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Summary

Author Ananda W. P. Guruge discusses key issues of diversification through examination of the Buddhist history and culture, and provides in-depth methods used to integrate and unify the universal teachings of Buddhism in modern times.

Cross-Sectarian Mechanism for Integrated Efforts towards the Progress of Buddhism in the New Millennium

I. Origin and Spread of Buddhism

Buddhism had existed for over two thousand six hundred years ago in that we have just celebrated in May last year its 2600th birthday.[1] During this period it had spread to a significant part of the world bounded by Greece and Bulgaria in the West, Mongolia and Buriatsi in the North, Japan, Korea and the Philippines in the East and Maldive Islands and Indonesia in the South. That Buddhism was the fountainhead of a multifaceted culture in this Region is evident from the vast treasures of its architectural, artistic, literary, and philosophical heritage of over two millennia. The following speak of the grandeur and glory of this culture:

- the ancient stupas of India of Bharhut, Sanchi, Amaravati, and Nagarjunikonda, with their rich sculptural embellishments,
- the gigantic and innovative Dagabas of Sri Lanka, e. g. Tissamaharama, Seruwila, Ruvanveliseya, Abhayagiriya, Jetavana, Kelaniya, Satmahalprasadaya, Demalamahaseya and Dedigama Kota Vihara,
- the spectacular stupas and monasteries of Taxila and Takht-i-Bahi in Pakistan,
- the exquisite cave sculptures of Ellora in India and Yun-kang and Lun-men in China,
- the fascinating cave architecture, stone carvings, and paintings of Ajanta, Bhaja, Karle, Nasik, Junnar and Kanheri of India, Kakrak of

Afghanistan, Dunhuang, T'rin-lun-shan and Kuang-sheng of China, and Dambulla of Sri Lanka,

- the magnificent murals of Situlpahuva, Tivanka-pilimage, Yapahuwa, Dimbulagala and Degaldoruwa of Sri Lanka, Tepe Maredjan, Bamiyan, and Begram of Afghanistan, Fundikistan of Central Asia, Yarkand, Khotan in Kashgaria, Aksu, Kizil and Kucha in Kumtura, Sorchuk, Miran, Kocho and Turkan of Eastern Turkestan,
- the exquisite miniature stone carvings of the Gandhara school of Buddhist art and its Indian counterpart in Mathura,
- the stupendous Buddha statues of Bamiyan in Afghanistan, Lashen in China, Sokkurgam in Korea, Galvihara, Aukana, Maligawila,

Buduruvagala and Sesseruva of Sri Lanka, and Nara and Kamakura of Japan,

- the breathtaking monuments of Angkor Wat and Bayenne of Cambodia, Borobudur of Indonesia, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Kandy of Sri Lanka, Paharpur of Bangaladesh, Shwedagon, Mandalay, Pegu and Pagan of Myanmar, Sukhothai, Chienmai, and Ayutthiya of Thailand**,** and Potala of Tibet,
- the impressive university complexes of Nalanda, Vikramsila, Odantadapuri, and Valabhi of India, Mahavihara and Abhayagiri of Sri Lanka, and Drepung, Sera and Shigatse of Tibet,
- many thousands of Buddhist objects of art in the most prestigious museums of the world, and
- ever-increasing architectural and artistic creations of the highest aesthetic and technical quality by the expanding Buddhist community of the world today.

The rest of the world including Europe, the Americas, Australia and New Zealand has received the message of the Buddha only within the last two centuries. The colonization of traditionally Buddhist countries by Britain and France enabled the Western missionaries and administrators to discover Buddhism and its culture. It found a nursery in the academia of Europe and North America and an enormous contribution has been made by scholars in the study and publication of Buddhist literature in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and

Vietnamese and research on its philosophy, history and archaeology and socio-spiritual impact.[2]

It is more recently that Buddhism in practice became worldwide due to three factors: (1) the importation of labour from China and Japan to USA in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, (2) the interest taken by an increasing body of intellectuals in Europe and Northern America who found Buddhism to be an alternative to Christianity and adopted it as their personal religion,[3] and (3) the immigration of a multitude of ethnic Buddhists from Korea and Vietnam as a result of the two wars and from Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Taiwan due to expanding opportunities for economic improvement. As such, Buddhism is the fastest growing religion in the Western world today.

As numerous as professed Buddhists in these countries, who are mainly from Asia, are those who find in Buddhism a variety of special activities fulfilling their spiritual needs such as meditation, chanting, retreats and monastic experience? A fair number of these, whom we would call the friends of Buddhism, remain culturally Christian or Jewish while associating closely with Buddhist institutions and the Sangha. Some even call themselves by such terms as Jubus (Jewish-Buddhists) to indicate the dual interest.

II. The Foremost Millennium Challenge to Buddhism

What has this recent development done to Buddhism as a whole? Buddhism is so widely known in the world today that the knowledge of the Buddha and the basic doctrines of Buddhism is indispensable as an integral aspect of cultural literacy. Hardly is found an educated person in any country who is devoid of some familiarity with Buddhism. But a major question has arisen in this process. That is: What is Buddhism and how can it be defined?

When Buddhism was confined to the traditionally Buddhist countries of Asia, each community had a clear idea of what Buddhism meant to it. The Buddhists in countries in East Asia, which continue to have the largest Buddhist populations practiced Mahayana Buddhism, studied Mahayana sutras as preserved in the Chinese Tripitaka, and worshipped the Bodhisattvas. Meditation as in Chan, Son, Zen or Thien, or the repetition of formulae like *Namo Amito fuo, Namo Amida butsu* or *Namo Amitaphat* in Pureland Buddhism or *Namo myo ren gekyo* in Nichiren Buddhism divided them into recognizable groups. Tibet and Mongolia followed the Vajrayana tradition, in which mantras (incantations like *Om mani padme hum*), mudras (gestures of worship) and mandalas (graphic aids to meditation) constitute the main elements of worship. The countries of South and Southeast Asia had preserved a form of early

Buddhism with its scriptures in Pali, which is still identified erroneously as Theravada.[4] It lays emphasis on intellectual study and discussion by both the Sangha and the laity, the observance of additional precepts on special days by the laity and self-cultivation.

Each tradition, school or sect of Buddhism had its own Sangha, who, though based on the same principal rules of Vinaya, dressed differently and differed in the ways they prepared for their spiritual role. Their temples and shrines varied in architectural design and each had special shrines as pagodas, chortens and stupas. Even the Buddha was presented in physical characteristics specific to each ethnic group. The Bodhisattvas were distinguished by particular iconographical features and all traditions did not have equal prominence give to such icons as Amitabha Buddha, Medicine Buddha, Dhyani Buddhas, Avalokitesvara, Kwanying, Maitreya and Taras. Each also had different rituals and forms of worship.

III. Seeking Unity in Diversity: The Beginning of a Buddhist Ecumenical Movement

This diversity of Buddhism was hardly known or recognized by the Buddhist populations of the world as they developed in isolation and without any interaction among them. It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that the different traditions, schools, and sects developed some contacts among them due to the efforts of Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka who set up the Mahabodhi Society as the first ever international Buddhist forum in 1891. His address to a sizeable Western audience in the Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago in 1893 and the American Theosophist Colonel Henry Steel Olcott's initiative to get Buddhists of different countries to agree on a Platform of Fourteen Points which he formulated in 1891.

But the most significant development in modern times began in the middle of the twentieth century when waves of ethnic Buddhists migrating to the major cities of Europe, the Americas and the Oceania brought these many forms of Buddhism to co-exist side by side. The rich diversity of Buddhism, which had developed in Asia during long centuries of independent growth, has given the impression of many "Buddhisms"[5] and few other than serious scholars have a clear idea of the doctrinal and attitudinal unity which binds them together.

It is true that several attempts have been made since Olcott to point out this unity. Christmas Humphreys in Britain formulated in 1942 twelve principles highlighting the common teachings of all traditions, schools, and sects. The World Buddhist Sangha Council convened in Sri Lanka in 1966 with

the hope of bridging differences and working together unanimously adopted the following, which was presented by Ven. Walpola Rahula:

1. The Buddha is our only Master.

2. We take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

3. We do not believe that this world is created and ruled by a God.

4. Following the example of the Buddha, who is the embodiment of Great Compassion (maha-karuna) and Great Wisdom (maha-prajna), we consider that the purpose of life is to develop compassion for all living beings without discrimination and to work for their good, happiness, and peace; and to develop wisdom leading to the realization of Ultimate Truth.

5. We accept the Four Noble Truths, namely Dukkha, the Arising of Dukkha, the Cessation of Dukkha, and the Path leading to the Cessation of Dukkha; and the universal law of cause and effect as taught in the pratitya-samutpada (Conditioned Genesis or Dependent Origination).

6. We understand, according to the teaching of the Buddha, that all conditioned things (samskara) are impermanent (anitya) and dukkha, and that all conditioned and unconditioned things (dharma) are without self (anatma).

7. We accept the Thirty-seven Qualities conducive to Enlightenment (bodhipaksa-dharma) as different aspects of the Path taught by the Buddha leading to Enlightenment.

8. There are three ways of attaining bodhi or Enlightenment, according to the ability and capacity of each individual: namely as a disciple (sravaka), as a Pratyeka-Buddha and as a Samyak-sam-Buddha (perfectly and Fully Enlightened Buddha). We accept it as the highest, noblest, and most heroic to follow the career of a Bodhisattva and to become a Samyak-sam-Buddha in order to save others.

9. We admit that in different countries there are differences with regard to the life of Buddhist monks, popular Buddhist beliefs and practices, rites and ceremonies, customs and habits. These external

forms and expressions should not be confused with the essential teachings of the Buddha.

More recently in 1997 the Sangha Council of Southern California and the American Buddhist Congress did a similar exercise in identifying a common base for all of them in ten points, as drafted by Venerable Havenpola Ratansara and Ananda W. P. Guruge. [6]

IV. Unity in Diversity – The Goal of Universal Buddhism

This diversity creates the impression that the Buddha Sasana is a splintered organization with little hope for unity and cooperation. This impression is further strengthened by the writings of early Western scholars who assumed that the Buddhist traditions originated in cataclysmic rifts and struggles similar to those of the Christian Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. But the Buddhist situation has been totally different. Divisions in Buddhism have been caused by isolation and independent development, and not by any confrontation.

These diverse groups have existed without contact until recent times. In the traditionally Buddhist countries this isolation and mutual ignorance persist even today. It is in the big cities of Europe, America, and Australia that the various traditions, schools, sects and other divisions have come to co-exist as a result of the influx of ethnic Buddhists. Every upheaval in the Asian Region has brought Buddhist immigrants to these continents in sufficiently large numbers to augment earlier waves of migration: e.g. the rise of Communism in China, the Korean War, the exile of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama from Tibet, the Vietnam War, and the political and economic situation in Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. Taiwan's and perhaps also Korea's presence in these continents stemmed from spectacular economic growth and its impact on the expansion of Buddhism.

As a result, Mahayana schools of Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea and Vietnam, the Vajrayana tradition of Tibet, and the Southern Buddhism of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar could establish contact, become familiar with one another, discover the unity and common base of the teachings and practices of each tradition, collaborate on common projects and movements, and approach the goal of universal Buddhism. These experiences have brought about enormous benefits to all Buddhist societies thus unified.

The situation in the traditionally Buddhist countries is very different. With no or little contact with forms of Buddhism other than what is indigenous to each country, ignorance, prejudice, and misunderstanding continue unabated. As a consequence, the Region as a whole is deprived of the benefits it can derive from unity and cooperation.

Why we should make a special effort to develop a common front is best illustrated by reference to the experience of Venerable Master Taixu of China in the 1920s. Disappointed with the isolation of the Buddhist Sangha and the relegation of Buddhism to mountains as a spent force in China, he visited Sri Lanka in 1928 and 1940. What he saw there he described in the following terms: "Though Buddhism in Ceylon is generally considered to be Theravada Buddhism, it is indeed the practice of Mahayana Buddhism." It was a compliment in appreciation of the socially engaged Buddhism he witnessed in the Island: "[Sri Lankan Buddhists] have made great efforts to study the doctrines and observe the precepts. That is why many Buddhists, not only Buddhists from Burma and Thailand, but also scholars doing research on the Theravada Buddhism in the Pali Language all over the world come to study Buddhism in Ceylon. Buddhists in Ceylon are widely engaged in many causes, such as social welfare, culture, education and so forth, thus giving benefits to the state, society and even the broad masses in the world. This marks a great spirit of compassionate love in Buddhism."[7] Needless to say, the reform of Buddhism, which Venerable Master Taixu spearheaded in China, was largely inspired by the knowledge and experience he gained in Sri Lanka and subsequently in Myanmar and Thailand. Today with greater facilities for travel and study abroad, the cross-pollination accruing from the exchange of knowledge and experience can be immense. Buddhist communities of Asia have much to learn from one another for our common benefit and mutual reinforcement. But many issues need to be addressed:

- How can centuries of prejudice, nurtured further through total isolation, be replaced by a better understanding and appreciation of the strong common base of the Buddha's teachings?
- How can the friendly and productive co-existence of different traditions, schools, sects and other divisions of Buddhism in Western countries be extended to the traditionally Buddhist countries of the Asian Region and emulated?
- How open will Southern Buddhist countries be to the establishment of Mahayana or Tibetan monasteries on their soil or to the popularization of teachings, practices and literature of other Buddhist traditions? (In this regard, the Northern Buddhist countries have already

demonstrated a significant openness: e.g. China which in Yunnan has a well-established Southern Buddhist tradition; Nepal and Vietnam which had been receptive to Sri Lankan missionary initiatives of especially Venerable Narada and continue to have the Sangha trained in Sri Lanka and Thailand; and Japan and Taiwan where important Southern Buddhist monastic institutions have come into existence in recent years).[8]

- How can the resources of the entire Buddhist world be pooled for the progress of Buddhism as a gift to humanity?

The least that needs to be stressed is that unity and cooperation are indispensable to Buddhists to meet the challenges of the modern world. We cannot stay divided or remain ignorant of the strength which diversity confers on Buddhism. In the first place, the more we learn of the specificities of each group of Buddhists, the more we become convinced of the underlying unity of the fundamental teachings of traditions, schools or sects.[9]

My own experience since I urged for interdenominational understanding among Buddhists of the world through my writings, which date back to 1954 is that, I have personally benefited from my exposure to the rich and varied ethical, philosophical, literary, and cultural heritage of the Buddhist world as a whole. My final appeal, therefore, is that we all share this invaluable treasure for our own benefit.[10]

V. Towards Universal Buddhism: The Current International Effort

Many in the West like to see the evolution of a unified form of Buddhism. Tricycle, the Buddhist periodical published in the USA, sees such unity as a combination of the Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana traditions. There are others who advocate unity in the form of a Buddhayana or Ekayana (vehicle of enlightenment). The ethnic Buddhists, on the other hand, are more conservative and favor the retention of their specific forms of Buddhism without any attempt at assimilation or interaction. This may be all right as far as the first generation of immigrants is concerned.

What will happen in the future when the younger generations, with increasing exposure to science and technology, participatory democratic process, and new trends in spirituality, find dissatisfaction with what is taught and practiced as Buddhism by their elders? This is a tremendous challenge for the Buddhist leadership in general and the Sangha in particular. How should

they prepare to face this challenge especially because the issue is the credibility of what Buddhism stands for?

Fortunately, the need for a unified front consisting of all traditions, schools, and sects to grapple with this problem has been widely recognized and a significant international effort to foster unity, cooperation, and interaction has been made through such organizations as the World Fellowship of Buddhists, the World Buddhist Sangha Council, and Buddhist forums and summits convened by national[11] and international bodies.

The World Fellowship of Buddhists, which celebrated its Diamond Jubilee in 2010 in Sri Lanka, brings together every two years representatives of all Buddhist traditions, schools, and sects to consider ways and means of promoting the advancement of Buddhism in the world scene. It has already fostered a greater understanding and collaboration among diverse Buddhist groups. The Word Sangha Council does similar work through monastics and has proved to be a very important forum to develop unity and cooperation. Similar efforts are being made by frequent conferences and seminars. But how successful are they in facing the challenge and what more has to be done? What is done by these organizations should have the desired impact at the grassroots level?

VI. How to ensure the Progress of Buddhism in the Coming Millennia

In 1982, Sri Lanka in collaboration with the World Fellowship of Buddhists convened the World Conference of Buddhist Leaders and Scholars. It was an August assembly consisting of all traditions and schools of Buddhism. It identified ten areas of concern for immediate international action.[12] (See Chapter II of my "*An Agenda for the International Buddhist Community,*" Colombo 1993).

These were the ten areas of concern identified:

- Peace, Human Rights, and Disarmament
- Preserving the integrity of Buddha Dhamma through the prevention of distortion and misinterpretation
- Studies and research and missionary services
- Inculcation of Buddhist values and practices in daily life
- Effectiveness of the Sangha
- Need to organize and mobilize Buddhist women
- Channeling of youth power

- Buddhist communities in disadvantaged positions
- Protection of Buddhist monuments and prevention of the desecration of sacred symbols and objects
- Improving the economic capacity of Buddhist communities.

Though three decades had passed since these concerns were identified, much remains to be done. The growing international leadership of the Buddhist movements has tasks cut out for not decades but perhaps centuries to come.

How can the progress of Buddhism, or more precisely the Buddha Sasana, be ensured? The word Sasana, derived for the Pali root 'sas' – to instruct, admonish or preach, means the Dispensation of the Buddha and signifies all aspects of Buddhism as an organized world religion. Traditionally the Sasana consists of the following three aspects:

- **Pariyatti** – Literary and educational component (**Theory**)
- **Patipatti -** Observance and praxis (**Practice**)
- **Pativedha** – Penetration and Deliverance (**Realization**)

In 2003, I identified the following challenges which have to be encountered in ensuring the continuing progress of Buddhism in the world and listed them as issues to be resolved with action[13]:

1. **The Literary or Textual Component (Theory)**

Buddhism outranks all other religious systems of the world by the sheer volume of its scriptural literature, which has been developed over twenty-six centuries in over a dozen languages.

The Pali Canon, the Tipitaka, in its present printed form in Roman script is a five-foot library of 45 volumes. That it evolved from the initiatives of the Buddha and his immediate senior disciples is borne out by internal evidence. Equally well established by fragmentary manuscripts is that its contents and structure had been maintained in versions of the Canon in other languages such as Sanskrit, Prakrits, and Khotanese. The Agama Sutras of the Chinese Tripitaka in the Taisho version maintain a very close resemblance in content and structure with the Pali Tipitaka. The extensive and intensive scholastic activity of the Sangha extended to the development of the Abhidhamma, the quasi-canonical works like Milindapanha, Nettippakarana and Petakopadesa, whose authorship is unknown other than in the case of Kathavatthu of the Abhidhammapitaka. The author of

this work was Thera Moggaliputtatissa, the President of the Third Buddhist Council of the third century BCE. Pali literature continued to grow with the enormous exegetical literature of Atthakathas, Tikas, Tippanis and glossaries, many chronicles, and prose and poetical compositions of a wide variety.

The great Buddhist Sanskrit works, Mahvastu and Lalitavistara, dealt mainly with the biography of the Buddha and have inspired many works of Buddhist art in Asia which depict events of the Buddha's life and career. Saddharmapundarika (better known as the Lotus Sutra), documenting and elaborating the major development of Buddhism as a popular religion, has gained the stature of a revered scripture. The rest of the voluminous Mahayana sutras and the copious Avadana literature in Sanskrit and their many translations and versions in Chinese and Tibetan singly and collectively serve as the textual and scriptural foundations of the major Northern Buddhist traditions and schools. Prajnaparamita of 8000 verses, Lankavatara sutra, Avatamsaka sutra, Śurangama sutra, Sandhinirmocana sutra and Vimalakirti nirdesa sutra are particularly important. Their impact on the understanding and practice of the Buddha Dhamma has lasted many centuries and in recent years has drawn the special attention of Buddhist scholars.

The same has to be said about the philosophical works of Nagarjuna, Asanga and Vasubandhu. Their elaboration of the concepts of *Sunyata* (emptiness), *svabhava* (own nature or intrinsic existence), *Alayavijnana* (store-consciousness), and *vijnaptimatra* (mind-only) dominates the philosophical content of Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions. The vast Tibetan collections of Tanjur and Kanjur are being discovered recently and their importance for all traditions of Buddhism only partially recognized. Thousands of manuscripts await identification, cataloguing, edition, and translation not only in the libraries of Asia but also in collections taken to the West by early explorers and scholars.

Thus the content of the Pariyatti aspect of Sasana is beyond estimation. After nearly one and a half centuries of research, many questions remain to be answered:

- Are the invaluable manuscripts secure in their present locations and are they accessible to scholars for study, evaluation and publication?

- Are there adequately qualified and philologically and philosophically competent scholars available for this purpose?
- Do resources and facilities exist for these manuscripts to be published and brought to the attention of the Buddhists in general? Is there a market to make it commercially feasible? If not, what other resources remain to be explored?
- Are the works already published known and used in circles beyond specialist scholars? Do they reach and benefit practitioners and students of Buddhism?
- Are the academic and literary advances made in isolated Buddhist societies in places like Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal brought to the attention of wider Buddhist community?
- Is the excellent research into Buddhist philosophy, literature, history, and culture in such national languages as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Sinhala, and Hindi accessible to scholars of the world?
- Are translations produced over a century ago in a literary style that is readable today or are they already dated?
- Have translators been conscious of the need to popularize their work? (Cf. for example the Budddha Jayanti Sinhala translation of the Tripitaka, done by scholars in elegant classical styles, which need to be re-translated into an idiom, which the common reader can understand).
- Is adequate research being done on what is already accessible in critical editions and translations?
- Are initial works of pioneering scholars reviewed for accuracy and misrepresentations, and misinterpretations corrected?
- Is adequate attention given to steps necessary for the continuing use of this vast literature for the promotion of Buddhist Studies and the propagation of Buddhist practice?

The answers to each of these questions could be “No,” even though some significant work is being done in several centers of the world and the more serious problems are dealt with. The need for wider participation and continuing effort cannot be over-emphasized. It can be a task for many decades but the urgency is patent.

The strategies for action also need to be reviewed. Digital modalities have simplified publication, access and retrieval. Already modest efforts have been made in this direction. Mahidol University and Dharmakaya Foundation of Thailand has the Thai edition of the Tripitaka available on a CD-ROM. S. N. Goenka has the Tripitaka, the Pali Commentaries and major works of the Pali literature accessible in six different scripts in one CD-ROM and search for words and expressions has been facilitated with requisite mechanisms. The Electronic Buddhist Text Initiative of Lewis R. Lancaster of Berkeley has similarly bought the Korean edition of the Chinese Tripitaka digitally to interested scholars. The Internet is used for similar results by enthusiasts in Cambodia and Australia. But more has to be done, and that, too, urgently. Digital libraries, however, cannot replace the traditional library as long as the printed word remains the foremost medium for knowledge. Especially in the traditionally Buddhist countries of South and Southeast Asia, books and libraries will continue to be the major need. The need is for a multi-pronged approach to the questions we raise above.

2. **The literary Resources and the Educational Component**

Buddhist education in both dimensions of (a) the regular instruction of monastics and lay Buddhists and (b) the promotion of academic Buddhist Studies have made giant strides over the last century and a half all over the world. Still the questions of both quantity and quality remain to be solved. Institutions, curricula and learning materials present complex issues:

- How can the institutional infrastructure of countries like Cambodia and Laos be restored and made adequate for the current demand?

- How can these countries and also Bangladesh and Nepal be assisted in developing curricula, instructional strategies and learning materials to overcome the problems caused by disruption and shortage of qualified educators?
- How can Sri Lanka cope with its dwindling number of English-proficient Buddhist scholars to maintain a lead role in this sphere?
- How can the impressive resources of Thailand be devoted to serve the wider Buddhist world?

Taken as a whole, the traditionally Buddhist countries of the whole of Asia need to revamp their Buddhist educational activities, both formal and nonformal. Japan and Taiwan have been reaching out to Buddhist societies

beyond their shores and their contributions have been substantial. Others have problems to solve nationally. The dearth of resources, mainly trained human resources for Buddhist education, is a problem in which international cooperation might provide some relief. Especially urgent is the insufficiency of effective teachers, suitably developed curricula, courses and course material, and modern textbooks and reference works. Here, again, the challenges and opportunities of the electronic digital age and on-line educational technologies have to be heeded.

3. Education for Missionary Activities

Though Buddhism is not engaged in active proselytization, *Dharmaduta* activities to bring the knowledge and the practice of Buddhism within the reach of seekers remains a primary concern of Buddhists. It is true that several generations of Buddhist monastics of Asia have succeeded in taking Buddhism to far-flung places. They, however, face new problems and it does not appear that these problems are being seriously dealt with. As far as *Dharmaduta* work in the West is concerned, the need for suitable literature in required languages to serve diverse categories of seekers is paramount. Good translations of the Word of the Buddha are vital, as these new seekers prefer original scriptures to interpretive manuals and treatises. In addition, they need books and articles, which are specially prepared for their level of interest and general knowledge.

Western readership looks for insightful writings by authorities that discuss Buddhism convincingly in relation to science, technology, philosophy and Western culture in general, and other religions in particular. The faith-evoking narratives on the wondrous and the miraculous do not impress them. What they want to know most is how Buddhism responds to current problems in day-to-day life such as abortion, euthanasia, suicide, asexual procreation, cloning and so forth. While the practice of meditation usually brings them to Buddhist institutions, these seekers do expect Buddhism to serve an intellectual function too. Hence the importance of a comprehensive literature to be prepared with special care.

Every country in the world, including traditionally Buddhist countries, has the need for internal missionary services. As education expands, Buddhism gains in popularity and acceptance mainly due to its appeal to rationalism. The educated youth subject Buddhism to critical study and wish to experiment with Buddhist practices such as chanting and meditation for spiritual development. A literature to cater for them needs to be produced with special attention to the intellectual curiosity of young

minds. As regards the outreach to the seekers of new knowledge, there has been a satisfactory utilization of electronic media such as the radio and the television. The digital facilities remain to be used more widely and the initiatives of those like the Buddha-net of Venerable Panyavaro of Australia are becoming quite popular. Here, again, the emphasis has to be in the sphere of doing more of what has proved to be relevant and effective.

4. Observance and Praxis (Practice)

Laity: The Buddha's own admonition was to know a little but practice diligently. He compared the bookish scholars to cowherds who protected other people's cows without themselves deriving the benefits of milk and milk products (Dhammapada 19-20). In short, Pariyatti is a stepping stone to Patipatti. No objective statistical data are available on how Buddhism is practiced either in the traditionally Buddhist countries and societies or in new Buddhist communities elsewhere. All information available is in the form of anecdotal evidence, which by nature is highly subjective. Some would report extremely favorable conditions while others would say the opposite. Both could be correct as they assess the nature of practice according to their own criteria and experience. The absence of congregational worship and registration of temple membership adds a further difficulty. The issues to be examined as far as the laity is concerned are as follows:

- What constitutes Buddhist practice – frequent or regular visits to temple for worship, chanting of Paritta or Mahayana sutras, and meditation? Regular observance of Eight Precepts on the Buddhist Sabbath? Attendance at the preaching of Dhamma? Providing requisites for monastics? And such other temple-centered activities?
- To what extent do home-based activities such as individual worship, meditation, family chanting, and the repetition of such formulas as *Namo Amito Fo*, *Namu Amida Butsu*, *Om mani padme hum* or *Namo myo horenge kyo* constitute Buddhist practice?
- Do the triple practices of *Dana, Sila* and *Bhavana* (giving, observance of precepts, and meditation) define a comprehensive set of Buddhist practices which can be universally accepted by all traditions and schools of Buddhism?
- What is the place of ritual, which vary from tradition to tradition (e.g. Buddha puja and Bodhi puja of Southern Buddhism; Protective rites connected with Avalokitesvara and other Bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism; Kalacakra initiation and other elaborate ritual of Tibetan Buddhism)?

- What is the relative importance of Panca sila (five Precepts), Atthanga sila (Eight Precepts), Dasa sila (Ten Precepts) and the four Boddhisattva Vows as Buddhist practice?
- Is temporary ordination, as practised in Southeast Asia, an aspect of Buddhist practice worthy of universalization?

Sangha: The whole issue of the Sangha also falls under the Patipatti aspect of the Sasana. Renouncing the householder's life and becoming a bhikkhu or bhikkhuni is, undoubtedly, the highest ideal in the Buddha Sasana. The space-like freedom of the monastic life has been extolled as the most desirable ambience for the practice of the Buddha's teachings. Many are the issues relating to the Sangha:

- Why does a person become a monastic – For the pursuit of one's own spiritual development and deliverance? To serve the Sasana as an educator, scholar, missionary, institutional builder or mobilizer of human and material resources? To safeguard the Buddhist heritage? To lead a life of relative comfort with minimum obligations? Or what else?
- Do the Sangha and the laity share a common understanding of each other's role and mutual obligations?
- Is the training of monastics systematic, adequate and in keeping with the highest standards of the Vinaya?
- Is there a growing consensus on the recent efforts in Southern Buddhism to revive the Bhikkhuni Order? How else are the aspirations of the women to be satisfied?
- How can a steady growth in the Sangha be guaranteed with special attention to motivating the educated youth to become monastics especially in the West?
- Are reform and innovation in Vinaya possible and desirable to make the Sangha cope with current social and economic conditions?

All these are sensitive issues and have to be solved by the Sangha itself. Nevertheless, it is necessary to list them and draw attention because, as the Buddha says,

"The lay and the HOMELESS alike

Each supporting the other
Accomplish the true doctrine
The peerless refuge from Bondage." (Itivuttaka 107)

5. Penetration and Deliverance (Realization)

The ultimate goal of Buddhism is the cessation of suffering. It is a path of deliverance, salvation, redemption, release, liberation or emancipation. The diligent Buddhist aspires to attain Nibbana, the *sumnum bonum* of Buddhism, which is described as a state of peace, tranquility, immortality and supreme happiness. Its attainment is signified as enlightenment, which one attains in this life itself. Parinibbana (Complete or Perfect Nibbana) is obtained at death.

All Buddhist traditions agree that enlightenment and Nibbana are within reach of every sentient being. The Mahayana tradition, based on the concept of *Tathagatagarbha*, stresses that each sentient being possesses the *Bodhicitta* (Enlightenment-mind), which in popular parlance is translated as "Buddha Nature."

Not all Buddhists, however, agree on how and when to attain enlightenment. The Sri Lankan view has been that no one had attained this state of perfection since Thera Maliyadeva a thousand or so years ago. The usual aspiration of a Sri Lankan Buddhist, as couched in the traditional Punyanumodana (merit-offering), is to await the arrival of the Buddha Metteyya (Maitreya). This belief, however, has not prevented a substantial number of earnest monks to take to lifelong meditation in forest hermitages. Other Buddhists of Southeast Asia believe that dedicated monks in forest hermitages have achieved and continue to achieve the state of an Arahant and attain Nibbana in this very life. They also believe that some of these monks have developed *dhyana* practices to a point of achieving *Iddhipada* or miraculous powers. The Chinese Chan tradition as developed in Korea as Son and Japan as Zen aspires to enlightenment through in-depth meditation and believes that it comes suddenly (Cf. Satori). Other traditions are less clear; an extremely devoted Tibetan monastic would have himself sealed in a cave for life in search of enlightenment. Issues pertaining to this aspect of the Sasana are as follows:

- Should the Buddhists have a common understanding about the attainment of Nibbana as a goal in current life?
- If so, what facilities need to be available for those who seek it?
- How can the pursuit of Vipassana meditation be instituted into regular Buddhist practice?
- How can meditation centers and forest hermitages promote meditation for the purpose of developing *Dhyanas* and various

stages of the Path and the Fruit (*maggaphala*), thus attaining the end of suffering?

- Or, is this aspect of the Sasana to be left entirely to the interested individual without any societal involvement?

Progress of Buddhism would entail the solution of all these issues which affect Buddhists as well as those who call themselves friends of Buddhism.

VII. Is a Cross-Sectarian Mechanism for Integrated Efforts needed for the Progress of Buddhism?

Prospects for the future are indeed very bright for Buddhism to redouble its effectiveness in the traditionally Buddhist countries of the Asian Region and also to expand substantially its influence in the world. The issues we have identified for action are in no way insurmountable. We have, however, to act severally and collectively. The more we meet and discuss the tasks at hand, the more we equip ourselves to solve them. "*Samavayo sadhu* (coming together or cooperation or collaboration is excellent)" said Asoka the Righteous, the paragon of Buddhist practitioners. He urged for a collective search for the inner essence of all religions. In the context of our present efforts, we should begin by seeking the inner essence of our common faith.

To revamp the Buddha Sasana, urgent steps need to be taken in all three aspects of Pariyatti (Theory), Patipatti (Practice) and Pativedha (Realization). No single group can address all the issues without collective action, because our resources are diverse. A group with abundant monetary resources may have a dearth of qualified human resources to teach, manage and write. Scholars capable of solving problems in the Pariyatti domain may lack access to publication. Or their need could be for specialists in the digital field to utilize electronic modalities to an optimum degree. It is urgent therefore to pool all available resources. But far more important is the will to act. There is no time to waste. The present good times may pass before we can fully utilize its advantages. Hence the need for commitment. It is time for us to heed the Buddha's own final message: *ma nivatta abhikkama* (Do not turn back. Go forward).

VII. Conclusion

Now I come to the question assigned to me by the organizers of the Conference: Is a cross-sectarian mechanism for integrated efforts needed for the progress of Buddhism in the next millennium, is it feasible and, if so, how is it to be developed?

It may be useful to review some efforts made in this direction in the past. As already mentioned, the Mahabodhi Society founded by Anagarika Dharmapala in 1891 was conceived as a cross-sectarian forum in that he was successful in bringing into it all traditions of Buddhism. Its membership and leadership were international and several branches were established all over the world. "The consolidation of the different Buddhist nations" was the first objective of the Anagarika. If this meant that, despite the variations in beliefs, practices and rituals, the Buddhists of various traditions began to share a common identity and cooperate to achieve a series of identified goals, it was certainly successful. But it never grew to be a cross-sectarian mechanism with either authority or means to sustain any integrated effort. After one hundred and ten years, it is only the name that is shared by its surviving branches as each acts independently. Interestingly even the Mahabodhi Society of India and the Mahabodhi Society of Sri Lanka have no common ground. The Indian Society on account of the diversity of Buddhism in the subcontinent remains cross-sectarian while Sri Lankan Society has nothing to do with the Mahayana and the Vajrayana traditions.

When Professor Gunapala Malalasekera carried on long-drawn consultations with the leaders of the international Buddhist community with the intention of setting up in 1950 a world Buddhist organization which could be a formidable cross-sectarian mechanism for integrated efforts to promote Buddhism, he was in for a surprise. Still ignorant of the unity which underlay the diversity, the agreement he could get from the leaders was for a fellowship to promote unity, goodwill and understanding. After sixty years, its main achievement is that a semblance of a unified community among the Buddhists of the world had developed in that all have adopted the six-coloured Buddhist flag and the Dharmacakra as their symbols and the Vesak as the Buddha day in May to be observed universally.

In 1988, at the General Conference held in the Hsi Lai Temple in Hacienda Heights, California, I was required to examine the role of the World Fellowship of Buddhists as regards Buddhist unity and world peace. Analyzing its activities since its inception, I asked the question: Do we see a need to become an active forum for Buddhists to discuss their problems, design and adopt solutions, raise funds and resources and implement programs of action on the basis of time-bound targets? My own answer was: Let us become a modern goal-oriented and achievement-guided international organization. Let us have a Program and budget, however, small to begin with. Assuming that such a transformation from what was more like a goodwill country club to such an organization required time, I also added: Twelve years will not be long a period to activate the international Buddhist community to form themselves

into an organization with (i) assured resources, (ii) a program and budget and (iii) a secretariat to implement it. The action to change the Constitution of the Fellowship to make the required transformation continued for nearly two decades until the General Conference in Tokyo in 200 decided otherwise. But the effort had not been altogether in vain. It was in the spirit of becoming a service-oriented organization that the Fellowship set up in 1998 the World Buddhist University and progressively attained substantial visibility in active participation in humanitarian disaster assistance.

The World Buddhist Sangha Council, established in 1966, with the objective of attaining cross-sectarian understanding and cooperation has had a similar experience in being anything more than a fellowship to promote goodwill among monastics of the different traditions. Compared to what existed decades ago, the harmonious relations, which the Council has developed among the monastics, are a significant achievement.

There had been other attempts to create a cross-sectarian mechanism. An attempt by a Korean prelate in the 1990s was to declare himself the Buddhist Pope with an eminent Sri Lankan prelate as the Deputy Pope and seek the approval of the United Nations for recognition. In some circles in the West, the question has been raised why the Buddhists around the world could not rally around His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Especially in the academia, some significant achievements had been made. The International Association of Buddhist Studies, established by Professor A. K.Narain, is a thriving mechanism of cooperation among scholars. Recently established Association of Buddhist Universities in connection with the UN Vesak celebrations in Bangkok, Thailand, too, is a promising organization. Both promote cross-sectarian cooperation but are not set up to exercise any authority as mechanisms for integrated effort.

The experience so far is that the international Buddhist community has still not realized the need for an action-oriented body to initiate and implement an integrated effort for the promotion of Buddhism. Buddhist traditions, schools and sects have developed in a highly decentralized, democratic and independent fashion throughout their history. That brings in the question for

feasibility. While a collective effort would indeed be a step in the correct direction, it has to be conceded what is practicable and possible at present is to revamp those organizations like the World fellowship of Buddhists and the World Buddhist Sangha Council to expand progressively their influence and activities and assume a coordinating role.

References:

1. This date is based on the Sri Lankan chronology which places the demise of the Buddha in 543 BCE. The uncertainty of the date of the Buddha's death has been noted by Xuan Shang (629CE) who observed, "The different schools calculate variously from the death of Buddha. Some say it is 1200 years and more since then. Others say 1300 and more. Others say 1500 more. Others say that 900 years have passed but not 1000 years since the Nirvana." Samuel Beal: Si-yu-ki, The Buddhist Records of the Western World, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1884/1981 Volume II p. 33.
2. For a comprehensive account of the scholarly movement known as "Orientalism" see my "From the Living Fountains of Buddhism," Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Colombo 1984.
3. The foremost among them was Colonel Henry Steel Olcott and Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who embraced Buddhism in Sri Lanka in 1880. Olcott's Buddhist Catechism, published in 1881, remained for a long time the main book through which the general public of the West came to know Buddhism.
4. Theravada Buddhism as preserved and propagated by the Mahavihara ceased to exist in its pristine form after the three monasteries, namely Mahavihara, Abhayagiri and Jetavanarama were unified by Parakramabahu I in the twelfth century. The new form which Georges Coedes calls the "Sinhala reform" was an amalgam of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana and proved to be more acceptable not only in Sri Lanka but also in the Southeast Asia. For details see my "Does the Theravada Tradition of Buddhism exist Today?" in "Buddhist and Pali Studies in honour of Venerable Professor Kakkapalliye Anuruddha" Hong Kong University, Hong Kong, 2009 pp. 97-107
5. See Stephen T. Teiser (ed): Buddhisms Princeton University Series, 2011
6. For the three documents of Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, Christmas Humphreyes and Havenpola Ratanasara-Ananda W. P.Guruge, see my "What in Brief is Buddhism?" Buddha Light Publishing, Hacienda heights, California 2003, pp. 126-136
7. Weifang, Tai Xu's Diary abroad, Complete Works by Venerable Tai Xu, volume 56, pp. 585- 650
8. A significant openness is shown in Sri Lanka where Venerable Bhikkhuni Kusuma has translated into Sinhala and published as many as seven books of Venerable Grand Master Hsing Yun of Fo Guan Shan, thus enabling the Sinhala readers have an insight into Buddhism as interpreted by an eminent prelate of the Mahayana tradition.
9. This advice had been given by Asoka in his Rock Edict XII.
10. See my booklet "Towards Universal Buddhism" published by the Sri Lanka Regional Centre of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, Colombo 1984, elaborating my first article published in Hindustan Times, Delhi, India in 1954

11. Countries have been more successful with national organizations like the Japanese Buddhist Federation and the Chinese Buddhist Association. Legally established mechanisms are in operation in Myanmar and Thailand.
12. See my “An Agenda for the International Buddhist Community”, Karunaratne and sons, Colombo 1993 Chapter II.
13. First presented to the International Conference Buddha Sasana in Theravada Countries – Issues and the Way Forward, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2003. See its report “Way Forward for Buddha Sasana,” Ministry of Buddha Sasana, Colombo, 003.