

About The Author

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- Education: * 1983 Bachelor Degree Buddhist Studies and Education Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University Bangkok Thailand.
- * 1986 Master of Arts Degree Political Science Pune University Maharashtra India.
- * 1988 Doctor of Philosophy Degree Political Science. Banaras Hindu University UP India.
- Experience: * 1989 - 1990 Vice Dean of Graduate School Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Bangkok, Thailand.
- * 1995 - 1988 Vice Dean Faculty of Social Science, Chiangmai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand.
- * 1995 - 2001 Special Undergraduate Lecturer at Chiangmai University, Chiangmai ; Maecho University, Chiangmai; (Christian) University, Chiangmai; Rachaphat Institute, Chiangmai, Thailand.
- * 1995 Visiting Lecturer Sonoma State University California, USA.
- * 1997 Participant Inter-Religious Federation for World Peace Washington, USA
- * 1997 **Guest** speaker on “Buddhist Belief and Tobacco control” in 10th World Conference on Tobacco and Health, Beijing, China.
- * 1997 Visiting Lecturer John Hopkins University,

Maryland, USA.

* 1997 **Guest** Speaker, on “Buddhism and Basic Public Health,” Department of Public health, Tokyo University and the Buddhist Association of Tokyo, Japan.

* 1997 Invited to meet with Labor officials in Israel along with the Ven. Panyananda., sponsored by the Thai-Israel Foundation and the Thai Embassy in Israel.

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* 2002-Present Abbot of Wat Buddha Panya, a Theravada Buddhist Community located at 1157 Indian Hill Blvd. Pomona California 91767.

* Wat Buddha Panya serves approximately 300 Thai-American families.

* Wat Buddha Panya is responsible for the educational development of body and mind. Direct daily and weekly meetings. **Attend** network events with Non-Buddhist Associations.

* Wat Buddha Panya distributes Buddhist books to support physical and spiritual growth nationwide and submit weekly articles for publication in the local Los Angeles Thai Town USA News and the Muang**thai** News.

Preface

The Buddha once proclaimed his resolution to work for the liberation of all sentient beings by saying that he was born for the benefit and happiness of large numbers of people. He was always peaceful and cool in temperament and pointed the way for others to access the peaceful and cool-tempered life too. In his youth he was enthusiastic and diligent. He often showed kindness to both people and animals around him. When he was married, he pleased his wife well. As a son of his parents, he pleased his parents well. As a crown prince, he was beloved by his people.

When he started seeking the truth, he always worked hard with endurance. After his enlightenment as the Buddha, he wandered from place to place day by day to point the way of liberation to people regardless of class, caste, race, color or any other limitation. His living was very simple. He consumed just the necessities of life and worked hard to teach people to realize the way of leading their lives to everlasting peace and happiness. When he passed away, he left nothing material, only the immortal, absolute, and universal truth, which everybody can know, realize and access. Regarding the truth as the real Buddha he said, "Whoever realizes the truth, realizes me." From this we know that the real Buddha has never died. He is with everybody who realizes the truth. Whoever experiences the truth experiences the Buddha here and now.

Neither he nor anyone else has ever praised him as God or Savior, but when considering his actions throughout his life, we can see that he is indeed a teacher of peace. Let us know the Buddha in history and reflect to see the real Buddha existing within our minds, free from all the defilement, clean, clear and calm. When we look within our minds, we will see the immortal Buddha in every walk of life, wherever we are.

With Love and Peace
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The Buddha: A Teacher of Peace

Introduction

The common task of the founders of all the world religions was to bring peace to mankind. The truth of each religion has served as a light leading human beings to peace. Loving-kindness and tolerance are the basic principles for peaceful co-existence for people who love peace. In the long history of the world, the history of the founders of the world religions is the history of disseminating the way of public well-being, happiness, and peace.

The Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, lived around 628-543 B.C. and worked for promoting the ways of peace in accordance with the resolution that “No happiness is beyond peace.” “Buddha” is his title given by those who followed him after his enlightenment. It means “the enlightened, awakened, and blossomed one.” He has been greatly respected by Buddhists as the great teacher who teaches them the way to a noble and peaceful life.

Buddha was born on a Friday at the time of the full moon in May 628 B.C. The place of his birth was Lumbhini Park, near the foot of the Himalaya Mountains in northern India in what is now in Nepal. He was named Siddhartha. His father was King Suddhodana who ruled over a small kingdom called Kapilavatthu and his mother was Queen Mahamaya. They belonged to the Sakya clan, and their family name was Gotama. His mother passed away seven days after his birth. Mahapajapati Gotami, Mahamaya’s sister, looked after him and loved him like her own son.

Loving for peace

He was warmly nurtured and grew up amidst a luxurious life. As a prince, he was surrounded by all of what was pleasurable in life. Yet in spite of this, he did not become attached to it. According to tradition, he started his interest in meditation when he was very young. The story is told that

“once he went to participate in the plough festival in the Royal field with his father, servants, and friends. He sat under the jumbu tree while his friends and servants left him to take part the entertainment.”

“Alone, he felt very refreshed and at peace. Then he closed his eyes and started focusing his mindfulness on breathing in and breathing out continuously for a long time. His mind became very contemplative, stable, pure, and peaceful. It was the first time he experienced spiritual tranquility.”

This was his first significant experience of peace which formed the great basis and influences for him to seek the truth, resulting in his attaining Nibbana, (in Buddhist language) the everlasting peace when he was grown. Thus experiences in childhood, when one is most impressionable, can determine one’s character in the future.

Education

When he was about eight years old a princely education was arranged for him, in which he continued until he was about sixteen. Unfortunately, the details of the subjects he studied are not known. According to the contemporary traditions in ancient Indian history, the main subjects would have probably been literature, music, law, mathematics, archery, swordsmanship, horsemanship and warfare. The story is told only of his great intellectual power in study and of the gentle-mannered, kind-hearted, modest, tender-hearted and deferential qualities shown by the prince.

According to the tradition, when the prince finished his education, an exhibition of his knowledge was held in front of the public. Siddhartha passed all the test events with the highest marks. This indicates that the structure of ancient princely education had as its goal to train the student to attain both physical and spiritual growth through a balance of both knowledge and ethics.

Loving-kindness and Gentleness

Prince Siddhartha’s distinguishing individual virtue which inspired him to devote his whole life to seeking the great truth, the way to eliminate suffering, and to working for the happiness and peace of the human race and all sentient beings, is his loving-kindness. According to the story, when he was young he always protected and helped those who were suffering. Once

he struggled to help a swan that had been shot and requested the right of ownership from the one who had shot the swan, his cousin Prince Devadatta. Siddhartha was a man of such good will that he believed every living being had a fundamental right to life and that no one had the right to kill other living beings. Prince Devadatta, however, grew angry and refused to give him the swan. The conflict between the two cousins could not be resolved by themselves and so they settled the quarrel in court.

After the swan's wounds were very well attended to by Siddhartha, they went to court and explained their case to the ministers and the wise men, who thereupon declared: "Everyone values his or her life more than anything else in the world. Therefore, we think that the swan belongs to the person who tried to save its life, not to the person who tried to take its life away. Give the swan to Siddhartha." When the swan was completely healed, Prince Siddhartha allowed it to return to the place it had come from.

He thus applied loving-kindness as the basis for standing confidently to preserving living beings, justice and righteousness. This is a universal immortal truth which can be applied to nature, the environment, and even the whole world in modern times. Real peace never comes from hatred and war but from love, mutual understanding, and cooperation.

Gentleness and personal attractiveness were also the prince's characteristics, which everybody who met him appreciated. The tradition tells us that "one day as he entered the city, coming from the royal garden, a maiden named Kisa Gotami, struck by the beauty and noble bearing of the prince, sang: 'Happy the father that begot you, happy the mother that nursed you, happy the wife that calls husband this lord so glorious!' The prince upon hearing this replied, "Happy are they who know deliverance. Longing for peace of mind, I shall seek the bliss of Nibbana, peace and cool.

Seeking the Truth

When he was sixteen years old, he was married to a beautiful princess named Yasodhara, his mother's cousin, from Devathaha, a city not far from Kapilavasthu. But after living a family life for thirteen years, he renounced the worldly life to lead a life of wandering, to seek for truth when he was twenty-nine years old.

What inspired him to change his way of life was his encounter with an old person, a sick person, a dead person and a pilgrim wanderer who was living simply. He felt great sorrow over the natural phenomena of human life, which cause suffering for all. The pilgrim wanderer appeared in his view as a little light among the great darkness in finding an alternative way to seek the truth of freedom from suffering. He was convinced that he must save not only himself, but all mankind from the bondage of suffering.

Loving-kindness and non-selfishness encouraged the prince to seek the truth, which is the path to ending suffering. In his pilgrim wanderer's life, he lived with the few things necessary for maintaining life without seeking or collecting surplus property just to make his life easy. He was free and ready to spend all his time seeking the truth. As a first step, he went to many contemporary popular schools of spiritual training to study and experience various kinds of meditation and other teachings.

He studied and practiced the subjects taught in each school very seriously, so much so that the great scholars of the schools verified that he was very bright in pursuing knowledge and was expert in the practice of meditation. According to the tradition, he attained with distinction the highest level of meditation taught in his time. The eminent masters of the meditation school requested him to be a teacher, but he refused the appointment, stating that his solemn intention was to search out the knowledge which could rid him of all defilements. According to his experience, even the highest level of meditation was just a temporary tranquility. Whereas it could prevent more defilement such as craving and attachment from occurring during the mediation, yet, just as a rock placed on the grass will keep the grass from growing only so long as the rock is in place, as soon as one stops the meditation the defilements and the suffering will begin again, just as the grass will sprout again as soon as the rock is removed from the grass. Meditation by itself cannot completely get rid of defilements and bring everlasting peace.

He thus decided to depart from all academic schools in order to seek the ultimate truth by himself. He wandered to many quiet places to test whether there was any physical setting that was beyond the power of defilements. Finally he arrived at the village of Uruvella Senanigama, which was surrounded by a peaceful environment consisting of a great forest of various green trees, grass and colorful flowers by the great river Neranjara with its pure and clean water and fresh atmosphere. People who would give

him food, just sufficient enough for living, lived not too far away. He thus thought this place appropriate for his great self-training.

Self-Mortification

The Buddha began his intensive course by repeating all of his experiences of contemplation and tranquility resulting from meditation training at the many schools in the time of his renunciation. There was nothing really advanced about it as meditation, and its result is described in the Buddhist scripture *Mahasuccakasutta, Majjima-Nikaya* (*Middle Length Sayings*, Volume 1) in a dialectical discourse with a man named Aggivesana as follows:

“Aggivesana, three parables occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. It is as if there was a wet sappy stick placed in water. Then a man might come along bringing a rubbing fire-stick, thinking, ‘I will light a fire, I will get heat’. What do you think about this, Aggivesana? That man who brought a rubbing fire-stick and used it to rub the wet sappy stick that had been placed in water, could he light a fire, could he get heat?”

“No, good Gotama.”

“What is the cause of this?”

“It is, good Gotama, that such a stick is wet and sappy and that it was placed in water. That man would only get fatigue and distress.”

“In like manner, Aggivesana, if any recluse or Brahman dwells not aloof from the pleasure of the bodily senses, then if that which is within him – affection for sense-pleasure, infatuation with sense-pleasure, thirst for sense-pleasure, fever for sense-pleasure – if this is not properly gotten rid of subjectively nor properly allayed, then even if such a worldly recluse or Brahman experiences feelings which are acute, painful, sharp or severe, these cannot lead to knowledge, vision, or the incomparable self-awakening. This, Aggivesana, was the first parable that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before.”

“Aggivesana, a second parable occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. It is as if, Aggivesana, a wet, sappy stick were placed on dry ground, far from water. Then a man might come along bringing a rubbing fire-stick, thinking, ‘I will light a fire, I will get heat.’ What do you think about this, Aggivesana? That man, who brought a rubbing fire-stick and rubbing

that wet sappy stick that had been placed on the dry ground, far from water, could he light a fire, could he get heat?”

“No, good Gotama.”

“What is the cause of this?”

“It is, good Gotama that that stick is wet and sappy although it had been placed on dry ground, far from water. So that man would only get fatigue and distress.”

“In like manner, Aggivesana, any recluse or Brahman who dwells not aloof from the pleasures of the bodily senses ... his feelings cannot to knowledge, vision, or the incomparable self-awakening. This, Aggivesana, was the second parable that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before.”

“Then, Aggivesna, a third parable occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. It is as if, Aggivesana, a dry sapless stick were placed on dry ground, far from water. Then a man might come along bringing a rubbing fire-stick, thinking, ‘I will light a fire, I will get heat.’ What do you think about this, Aggivesana? That man who brought the rubbing fire-stick and rubbed that dry sapless stick that had been placed on dry ground, far from water, could he light a fire, could he get heat?”

“Yes, good Gotama.”

“What is the cause of this?”

“It is, good Gotama, that that stick was dry and sapless and had been placed on dry ground far from water.”

“In like manner, Aggivesana, if any recluse or Brahman dwells aloof from the bodily pleasures of the senses, then if that which is within him – affection for sense-pleasure, infatuation with sense-pleasure, thirst for sense-pleasure, fever for sense-pleasure – if this is well gotten rid of subjectively and well allayed, then if such a worthy recluse or Brahman experiences feelings that are acute, painful, sharp or severe, they can indeed lead to knowledge, vision, and the incomparable self-awakening; but even if such a worthy recluse or Brahman does not experience feelings that are acute, painful, sharp or severe, he can attain knowledge, vision, and the incomparable self-awakening. This, Aggivesana, was the third parable that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before.”

These three parables crystallize and focus the Buddha’s thoughts, like the chemical synthesis of a crystal that occurs after long experimentation. The Buddha thus decided to try harder than before. He decided to begin self-torment and mortification of the flesh, which were well known among the

contemporary seekers of truth as the hardest and the final way to overcome all suffering. But nobody passed this course and presented the results of this practice to the public because all of them died of the practice. So whenever anyone started self-mortification it received public attention, and that person become known as a “holy one.”

The Buddha started with various kinds of self-mortification including reducing the amount of food eaten each day until the ultimate result was no food, absolute fasting. The main concept of this was the belief that defilements depend upon the life-force and the life-force depends upon food: when the life-force increases defilement increases, so when the life-force decreases defilement decreases too. The logical conclusion was that fasting had to be done in order to decrease defilement.

Self-torment Meditation

The Buddhist Scripture (*Mahasaccakasutta, Majjimanikaya*, Volume 1, pp. 297-305) tells the way of self-mortification step by step in a conversation between the Buddha and Aggivesana as follows:

(1) “It occurred to me, Aggivesana: Suppose now that I, with my teeth clenched, with my tongue pressed against my palate, should subdue, restrain and dominate my mind? So I, Aggivesana, with my teeth clenched, with my tongue pressed against my palate, subdued, restrained and dominated my mind. While I was subduing, restraining, and dominating my mind, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, sweat poured from my armpits. It is as if, Aggivesana, a strong man, having taken hold of a weaker man by his head or shoulders, would subdue, restrain and dominate him. Even so, while I, Aggivesana, was subduing and dominating my mind, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, sweat poured from my armpits.”

(2) “It then occurred to me, Aggivesana: Suppose now that I should meditate through non-breathing meditation? So I, Aggivesana, stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose. When I, Aggivesana, had stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose, there come

to be an exceedingly loud noise of wind escaping through my auditory passages. As there comes to be an exceedingly loud noise from the roaring of a smith's bellows, even so when I, Aggivesana, stopped breathing in and breathing out through the mouth and through the nose, there came to be an exceedingly loud noise of escaping wind that stirred up in me unmuddled mindfulness; yet my body was turbulent, not calmed, because I was harassed in striving against that very pain. It was in this wise, Aggivesana that a painful feeling that had arisen in me persisted without impinging on my mind."

(3) "It then occurred to me, Aggivesana: Suppose now that I should again meditate the non-breathing meditation? So I, Aggivesana, stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose and through my ears. When I, Aggivesana, had stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose and through my ears, exceedingly loud winds rent my head. As a strong man, Aggivesana, might cleave one's head with a sharp-edged sword, even so when I, Aggivesana, stopped breathing in and breathing out through the mouth and through the nose and through the ears, exceedingly loud winds rent my head. Although, Aggivesana, unsluggish energy came to stir up in me steady mindfulness, yet my body was turbulent, not calmed, because I was harassed in striving against that very pain. It was in this wise, Aggivesana that a painful feeling that had arisen in me persisted without impinging on my mind."

(4) "It then occurred to me, Aggivesana: Suppose now that I should again meditate through non-breathing meditation? So I, Aggivesana, stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose and through my ears. When I, Aggivesana, had stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose and through my ears, I came to have very bad headaches. As a strong man binds a turban on his head with a tight leather strap, even so when I, Aggivesana, stopped breathing in and breathing out through the mouth and through the nose and through the ears, did come to have very bad headaches. Although, Aggivesana, unsluggish energy came to stir up in me unmuddled mindfulness, yet my body was turbulent, not calmed, because I was harassed in striving against that very pain. It was in this wise,

Aggivesana that a painful feeling that had arisen in me persisted without impinging on my mind.”

(5) “It then occurred to me, Aggivesana: Suppose now that I should again meditate through non-breathing meditation? So I, Aggivesana, stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose and through my ears. When I, Aggivesana, had stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose and through my ears, very strong winds cut through my stomach. As a skilled butcher, Aggivesana, or his apprentice might cut through the cow’s stomach with a sharp butcher’s knife, even so, Aggivesana, did very strong winds cut through my stomach. Although, Aggivesana, unsluggish energy came to stir up in me unmuddled mindfulness, yet my body was turbulent, not calmed, because I was harassed in striving against that very pain. It was in this wise, Aggivesana that a painful feeling that had arisen in me persisted without impinging on my mind.”

(6) “It then occurred to me, Aggivesana: Suppose now that I should again meditate through non-breathing meditation? So I, Aggivesana, stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose and through my ears. When I, Aggivesana, had stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose and through my ears, there came to be a fierce heat in my body. As two strong men, Aggivesana, having taken hold of a weaker man by his limbs, might set fire to him and make him sizzle over a charcoal pit, even so, Aggivesana, when I had stopped breathing in and breathing out through my mouth and through my nose and through my ears, did there come to be a fierce heat in my body. Although, Aggivesana, unsluggish energy came stir up in me unmuddled mindfulness, yet my body was turbulent, not calmed, because I was harassed in striving against that very pain. It was in this wise, Aggivesana that a painful feeling that had arisen in me persisted without impinging on my mind.”

From this self-torment, many opinions arose. Some who had seen him said, “The recluse Gotama has passed away.” Others said, “The recluse Gotama has not passed away, but he is passing away.” Still others said, “The recluse Gotama has not passed away nor is he

passing away; the recluse Gotama is a perfected one; the mode of living of a perfected one is just like this.”

Fasting and Results

After passing this training, he had not yet reached the truth he was seeking. Therefore he started fasting. The detailed methods and results of his fasting are described by the Buddha as follows:

“It occurred to me, Aggivesana: Suppose now that I was to take food little by little, drop by drop such as from bean soup or vetch soup or pea soup or chickpea soup? While I, Aggivesana, was taking food little by little, drop by drop such as from bean soup, vetch soup, pea soup and chickpea soup, my body became exceedingly emaciated.”

The results of his eating so little over time he described as follows: “Because I ate so little, all my limbs became like the joints of withered creepers ... my buttocks became like a hooves ... my protruding backbone became like a string of balls ... my gaunt ribs became like the crazy rafters of a tumble-down shed ... the pupils of my eyes appeared sunken and dead ... my scalp became shriveled and shrunken as a bitter white gourd cut before it is ripe becomes shriveled and shrunken by the hot wind.”

Describing how he became weaker and thinner, he said, “If I thought, ‘I will touch the skin of my belly,’ it was my backbone that I took hold of. The skin of my belly came to cleave to my backbone. If I thought, ‘I will obey the call of nature,’ I fell down on my face then and there. If, soothing my body, I stroked my limbs with my hands, the hairs, rotten at the roots, fell away from my body as I did so.”

Because of this many people came to see him and spoke to each other about him. Some said, “The recluse Gotama is black or the recluse Gotama is not black. The recluse Gotama is deep brown.” Others said, “The recluse Gotama is not black or deep brown but is of a sallow color.” This indicated that his clear pure complexion was spoilt. Many people around him observed his actions very closely in order to give advice in every activity and the effects that arose from these activities.

Evaluation and search for the new way

When, though after passing the intensive course of self-mortification in the highest degree, he still had not realized the knowledge and vision for eliminating suffering, he evaluated his self-training as follows:

“Some recluses and Brahmans in the past have experienced feelings that were acute, painful, sharp, and severe; this is paramount, nor is there anything worthier than this. And some recluses and Brahmans in the future will experience feelings that are acute, painful, sharp, and severe; this is paramount, nor is there anything worthier than this. But I, by such severe austerity, have not reached the state of the furthered men, the excellent knowledge and vision befitting the Aryans. Can there be another way to awakening?”

After he had repeated and reviewed the whole course of his experiences of spiritual training, he recalled an impressive event that occurred when he was a child: “ I remember that while my father, King Suddhodana Sakyan, was ploughing, and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose apple tree, aloof from the pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, entering into meditation, which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness, and is rapturous and joyful, and while abiding therein I thought, ‘Now could that be a way of awakening?’ Then, following on my fullness, there was consciousness; this is itself the way to awakening.”

After he had evaluated scientifically his experiences and results from each course of training so that he could clearly separate what was meritorious from what was not meritorious, what was right what from what was wrong, and what was effective from what was ineffective, he decided to change from the way of extremism to the middle way which would produce a balance between the body and mind.

The middle way to the Enlightenment

The Great One gave up the way of non-breathing meditation, which was a kind of self-torment action, and followed the way of mindfulness; he stopped fasting and followed the way of nourishment just from living in a healthy way. When he decided to change his way of training he said, “Now it is not easy to reach that happiness by thus subjecting the body to extreme

emaciation. Suppose I were to take material nourishment of boiled rice and sour milk? So I took material nourishment of boiled rice and sour milk.”

When he decided to stop his self-torment and fasting and turned to have food for support of life, eventually his body regained its health. This enabled him to undertake mindfulness meditation effectively. He spoke thus: “When I had taken some material nourishment, having picked up strength, I remained aloof and abided in the first meditation which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness, and is rapturous and joyful. But yet the pleasurable feeling that arose in me persisted without impinging on my mind.

“By allaying initial thought and discursive thought, with the mind subjectively calmed and fixed on one point, I entered on and abided in the second meditation which is devoid of initial and discursive thought, is born of concentration, and is rapturous and joyful. But yet the pleasurable feeling that arose in me persisted without impinging on my mind.

“By the fading out of rapture I dwelt with equanimity, attentive and clearly conscious, and I experienced in my person that joy of which the Aryans say, ‘Joyous lives he who has equanimity and is mindful.’ I thus entered on and abided in the third meditation. But yet the pleasurable feeling that arose in me persisted without impinging on my mind.

By getting rid of joy and by getting rid of anguish, by reducing former pleasures and sorrows, I entered into and abided in the fourth meditation which has neither anguish nor joy and which is entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness. But yet the pleasurable feeling that arose in me persisted without impinging on my mind.”

Enlightenment

After he had tried the new middle way of training which is based on the balance between a healthy body and mind, he felt satisfied and confident that it might be the right and appropriate way to attain the absolute truth to end suffering. In that way he attained both physical and spiritual fitness in every walk of life.

In the evening on the full moon day of May in 588 B.C., while sitting under the Bodhi tree by the Neranjara River in a peaceful environment and fresh atmosphere, he entered into and abided in the first through the fourth

steps of mindfulness meditation. As a result a special knowledge arose in him which was very different from the past. He later called it Enlightenment. The Buddha described the process of enlightenment after entering the four mindfulness meditations as follows:

“With the mind composed thus, quite purified, quite clarified, without blemish, without defilement, grown soft and workable, fixed, immovable, I directed my mind to the knowledge and recollection of the former habitations.... Thus do I remember divers’ former habitations in all their modes and details. This was the first knowledge attained by me in the first watch of the night: ignorance was dispelled, knowledge arose, darkness was dispelled, and light arose, even as I abided in diligence, ardent and self-resolute. But yet the pleasurable feeling that arose in me persisted without impinging on my mind.

“With the mind composed ... (as above), I directed my mind to the knowledge of the passing hence and arising of beings.... Thus with the purified superior vision surpassing that of men, I see beings as they pass hence and as they arise. I comprehend that beings are mean, excellent, fair, foul, highly born, or lowly born according to the consequences of their deeds. This was the second knowledge attained by me in the middle watch of the night; ignorance was dispelled....

“With the mind composed thus ... I directed my mind to the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers.... When I knew thus, saw thus, my mind was freed from the cankers of sense pleasures, the canker of becoming, and the canker of ignorance. In freedom the knowledge came to be that I was freed, and I comprehended: Destroyed is birth, brought to a close is the noble way of life, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or such. This was the third knowledge attained by me in the third watch of the night.... But yet the pleasurable feeling that arose in me persisted without impinging on my mind.” (*Mahasaccaka Sutta, Majjima Nikaya*, Volume 1, pp. 302-303)

The Buddha’s Enlightenment process was very scientific because it depended on the law of interdependent origination based on cause and effect. It was the total crystal synthesis arising from the combination of various kinds of training and experiments in the field work which the Buddha engaged in for six years, using himself as the object of observation, collection of experiences, experimentation, evaluation and conclusion led

him to find the right and appropriate way to attain enlightenment. It was the result of applying the human force of good intention, mindfulness, meditation, effort, endurance, and wisdom.

In the Enlightenment process, the Buddha realized the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering, the Noble Path leading to end of suffering. According to him, ignorance is the main source of the defilements or cankers: desire, greed, anger, delusion and attachment, which cause suffering every time they appear. On the contrary, knowledge is said to be the main light for destroying ignorance which is like darkness. It is the pivotal source of origination of the noble eightfold path: right understanding, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation, which together result in freedom from defilement and the end of suffering.

In order to attain this great knowledge, the Buddha used mindfulness as the keynote of spiritual development which results in origination of knowledge and other wholesome virtues which, finally, establish everlasting peace, Nibbana. It is empty and free from all defilement absolutely. Both ignorance and knowledge originate from the law of cause and effect based upon the law of interdependent origination. Both suffering and non-suffering, the main point of the Buddha's teaching, originate in the same way. Human life in the body and mind is considered to be the central condition for both originating and extinguishing suffering.

The Buddha's mind is without defilement but full of perfect mindfulness, morality, concentration, loving-kindness, great wisdom for radical salvation, and eternal peace. Because of his purely spiritual quality the people titled him "Buddha" – meaning the enlightened, the awakened, the blossomed one – from the day he attained enlightenment.

The Main Directive for Preaching the Truth

After finding relief in the happiness of salvation and repeating the truth that he had realized for some time, historically recorded as forty-five days, under the Bodhi tree and other trees in the area, loving-kindness arose in him to teach all his suffering fellow human beings the way to end their suffering. He departed from that place directly to the deer park called Isipatanamigatayavana not far from Varanasi, which was the abode of the five ascetics, former disciples at Buddhagaya – Gondanya, Vappa,

Baddhaiya, Mahanama, and Assachi – who had left him when he gave up self-mortification.

These were those who listened and realized his teaching and became the first group of monks whose ordination was given by the Buddha. After three months the number of monks who had attained ultimate truth and salvation and been ordained by the Buddha had increased to sixty. When the rainy season had passed, the Buddha and his followers started preaching the doctrine to the people without regard to class, caste, race, color or sex in every place they wandered to. Before starting his mission work, the Buddha called the sixty monks together and proclaimed his main directive for preaching his doctrine as follows: “I am delivered, O monks, from all fetters, human and divine. You, O monks, are also delivered from all fetters, human and divine. Go you now, O monks, with compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, and for the welfare of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach, O Monks, the doctrine which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle, glorious at the end, in the spirit and in the letter; proclaim a consummate, perfect, and pure life of holiness. There are beings whose mental eyes are covered by scarcely any dust, but if the doctrine is not preached to them, they cannot attain salvation. They will understand the doctrine. And I will go also, O monks, to Uravella Senanigama, in order to preach the doctrine.” (*Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 13: *Mahavagga*, pp. 112-113).

Having considered this directive, there are various interesting and important points that can be applied in missionary work even today:

Personal quality of the preachers. They were well trained to be perfect in character and free from the power of all defilements. They were ready to devote their time and energy to the public without asking any profit for themselves.

Manpower management. The Buddha used decentralization in sending the monks to work in various places. Only one monk was assigned to arrange the preaching in each direction in order to spread the noble way of life in many places very quickly.

Purpose of preaching. The purpose was set as the benefit and happiness of many people. Compassionate love would be preached to all sentient beings all over the world. Happiness and peace would come to the people of the world because of compassionate love and the thought of the entire human race as our sisters and brothers. This should be the universal

central tenet for peaceful coexistence among all peoples in the age of globalization.

The issues of preaching. The Buddha instructed all monks to preach the noble way of life step by step so as to make the listener happy and make the way easy to follow and practice. The steps of the noble way of life can be classified into three categories: morality, mindful meditation, and wisdom for freedom.

The target group for teaching. The Buddhist Scriptures describe the classification of individual differentiation and ability of learning as follows:

The Buddha, having full compassionate love towards sentient beings all over the world, saw beings whose mental eyes were darkened by scarcely any dust and beings whose eyes were covered by much dust, and so beings sharp of sense and blunt of sense, of good disposition and of bad disposition, easy to instruct and difficult to instruct, some of them seeing the dangers of the future life and the dangers of evil.

As in a pond of blue lotuses or water-roses or white lotuses, some are born in the water, grow up in the water, and do not emerge from the water but thrive hidden under the water; others are born in the water, grow up in the water, and reach to the surface of the water; still others are born in the water, grow up in the water, reach to the surface of the water, and then emerge from the water, and the water does not touch them.” (*Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 13: *Mahavagga*, pp. 88-89)

The Buddha and his followers considered the fundamental ability for learning in human beings and used this as the criterion to test their readiness, preparing appropriate lessons to teach them effectively. The means of communication they used were as follows:

- Conversation on the issues, satisfying the listeners and pointing out the truths concerning the issue, done one-on-one or with small groups.
- Preparing the subject for field work, study and activity for people who were less ready to learn and required additional time to improve their readiness, done mostly for those who were in a serious condition or were suffering badly.
- Holding impromptu discussions based on current situations to bring Buddha’s teachings to bear on the reality of life.

- Presenting parables of nature, context and the phenomena of human nature and the essence of the doctrine to enable the listener to understand and practice easily,

- Presentation of practical truths through activities in daily life as examples of applying truth to living. This made use of the important principle for all teachers that “one practices what one teaches” through appropriate methods which help the listener approach the subject easily, quickly, and successfully.

In general, Buddhism could be studied and practiced equally by anyone who was ready to learn because the Buddha used human life and conduct as the central laboratory for study and practice.

The Buddha’s Teaching

The nature of the Buddha’s teaching does not depend upon any ironclad statement of unbreakable law, but is flexible and depends mostly on human experience and environment. The teachings concerning humanity, society, all beings, and world peace can be found both directly and indirectly.

The Buddha’s message is no different today from what it was in his own time because human problems and suffering have not changed or decreased; on the contrary, human suffering has increased because the causes leading to suffering have increased as the result of modern science and high technology.

The spread of materialism and consumerism around the world – as an apparently necessary adjunct to capitalism – has served only to create more greed, more anger, more desire, and more delusion. It has led people into more craving and clinging, leading to more striving and competition. People must fight one another in every walk of life. Their life is now like walking across a battlefield. Such striving causes increasing anger and hatred over time, leading to political, racial, cultural and economic wars, both locally and internationally, spread through every part of the world. The results of these various types of wars include deforestation, over fishing, depletion of every kind of natural resource, and environmental pollution that leads eventually to human health problems. The results also include various kinds of social problems, such as drug addiction. All of this, unfortunately, makes people suffer as surely as did the conditions in the time in which the Buddha lived.

Therefore what the Buddha said is always relevant: “In the past, present and future, I teach only the issue of suffering and non-suffering.” This is the main theme of his work and teaching throughout his life. On this the Buddha’s teaching can be classified and applied as follows:

1. **Humanity:** The Buddha’s enlightenment comprised the four noble truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering. Suffering means the experience of painful phenomena in human daily life: old age, illness, death, sorrow, disappointment, missing a loved one, facing a hated one, bad feeling and other dissatisfactions occurring in the mind.

The cause of suffering originates in the law of interdependent origination as: the interrelation between six inner sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind) and six outer sense organs (visible object, sound, odor, taste, tangible object, cognizable object) associated with consciousness causes us to be affected by these things we sense a concept that Buddhists call “touching,” and touching associated with ignorance causes satisfaction or dissatisfaction, selection or non-selection the term we use for this is “sensation” and sensation causes desire (craving for experiencing sensual pleasure, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming), desire arising again and again causes attachment, and then all this causes suffering.

Cessation of suffering means the complete cessation of desire which consists in the absence of every passion with the abandoning of this thirst, with doing away with it, with the deliverance from it, with the destruction of desire.

The Path for cessation of suffering originates from the law of interdependent origination as: the interrelation between six inner sense organs (as mentioned earlier) and six outer sense organs (as mentioned earlier) associated with consciousness causes the touching, this process associated with mindfulness to separate what is right and what is wrong, then it causes the Noble Eightfold Path leading to cessation of suffering consisting of right understanding, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation. (Sacred Books of the East ed, by Max Muler Vol., 13 Mahavagga p.97)

The ethical code for human development can be concluded as: abstaining from all evil deeds (action, speech and thought), committing all

good actions, and purify the mind. It concerns both self-development and social development for human and social well-being.

2. **Society** Morality consisting of five precepts: one should abstain from harming and killing another sentient being, stealing another's property, committing sexual conduct with another's husband or wife, telling a lie, using intoxication or addiction substances. Morality is the social ethical conduct for peaceful co-existence among human beings and other beings. It ensured life, property, family, credibility and health security, which are the fundamentals of a secure society. Other virtues: compassionate loving, tolerance, honesty, mutual understanding and forgiving, support social harmony and unity.

3. **Economy** Seeing through the whole Buddhist way of life, Buddhist economic concept should be based upon self-helping, self-sufficiency, self-awakening, self-development and self-confidence, freed from the strong stream of consumerism and materialism. These two phenomena are the products of unregulated capitalism, causes of desire, greed, and delusion, which are, and will continue to harm and kill people in every part of the world. Business in such a system has been for too long carried on with profit as its only morality and has led to the destruction of human, natural and environmental resources.

Buddhist philosophy should be applied to the economy. It is applicable, and brings a morality that business should be carried on for the promotion of the well being of a majority or of all human fellow beings, preserving natural resources and the environment for the next generation. The co-relationship and unity between human beings, other beings, natural resources and environment should be the first thought for future businessmen. At the same time, the point of balance between consuming and maintaining should be done on the fundamental tenet that the necessary condition for living must be satisfied. Many countries in Asia and in the other continents which are facing economic devastation should come to perceive what is happening as it really is, then deliberately change to a new style of economy based on self-help and self-sufficiency with self-awakening leading to the safely and economic stability for all, not for only a small group as has lately been the case.

4. **War or peace** it is the reality that wars have been fought to create peace during all of human history, but peace never comes from war. The

Buddha refused war and pointed the way of origination and cessation of war as follows:

“A man many spoil another, just so far
As it may serve his ends, but when he’s spoiled
By it may serve his ends, but when he’s spoiled
So long as evil’s fruit is not matured,
The food doth fancy ‘now’s the hour, the chance.
But the deed bears fruit, he felt ill.
The slayer gets slayer in his turn;
The conqueror gets one who conquers him,
The’ abuser wins abuse, the’ annoyer frets.
Thus by evolution of the deed,
A man who spoils is spoiled in his turn”

Again he said the way to end of war for peace; “Victory breeds hatred. The defeated live in pain. Happily the peaceful live, giving up victory and defeat” (Narada, The Buddha and his teaching; p.111)

World peace. Individual peace arising from following the four noble truths has been extended to the world and no happiness is beyond peace.” In order to cultivate the seed of peace in the human mind, he always taught: Let one cultivate good will towards the entire world, a boundless friendly mind, above and below and across, unobstructed, without hatred, without enmity. Standing, waling, or sitting or lying, as long as he is awake, let him devote himself to this mind. This way, they say, is the best in the world. (F.Max Muller(ed.) Sacred Books Of the east, vol. x, trans., F. Max Muller and V. Fausboll, Delhi: motilal baranasidass, 1968 p. 25)

According to the Buddha’s word, universal compassionate loving, loving-kindness, friendship should be used as the new arm to increase and individual level is passed to another, to society, and extended nationwide and finally worldwide, like the internet, as a spiritual network. It also causes integrity, harmony, and cooperation in the globalization age.

The Buddha’s daily routine

The Buddha said: ‘he was born for the benefit and happiness for all beings so every day he worked hard from early morning to midnight. The time tale of his daily routine can be seen as follows:

- Early Morning: surveying all beings in the world to find someone who wants spiritual guidance. Most of them are in crisis.

- In the morning: going to visit the one who has been seen in early morning surveying and helping them. After seeing the Buddha, their ignorance is removed, the end of suffering and happiness has come.

- Going to receive food from the people who respect and prepare for him with good intention and coming to have a meal for just one time a day only before noon. At that time if he meets the people who are appropriate to be taught, he will not hesitate to teach them.

- In the afternoon, he sits at the monastery to teach, train, and personally supervise the monks who have not yet attained the ultimate truth to help them progress. At the same time, he greets the people who come to respect and listen to the sermon or get spiritual uplifting from him.

- In the evening, the first watch, this period of night extends from 6 p.m. – 10.00 p.m. and was exclusively reserved for instruction to monks. During this time, the monks are freed to approach the Buddha and get their doubts cleared, question him on the intricacies of the Dhamma, obtain suitable objects of meditation, and hear the doctrine.

- In the middle watch, about 10 p.m., invisible to physical eye, celestial beings such as Devas and Brahmans approach the Buddha to question him on the Dhamma. Several discourses and dialogues between the Buddha and them are collected in the Buddhist scripture called Devata Sumyutta in Sumyutta Nikaya section.

- In the last watch, the small hours of the morning, extending from 2-6 a.m. which comprise the last watch, the Buddha spends the time from 2 a.m. – 4 a.m. to mindfully sleeping on his right side. At 4 a.m. he attains the ecstasy of great compassion and radiates thoughts of loving kindness towards all beings and softens their minds. At this early hour he surveys the whole world with his Buddha's eye to see whether he could be of service to any. The virtuous and those that need his help appear vividly before him though they may live at a remote distance. Out of compassion for them he goes of his accord and renders necessary spiritual assistance.

Leading a life of voluntary poverty, seeking his alms without inconveniencing any, wandering from place to place for eight months throughout the year preaching his sublime Dhamma he tirelessly worked for the good and happiness of all beings till his eightieth years. (Narada Mahathera, the Buddha and his teaching; 125-128)

The Buddha's passing away

The Buddha worked hard to bringing everlasting peace to the human race, from the day of enlightenment, for forty five years. On the full moon day of May, 543 B.C., he went to the small city called Kusinara to perform the last task all the day by answering the questions asked by monks, lay Buddhists, and kings and giving the sermons to those surrounding him. Asked by Ananda: “the Word of the Master is ended, we have no teacher more!” the Buddha said: “The truths and the rules of the orders which I have set forth and laid down for you all, let them after I am gone, be the teacher to you”.(Sacred Books of the east: ed. By Max Muller, vol. XI, Mahparinibana Sutta, P. 112-114.)

And at night he lay down on the bed just covered with the simple robe and said: “*Behold now, brethren, I exhort you; Decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your salvation with diligence!*” Then entered to and repeated all deep stage of meditation and immediately expired. It is very clear from the Buddha’s word that it is just the physical Buddha who passed away, but the truthful Buddha is immortal. Once he assured that: “whoever sees the Truth that person sees me.” According to the Buddhist sense, as long as we follow the truth and rules for salvation we are following and living closely with the immortal Buddha. He would be our spiritual leader who holds the great light to point the right way for us forever.

His teaching has been studied, practiced and passed along by the faithful people from one generation to another, from time to time up to our time. In the long run, it has been respected and followed by many hundred million people all over the world. About in the third century B.C. the Buddhist art of the Buddha’s statue began to make its appearance. The earliest, Buddhist art was influenced by Greece after Alexander the Great reached India in 326 B.C. (William Macquitty, p.53). Afterward, whenever Buddhism spreads to the people they will create the Buddha’s statue to remind us of his great loving kindness, great purity, and great wisdom. Some, thinking of the Buddha as god to pray to and worship, create the statues small or grand in accordance with their belief.

However, because Buddhism has non-violence as its own basic principle, all human beings have an equal right to hold Buddhism as their spiritual refuge according to their view without any limitation. So Buddhism was founded by a human being, taught by human beings, for the happiness and peace of human beings.

Conclusion

Every founder of the world's religions has taken part in saving the people from the great danger of evil in the past and in the present, and will continue to do so in the future. All religions are the light for their people. The more darkness of ignorance covers people's minds all over the world, the more light of truth leading the way they want. The more fire of defilement is burning people's hearts, the more water of truth they wish. The more spirit of friendship, respect for each other, integrity, harmony and co-operation, exchange of knowledge and experience of each other among all religions will create the new dimension of alternatives for the world community. We have no time to hesitate, now the world is waiting for us to bring it peace.

November 16, 1997.

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Buddhism and Current Events

Buddhist Thanksgiving

On Thanksgiving Day people in America may have splendid dinners with turkey and other tasty, festive foods. Some go to Las Vegas to enjoy gambling. This year, there was about 20 people from different places of L.A. coming to Wat Buddhapanya to celebrate “Thanksgiving Day” in the special way that nobody has ever done. They came for a series of lectures on the Buddha’s teaching and practicing meditation. It will be an extraordinary Thanksgiving Day Ceremony.

Thanksgiving in the Buddhist sense means to show gratitude to the things, persons, or the places that have contributed to the progress of our life. We pay gratitude to our parents because they give us life, clothes, residence, medicine, food, money for education all the necessities for life. We regard our parents as God because they are the creatures of our life and they had done everything for us with the power of kindness.

We pay respect to the teachers because they teach us the way of living and doing anything, which supports our well being of life. We regard our teachers as the people who bring enlightenment to us.

We thank our husbands and wives who fulfill our sweet dream. We give thanks to our sons and daughters who come to encourage our life to have the bright hope of a future of peace.

We thank our enemies who struggle to defeat all the difficulties. We thank the land where we were born giving us the opportunity to learn and to work. So, we as Buddhists can share the Thanksgiving Celebration.

Those people have the same goal as the others to celebrate Thanksgiving Day with the hope that they will find peace and the end of suffering. On November 24, 2005 Wat Buddhapanya they came and made camps around the temple. They said, "Our Buddha stayed on the ground for all his life, we as the followers should do along with his actions." The main core of Buddhism is emphasized on "plain living and high thinking." Living likewise is a way to practice Buddhism directly.

The devotees of Wat Buddhapanya, led by the master monk, gathered together to chant and meditate. The master monk opened question and answer hour for all. The master monk can answer all questions dealing with life, family, society, Buddhism, and so on. It is a time for Buddhists to have time for conversation with the master monk closely.

In the morning, at 5.00 a.m. the people get up and do personal business. They start each day by chanting and meditation to purify of mind. At 7 a.m. the participants travel to the Los Angeles National Park at Mt. Baldy for walking meditation. The participants shared breakfast near the lake with the fresh air in the morning. We would like to thank those who contributed food and for all the preparations making this event a success.

The participants sit in meditation to show their gratitude by breathing in and out to examine life from moment to moment. Our life depends on breathing in and out. Breathing in and out keeps us alive. It is our real home where our life can take a rest safely.

The devotees of Wat Buddhapanya exchanged experiences , opinions , and ideas for two days and two nights. They commit themselves to good deeds, to right speech and to right thinking .

The devotees at Wat Buddhapanya exhibited a desire to show thanksgiving to the land called America where the devotees share opportunities and a better life.

O My God

When I came to America my friends often ask me, "Do you know God? Do you believe in God? Do you have God in Buddhism?"

I would answer, "I don't have significant knowledge about God. Therefore, I can not deny or agree with that belief. However, if God is the

source of goodness, then I believe. I conclude that all that love goodness, as I do, should know God.”

In a multicultural society, like the one we live, it is important to understand the core teachings of each religion. Religion, and the understanding of various religions, is the key to peaceful co-existence among people in a diverse culture. While in America, I have had the privilege of exchanging knowledge and sharing experiences with many friends from different religions. In each religion, I ask: What is your concept of God? From all that I have gathered, it is my opinion that in most religions, God is seen as:

God can do everything
God knows everything
God is the source of love
God creates and saves human beings
God gives human beings prizes and punishments

Ven. Buddhadasa Bikkhu, the great Buddhist scholar monk of Thailand, who has been recognized by the UNESCO of the United Nation as a voice of importance among the many other important people of the world, has spent his life promoting the happiness and peaceful harmony of human beings.

His temple, Suan Moke , which translates to The Garden of Liberation, welcomes all people, from different religions and from different parts of the world, to attend a 10-day course meditation. Sharing a quest to come to the same place, to do the same thing – to fill the mind with peace. Peace of mind is something that all human beings can accomplish and should strive to reach. Peace of mind may be the common ground to which people from all different religions can find understanding.

The late Ven. Buddhadasa Bikkhu devoted his life to the dissemination of Buddhism. He sought to find a connection and mutual understanding at the core of diverse religions. His goal was to bring together people from different religions, cultures and backgrounds.

Derived from my learning from Ven. Buddhadas Bikkhu and the conversations and encounters I have had with friends in America, I am able

to draw one of many parallels that I hope will help all you clarify God in your heart. When I review the qualities that I believe to be of God, I realize that these too are qualities that are inherent in parenthood. I lay out my comparison for you to see:

God knows everything. Our parents know almost everything about us. That is how they are able to serve our needs. They know when and how we feel happy or sad. They know how to treat and encourage us to pass through the troubles of life. They know how to nurture us physically, emotionally and spiritually.

God is the source of love. Our parents are our main and first source of love. Their love is unconditional – without limitations and conditions. Their love grows as we grow and blossoms as we blossom. Their love lights us up in the day like the sun and lights us up at night like the moon. Their love is consistent and all encompassing.

God creates and saves human beings. Our parents are the creators of our lives - they take care of us, protect us, and work to save our lives from hardship. They try to save us by making us strong spiritually and physically- by providing us with an education, sheltering us from physical suffering and introducing us to spiritual enlightenment.

God gives human beings prizes and punishments. Our parents always give us the prizes to encourage our progress and a lot of these prizes often go overlooked. Their prizes include: food, clothes, shelter, cars, toys, money, books, and the list goes on and on. These are all prizes because we never pay for them and it comes from their heart. Their prizes come to us without limitation and condition.

If you agree with this parallel that I have drawn out for you- then you and I have experienced God all the time in our homes. I remember God waking me up in the morning. I remember God preparing three meals a day for me. I remember God taking me to school and picking me up everyday. I remember God hugging me when I cry and comforting me when I'm scared. Before I sleep, I remember God singing me to bed. I remember waking God up in the middle of the night when I had a bad dream. I remember God teaching me to move forward and seek new accomplishments when all else

seemed to fail and not go my way. I remember God healing me when I was in pain. And, I remember God's happiness and adoration with my every accomplishment. Do you remember all that your God did for you?

Although I compare God to parenthood in this article, I hope that you all understand what I am trying to convey: God is goodness- God can take on many different forms- from your parents to your teachers to your friends. Whenever and with whomever, you realize the existence of God – find happiness and peace by worshiping, caring and loving that God with all your being. With that, you will find peace of mind. With that you will see, God is in all of us.

Be Careful

On December 4, of every year, the King of Thailand delivers a speech to the Thais all over the country the day before His birthday on December 5, which is regarded by all the Thais as Father's Day. The Thais wait for his speech because it concerns the direction of the country and the way of life of the people in the future.

On December 4, 2005, the main theme of the King's annual speech, which covers economic, social, and political events in Thailand today, was "**being careful.**" As a devout Buddhist, he reminded us of this truth from the main tenets of Buddha's teaching which he always taught his followers: "**Carefulness is the way of deathlessness but carelessness is the way of death.**" Before the Buddha passed away, he gave these final words: "O monks, now I warn you that all composite things (including body and mind) will expire; therefore you must all live with carefulness." Previously the Buddha had said, "All teaching or all truth in Buddhism can be concluded in one word: **carefulness**." This is the keyword and foundation of all the Buddha's teaching.

What is meant by the word "**carefulness**"?

Carefulness means that the ways of thought, action, and speech in every walk of life are conducted with mindfulness. Knowing before thinking, acting or speaking is called mindfulness. In our daily life we must

always use mindfulness, from getting up in the morning to going bed at night. We can realize the way of applying mindfulness in every movement. Let us examine the main duties in daily life done with the guidance of mindfulness.

When we get up in early morning, we know we must wash ourselves in the bathroom. When we are in the bathroom we must be careful while bathing, giving attention to the whole process of cleaning the body. When we feel hungry, we must know how to make food or buy food for eating. Once we know what to do, we decide according to our knowledge. If we decide to cook for ourselves, we should know the way to the kitchen. We must also know how to make different kinds of food we want to eat. We must be careful when we light the fire and must know how to manage the fire when making the, since the fire can cause great danger if we manage it without carefulness. It may burn our food, our hands, or even our homes. We must thus finish our cooking and have the food with carefulness throughout the entire process.

When we go to work, we must drive the car with even more carefulness. We must use more mindfulness and awareness while driving. If we drive with carelessness, we will become injured or even die, and the car will be wrecked along with our body. Driving with careless brings death. But driving with carefulness brings happiness because it brings us to our work place safely and our mindfulness and awareness are increased.

This is the way we can realize carefulness in our daily life. The more carefulness we practice, the more safety and happiness we will have.

In the speech, His Majesty the King began by stating the immortal truth to all the highly ranking officials led by the prime minister of Thailand, seated in front of him: "If you are careless you will die; if you are careful you will survive". He used this theme to explain the life of the people who are working for the public: whether they are officials, politicians, or even the king himself, they must be careful in their work because they are within the eyes of the people. But if they do wrong, they will be killed by the eyes of the people who are watching them. Killing does not mean killing with weapons but with the criticisms from the people who participate in the political activities of a democratic society. The criticism of the people is a great weapon against the politicians who are working for the public. Being careful means they must be aware of what is right and what is wrong, being careful not to do the wrong thing. He brought up the popular words from the

text of the law, “The King can do no wrong,” to explain that some people think that if the King does something wrong, it is not wrong. But he does not agree with this interpretation because, if the statement is true, then the king is not a human being.

According to his opinion, the statement “The King can do no wrong” means “The King must not do wrong.” If the King does something wrong, he must also be criticized by the people to let him know what the wrong done by him was. If the people never tell the wrong done by the king, the disadvantage will be with the king. As one who works for the public, he has agreed to listen to the criticisms if the people. Yet according to the Thai constitution, nobody can criticize the king. Criticizing the king is illegal. But according to his opinion, he does not disregard criticism by the people because it allows him to know how to correct the wrongs he has done. His understanding of the statement, “The king can do no wrong,” is that if he does do wrong, it will harm both himself and others in accordance with the Buddhist sense.

He also said that if someone criticizes him, he will not put him or her in jail even though it is illegal. To do so would bring upon him guilt and disadvantage. It is a great time for him to raise this issue in his annual speech and explain his standpoint very clearly, because many selfish politicians are now trying to destroy the opposition by trying to prosecute and jail anyone who has just referred to the king even in a positive way. The king has therefore confirmed that he will never put one who criticizes him in jail.

This major theme of his speech reflects the reality of political maneuverings of the politicians in Thailand in the midst of gossip about corruption of the politicians who are in power. They are trying to stop criticism from the various groups of people in every way they can. The political conflict in Thailand in regard to corruption and the criticisms of the people against the government has become heated. If the politicians in the power ignore the king’s warning to correct their behavior, a political crisis may arise and worsen rapidly because most of the people in Thailand are aware if the cunning policies of the government made to benefit those in power rather than the people. The eyes of the Thai people throughout the country and the world are watching them. If they go on engaging in corruption in direct and indirect ways, the people may turn against them with violent marches to kick them out of power and even out of the country. They

will thus lose the power, property, opportunity, honor, and good, which they have accumulated throughout their lives.

The word “death” in the Buddhist sense does not mean the destruction of life only but also the loss of the good while living. Thus when the king said, “Carelessness brings death,” may mean the death that result from the loss of the good, including everything available in this life. If the politicians in the power are to realize deathlessness, they must use their power with mindfulness and awareness by being careful to act in the right way so that the people who are watching them will agree with their right actions. All politicians must remind themselves of the warning of our king: “Carelessness will cause you to die; carefulness will cause you and your country to survive.” Knowing this, politicians must choose whether they want to die or survive.

Merry Christmas

Buddhadasa Bikkhu, the great Buddhist scholar of Thailand once said, “Mutual understanding and co-operation among religions is an important for individual, social and world peace because the main task of all religions is to eliminate selfishness and make peace among human beings and all sentient beings”.

Love, peace and happiness are inherent in all religions. No matter what religion, belief, culture, color, race etc, we all seek the same outcome. Thus began my quest to understand other religions and find parallels within them to further explain Buddhism to everyone who is interested. This is my exploration of Christmas from a Buddhist view...

Growing up as a child, I lived in a rural area that was deeply embedded in the Buddhist culture, therefore, many of my references derived from Buddhism. When I first came to Bangkok, an urban city filled with people from different places around the world and different cultures, it was

no shock that when I saw a sign at a shopping center that read: Merry Christmas, I was confused and bewildered by what it meant.

I was immediately interested in the phrase, Merry Christmas, as it was plastered on signs all over the city. I guessed that this statement likely dealt with St. Mary, Jesus' mother. I concluded that when Christians want to pay patronage to Jesus' birthday, they rightfully so, pay patronage to his mother. This was a very Buddhist interpretation.

When I returned to my temple, I decided to look it up in the dictionary. I found that the translation of the word "Merry" had many meanings, none of which were of reference to St. Mary, as I had thought. The translation that stuck out to me most was, "delightfulness or entertaining". This made sense to me, because the word "delightfulness" represents the feeling of deep appreciation derived from some impression and aspiration of something that touches your soul. I could see why people celebrated to be "Merry" and from this day forward, I never forget the meaning on "Merry Christmas".

I concluded that in Christianity, when Christians remind themselves of Jesus' love for them on his birthday, they feel delightful and appreciative. I thought – Christians around the world must all come together on this Christmas day to rejoice for Jesus. And, if we translate "Merry" as entertaining, it's understandable that they rejoice by entertaining on Christmas Day by having a celebration or a party. People adorn their houses and public buildings with colorful trees, lights and all various kinds of decorations- this too is delightful and entertaining. They eat delicious food, drink, sing, and dance - this all made sense.

But then I see that there are other dimensions to Christmas which don't quite make sense. I realize that Christmas has come to mean so much more than I think it was originally intended. I think it's become not only a religious holiday, but an economic, commercial, capitalist and materialistic holiday.

If people celebrate Christmas Day along the intended religious way, they would live simply and gather with family in memory to Jesus' birth. They would strive to experience real peace and rejoice. At the same time, they would help to preserve the earth, energy, and natural resources by consuming less and maintain only for the necessary conditions of living. It

would be a great time for all members in the family and community to make harmony, unity and integrity by performing religious activities together.

But this isn't anymore the case. Christmas has become an economic holiday moved by capitalism, commercialism, consumerism and materialism. Christmas Day has become a great time of economic circulation. In the capitalist economic system, money is the central factor to move all the economic machines. The more desire people have, the more money people pay for what they desire. The more things people consume, the more production is made, sold and distributed. And what better time to hit peoples' desires than to exploit a time when presents and present giving is central to the holiday ritual.

Christmas celebration now has become a day to support economic growth rather than spiritual growth- its true intention. It stimulates people to think more about luxurious living based on the materialist ideals and consumerist glory rather than the simple life that religious prophets of all religions preach about. Thus, economic growth is high but spiritual growth is low.

Even the Pope, the great leader of the Catholic world, reminded Christians around the world that Christmas is a spiritual holiday, not a commercial one that should be overshadowed with consumerism. He tried to bring people back to the reason of the holiday – to remember the path walked and led by Jesus Christ and his teachings of simplicity and good. The Pope explained that Christmas is a time to remember Jesus and if you worship him, to practice the 'right way' to celebrate his birthday.

Jesus was very much like Buddha in the way he lived his life. They were both very simple; living and working to spread peace and happiness. They were free of materialistic desires. They both taught love, kindness, forgiveness, tolerance and non-violence. They represented their teaching through their daily actions and expected their followers to do the same. Doing good and living a spiritual life by following the middle way was how all prophets lived. We would do all of ourselves a benefit if we remember this. You may also find that a life of simplicity also relieves stress, which is caused by competition for material motivated by greed, anger and delusion.

Many people misunderstand that Buddhist chanting is done in order to get blessings or have prayers answered. In fact, the Buddha statue is not at

all a holy thing which can bless prayers and make what you beg for come to you, but it is, in fact, a symbol of the loving kindness, purity and wisdom Buddha has given to us. When Buddhists chant in the morning and evening, they chant to remember, not to ask. It is when you cultivate Buddha's teachings and qualities into your own life, that you will reap the reward. I believe this is true for many religions, Christianity included.

We do not deny the mainstream way of living in the modern world. We understand that many things in the modern world depend upon money and material objects, but it is important for it all to be in moderation. To understand, the real reason for celebration, to live in accordance with that reason, and to choose to not be only a consumer, a capitalist, a materialist, but also a spiritualist. Merry Christmas to all- and May your path lead you to happiness and peace.

Happy New Year

Although nobody can define or describe the essence of happiness, everybody can know, experience, and wish to have it either temporarily or forever. On important occasions of life such as a birthday or New Year's Day, people greet their loved ones and friends by saying, "Happy birthday!" or "Happy New Year!" and giving them speeches or cards to express their best wishes and good will with deep feeling. The one who receives such a greeting feels delighted and happy from such a greeting. Happiness is a universal emotion, which everybody, without exception, can understand and enjoy.

On New Year's Day, people take a holiday to organize various kinds of activities for their happiness. Travel, singing, dancing, gambling, drinking,

and big parties are engaged in for the purpose of happiness. Some stay home enjoying cooking and eating delicious food and sweets together. But after one has spent so much time, energy, money, and natural resources, he should evaluate what he has gained and what he has lost in his life.

New Year's Day is a special time in life for recalling the things done in the year just passed and for planning what one will do in the next coming year. Self-awareness, self-study, self-knowledge, self-improvement, self-development, and self-content are the ways to set the strategy of life to walk forward strongly into the future. One should review, repeat, and remind himself of what he has done for happiness: "Is it real happiness? Is it temporary or sustainable? Can one have happiness only on auspicious occasions or can one have happiness in his daily life? Can one have happiness only while enjoying a holiday or also while working? Does happiness depend on external conditions or can one have happiness without external conditions?"

If we consider the concept of happiness from the Buddhist view, happiness that arises from calm and peace is more sustainable than happiness that arises from excitement. Peace can bring happiness more easily than excitement can. Peace is without limitation of time or space but excitement requires time, space, a place, and an occasion. In daily life we can all have peace as a foundation of life to nurture our minds so as to have sufficient power to carry on the activities of life successfully. When we realize this truth, we can seek happiness easily in our daily work and routine because happiness is found everywhere peace exists.

A peaceful mind makes everything around us meaningful. When you get angry, your beautiful house, car, and ornaments are meaningless because without a peaceful mind you cannot enjoy what you have. Property is like rock, sand, wood, and stones. Money is like so many pieces of paper. When one becomes angry with one he loves, the beloved one becomes an enemy whom he must fight against. A peaceful mind is normal while an excited mind, whether excited positively or negatively, is abnormal. In ordinary times when the mind is not clouded by hatred, anger or delusion, peace exists and happiness exists too. But when the mind is interrupted by hatred, anger or delusion, peace and happiness do not appear. Looking within and taking care of the mind is maintaining peace and happiness.

Happiness is caused by both external and internal conditions. Some people can have happiness when they do activities dealing with outside conditions. On the other hand, some people feel happy by themselves. They are happy wherever they are because they have sufficient inner peace, which creates happiness without dependence on outside conditions. Whether they sit, walk, work, stand or carry on the activities of daily life, they are still happy because they have internal peace as the foundation of all their activities. If people realize this truth, they can become happier easily.

However, in Buddhism the Buddha teaches us both the external and internal conditions of happiness. Whenever we feel content with what we have or what we are doing, we are happy. Each family consists of various members, namely the mother, father and kids. When they do activities or work together, they are happy. For special occasions like birthdays or New Year, they organize parties. They are happy to decorate the house, cook, eat, and talk together. In the society outside the family, when people organize parties for some special festival or occasion, they are happy to have lunch or dinner and talk together. The Buddha speaks of the human beings as a social animal: “Having a meal by oneself alone has never been happy.” Thus we can see human beings in every part of the world doing the same when they have a special occasion on which they feel happy: they organize a party and have a meal together.

The Buddha also points out that “harmony of the people is a way to happiness.” It is clear that people in the same family or society are happy while doing activities like working, walking, playing sports, and exercising together. They have an opportunity to show their skills and potential and to exchange opinions so as to learn from each other. It is an important time for making good friends who can please and entertain each other. Working and engaging in activities bring knowledge and wisdom. Concerning this case the Buddha says, “To gain wisdom is a way of happiness.” This means the more learning and activities one engages in, the more knowledge and wisdom one gains. Knowledge and wisdom create happiness for the one who possesses them. One who has wisdom can find many ways to make himself or herself happy.

The Buddha also regards non-violence in society as a way to happiness. We know well that in a society where there is no harming, killing or war, the people live happily because they feel secure and confident. To bring non-violence to the society is not done by government only but by

everybody who helps to make a non-violent society by stopping the harming and killing of one another. The Buddha says clearly, “Non-violence is a way of happiness.” From this it depends on one another that the peaceful mind creates a non-violent society which causes the people to feel secure and confident and thus be happy. Each factor supports the conditions for accessing peace and happiness. It is like a circle of happy lives within a society.

When the Buddha refers to internal condition of happiness, he says, “No happiness is beyond peace”. He means the peace of mind. The mind, which is free from the power of negative and positive thoughts, is pure, calm, clean, clear, active, and fresh. This is the normal mind with peace as its original foundation. Looking within mindfully and insightfully will cause one to see the truth of life that peace and happiness already exist within every life. One need only pay attention and look within carefully concerning what appears in a moment to know it as really is. It is very natural and common for all to understand and realize by real experience without imagining or dreaming.

Now we know many ways to access happiness. On this special occasion of the New Year, let us each choose a way that is right and proper way for us to access the happiness to celebrate and welcome the coming new year so as to assure a prosperous, happy, and peaceful life. Happy New Year to you all!

Foundation of Life

Most of the Buddhist devotees, both women and men, who come to engage in conversation with me at Wat Buddhapanya on Sunday or at Griffith Park on Saturday ask me how to develop mindfulness. This is because Buddhists are always taught to live with mindfulness. The Buddha praised mindfulness as the main focus of all his teaching. Before his passing

away, he preached on mindfulness as the last word for all his fellow beings on which to establish the foundation of life at every step.

The word “**mindfulness**” is the English translation of the word “**sati**” in Pali, the language which preserves the Buddha’s teaching. It means remembering what has been done previously, thinking how one will act in the future, and knowing what is going on here and now. Mindfulness is applied whenever our life is moving. It is like a safeguard for maintaining security against doing evil at every step of life. All of us can apply mindfulness to carry on our tasks in our daily lives because it is an innate ability that is available to everybody. On the other hand, life without mindfulness is prone to accidents, injury, and even death. Lack of mindfulness causes the good way of life to be lost and to turn into evil because the one without mindfulness cannot maintain his life. Even if one has much money and valuable property, if he has no mindfulness to maintain it he can lose it totally. Mind without the safeguard of mindfulness is interrupted by restlessness, lust, hatred, confusion and boredom. Because of this it becomes disgruntled, aggressive and unstable. Under such a condition one cannot work and live happily. Therefore mindfulness is required to take good care of both the body and mind, so as to compose a perfect life, which is full of good physical and spiritual quality.

How can we become skillful in having mindfulness?

We must apply mindfulness to our bodies by thinking of how our bodies move and act in every direction. We get up early in the morning and do our personal business such as sitting, walking, standing, running, bathing, cooking, having a meal, washing and cleaning the utensils we use for cooking and having the meal, reading the newspaper, driving our car on the street, and going to work. We need mindfulness and awareness to carry on and perform these activities.

We must apply mindfulness to our feelings. According to Buddhism, there are three types of feelings: negative, positive and neutral. If we try to know more or less when we get angry, aggressive, agonized or stressed, then we can become mindful of our negative feelings. At the same time, if we try to know more or less when we feel pleasure, delight, joy, satisfaction and happiness, then we can become mindful of our positive feelings. Finally, if we try to know more or less

when we are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, neither liking anything nor disliking anything, then we can become mindful of our neutral feelings. When we practice mindfulness, let us observe our feelings continuously so that mindfulness will be natural and spontaneous.

We must apply mindfulness to our minds. Although this is a very abstract concept, we can deeply observe the moments of our minds while we are thinking so as to know what we are thinking of. Is our mind pure or impure, clear or cloudy, bored or active, stable or restless? This is the way that we apply mindfulness to our minds.

We can apply mindfulness to what appears in our minds, whether good or bad, wholesome or unwholesome. How can we react and respond to all that is happening at every moment? Do we recognize all that is happening? Or do we deny it? Or do we know it and let it go according to natural law; arising, existing, and expiring?

In this way everyone without limitation can practice, accumulate, and apply mindfulness wherever they are. If they want more time to observe closely in every action, they can take special time for retreat meditation. This requires a peaceful place such as a private room, a forest, a park or any place which is convenient to visit. The mind will be composed with some movement of body or mind as enumerated above. If we compose our mind with our body, we can come to know any part of our body easily, like breathing in and breathing out.

When we start out, our minds may be running off to something that impressed us in the past or dreaming of the future. In such case we should not become worried, stressed or melancholy; we should just know it and look at it calmly. We should not let our minds follow what we are thinking but just be aware of breathing in and out again. At the beginning of training, it may not be easy to be calm. It requires much time and skill to realize and clarify the body, mind, thoughts, mindfulness, awareness and defilements. Knowing this, we can experience both suffering and non-suffering that appear in the mind. We can also experience the root cause of the suffering that passes in and out of our mind from time to time.

If we hold on to anything, whether negative and positive, the mind has a burden. As long as we hold on to it, it is heavy. The more we hold on to it,

the heavier it becomes. But the less we hold on to it, the lighter it becomes. If we hold on to nothing, but just know it and let it pass, no burden exists on the mind. The mind is thus empty and free. The mind which is free from carrying any burden has no suffering. We can know anything, but let it be in the right way as it should be known naturally.

From such practice we can experience to at least some degree the four noble truths, which are the main tenets of Buddhism. When we have the experience of a liberated mind even for just a short time, it is the same as knowing the way to everlasting peace of mind. We can be sure that whenever we walk on the right way, we will find the goal. When we practice mindfulness in the right way, we can access the peace both temporary and everlasting.

Mindfulness is always with us. If we can discover its benefits by our experience, we can use it to create a perfect life, which can grow both spiritually and physically. We can use it to create a family of warmth and happiness, and we can extend it to social security and world peace. Peace is with us, and we can live with it.