



Venerable Seck Kwang Phing

Symposium Session 2:
Contribution of Buddhist Sangha for
Education and Humanity
Speaker

Brief Bio-data

Ven Seck Kang Phing is currently an appointed Council Member serving in the Presidential Council For Religious Harmony of Singapore cum Secretary-General of Singapore Buddhist Federation, Supervisor of Manjusri Secondary School Management Committee and Director for Maha Bodhi School Management Committee, a Dharma teacher and a meditation teacher in various Buddhist temples and organisation. He was awarded a Contribution Award by His Excellency President of Sri Lanka and Leadership Awards by His Holiness of Deputy Sangha Raja of Thailand in 2012. Long Service Award of more than 20 years by Ministry of Education and Long Service Award by Prison Department, Ministry of Home Affair, Singapore in 2012.





Future Role of Sangha as an Educator and a Humanist

*Venerable Seck Kwang Phing
Secretary-General
Singapore Buddhist Federation*

Introduction

The first question to ask is why was Buddha born to this world?

If we really try to find the answer and deeper we dive into it, we will definitely appreciate and praise Him as no one had ever revealed to us the Truth about the universe and our existence.

Buddha has taught us that with inter-dependence origination, we exist; by conditions the world appeared and there is no beginning or ending to anything which we thought wrongfully there is. If there is a beginning, what does the beginning to start? Since there is no beginning, then there is no ending. Thus, the Buddha said all things arise by conditions and perish by conditions, and there is no beginning and no ending.

After His Enlightenment, the Buddha first taught the Dharma to two merchants and before proceeding to Sarnah to preach to five Bhikkhus who became the first batch of Buddha's disciples to gain Arahanship. These marked the beginning of Buddha's education to mankind. Later, Buddha sent off 60 Arahans to one destination each to preach the other people.



The purpose of peaching Dharma to mankind is to inculcate wisdom in them and to lead them to attain final liberation from the wheel of rebirth by realizing the Truth.

Defination of Religion

What is religion? The concept of religion is normally based on the idea of God or a creator which may not be agreed by other religions such as Buddhism. Lets first look to how others have defined religion.

As described in Penguin Dictionary, religion: is a general term used...to

designate all concepts concerning the belief in god(s) and goddess(es) as well as other spiritual beings or transcendental ultimate concerns.

Whereas in Encyclopadia Britannica: religion: human beings' relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, spiritual, or divine.

Religion:(2) a personal set or institutionalised system of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices;(4)a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith. (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary)

Religion is to do right. It is to love, it is to serve, it is to think, it is to be humble. According to Ralph Waldo Emerson

Religion, whatever it is, is a man's total reaction upon life.(William Penn)

After all, what is religion in Buddhist perspective? The general term of religion does not describe the traits of Buddhism. Buddhism goes beyond the concept of God or Creator. Buddhism wants us to detach from all concepts, ideas and attachments. Buddhism is non conceptualisation. Buddhism sees things arise from and perish in condition. Thus, all things comprise duality in itself. The absolute is beyond life and death,

come and go, appearance and disappearance. In the eye of a Buddhist, there is no life or non death, the absolute is laid in non conceptualisation. Buddhism is a "special religion" which focuses on practising the middle path to develop our mind to realize the Truth of Non Beginning and Non Ending in all things. This Truth can be testified by all who follow the Buddha's path.



Defination of Education:

Now, let's talk about education. Education has dual meanings: broader and narrow. Regarding the former, education is referred as universal where we can gain our knowledge from any person, anywhere, anytime. Moreover, the process is life long.

In its narrow definition, education is seen as learning in a confined institution where there are teachers, structural syllabus, examination; mostly emphasizing on bookish knowledge.

If we go back to its origin , the word Education is derived from Latin word of educere, educare which mean to learn, to know, to lead out.

Thus, Education means a learning process to lead out man's internal hidden talent, goodness, strenght.

Religion and Education:

What is the relationship of religion with education?

Religion and education are co-related; as both share some common grounds such as morality. Both try to educate man to be kind, gentle, generous, independent,. Buddha was a good example who went on to seach for the Truth Himself and finally he attained to Buddhahood by Hiself. He even proclaimed that He has no teacher, he is his own teacher as Truth is within us and not getting it from outside of self.

Thus, all beings have a potentiality to attain to Enlightenment regardless of gender, language, race and culture as long as we walk the Buddha path. Buddha was the only one who has relised the Truth and show us the path to it .

Future role of sangha as an Educator

Sangha who is a spiritual person to all beings whose mission is not only to attain to his own realisation of Truth but to help other fellow beings to attain the same. Thus, he has dual roles to play. What is the role of sangha in future in which is fast changing and challenging?

1. Mission

Sangha should not forget his fundamental mission is to pass on the Dharma to others. He has to constantly remind himself that he has a noble task to perform as what the Buddha did. Buddha had travelled from one place to another non stop to deliver the Dharma and instructed many monks and laypeople to attain to different stages of fruitions.



2. Making Dharma easy to learn and practice

Some has founded that it is not easy to comprehend the Dharma especially to the kids. It is the duty of sangha to teach Dharma in a more understandable manner to children, young and all age group. Sometimes we have to adopt appropriate teaching methods, and to try to understand what are the difficulties they face during in learning the Dharma.

3. Every Buddhist is a Dharma Preacher

We shall train and equip laypeople to be a Dharma preacher as to spread the Dharma to all mankind, especially, we foresee that the numbers of sangha will decrease in future. The lay person can be a good volunteer not only to take up the role as an educator to pass on Dharma to others but to counsel others with Dharma when they are in need.

4. Every temple and Buddhist organisation to be a learning place of Dharma

We shall encourage every temple or Buddhist organisation to organise more Dharma activities for children, and youths to learn . We shall adopt new approaches to attract kids and youths to develop interest in Dharma. The activities we organise must be attractive to them, or meet their needs. Maybe, we do not really understand what are their needs.

5. Sangha as a friend to all

Sangha are going to face a fast changing, technological and scientific advancement in future. Thus, sangha has to keep up in pace with new knowledge that are evolving in this world. Sangha must be able to explain what future bioscience means to human life and themselves. Sangha must

be trained how to handle and counsel difficult child or troubled youths. Sangha has to be a friendly person to all who can seek their advice and willingly to learn the Dharma from him.

6. Supplementary Materials

The temple or Buddhist organisation must develop a good and numerous database for parents who can draw stories or any material to teach their child about Buddhism at home as many parents are shot of supplementary materials to rely on. Materials shall be made as simple and inrteresting as possible.

7. Meditation

Meditation is the core of Buddhism. We shall equip monk and lay with meditational skills to suit the needs of all ages. Method shall be as simply and be sysematic.



Humanism:

It is referred to philosophical as denial of any power or moral value superior to that of humanity and the reject of religion in favour of a belief

In the advancement of humanlity by its own efforts.

But, on the contrary, the humanity has been used by some religions in their agenda to their end.

Sangha as a Humanist

Sangha by nature and practice is a humanist himself who gives guidance to others to eliminate their suffering whether spiritually or materially. The good example is an Abbot of one of a temple in Northern Thailand who mobilises his devotees to donate their golds to help the country during the economic crisis in 1997.

Disasters may happen suddently, how sangha can response to the rescue as soon as possible? How can we be mobilised and organised the Buddhists to do humanitarian works to help the victims within first hour? It is a big challenge for the future monks to do relief and welfare works locally and aboard.

It can start with countries around their own region and networking among themselves, gradually expanded to continental and finally global.

Sangha has to be seen as a good friend to all . Thus, sangha has to be trained to be a good listener , be a good counsellor, a good motivator, a proficient teacher and a true friend to all and guide all to know and practising Buddhism..

Conclusion

It is not easy to become a sangha. You need a lot of meritorious deeds. By cultivating voluminous good deeds will help you to walk through the life as sangha more easily and gaining highest blessing from the Dharma as As the Buddha has said it, those who practices the Dharma, Dharma will protect you. Through educational and humanitarian works , one 'swill definately accumulate large volume of merits.

Let's hold hand in hand to walk the Buddhist way and become a good friend of all beings.