

# Editorial

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## Preconceive mentality

There has been a visible increase in the development works being initiated in the state of late. These activities, if being brought to a fruitful conclusion, should propel our small state into one with adequate infrastructures and public amenities for replicating the success stories of places like Thailand, Singapore and even Vietnam which was considered a poor man's tourist destination only a few years back, but which has managed to accelerate their tourism-centric infrastructures to such an extent that there has grown a number of exotic tourist destinations which only the well-heeled could afford.

The potential for our state to be developed into a thriving tourist hotspot cannot be stressed enough, and it undoubtedly will become one, if the Act East policy comes into full effect, whether we are prepared for it or not. The nagging doubt that has been occupying the minds of the people who are eagerly awaiting the promised changes is a definite time frame for successful completion without the cost overrun that has been the hallmark of public infrastructure development.

However, a deeper look into the causes would reveal a dark undercurrent that is threatening to engulf the whole strata of public dealings in the state. The looming shadow of violence and influence has permeated every contract and supply works to the extent that every development work are now being allotted according to the hierarchy at which a contractor, immaterial of whether registered or not, has reach and proximity.

Credibility and sincerity has become the least important criteria for allotment of works, while the number of shadows one has behind one's back is the one most important factor that clinches the deal - any deal.

Money speaks louder than honesty and mammon worship has become the new religion of choice. It would not be much farther from the truth to state that material gain and not progress is the most important consideration, whether while governing the state or mobilizing the naïve public by certain vested interest for their own material gains, taking advantage of the lacunae in the administration and spawning sky-high ideologies.

The gullible people, meanwhile, ended up being caught in the crossfire, a collateral damage that will be written off and entered in the books of statistics. The convenient oversight of the Government on the innumerable undesirable things that is taking place in the administration needs to be checked. The earlier those at the helm of affairs realize this anomaly and actually initiate action to rectify it, the better will it be for all. And the onus of proving that the government has enough political will and strength to come out of this quagmire rests with the leaders who have doled out enough promises and hopes with folded hands at the election rallies, else the multiplying shadows behind their backs will obliterate them as well.

# Glimpse of the Buddha's teaching

By Thangjam Sanjoo Singh

What did the Buddha teach? It is a very common question that generally asked by newcomers into Buddhism. It is indeed a fundamental question that everyone should learn to ask in every aspect of life. Regarding Buddhism, there are different ways to respond depending on the questioner's intention and perspective. Any response however can only be a guideline or a road map. It would not be possible to find the actual answer until one gets into the car and drives the road. Buddhism basically is based on the mainstays called the Triple Gem;

- 1) *The Buddha* - one who was awakened,
- 2) *The Dhamma* - truth / teachings of the awakened one and
- 3) *Sangha* - community of the fully awakened one.

The Triple Gem is the cornerstone of the Buddhist's beliefs and is the most valuable possession in the spiritual armory. A formal ceremonial commitment is made to all three whenever one decides to follow the path of the Buddha, that is, to avoid doing any evil and unwholesome actions that harms oneself and others, basically including taking things that is not given, sexual misconduct, speaking unskillfully and taking things that delude the mind and consciousness, but to cultivate good wholesome deeds, being kind, compassionate, generous, respecting human rights and equalities, skilful speaking that generates love and compassion and to purify the deluded mind through mindful living. However, the core foundation of the Buddhist teachings is generally understood to be the Four Noble Truths. That is:

- 1) The fact that unhappiness exists,
- 2) There is a cause for unhappiness,
- 3) There is the end for

unhappiness and  
4) There is a way to find happiness.

These Four Noble Truths are the foundation of all the teachings of the Buddha. It is the master plan or road map that leads one to find a peaceful and tranquil mind that is free from suffering and that leads one to liberation. The way to end the suffering that leads to the illumination of ultimate wisdom according to the Buddha's instruction is to follow the Middle Way avoiding the two extremes of life.

*"There are these two extremes that are not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth, the Buddha. Which two? That which is devoted to sensual pleasure with reference to sensual objects; base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable and that which is devoted to self-affliction; painful, ignoble, unprofitable."*

*Avoiding both these extremes, the middle way realized by the Buddha - producing vision, producing knowledge leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding."* The middle path, therefore, is a fundamental teaching of the Buddha, sometimes understood as the way of life consisting of eight steps, the Eightfold noble Path:

- 1) Right understanding,
- 2) Right thinking,
- 3) Right speech,
- 4) Right conduct,
- 5) Right vocation,
- 6) Right effort,
- 7) Right alertness and
- 8) Right concentration.

The Buddha furthermore taught something unique in his second sermon that impermanence is a natural fact. It is the universal truth. There is a famous Thai statement about changing nature of all phenomena says *"the only unchangeable fact is change itself"*. Inability to understand the

changing phenomenon causes dissatisfaction generally known as suffering, unhappiness or misery. Suffering, in terms of the Buddha's teaching refers to both physical and mental suffering but a deeper level, it only refers to the mental suffering. The Buddha suggests a possible solution. Suffering or unhappiness can be reduced, according to the Buddha, only through development of selflessness/ egolessness (non-soul identity), which the Buddha term *amatta*. Objects that are subjects to change cannot be permanent (*atta*) entity. Hence it is selflessness, no *atta*. The core Buddhist teaching is also summarized concisely in the verse spoken by one of his first five disciples, Ven. *Assaji* when he was asked by Venerable *Sariputta*, the Buddha's right hand assistant to be: it goes like this:

*"Of things that proceed from a cause,  
Their cause the Buddha has told  
and  
Also their cessation:  
Thus teaches the Great Ascetic."*

The birth is suffering, the Buddha further explains the general nature of impermanence, aging is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair are suffering, associating with things disliked and separation from things liked or loved ones is suffering, not getting things that are desired is suffering, in short the Buddha said, the clinging to five arrogates; from feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness are suffering. For 45 years The Buddha frequently instructed his listeners that these aggregates are subject to change and impermanence. One should not be attached to them, or cling to them. These five aggregates should not be accepted or grasped as me and mine but should not be accepted as non-self because it is subject to change. It

is impermanent. Learning to avoid clinging to the five aggregates is the path that leads to ultimate happiness. Detachment from materialism is hard enough for today's consumer world, so it is certain that detachment is not a simple endeavor because of human desire and attachment to things. As a result, Buddhism emphasizes the gradual development of letting go from a very basic level of learning to giving away like generosity and then learning to give greatly as foundation for spiritual development. Learning to give things is a start of learning to give away things that belongs to us. Learning to give things away is path to letting go even unwanted feelings, anxieties, emotions and sensations, discarding and completely disconnecting with it which everyone can develop through right understanding and proper practice.

The Buddha explained The Noble Truth of suffering, its cause that is craving for pleasure, craving for individual existence or release from our present situation, such craving can be transcended the mind liberated from the demands of the insatiable ego, and we can find a way of life which leads to the end of sufferings. The way leading to the end of the suffering is the middle path or the Noble Eightfold Path. These are the foundation stones on which the entire *Dhamma* is based. In the study of Buddhism, therefore, a mere superficial glance or even just learning the philosophical aspects of it and repetition of words is futile unless it leads to deep understanding and right practice, therefore are fundamental tools that lead to ultimate reality. Deep understanding at experiential level of right practice is only possible through the mental cultivation known as *Meditation*; *Vipassana* Meditation.

## Utilizing media as tool for political gains

By - Halbrooks

Politicians are always quick to blame the media when a news story doesn't put them in a favorable light. But politicians use media to win elections by getting the exposure they need to reach voters. Reporters have no choice but to cover the people chosen to lead the government. In election years, people who work in media should prepare themselves for the manipulation they'll likely face when a politician's quest for office runs head-on into the media's desire to seek the truth.

**Staged Political Rallies**  
Rallies are designed to show the voters' spontaneous excitement for a candidate. There's nothing wrong with that. But those homemade signs that you see waving in the air are often drawn by campaign workers themselves, not people at home. Sometimes the crowds are even made up of campaign workers and volunteers so that the TV cameras don't capture an empty room. They'll be dressed so they appear to be moms and dads, factory workers and teachers, but that can be just an illusion.

Take note of the backdrop behind the candidate. Sometimes those people are carefully chosen so they appear in photos and in news coverage. If a candidate is doing poorly with young voters, expect to see college students and people in their 20s in the background. Race and gender are also considered when deciding who gets to sit or

stand behind the candidate during a campaign speech.

**News-less News Conferences**  
The sure-fire way for a candidate to get media coverage is to invite reporters to a news conference for an "important announcement." That announcement could be the same tired 10-point economic plan that the candidate has announced twice a week for the past six months. It could be a "major endorsement" from his Sunday School teacher or a "demand for the truth" about why an opponent refuses to debate.

You won't know until you get there because a campaign doesn't want to admit that its big news is really no big deal for fear that you'll be a no-show. It's worth attending these news conferences so you can get access to the candidate. But beware of rules designed to keep you on a leash. You may be told the candidate will be happy to talk about why he's in favor of good schools, but any other topic, like his recent sex scandal, is off limits. Another common trick is to say that the candidate is really busy and can't take any questions at all, so he can be on time for his next event. People who organize news conferences don't make accommodating your every wish their top priority.

**\*Exclusive\* One-on-One Interviews**

Nothing tempts reporters like a chance for an exclusive interview. A campaign will sometimes dangle these offers just before election

day to guarantee news coverage. Campaign experts know an exclusive interview will be promoted heavily and be given more space in a newspaper or more time in a TV newscast than a typical day-to-day campaign story. That's free publicity.

Don't accept any conditions for granting such valuable exposure. No questions should be off the table. If you're told you only have five minutes with the candidate, negotiate for more time by saying you need to also shoot photos or additional video to make your story the best it can be. Unless you're in a small city covering a presidential candidate, you should be able to win that battle.

Expect the campaign to shop the candidate around for other "exclusive" opportunities. You may have had the exclusive for the 6:00 p.m. TV newscast, but a radio station may get the candidate for its morning show the next day.

**TV Commercials and Print Ads**  
Any candidate with enough money will spend some of it on TV and print advertisements. Just like all other ads, the aim is to sell a product, not necessarily to tell the entire truth about the candidate or his campaign.

That's no surprise, but you may not know about the rules that give a political campaign an advantage over the media. Thanks to campaign laws concerning the media, ad space has to be sold at the lowest available rate. Not only that, media outlets have very little control over what is said in a political advertisement, even if it is misleading or downright false.

The Communications Act of 1934 outlined how political ads were to be handled by radio stations. Today, many of those same rules

apply. Clips from newspaper stories or TV newscasts can even be used without permission, as part of "fair use" guidelines — even if the clip is twisted to imply the exact opposite of what was originally said.

**Friendly, Harmless Media Coverage**

Ever wonder why a politician who has no time to be a guest on a show like *Meet the Press* is suddenly available to appear on *The Tonight Show*? It's not because his schedule suddenly opened up.

President Obama has even taken a seat next to Colbert. That type of setting allows a politician to be on TV without being asked pesky questions about his policies. For a little-known candidate, this experience is a media gold mine. He can talk about his family and his hopes for a better world for all of us. A talk show host is likely to ask softball questions to let the candidate appear relaxed and human.

A call-in talk radio show provides an additional opportunity. A good campaign manager will do everything possible to make sure she can plant phone calls that are taken on the air. A host who takes call after call from people thrilled to just get the chance to talk to the candidate should suspect that his show has been taken over by the campaign. Campaigns know that finding the right political radio talk show can help win elections.

**Family Photo Spreads**  
At the height of a campaign, it's no coincidence that a magazine has a cover story that takes you inside the home of the candidate. You can see his wife baking cookies for charity in their newly

remodeled kitchen and get her secret recipes.

This spread can do more for a campaign than the candidate's position statement on fighting crime. Readers will feel as though they know the entire family, and that familiarity brings support at the ballot box.

It's a delicate balance between getting a story that might boost sales and knowing that you're being used. Decide if a trade-off is worth it and whether to seek the same type of story from other candidates to demonstrate fairness. While you want to avoid ethical questions of photo manipulation, don't allow the campaign to have the final say in which images are published.

**Social Media**

It's typical for a candidate to criticize traditional media for not allowing "the whole story" to get out to the voters. A candidate will mean that his entire 45-minute news conference wasn't aired in its entirety on a 30-minute newscast, which would be impossible. It's a reporter's job to edit so that the most important information is presented to the audience.

Today, a candidate can bypass broadcast and print media to reach his potential voters through social media. A Facebook page can show he has 20,000 fans, offer his entire news conference and most importantly, allow him a totally unfiltered way to speak. President Obama had a successful web strategy that helped him win the 2008 presidential campaign.

A wise candidate should realize that social media is a tool, but it has yet to replace the value of getting his face on the front page of the paper or on the 6:00 p.m. newscast. While the candidates

may tout their "grassroots campaign" using social media to get in direct touch with voters, they know they need you desperately to win.

**Media as a Punching Bag**

Politicians who are pleased with a particular news story will sometimes praise the reporter for fairness and objectivity. When the story's not so positive, claims of media bias will usually pour out from the campaign.

A good reporter should present the facts without fear or favor and not seek out praise or shy away from criticism. But when a candidate stumbles or seems unprepared, as some say former Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin appeared in 2008, the campaign will try to shift the focus from the candidate to the media.

Candidates are human — tired, stressed and worried about failing. Sometimes those normal frailties come out in an interview. A media outlet is faced with a decision on whether to show candidates when they're not at their best.

In Palin's case, there were calls of political and gender bias. But Bill Clinton is a man and a Democrat, and his campaign also fought the media during his 1992 presidential campaign when allegations of womanizing were first brought up. While media outlets were attacked then, Clinton's impeachment after the Monica Lewinsky scandal showed that it was a legitimate issue. Media manipulation will never stop as long as there are people seeking elected office. By educating yourself on how you might be used, you'll make smarter decisions when you're on the campaign trail.

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