religious adherents have been misled to tread the wrong path which will lead the world into the bottomless pit of darkness and suffering. So it is time for each and every one of us to do some serious thinking that reflects on this modern age of ours to see if we could save our topsy-turvy world from more turbulence, turmoil and self-destruction.

One thing we all can easily do is that to spread loving-kindness to all beings every day. The words of spreading are:

May all beings who are subject to birth, old age,
disease and death, be happy.

May they be without enmity

May they be without malevolence.

May they be without physical and mental suffering.

May they be happy in both body and mind.

May they be able to protect themselves from danger.

May Dharma, or May God help us all!



Conclusion

Our mind normally clings to something which we like or dislike. We cling to those things as though they are permanent. These attachments to likes or dislikes (or indifference) mould our thinking and determine our action. Thus our mind is not free. It is always a slave of our likes or dislikes. For example, both the feeling of love and hatred can enslave our mind, rendering us blind to everything and leading us into doing something silly or even dangerous. Not only hatred can be dangerous, love can be dangerous too, especially when it is being abusively applied. Excessive love for one religion may lead to violent hatred for other religions, and that is highly dangerous.

The Buddha had shown us the way to liberate ourselves from being slaves to our own craving, desires or material defilements of all sorts. Through breathing meditation or mindfulness of in-and out-breathing known as *Ānāpānasati*, the Buddha has attained his Enlightenment. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakam Vol.19, 1995, p.401) By practising meditation, we will be able to develop our mental factors. That will help us to discern the causes and conditions behind all our activities. Meditation gives us rise to mindfulness needed by us to observe how ethical and unethical behaviors are being motivated by our own mental qualities. Through meditation, we will be able to gain an insight of the true nature of our likes and dislikes or desires as a whole. We can thereby be a fair judge to our own inclination and guide it towards the ethical behavior. We can also better resist the temptation to do wrong and

choose instead a morally sound course that aims at true well-being. In this way, we will be able to make the most appropriate decision in all matters. What is most important of all is that through meditation, we will eventually attain true insight and wisdom which will liberate us from the enslavement of desire and the subsequent suffering, and give us a real peace which flow out from a truly tranquil mind.

Religions should be the cure of a troubled mind. Therefore, there should be no elements of violence in them. We are living in a world that is increasingly violent and the violent events of today are uglier and more tragic than in the past. The world cannot be restrained if we do not learn to restrain ourselves individually.

Buddhist meditation provides a most convenient way of learning how to restrain ourselves, especially this so-called *Ānāpānasati* meditation which is a meditation based on the regulating of our own breathing. Since breathing is a natural occurrence whether one is awake or asleep, it is thus the most convenient way of meditating. One does not have to pay for one's own breathing; proper instruction guidance is all that is needed.

The world is now sliding more and more to the extremes in an almost every aspect of our lives; be it in the economic, social, political or religious field. Many of us seem not to have realized that we are drifting away from the wisdom of moderation which is the very core of Buddhism. Nature itself has proved to us rather clearly

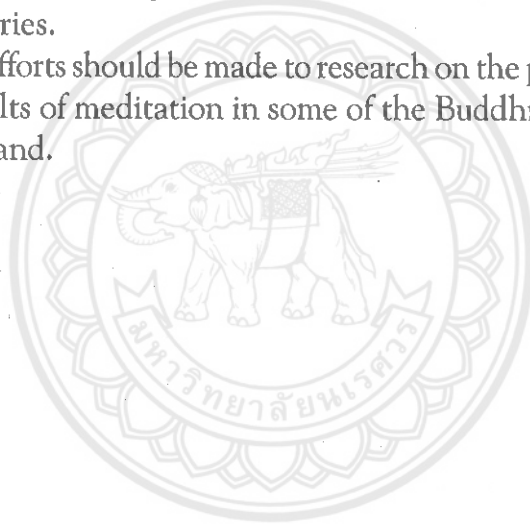
that all living beings thrive well in moderate climatic conditions. Not many trees and animals flourish in the extreme weather of deserts or the north and south poles of this planet. Thus, human activities too, must be harnessed by this concept of moderation so that there will be a balance or equilibrium in our thinking and our deeds.

Knowing the perils of the extremes, the Buddha wisely suggests the Middle Path for all humankind to tread. Nowadays there have been a lot of distortions made upon religion by unscrupulously selfish deviated people just to satisfy their motives and interest. The most regrettable fact is that many people succumb to distorted views and therefore we see the rise of fundamentalism, fanaticism and worst of all - terrorism. Plenty of religious adherents have been misled to tread the wrong path which will lead the world into the bottomless pit of darkness and suffering. So it is time for each of us and everyone to do some serious thinking that reflects on this modern age of ours and see if we could save our topsy-turvy world from more turbulence, turmoil and self-destruction.

May Dharma, or May God help us all.

of the training in morality, concentration and wisdom. The practice in concentration can be of two kinds *samatha - bhāvanā* or tranquillity development and *vipassanā - bhāvanā* or insight development. Nowadays, there are thousands of Buddhist meditation centers spreading all over the world. In Thailand, the most famous and popular method of meditation is *Ānāpānasati meditation* – the mindfulness on breathing. The widely known meditation centers are Wat Ambhavan in Singburi Province, Wat Mahathad in Bangkok and some other north-eastern monasteries.

Efforts should be made to research on the procedures and results of meditation in some of the Buddhist temples in Thailand.



Bibliography

- Arboucave, James Graff. (2006, March 13). The French Resistance. *Time*, p.29.
- Bahr, Lauren S. & Johnston, Bernard. (1991). *Colliers Encyclopaedia*. Vol. 13. New York: Macmillan.
- Bhikkhu Khemanando. (1994). *Buddhist Perspective of the Problem of Peace : A Philosophical Appraisal*. Bodh-Gaya: Magadh University Press.
- Bower, Amanda. (2005, November 7). *Time*, p.12.
- Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. (1990). *Messages of Truth from Suan Mokkh*. Bangkok: Edison Press.
- _____. (2000). *Three Wishes*. Bangkok: Dhammasapha & Dhammadhana Foundation.
- _____. (2003). *Ānāpānasati – bhāvanā Meditation*. Bangkok: Mental Health Publication.
- Buddhghosa, Bhadantacariya. (1964). *The Path of Purification* (2nd ed.) Colombo: A. Semege, M.D. Gunasena.
- Byles, Marie Beuzeville. (1972). *Footprints of Gautama the Buddha* (2nd ed.) Illinois: Whenton.
- Compton's Encyclopedia* Volume 20. (1991). Compton's Learning Company.
- Dailleux, Dennis & Vu, Agence. (2002, February 11). Religion – In the beginning there were the Holy Books. *Newsweek*, p.19.
- Dalai Lama and Cutler, Howard C. (2005). *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living* (4th ed. Thai Translation rights) Bangkok: Eternal Ink.

- Elegant, Simon. (2002, November 25). The family behind the bombings. **Time**, pp.16-21.
- Ephron, Dan; Husenball, Mark and Hirsh, Michael. (2002, December 9). Open Season. **Newsweek**, p.17.
- Fuen Dokbua. (2001). **Comparative Religions** (2nd ed.) Bangkok: Sophon Press.
- Gates, Bill. (2000, December 24). "Will Franken Food Feed the World?" **Time**, pp.42-43.
- Gibbs, Nancy. (2005, November 7). Saving life at a time. **Time**, p.39.
- Gossett, Dean L. (1978). **A Journey Through the Bible** (4th ed.) Illinois: Emmaus Bible School.
- Harlow, R.E. (1979). **Basic Bible Doctrines**. (3rd ed.) Illinois: Emmaus Bible School.
- Hornby, A.S. (1990). **Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English** (Fourth Impression). Oxford University Press.
- Humphreys, Christmas. (1976). **A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism** (2nd ed.). London: Curzon Press.
- Khemanand Khemanando Bhikkhu. (2010) . **Peace...the Only Option and Five Precepts: A Buddhist Means to World Peace**. (2nd ed.) Bangkok: Bhumi-thong Publication.
- Kimball, Charles. (2002). **When Religion Becomes Evil**. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Loewenberg, Samuel and Walter, Jane. (2004, March 22). Terror on the track. **Time**, pp.20-24.
- Lopez, Donald S. (2002). **Modern Buddhism**. London: Penguin Books.

- Luther, Martin. (1991). **Colliers Encyclopaedia**. Vol.15.
New York: Macmillian.
- Mahamakutraajvidyalaya. (1995). **Syāmaratṭhassa
Tepitakarṃ** (45 Vols.4th ed.) Bangkok:
Mahamakutraajvidyalaya Press.
- _____. (1997). **Visuddhimaggassa Nāma
Pakaraṇavisesassa** (3 Vols.9th ed.) Bangkok:
Mahamakutraajvidyalaya Press.
- _____. (1999). **Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā** (8 Vols.24th
ed.) Bangkok: Mahamakutraajvidyalaya Press.
- Malalasekera, G.P. (1995). **Dictionary of Pāli Proper
Names**. 2 vols. New Delhi: Munshiram
Manoharlal Publishers.
- Malthus. (2005, March 4). Exclusive book excerpt from
Time. Time, p.35.
- Narada. (1988). **The Buddha and His Teachings** (4th
ed.) Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary
Society.
- P.A. Payutto. (1996). **A Constitution for Living**.
(Translated from the Thai by Bruce Evans).
Bangkok: Sahadhammika.
- _____. (1998a). **Buddhist Economics** (5th ed.).
Bangkok: Sahadhammika.
- _____. (1998b). **Buddhist Solutions for the Twenty
– first Century** (2nd ed.). Bangkok:
Sahadhammika.
- _____. (1998c). **Toward Sustainable Science**.
Bangkok: Sahadhammika.
- _____. (2003). **Dictionary of Buddhism** (12th ed.)
Bangkok : Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya
Press.

- _____. (2007). **Vision of the Dhamma.** (Bangkok: Sahadhammika.
- Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto). (2005). **Thai Buddhism in the Buddhist World** (10th ed.) Bangkok : Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya Press.
- _____. (2006). **Buddhadharma.** (11st ed.) Bangkok: Sahadhammika.
- Phra Debvedi (Prayudh Payutto). (1990). **Freedom Individual & Social.** (2nd ed.) Bangkok: Buddhadharma Foundation.
- Phra Dharmakosajarn (Prayoon Dhammacitto Mererk). (2005). **A Buddhist Worldview** (7th ed.) Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya Press.
- Phra Dharmasinghapurajarn (Jarun Thitadhammo). (2003). **Buddhology.** Bangkok: Advanced Standard Group.
- _____. (2007). **Advantages of Chanting and How to Practice Vipassana Meditation** (3rd ed.) (Translated from the Thai by Suchitra Onkom). Bangkok: Sahadhammika.
- Phra Rajsuddhinanamongkol (Jarun Thitadhammo). (2001). **The Law of Karma – Dhamma Practise** Vol. 3. (Translated from the Thai by Naraporn Rungsimuntakul). Bangkok: Horatanachai.
- _____. (2003). **The Law of Karma – Dhamma Practice.** Vol.7. (Translated from the Thai by Suchitra Onkom). Bangkok: Horatanachai.

- Piyadassi Thera. (1981). **The Book of Protection** (2nd ed.) Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
- Sathien Pantharang -si. (2006). **Comparative Religions** (10th ed.) Bangkok: Tathagata Publication.
- Sathienpong Wannapok. (1995). **The Buddha's Conduct** (2nd ed.) Bangkok: Roenkaew Press.
- Sawvane Jidmoud. (1992). **Islam Culture** (3rd ed.). Bangkok: Tang – nam Publication.
- Seri Pongpit. (2002). **Christianity** (3rd ed.) Bangkok: Assumption Press.
- Singh, L.P. and Sirisena, B.M. (1988). **Zen Buddhism**. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
- So Sethaputra. (1997). **New Model English – Thai Dictionary**. Bangkok: Thaiwatthanapanich.
- Speath, Anthony. (2002, March 11). Killing thy Neighbour. **Time**, pp.14-18.
- Suchitra Onkom. (2000). **Thai Kings and the National Religion**. Bangkok: Dhonburi Rajabhat University.
- _____. (2006). **Practice of Meditation**. (10th ed.) Bangkok: Dokya Group.
- _____. (2007a). **Buddhist Manual**. Bangkok: Horatanachai.
- _____. (2007b). **Creating Sustainable World Peace**. (6th ed.) Bangkok: Sahadhammika.
- _____. (2009). **Comparative Religions**. (8th ed.) Bangkok: Sahadhammika.
- Sudassa Onkom. (2007). **Fruit of Karma**. (4th ed.) Bangkok: Sahadhammika.
- Sujeep Punyanuphab. (1997). **Comparative Religions** (4th ed.) Bangkok: Mahamakutrajvidyalaya Press.

- Sulak Sivalaksa. (2004). **Trans Thai Buddhism.**
Bangkok: Song Sayam.
- Sunthorn Na – Rangsi. (1989). **The Buddhist Concepts of Karma and Rebirth.** Bangkok:
Mahamakutraajavidyalaya Press.
- Thailand Bible Society. (2004). **Thai Holy Bible** (14th ed.) Bangkok: Thailand Bible Society.
- Thich Thien Tam. (1994). **Buddhism of Wisdom & Faith.** (5th ed.) Taipei: The Corporate Body of Buddha Educational Foundation.
- Tillich, Paul Johannes. (1991). **Colliers Encyclopaedia.** Vol.22. New York: Macmillian.
- Thomas, Edward J. (2005). **The Life of Buddha.** Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Twain, Mark. (1999). **Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.** New York: Oxford University Press.

About the Author

Name : Dr. Suchitra Onkom

Date of Birth : March 27, 1951

Home Address : 33/45 Moo 7, Soi Bangbon 3 Soi 2,
Khwaeng Laksong, Khet Bangkhae,
Bangkok 10160 THAILAND

Telephone / Fax : 024-455-407

E-mail Address :

suchitra.ok@yahoo.com

www.sudassa.com

Office Address : Dhonburi Rajabhat University
172 Issaraparb Road, Khet Dhonburi,
Bangkok 10600

Telephone : 028-901-801

www.dru.ac.th

Education : B.A. in English from the Faculty of Arts,
Chulalongkorn University (1973)

M.A. in Philosophy from the Graduate
School, Chulalongkorn University (1980)

Ph.D. in Philosophy from Magadh
University, India (1992)

Certificate of Supervising Research,
University of Sydney, Australia (2004)

Positions : Associate Professor in Philosophy and Religion, Dhonburi Rajabhat University.

President of M.A. in Thai Studies Program, Dhonburi Rajabhat University

Visiting Lecturer of:

- (1) Mahidol University
- (2) Sukhothai Dhammathiraj University
- (3) Thammasat University
- (4) Princess Walai Alongkorn University
- (5) Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University
- (6) Tepstri Rajabhat University
- (7) South-East Asia University
- (8) Royal Thai Naval Academy
- (9) Saint John's University

An author under the pen name
Sudassa Onkom

Courses Taught:

B.A Courses

- (1) Comparative Religions
- (2) Ethics
- (3) Fundamentals of Religion
- (4) Introduction to Logic
- (5) Introduction to Philosophy
- (6) Man and Civilization
- (7) Philosophy and Religion
- (8) Practice of Meditation

- (9) Principles of Philosophy
- (10) Religious Meditation
- (11) Truth of Life

M.A. Courses

- (1) Advanced Comparative Religions
- (2) Buddhism and Thai Literature
- (3) Buddhism and World Peace
- (4) Educational Philosophy
- (5) English for Further Study
- (6) Leadership, Morality and Ideology for Development
- (7) Philosophical and Sociological Foundation of Education
- (8) Religions in Thailand
- (9) Thai Philosophy of Life

Research

- (1) Religions and Peace : Buddhist Solutions to the Chaostic World
- (2) The Concept of Karma and Rebirth with Special Reference to Buddhist Philosophy
- (3) The Concept of Happiness in Buddhist Philosophy
- (4) The Concept of Man in Buddhism and Existentialism
- (5) The Policy on Promoting Religions in Social Development

Publication List

- (1) An Introduction to Philosophy
(9th Edition)
- (2) Buddhist Chanting (6th Edition)
- (3) Buddhist Manual : Morning and
Evening Chants
- (4) Comparative Religions (8th Edition)
- (5) Creating Sustainable World Peace
(8th Edition)
- (6) Fruit of Karma Volume I (6th Edition)
- (7) No Fire is as Hot as Hellfire
(26th Edition)
- (8) Practice of Meditation (11th Edition)
- (9) Thai Kings and the National Religion
(2nd Edition)
- (10) The Price of a Life (2nd Edition)
- (11) The Story of Old Man Tiow (3rd Edition)

Articles Presented in International Conferences and International Seminars

- (1) The Law of Karma in Human Life
(Presented at Srinakarindarawit, July 16, 1995)
- (2) Building Peace in the New Millennium
(Presented at UNESCO Office, Thailand, December 2,
2000)
- (3) Buddhism and the New Millennium
(Presented at Mahidol University, February 1, 2001)
- (4) Moral Crisis in Thai Society (Publicized
in PWPA Journal (Professors World Peace Academy)
- (5) Creating Sustainable World peace
(International Award Winning Essay From Toronto,

Cannada, 2003. Publicized in www.rethinkers.org/essays.html)

(6) True Menace to Peace and The Buddha's Answer (Presented in Buddhist Conference, South Korea, August 21, 2003)

(7) Propagation of Buddhism in Thailand (Presented at UNESCO Office, Thailand, May 19, 2005)

(8) Buddhist Women and Sustainable Development. (Presented at UNESCO Office, Thailand, May 9, 2006)

(9) Buddhist Solutions to Contemporary Problems with Religions and Peace (Presented at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, April 28, 2009)

(10) Religions and Peace : Buddhist Solutions to the Chaotic World (Presented at the 7th International Buddhist Conference on the United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Main Campus, Wang Noi, Ayudhya, May 24, 2010)

Religious Functions

(1) Administrative Committee Member, Young Buddhists Association of Thailand under the Royal Patronage

(2) Editor of "The Law of Karma-Dharma Practice", Wat Ambhavan's Yearly Buddhist Magazine

(3) Dharma Lecturer

(4) Vice – President of Inter-Religious Federation for World Peace (Thailand)

(5) Advisory Committee the Romanized Tipiṭaka Project under the Patronage of the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand







The Practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness is the method of practising vipassana or insight meditation. Now the method of practising will be explained. We should have faith when practising in order to clarify, brighten, and energize the mind, to inspire it in the practice and to remove worries and concerns from the mind.

The first step of practising is the standing posture. Stand with our hands crossed behind our back, the right hand holding the left wrist at the level of the waist. Stand erect and look straight ahead, but don't tense up. Just relax, be natural, and close the eyes slowly and gently.

Then concentrate and become aware of the whole body in the standing posture, excluding all other thoughts. Concentrate our mindfulness and be conscious of the present moment, then fix our mindfulness on the crown of the head and sweep down, as if the mind were flowing down through our body, mentally note "standing". When the mind is at the level of the navel, stop and breathe deeply, then slowly move the mindfulness downwards from the navel to the tips of the toes. When the mindfulness comes to the toes, note "thus." This is one cycle.

Then concentrate and sweep the mindfulness from the toes, noting "standing", up to the navel. When the mindfulness reaches the navel, note "standing" and breathe deeply, then sweep the mindfulness to the crown of the head and note "thus" to complete the second cycle. Repeat

this procedure five times and recite the last “thus” when the mindfulness reaches the tip of the toes. Keep our mindfulness on the toes.

Practitioners should be careful not to fix the mind at the nostrils. Don't worry about the breath or follow the inhalations and exhalations. Try to concentrate and be conscious of the present moment as much as possible, keeping the mind inside, not wandering outside.

After practising “standing, thus” five times, slowly open the eyes and look at the toes for a moment. When the mind is concentrated, continue with walking meditation.

For walking meditation, concentrate on the toes and start “right moves thus” by silently noting “right” when lifting the heel of the right foot. Lift the heel of the foot above the floor about 3 inches. The movement and the awareness must be simultaneous and we should be clearly aware of that present moment. Then slowly move the right foot forward. Try to move very slowly and note “moves.” Then slowly place the foot on the floor while noting “thus” at the moment the foot touches the floor.

Next, concentrate on the left foot and do the same thing as with the right foot by silently noting “left moves thus.”

In walking meditation, the steps should be about 8 inches apart at the most to help keep balance while walking.

Practitioners are advised to walk to the end of the path and put their feet close together with toes even in the standing posture. Raise our head slowly then close our eyes, note "standing, thus" slowly five times as explained before.

Now open the eyes look at the toes and turn back while noting "turning thus" 8 times. For the first "turning," lift the toes of the right foot and turn on the heel to the right slowly 45 degrees. For the second turning, slowly move and place the left foot close to the right one in the same manner. The third, the fifth and the seventh turnings are the same as the first and the fourth, the sixth and the eighth are the same as the second respectively.

Having turned around, raise the head up until facing straight ahead, close the eyes and note "standing, thus" five times. Open the eyes and continue practising.

While practising the walking meditation, do it slowly and acknowledge the various movements at every moment. Our gaze should be about 4 feet in front of us. When looking down however, pain may arise at the back of the neck. If that occurs, fix your gaze at a point about two meters in front of our feet. In doing so, we will not lose control of our mindfulness and will also attain good concentration in the sitting posture. Truth will then be revealed when the mind has spent a certain period in deep concentration.

The benefits of walking meditation are:

1. One is sure to have great patience for traveling long distance without getting tired easily.
2. One will develop patience for practising vipassana meditation.
3. One will not become sick easily.
4. Food is digested easily.
5. The concentration power of mindfulness which arises from walking is more lasting or enduring than that of sitting posture. (Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakaṃ Vol.22, 1995, p.31)

There are four bases for the establishment of mindfulness. Mindfulness and awareness observe at these four bases. The first base is the body. The second base is feeling. The third base is the mind, and the fourth base is mind-objects. These four bases are where we put our mindfulness. We observe at these four bases and know them as they really are. For example, when the body is standing we establish mindfulness at the body. They say the mind as it sweeps the body is like a red disk flowing over the body. This is only an analogy. In fact, the “red disk” is only a metaphor. The mind is not really a red disk because the mind is entirely void of material attributes. It has no color or shape. It is simply a point of mindfulness, the natural consciousness. We take this point of mindfulness and direct it over the body, from the crown of the head, slowly down, like a red disk, sliding slowly down. As we direct the mindfulness down over the body, we recite to ourselves, “standing, thus.” We observe from the crown of the head down to the navel, then stop and take a breath once, then direct the mindfulness once more slowly down

from the navel to the feet. Our objective is to know things as they occur. When we direct our mindfulness over the body, our objective is not to see the visual aspect of the body or try to conceive an image of it. We simply direct our mindfulness over the body and note the feeling as the mind sweeps over the various parts of the body.

When we have walked for the proper length of time, we sit. When sitting we place our mindfulness at the navel. We note the feelings that arise at the navel, or in the area no more than two inches away from it. We put our mindfulness there and note carefully to see what will arise there. When the abdomen rises we note the arising; when it falls we note the falling. We note things as they actually happen. If we do not yet see clearly we cannot yet meditate, we must train ourselves to see clearly first. When we can see clearly – “this is the rising” – we can meditate and note it as it occurs – “rising.” When the abdomen falls we note “falling.” We note things as they arise; we don’t try to make them arise or try to control what’s happening. We just let things flow naturally and note them as they occur. We practise like this until the time we have put aside for walking meditation is over. In sitting meditation, when we have finished the walking posture, note “standing, thus” 5 times before sitting down.

While slowly lowering the hands, note “releasing” until the arms are fully extended downward, then slowly lower the body into sitting posture and note “lowering.” While the hands touch the floor, note “touching.” Kneel down slowly and note “kneeling.”

When we have knelt on the floor, slowly move into the sitting posture and note “sitting” until we are sitting with crossed legs, folding the left knee and bending the left foot to the right, and folding the right knee and placing the right foot on the calf of the left leg. Rest the right palm on the left one, the spine erect and straight. Raise the head to face straight forward and slowly close our eyes.

Be careful to maintain concentration and mindfulness continuously in the present moment. Then concentrate on the navel. The area around the navel which is the object of concentration extends about 2 inches to the left, right, above and below the navel. Concentrate on the movement of the abdomen, rising and falling. When breathing in deeply, the abdomen slowly rises; when breathing out, the abdomen slowly falls. When we are fully aware of this movement, fix the mind on the navel and watch only the rising and falling of the abdomen. We should not worry about the breath at the nostrils, but observe only the movement of the abdomen. This is the first base for establishing mindfulness.

The second base for establishing mindfulness is noting feelings of all kinds. This is called the experience of feeling. It can be of three kinds: pleasant, painful or indifferent. When we experience a feeling we note it as it arises. Is it pleasant or unpleasant? Does it make the mind cheerful or dull? When a feeling arises, we meditate on it. If it is a pleasant feeling, suppose there is a pleasant feeling arising in our leg or in some other part of the body, just direct your mindfulness to that feeling, observe what that

pleasant feeling is like and note “pleasant feeling, pleasant feeling.” We keep on noting in this way. The pleasant feeling arises, appears, and then fades away. We must see it like this. When that pleasant feeling has passed away, another feeling arises, and we note the feeling. Perhaps our leg is numb or painful, when the unpleasant feeling arises we observe it and meditate on its true nature: “numbness, numbness.”

This is how we meditate on the feelings, note them as they occur. It is not our job to get angry, feel averse or attracted to the feelings. We simply note them as they arise. When the feelings change we note them whatever they are: painful, hot, itchy. We note them just as they are. This is observing the feelings. If the feeling is one of indifference, that should also be noted. For example, when we sit down and our body is making contact with the floor or the cushion, but we do not perceive the feeling to be hard or soft, hot or cold, it is a feeling of indifference. That is, we sit and our mind is dull: we experience indifference because our mindfulness and awareness have slipped. We should establish our mindfulness and keep on meditating, noting things as they are. Note “knowing, knowing, knowing,” compose our mind and meditate like this, and the feeling of indifference changes to something else. It passes away.

Then we come to the third base. It is the mind. The mind is that which thinks and concocts the various moods we have. We must see it as it is. We establish mindfulness and note our mind. We concentrate it at the

solar plexus and note how it creates and imagines. What kind of thoughts and moods arise? What state is the mind in? Whatever it is we must note it, meditating, "thinking, thinking". We concentrate our mind at the solar plexus and note. We simply note it as it is. Our only task is noting the actions of the mind. This mind, like the body, is a conditioned thing. Its function is to create mental impressions. If it was the body, it would be food. The mind concocts all kinds of mental "food," and some of these kinds of food are beneficial, some harmful. The "cooking" is the action of conditioning. It is like our hands. Our hands have the function of creating, making, and working. The mental formations have the task of creating mental impressions for the mind to "eat." When the mind "consumes" these mental impressions, which expresses itself in the form of thoughts, however, the mind thinks we must note it at every stage, observing how the mind is thinking. When the mind "eats" these things, what happens?

Thus we come to the last of the four bases—the base of mind-objects. It is called this because it arises from the mind having "eaten" mental impressions and receiving the energy from them. They then become natural conditions. For instance, when the mind consumes certain kinds of impressions, a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure arises.

There are five groups of mind-objects:

Group One: the Five Hindrances: sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, distraction and remorse, and doubt.

Group Two: the Five Aggregates: corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.

Group Three: the Twelve Sense-Fields: six kinds of internal sense-fields: the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind. Six kinds of external sense-fields: form, sound, odor, taste, touch, and mind-objects.

Group Four: the Seven Factors of Enlightenment: mindfulness, truth investigation, effort, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity.

Group Five: the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

We should note what kind of mind-objects has arisen. For example, when sensual desire arises we must note it. We note that liking has arisen, and meditate in keeping with that condition, "liking, liking." We note it as it occurs. We note also how it affects the mind: does it make the mind clear, or dull and agitated? Does it make the mind happy or unhappy? We must observe this as it happens. This is how sensual desire is. It arises, persists for a while, and then disappears, to be followed by another kind of condition. We note this as it happens.

When ill will arises, ill will must have an arising, and it arises because the mind has "consumed" a mental impression. It has received the sense impression from its own fashioning, just as before. Once it consumes the sense impression, the mind is energized by the condition known as aversion or anger. Anger arises as a result of something that has arisen in our awareness and we have embroidered or embellished upon it. Anger is produced by the reaction. We note that anger has arisen. We note what anger is like,

how it arises, how it persists and how it ceases. We meditate on it, noting “anger, anger.” Once anger has arisen, persisted and disappeared, we let it go. We do not linger over it. It is past.

We continue to look at the mind. Perhaps, sloth and torpor arise. We establish our mindfulness on these things, noting what sloth is like, how it arises, lingers and disappears. We note it as it really is: is it useful or is it harmful? Note whether the mind that is sunk in sloth is bright and cheerful, or dull and lethargic. Try to keep mindfulness firm. Don’t let it slip. Meditate on, noting “sloth, sloth”. Sloth is impermanent. It arises, lingers and passes away, and we can see it like that.

Then the next kind of hindrance is distraction and remorse. When they arise at our mind once again, we concentrate our mind at the solar plexus, and mindfully note the restless and distracted mind. How does it arise, how does it linger, how does it disappear? Is it useful or is it harmful? We observe it as it really is, noting “distraction, distraction”, until its transitory nature becomes evident to us. It passes away and becomes the past.

Then the fifth kind of hindrances, doubt, arises. If doubt arises in us we note it. We note how it arises, and what kind of conditions lead to its arising. When doubt arises in the present moment, we observe it as it is and meditate on it, “doubt, doubt.” Doubt can arise about everything. Whatever we don’t really understand we can have doubt about it. When doubt arises we try to establish

mindfulness on it. When we see it as it really is, doubt will be seen to arise, linger and pass away. This is its nature.

As for the other four groups of mind-objects, we can meditate on them in the same way. This is the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Carrying out this practice, we can attain real results. We must use mindfulness and awareness to observe the present moment. We should not go looking at the past or the future; we should not speculate about the things that arise. Don't try to analyze them. Our only task is to mentally note and observe things as they arise, and meditate on things as they arise in the present moment.

The most important thing we should do every time after having finished the practice is spreading loving-kindness and transferring merit. First, we silently note to ourselves, mentally note the words of spreading loving-kindness to our own self as follows:

Ahaṃ sukhito homi

Niddukkho homi

Avero homi

Abyāpajjho homi

Anīgho homi

Sukhī attānaṃ pariharāmi.

May I be happy.

May I be without unhappiness.

May I be without enmity.

May I be without malevolence.

May I be without physical and mental suffering.

May I be happy in both body and mind; and may

I be able to protect myself from danger.
(Visuddhimaggassa Nāma Pakaraṇavisesassa
Vol.2, 1997, p.93; Suchitra Onkom, 2007a,
p.52)

The reason why we spread loving-kindness to our own self first is that, according to the Buddha's teaching, no one loves another more than his or her own self. ("Self" here is the conventional truth; for the Ultimate Truth, there is no self) The Buddha says:

*Sabbā disā anuṇṇigamma cetasā
Nevajjhaga piyataramattana kvaci
Evaṃ piyo puthu atta paresaṃ
Tasma na himse paramāttakamoti
Whatever quarter of the heavens I searched
through,
None did I find whom I love better than myself.
Just so to all others is their self dear.*

*Thus, wishing well to all, one should do harm to
none.* (Visuddhimaggassa Nāma Pakaraṇavisesassa Vol.2,
1997, p.94)

Then note the words of spreading loving-kindness to all beings:

*Sabbe sattā sukhī hontu
Averā hontu
Abyāpajjhā hontu
Anīghā hontu
Sukhī attanaṃ pariharantu.
May all beings (who are subject to birth, old age,
disease and death), be happy.*

May they be without enmity.

May they be without malevolence.

May they be without physical or mental suffering.

*May they be happy in both body and mind; and
may they be able to protect themselves from
danger. (Visuddhimaggassa Nāma Pakaraṇa-
visesassa Vol.2, 1997, p.93; Phra Dharmas-
inghapurajarn, 2007, pp.18-19)*

After having finished spreading loving-kindness,
then note the words of transference of merit as follows:

*Idaṃ me mātāpitūnaṃ hotu sukhitā hontu
mātāpitāro*

Idaṃ me ñātināṃ hotu sukhitā hontu ñātayo

*Idaṃ me gurūpajjhāyācariyānaṃ hotu sukhitā
hontu gurūpajjhāyācariyā*

*Idaṃ sabbadevānaṃ hotu sukhitā hontu sabbe
devā*

*Idaṃ sabbapetānaṃ hotu sukhitā hontu sabbe
petā*

*Idaṃ sabbaverīnaṃ hotu sukhitā hontu sabbe
verī*

*Idaṃ sabbasattānaṃ hotu sukhitā hontu sabbe
sattā.*

*May this merit accrue to my mother and my
father; may they be happy.*

*May this merit accrue to all my relatives; may
they be happy.*

*May this merit accrue to my teachers and my
preceptor; may they be happy.*

*May this merit accrue to all gods; may they be
happy.*

May this merit accrue to all hungry ghosts; may they be happy.

May this merit accrue to all enemies; may they be happy.

May this merit accrue to all beings; may they be happy. (Phra Dharmasinghapurajarn, 2007, pp.18-19; Suchitra Onkom, 2007a, p.53)

There are ten advantages that one can get from the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness:

1. When we practise the Four Foundations of Mindfulness regularly, a sense of willingness to give material things away or to share knowledge for philanthropic purpose, and a tendency to forgive will arise from the depths of our hearts.

2. The practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness enables us to develop the ability to adhere to moral precepts and disciplines, that is, to refrain from wrong and evil doing.

3. Regular practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness helps to train our mind that it may adhere firmly to righteousness.

4. Regular practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness leads to humility. The more we practise, the better we will understand about our own selves and this will make us more humble.

5. Our practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness will teach us to be more compassionate and helpful to other people. We will have no jealousy in our mind. Jealousy brings about five bad consequences as follows:

- 5.1 It is the main reason behind disunity.
- 5.2 It is an obstacle to the building up of a good mutual contact and cordiality.
- 5.3 It is the tool which destroys the incentive and spirit of colleagues.
- 5.4 It helps one to create enemies for oneself since in jealousy, there is no room for compassionate feelings or thoughts.
- 5.5 It provides no place for sincerity.
6. Regular practice will make us want others to share or to have the merit we have 'accumulated'.
7. Practising will make us sincerely appreciate and praise the good deeds of other people.
8. Practising will teach us to love listening to sermons and talks from which we can derive good, moral lessons. We will not like listening to nonsensical talk.
9. Practising will make us teach people to do good only.
10. Practising will make us seek for and cultivate right views (Phra Rajsuddhinanamongkol, 2003, pp.141-142)

Apart from ten advantages mentioned above, practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness also gives us these results:

1. We have developed self-disciplines in three aspects:
 - 1.1 We have learned to be cautious about ourselves.
 - 1.2 We have learned self-restraint.
 - 1.3 We have learned to be willing to listen to the elders.

2. We have acquired four aspects of working habit:
 - 2.1 Diligence, love for our work and willingness to face challenges.
 - 2.2 We have learned to be thrifty and to spend our money and live wisely.
 - 2.3 We have learned to improve ourselves and our occupations.
 - 2.4 We have learned about the spirit of unity and co-operation as well as the love of our family, community and country.
3. We have acquired four aspects of good personal character:
 - 3.1 Respectfulness.
 - 3.2 Willingness to try or make an effort.
 - 3.3 Practise according to regulations and disciplines.
 - 3.4 We know where we stand.
4. Our secular knowledge coupled with moral scruples provides the four necessary conditions which make it possible for us to develop the quality of life:
 - 4.1 We know how to think rightly.
 - 4.2 We know how to re-adjust ourselves.
 - 4.3 We know how to solve our problems.
 - 4.4 We will prosper in our work. Our boss and our colleagues will trust us. (Phra Rajsuddhinanamongkol, 2003, pp.143-144)

These aforesaid are the Buddha's teachings which the Venerable Phra Dharmasinghapurajarn (Jarun Thitadhammo) formerly Phra Rajsuddhinanamongkol of Wat Ambavan, Singburi Province, considers "Buddhology."

And this Buddhology, the way for every individual to practise, will help create a peaceful, sublime, and energetic world. If there are those who do not believe that this is the most effective way to create sustainable world peace, they are cordially invited to test it, as the teaching of the Buddha invites all to question and discover for themselves. He also guarantees that those who practise the Four Foundations of Mindfulness will obtain great benefits. Their minds will be full of loving-kindness and compassion, and they will have no thoughts of harming others. Then they will find peace, both internal and external and the whole world will be in peace.

May all religious followers and the leaders of every country in this world join hands and create world peace by practising the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Once each of us, individually, has struggled with our own inner fragmentation and chaos; has subdued our internal enemy; has fought 'the war to end all wars', obtaining tremendous, positive energy in the process. Then our topsy-turvy world will be topsy-turvy or will suffer no more.