

Current Problems of Faith towards the Saṅgha Community and Their Solution

Ven. Sumanpriya Bhikkhu (Suman Barua),

Asst. Prof. Dr. Sanu Mahatthanadull,

Phramaha Nantakorn Piyabhani, Dr.

International Buddhist Studies College,

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

Corresponding Author Email: sumanpriyabhikkhu@gmail.com

Abstract

Faith has an important role in the early Theravāda Buddhism. The Theravāda Pali Canon lists faith as one of seven treasures (dhāna), one of five spiritual faculties (indriyas), and one of the spiritual powers (balas). There are also other lists of virtues in which faith is included; faith is described as an important quality in some stream-enterers, a state preceding enlightenment. In standard descriptions of people going forth (taking ordination as a monk), faith is usually mentioned as an important motivation. Faith in the sense of a trustful confidence – a quality more of the heart than a cognitive belief – has an important role in Buddhism, albeit generally not as central as in some religions. Faith both leads to calm and encourages one to seek to attain the stages of spiritual perfection. This paper aims to search for current problems on Faith to the Saṅgha Community, to analyze their cause and effects.

Keywords: Community, Faith, Saṅgha, Theravada Buddhism, Vinaya Rules.

Introduction

In Theravada Buddhism, monk, a male member of the Buddhist saṅgha, who has left home, been fully ordained and depends on alms for a living. The English word monk is derived from the Latin *monachus*, originally referring to a religious hermit, but eventually coming to mean instead a male member of a religious order. Similarly, while terms for monk in the Buddhist tradition (Sanskrit, *bhikṣu* or *sramana*; Pali, *bhikkhu* or *samana*) are rooted in words connoting mendicancy and austerity,¹ the Buddhist monk is more generally understood as a member of a community of religious renunciates (the saṅgha) who has undergone a formal ordination ceremony conducted by a quorum of fully ordained monks. In addition to the fully ordained monks (*bhikkhu*), novice monks (*samanera*) may also be considered members of the monastic community.² The discipline of a Buddhist monk is refined through mindfulness and wisdom. This code of conduct is called the Vinaya. While it is not an end in itself, it is an excellent tool, which can be instrumental in leading to the end of suffering. Theravada believes that *āviṅga* (ignorance) afflicts the minds of all unenlightened beings, who cling to them and their influence on their ignorance of the truth. Mental defilements frequent instigation and manipulation of the mind is believed to prevent the mind from seeing the true nature of reality. Unskillful behavior in turn can strengthen the defilements.³

What is Faith in Buddhism?

The words *saddhā*, *pasāda* and their related synonyms *pasanna* and *pasidadi* are sometimes translated as ‘faith’, however, *pasāda* are given a higher value than *saddhā*.⁴ *Saddhā* deepens when someone progresses along the spiritual path, and this is sometimes described as *pasāda*.⁵ *Pasāda* is faith, accompanied with clarity of mind and understanding.

¹Reginald A. Ray, **Buddhist Saints in India: A Study in Buddhist Values and Orientations**, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 20-35.

²Robert E. Buswell, Jr., “Ancestors”, **Encyclopedia of Buddhism**, Vol. 1 (2003), pp. 20-23.

³S. Dhammika, **The Broken Buddha, Critical Reflections on Theravāda and a Plea for a New Buddhism**, 2001, pp. 28-35.

⁴De Silva Lily, **Faith**, (Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Government of Ceylon, Vol V., 2002), pp. 214, 216.

⁵Harvey Peter (2nd ed.), **An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices**, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 31.

Ultimately, the practicing disciple develops and stabilizes his faith, basing it on spiritual insight. This leads his faith to become “unshakeable”. Along the path of spiritual growth, *saddhā* also has the meaning of ‘self-confidence’, required for dealing with temptations and self-mastery.⁶ Thus, faith is by itself not enough to attain deliverance, but is a first step on the path leading to wisdom and enlightenment.⁷ In many Dhamma teachings in early Buddhism, faith is mentioned as the first step, whereas wisdom⁸ is mentioned as the last: faith must be balanced by wisdom. On the last stage of the Buddhist path, the attainment of arahantness,⁹ faith is completely replaced by wisdom.¹⁰ At that point, the arahant no longer relies on faith at all.¹¹

Though, with a faithful heart, one takes refuge in the Buddha, his Teaching and the community of monks; or with a faithful heart observes the rules of morality, or develops a mind full of loving-kindness, be it only for a moment.¹² The sevenfold grouping of the noble disciples is as follows: (1) the faith-devotee (*saddhānusārī*), (2) the faith-liberated one (*saddhā-vimutta*), (3) the body-witness (*kāya-sakkhī*), (4) the both-ways-liberated one (*ubhato-bhāga-vimutta*), (5) the Dhamma-devotee (*dhammānusārī*), (6) the vision-attainer (*ditṭhippatta*), and (7) the wisdom-liberated one (*pañña-vimutta*).¹³ The enlightenment of a Buddha is called *sammāsambodhi*, the ‘perfect enlightenment’. The faith (*saddhā*) of a lay follower of the Buddha is described as “he believes in the enlightenment of the Perfect

⁶De Silva Lily, **Faith**, (Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Government of Ceylon, Vol V., 2002), p. 216.

⁷De Silva Lily, **Faith**, (Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Government of Ceylon, Vol V., 2002), pp. 214, 216.

⁸*Paññā* (Pāli) or *Prajñā* (Sanskrit) “wisdom” is insight in the true nature of reality, namely primarily *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (dissatisfaction or suffering), *anattā* (non-self) and *sūnyatā* (emptiness) (Carl Olson, *The Different Paths of Buddhism: A Narrative-Historical Introduction*, Rutgers University Press, 2005, pp. 63-64).

⁹Arahant (Pāli) or the Theravada Buddhism defines Arahant (Sanskrit) as “one who is worthy” or as a “perfected person” having attained nirvana (Warder, A.K., **Indian Buddhism**, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000), p. 67.)

¹⁰Lamotte, Etienne, **History of Indian Buddhism: from the origins to the saka era**, (French: Institut orientaliste, 1988), pp. 49-50.

¹¹Harvey Peter (2nd ed.), **An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices**, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 237.

¹² A.X. 20, also A. VI, 102; A. VII, 48; Ud. IV, 1; S. XXII, 102

¹³Vism. XXI, 73.

One” (saddahati Tathāgatassa bodhiṃ).¹⁴ There are also six types of men divided according to their nature: the greedy-natured (rāga-carita), the hate-natured (dosa-carita), the stupid or dull-natured (moha-carita), the faithful-natured (saddhā-carita), the intelligent-natured (buddhi-carita), and the ruminating-natured (vitakka-carita).¹⁵

A Buddhist is said to have faith if “he believes in the Perfect One’s (the Buddha’s) Enlightenment”,¹⁶ or in the Three Jewels (ti-ratana), by taking his refuge in them (ti-sarana).¹⁷ His faith, however, should be “reasoned and rooted in understanding” (ākāravatā saddhā dassanamūlika),¹⁸ and he is asked to investigate and test the object of his faith.¹⁹ A Buddhist’s faith is not in conflict with the spirit of inquiry, and “doubt about dubitable things”²⁰ is admitted and inquiry into them is encouraged. The ‘faculty of faith’ (saddhindriya; should be balanced with that of wisdom (paññindriya; indriya-samatta). It is said: “A monk who has understanding, establishes his faith in accordance with that understanding”. Through wisdom and understanding, faith becomes an inner certainty and firm conviction based on one’s own experience.²¹ Faith is called the seed of all wholesome states because,²² according to commentarial explanations, it inspires the mind with confidence (okappana, pasāda) and determination (adhimokkha), for ‘launching out’ (pakkhandhana)²³ to cross the flood of saṃsāra.

¹⁴ M.53, A. III, 2.

¹⁵ Ven. Ñyanatiloka (tr.), **Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms & Doctrines**, 4th eds., edited by Ñyanaponika, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), p. 81.

¹⁶ M 53; A. V, 2

¹⁷ The ‘Three fold refuge in Pāli, by the uttering of which one may also outwardly profess one’s faith, is still the same as in the Buddha’s time, namely:

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi,

Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi,

Sanghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi,

Meaning, I take my refuge in the Buddha! I take my refuge in the Dhamma! I take my refuge in the Saṅgha! Bhikkhu Bodhi, **Going for Refuge Taking the Precepts**, (Kandy: The Wheel Publication, 1981), pp. 7-20.

¹⁸ M. 47.

¹⁹ M. 47, 95.

²⁰ A. II 65; S. XLII, 13.

²¹ Ven. Ñyanatiloka (tr.), **Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms & Doctrines**, 4th eds., edited by Ñyanaponika, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), p. 287.

²² Sn. V. p. 77.

²³ M. I. 122.

Unshakable faith is attained on reaching the first stage of holiness, ‘stream-entry’ (sotāpatti, ariyapuggala), when the fetter of skeptical doubt (vicikicchā; saṃyojana) is eliminated. Unshakable confidence (avecca-pasāda) in the Three Jewels is one of the characteristic qualities of the stream-winner (sotāpannassa angāni). Faith is a mental concomitant, present in all karmically wholesome, and its corresponding neutral, consciousness. It is one of the 4 streams of merit (punnadhārā), one of the 5 spiritual faculties (indriya), spiritual powers (bala), elements of exertion (padhāniyanga) and one of the 7 treasures (dhana).²⁴ The 5 blessings are said to be faith, morality, learning, liberality, and wisdom.²⁵

The Current Problem: Disrespect of Lay Buddhist Devotees

Lay Buddhists can be guided by the Buddha’s words regarding the bhikkhus who began to sing the Dhamma verses: “Bhikkhus, there are these five dangers when Dhamma is chanted with a long, singing sound:

1. He is pleased with himself regarding that sound (pride);
2. Others are pleased regarding that sound (they have regard for it but not for Dhamma);
3. Householders look down upon him (as music is for those who enjoy sense pleasures);
4. While trying to improve the sounding of his voice his concentration is broken (he neglects the meaning of what he is chanting);
5. People fall into views (saying: ‘our teachers and preceptors sang it thus’ – a source of both pride and quarreling among later generations of Buddhists).²⁶

From these five disadvantages we understand that it is disrespectful for a bhikkhu to sing or intone the Dhamma in such a way that its meaning is lost.²⁷ This rule, of course, does not apply to lay people but in Buddhist countries lay people, perhaps guided by the

²⁴Thera soma, (tr.) **Faith in the Buddhist Teaching**, (wheel 262),

²⁵A. V. 91.

²⁶**Vinaya Pitaka II**, p. 108.

²⁷**In The Entrance to the Vinaya II** (Mahamakut Press, Bangkok, BE 2516) we read: “It is prohibited for a bhikkhu to preach Dhamma with a long-drawn intonation. To preach Dhamma or recite Dhamma in an artificial long-drawn way of chanting until it brings about mispronunciation should not be done.”

conduct of bhikkhus, have made little or no use of music for religious purposes. After all what are we trying to achieve by chanting the words relating to the Buddha and his teaching? Is it not to gain calm through a mind concentrated on Dhamma? The music has rather an exciting effect on many people and so is opposed to our aim.²⁸

Cause of Problem of Faith: Monks Break the Vinaya Rules

It is useful to examine the relationship between violation of a monastic vinaya rule and pāpa/akusala. Killing any living being forms the first of the physical pāpa acts. Killing a human being in particular is both a pāpa and a vinaya violation of the highest degree (pārājika). Killing anyone other than a human being is a lesser vinaya offense for a fully admitted monk. Stealing and pretending which is a form of lying too is pāpa. The case with the first pārājika is different: although having sex is an offense of the highest degree it has not been described as a pāpa.²⁹

In this context it is useful to introduce a general distinction available in the Theravāda tradition. According to this distinction offenses or forms of wrong behavior are classified as wrong by their very nature (*pakati-vajja*) and wrong because they violate a rule established by the Buddha (*paññatti-vajja*). The first category of behavior is also called ‘*loka-vajja*’ or behavior that should be avoided in the world. Under the first category acts such as killing, stealing, etc., are included. It is under the second category that most of the monastic vinaya offenses come. As for the distinction in the context of ten precepts (*dasa-sila*), the commentary to the Khuddaka-pāṭha describes the first five as ‘arisen from definite akusala thoughts’ (*ekanta-akusalacitta-samutthanatta*), and thereby allow us to have some idea as to why certain forms of behavior were considered ‘wrong by nature’. Killing, stealing, etc., are treated under this category for they originate from lobha, dosa and moha. The last five of the ten precepts such as using high and valuable seats, taking meals at improper time, etc., have been described as *paññatti-vajja* for they are considered wrong because the Buddha established them as so.³⁰

²⁸ Bhikkhu Khantipālo, **Lay Buddhist Practice: The Shrine Room, Uposatha Day, and Rain Residence**, (Kandy: BPS Online Edition 2007), pp. 21-22.

²⁹ Ven. Khammai Dhammasami D. Phil, **The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Universities, (JIABU)**, Thailand: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, Vol. 1, 2008, p. 9.

³⁰ **The Khuddaka-pāṭha** (PTS), p. 24.

Considering the *loka-vajja* rules, the commentator says that it is these rules that the Buddha meant when he said that his disciples would not violate them even if they were to lose their life. Then he refers to rules involving sharing the same bed by two monks, and building monasteries, etc., and calls them *paññatti-vajja*, indicating that the violation of such rules is less serious.³¹ In the *Samantapāsādikā*, the commentary to the Vinaya Pitaka, Buddhaghosa describes the *loka-vajja* offences as ‘harmful’ (*antarāyika*) for both heaven and nibbāna, and *paññatti-vajja* violations as not harmful in either manner (*anantarāyika*=*na*+*antarāyika*).³²

According to the Buddhist teaching, we must distinguish between life and property.³³ The right to the former is considered the primary right, while the right to the latter is the secondary one. The great difference between the primary and the secondary right is that the former can never be transferred, while the secondary right can be. In the Buddhist texts, it is recorded that voluntary euthanasia constitutes a violation of one of the Four Rules of Defeat (*pārājika*) for the monk who commits it. That is, in Buddhist monastic rules, a monk violates the Four Rules of defeat if he engages in sexual intercourse, commits robbery, kills a human being, or deceptively claims to attain higher levels of spiritual excellence. As regards sexual behavior, universal religions teach that illicit sexual behavior is damaging to an established order and detrimental to family relations.³⁴ Durkheim argued that the imperative to control sexuality was part of the wider need to avoid chaos and give order to human life.³⁵

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 190.

³² *Samantapāsādikā*, Vol. VII., p. 1319.

³³ Somporn Promta, **Buddhism and Human Genetic Research**, *The Chulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol 3, 2004, pp. 240-241.

³⁴ Malcolm Joyce, **Foucault, Buddhism and Disciplinary Rules**, (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 13.

³⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 295-325.

Derogatory Conduct of Bhikkhus: Another Cause of Problems

The greatest myth perpetuated by Theravada however is the idea that monks are a race apart, a unique breed, a special class of beings so different from everyone else that they must be treated with extraordinary reverence.³⁶ Thus, when a monk walks into a room people start to whisper as if the sound of the ordinary human voice will somehow damage his ears. When people spoon food into his bowl they do it as if they are performing a delicate surgical operation. When I visited Theravadin groups in the West that have had a Thai or Burmese monk prior to my coming, the word I heard more often than any other was ‘sorry’. If I asked for a glass of water, someone immediately replied ‘Sorry, bhante’ and rushed off to get one. If I walked towards the door and if someone was coming through it in the other direction they would say ‘Sorry’ and back away to let me pass. Unlike some Theravadins, the Buddha had no illusions about unenlightened human beings including those who shaved their heads and wore robes. In the Dhammapada verse 307 he says: ‘There are many uncontrolled men of evil character wearing the yellow robe’. But if such a thing is said in a Theravadin country or it is suggested that most monks are not much different from other people, it could provoke shock, outrage and accusations of impiety.

Over a two year period Michael Mendelson pursued the Rangoon newspapers for reports of monks involved in unseemly behavior. This was his findings. ‘Two cases were reported of monks arrested for trafficking opium, two involving theft and refuge in the Sangha after misappropriation of large sums, one of kidnapping, a case of two monks in a pilgrimage racket designed to smuggle goods and foreign exchange to India, a report of a monk carrying medical supplies to insurgents and one example of a monk confidence man who tricked a school mistress out of a valuable ring. There were accounts of three monks involved in clandestine affairs with women, one resulting in a paternity charge, another culminating in a mortal assault on a boy and his companion who had gossiped about an older monk’s affair with a young girl, and a third involving an Irishman’s wife and a monk. For “embracing and kissing in a railway carriage” a monk and a girl were imprisoned for three months. Finally, I read of a monk who wounded his own abbot because the abbot had threatened him in order to gain the monk’s sister in marriage’.

³⁶S. Dhammika, **The Broken Buddha: Critical Reflections on Theravada and a Plea for a New Buddhism**, Seite 39 von 66. < http://www.theravada-dhamma.org/pdf/Dhammika_Broken-Buddha.pdf>

Misunderstanding the Buddha's Teaching as the Cause of Criticism

The essence of the Buddha's teaching can be summed up in two principles: the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The first covers the side of doctrine, and the primary response it elicits is understanding; the second covers the side of discipline, in the broadest sense of that word, and the primary response it calls for is practice. In the structure of the teaching these two principles lock together into an indivisible unity called the dhamma-vinaya, the doctrine and discipline, or in brief, the Dhamma.³⁷

We pass our days running after the one and running away from the other, seldom enjoying the peace of contentment; real satisfaction seems somehow always out of reach, just beyond the next horizon. Then in the end we have to die: to give up the identity we spent our whole life building, to leave behind everything and everyone we love. But even death, the Buddha teaches, does not bring us to the end of dukkha, for the life process does not stop with death. When life ends in one place, with one body, the "mental continuum", the individual stream of consciousness, springs up again elsewhere with a new body as its physical support.

The first spiritual breakthrough may be made by a person emphasizing either understanding of the Dhamma or faith in the Buddha. That said, though some serious disciples are relatively stronger in understanding or faith, all need sufficient strength in all five faculties. Faith needs to be guided by understanding, and the cognitive quality of understanding needs grounding by the heart quality and commitment of faith.³⁸

Virtues taught by the Buddha are to be understood within the overall context of his path to awakening. Whenever the Buddha spoke about contentment he paired it with an energetic quality such as diligence, persistence or industriousness. He was careful to make clear that contentment is in no way connected to laziness, and is not another word for passivity. In Buddhist sense, it must be appreciated in the light of the central importance the Buddha gave to human effort.³⁹

³⁷ Bhikkhu Bodhi, **The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, Access to Insight-Legacy Edition, November 2013). < <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/waytoend.html> >

³⁸ Phra Brahmapundit & Peter Harvey, **Common Buddhist Text: Guidance and Insight from the Buddha**, (Thailand: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, 2017), p. 261.

³⁹ Ajahn Jayasaro, **Without and Within: Questions and Answers on the Teachings of Theravāda Buddhism**, (Thailand: Panyaprteep Foundation, 2013), p. 146.

It appears that many lay Buddhists do not consider their moral conduct to be a necessary condition of their Buddhist identity. Buddhism rejects carrot and stick moral teachings in favor of an education of conduct. Unfortunately, when the nature of this education is not effectively propagated, lay Buddhists can become more heedless than those fired with a desire for divine reward and fear of eternal torment.⁴⁰ Unenlightened beings commonly feel that they are missing out, that things they don't possess would make them happier than the things they already have. Even when desire is fulfilled, the mind sated but the sense of lack found to be unchanged by the experience, this hope survives. Learning how to appreciate the merits of what we already possess allows us to let go of cravings, frustrations and jealousy. We set ourselves realistic goals and apply ourselves diligently to creating the causes and conditions for realization of those goals.⁴¹

Through studying many Buddhist texts we may become a renowned scholar; but if we do not put Buddha's teachings into practice, our understanding of Buddhism will remain hollow, with no power to solve our own or other's problems. Expecting intellectual understanding of Buddhist texts alone to solve our problems is like a sick person hoping to cure his or her illness through merely reading medical instructions without actually taking the medicine.⁴² As Buddhist Master Shantideva says:

We need to put Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, into practice, because nothing can be accomplished just by reading words.

A sick man will never be cured of his illness through merely reading medical instructions! There are three kinds of teachers in the world. The first kind teaches the existence of an eternal ego-entity outlasting death: that is the eternalist, for instance, the Christian. The second kind is the annihilationist, or materialist. The third kind teaches neither an eternal, nor a temporary ego-entity: this is the Buddha. The Buddha teaches that what we call ego, self, soul, personality, etc., are merely conventional terms not referring to any real independent entity. And he teaches that there is only this psycho-physical process of existence changing from moment to moment. Without understanding the egolessness of existence, it is not possible to gain a real understanding of the Buddha-word; and it is not

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴² Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, **Modern Buddhism: The Path Compassion and Wisdom**, (USA: Tarpa Publications, 2nd editions, 2013), pp. x-xi.

possible without it, to realize that goal of emancipation and deliverance of mind proclaimed by the Buddha. This doctrine of egolessness of existence forms the essence of the Buddha's doctrine of emancipation. Thus with this doctrine of egolessness, or anatta, stands and falls the entire Buddhist structure.⁴³

The Way Out is to Strengthen the Faith towards the Saṅgha Community

A Buddhist aspires to gain a strong faith in the Triple Gem, that is, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. However, in early Buddhism, such faith did not mean a hostile response or lack of recognition of other deities. Although the Buddha refutes the bloody animal sacrifice, peaceful offerings to the deities are in itself not morally condemned, but considered far less useful than alms offerings to the monastic Saṅgha.⁴⁴ Thus, everything is given its place in a hierarchy of fruitfulness or usefulness, in which the efficacy of moral action is much more highly regarded than rites and rituals.⁴⁵

Faith is an initial trust in the Buddha as a spiritual teacher and an initial acceptance of the Buddha's teachings. By listening to the teachings and putting them into practice,⁴⁶ a Buddhist disciple can examine and realize through direct experience whether they are true or not.⁴⁷ Faith is therefore of great benefit to a beginning practitioner of the Buddhist teaching.⁴⁸ In the Culahatthipadopama sutta, the Buddha describes the path of enlightenment as starting with faith in the Buddha, but continuing by practicing the path of virtue, meditation and wisdom, culminating in the achievement of enlightenment.⁴⁹

⁴³ **The Light of Buddha, Burma Buddhist Society**, Mandalay, Vol. III. No. 1, Monthly Magazine, January 1958, p. 4. Electronic Publish by Pariyatti Publication, USA., <www.pariyatti.org>

⁴⁴ Giustarini Giuliano, **Faith and renunciation in Early Buddhism: saddha and nekkhamma**, (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2006), pp. 161-162.

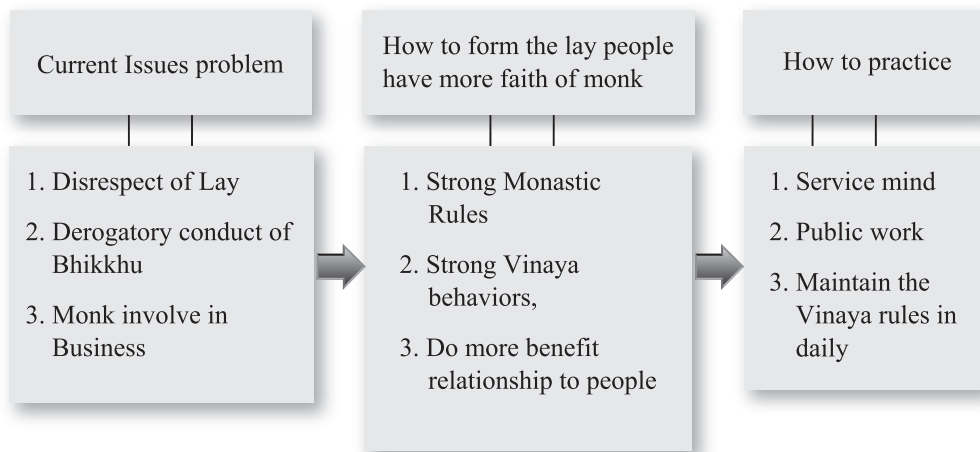
⁴⁵ Lamotte, Etienne, **History of Indian Buddhism: from the origins to the saka era**, (French: Institute orientaliste, 1988), p. 81.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴⁷ Thomas Edward J., **The History of Buddhist Thought, History of Civilization** (2nd ed.), (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 43.

⁴⁸ De Silva Lily, **Faith**, (Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Government of Ceylon, Vol V., 2002), p. 216.

⁴⁹ Bhikkhu Thanissaro (tr.), **Cula-hatthipadopama Sutta: The Shorter Elephant Footprint Simile**, MN I, PTS, 2005, p. 27.



Buddhist put faith in the reliability of the Buddha as a truly awakened spiritual friend and faith, conviction and confidence in the three jewels (Pāli: Tiratana, Sanskrit: Triratna). Faith in Buddhism is expressed in the act of taking refuge. It centers on the authority of the Buddha as a supremely awakened being, by assenting to a role as teacher of both humans and gods. This often includes other Buddha's from the past and future Buddha's that has not arisen in the world yet. The taking of refuge honors the truth of the Buddha's spiritual Doctrine (*Dhamma*),⁵⁰ which includes the truth of phenomenon such as their impermanent nature. The act ends with the acceptance of the community of spiritually developed followers (*saṅgha*),⁵¹ which is mostly about the monastic community, but may also include human beings and even devās that are nearly enlightened. The Saṅgha is described as a "field of merit", because Buddhists regard offerings to them as more karmically fruitful than any other offering.⁵²

⁵⁰ In Buddhism dharma means cosmic law and order, but is also applied to the teachings of the Buddha (The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions, Dharma). In Buddhist philosophy, dhamma/dharma is also the term for "phenomena" (David Kalupahana, **The Philosophy of the Middle Way**, SUNY Press, 1986, pp. 15-16).

⁵¹ Saṅgha (Pāli: saṅgha; Sanskrit: saṅgha) is a word in Pali and Sanskrit meaning "association", "assembly," "company" or "community" to the monastic community of bhikkhus (monks) and bhikkhunīs (nuns). Bhikkhu Bodhi, November, 2010.

⁵² Harvey Peter (2nd ed.), **An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices**, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 245-6.

The eight generic competencies – the critical and expected behaviors that the monks in all roles need to possess – include:⁵³ (1) mastering Dhamma knowledge; (2) observing monastic conduct; (3) sustaining Buddhist longevity; (4) rightful execution; (5) authentic-modern integration; (6) mindful elevation; (7) faith building; and (8) relationship building.

Faith in Buddhism can be said to function as a form of motor, which propels the Buddhist practitioner towards the goal of awakening (Pāli: bodhi)⁵⁴ and Nibbāna.⁵⁵ When a person decides to give up domestic life and live as a monk or nun, it is said to be out of faith “through faith in the Lord”.⁵⁶ First comes the hearing of the Buddhist teachings (Dhamma) and then the aspirant puts these teachings and instructions into practice due to his faith, reflecting upon the value of their application.⁵⁷

Conclusion

This paper suggests holistic approach for human spiritual development as foundation for sustainable development by practicing the Buddha’s teaching, Dhamma and Vinaya. The Buddhist community can be broadly divided into two groups, namely the lay people and the monastic community. The assembly of monastic community is the Order of monks and nuns (Saṅgha). In terms of faith, they both take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. The faiths of others all deserve to be honored for one reason or another. By honoring them, one exalts one’s own faith and at the same time performs a service to the faith of others. By acting otherwise, one injures one’s own faith and also does disservice to that of others.

⁵³ Sallaya Ratanopas, **Developing Competency Model of Theravada Buddhist Monks in Thailand**, a dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, (Human Resource and Organization Development) Graduate School of Human Resource Development, National Institute of Development of Administration, 2013, p. iv.

⁵⁴ Bodhi in Buddhism is the understanding possessed by a Buddha regarding the true nature of things. (Fische Schreiber, lemma “**bodhi**”, 2008, p. 5051).

⁵⁵ Nirvana: [nibbāna (Pāli); nirvāṇa (Sanskrit); and ṇivvāṇa (“Nirvana”, Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, 1947] literally means “blown out”, as in an oil lamp (Richard Gombrich, **Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo**, Routledge). (Steven Collins, **Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravada Buddhism**, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 81-84).

⁵⁶ MN IV, p. 140

⁵⁷ MN 112, Chabbisodana Sutta.

For if a man extols his own faith and disparages another because of devotion to his own and because he wants to glorify it, he seriously injures his own faith. Therefore concord alone is commendable, for through concord men may learn and respect the conception of Dhamma accepted by others.

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