

Buddhism, Tanzania Buddhist temple and present difficulties for the spread of Buddhism in Africa

Rev.I.Pannasekara –The Chief Monk for the African Continent

Introduction

After attending many international inter-faith conferences and after visiting some European, American and Asian countries, I came to realize that many of the people I met did not know what is going on with Buddhism in Africa. They still think negatively of Africa and that nothing positive is happening anywhere on the continent. Some even believe that Africans can not understand Buddhism at all. People I met did not have a good picture about Africans' ability to reach out to Buddhism and to achieve it. Some of these people even think that Africans have no access to Buddhism and that Buddhist monks cannot work within African communities.

As a result of my observations, and also due to the responsibility placed on me by the Theravada Tradition in Sri Lanka as Chief Monk for Africa, I felt compelled to write these details on Buddhism in Africa: past, present and challenges for the future. Here I have compiled the details about the introduction of Buddhism to Africa, the current situation, and at the same time I have explained how I perceive the challenges for the future. After reading this note any one may have a more precise picture of Buddhism in Africa and the achievements of Africans.

In Africa, Buddhism first appeared in the 19th century. It came to Africa through a Sri Lankan Buddhist community and other Buddhist groups like Indian, Burmese, Thai and Chinese. Now it has established temples and monks in many countries in Africa like Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa and Botswana. Local people have become Buddhist monks and nuns. They are now teaching Buddhism using their mother tongues. If we want to really establish Buddhism in any country a local person has to become monk or nun. Until the teachings of the Buddha are spoken in the native language of the people there is not complete established Buddhism in that country. That is the way it goes on. The fortunate thing is that now we have local monks and nuns in some African countries and they are doing their services regarding their local people very well. They are not yet great in number. But we can satisfy many people with those who are trained. For example: Bhikku Buddharakkhita is a Ugandan monk. He teaches Buddhist meditation at Bhavana society in USA. And also a Congolese monk named Hui Ran is doing his works at Buddhist centre in Congo. We Buddhist monks are very happy to see they are doing our duty using their own words. That is the way Buddha taught. If any body follows and practices Buddhist teachings he also can be a Buddha. Because Buddha did not keep a monopoly on enlightenment. He kept open his path and teachings. Without hiding its flavor he invited everyone to test and follow it.

People in Africa are beginning to test the teachings. Those who understand suffering learn easily what is the cause of suffering, what is the way of cessation of

suffering and what is the final liberation from it. Then they can develop their way to happiness. If some body is in a hole, coming up from it will naturally cause happiness. Nearly fifty Buddhist centers have been established in Africa. I tried to collect details about all of them, but I could not establish contact with all of them. I visited physically ten different places. I received other news from websites and by writing letters.

At the same time, here in South Africa I have done interviews with local followers from different countries to understand what they really hope for. Most interviews took place at the African Buddhist seminary in South Africa. It is good place to find many young Africans who practice Buddhism. They said themselves what they understood through Buddhist practice. These things are not my imagination. They wrote them as self explanation. Each and every word they wrote is very valuable for understanding how they think, what they need and their hopes and fears. I did personal interviews with most of them and have come to understand how Buddhist teachings are currently valued on the African continent.

I have been nearly Eight years (1998 -2006) in Africa and I am still living with Africans. I am sharing with them their sorrow and happiness. It is not difficult to live with them. I have realized who are they and how we can develop their capacity. I got many experience from them after counseling, through guiding meditation, chanting Pirith, teaching, dharma discussion and social works.

While we work multi cultural, multi national places we face many difficulties. We get encouragements and discouragements from the field. But if some body came to help them we no need to think or hope any encouragement from local people. Most of the time we have to hope from them discouragement. That is the nature of the world. Here also I have explained what are the present difficulties we are facing in Africa while practicing Buddhism.

Buddha's teaching is very wide and deep. So many sutras and explanations are there. He explains how to make our life follow the proper way and how to get good benefit in this life and here after. If some body follows only a few of his teachings, that person will also get benefits for develop his good side. The Five precepts are the foundation of Buddhist society. I am teaching to them few selected most related teachings to develop their (Africans) current values. After read and follow them they can make their lives more valuables than now.

Here in Africa we see very famous diseases and other things like HIV-Aids, Poverty, health problems and etc... I am trying to give some explanations how Buddhist teachings can help to eliminate these present problems. However, more research is needed to insure that a wide majority of the society becomes aware of the positive effects brought by this religion.

Tanzania - Buddhist Temple & Meditation centre (The Oldest Buddhist temple in Africa)

Buddhism is spreading on the world through clear understanding of followers. People are not converted or forced to follow it. They follow it after understanding. If one follows and practices it, one can eliminate suffering and attain full liberation. The

Buddha also followed and practiced the same way and attained enlightenment about 2547 years ago.

At that time there was one Buddhist who was the Buddha himself. But afterwards he preached his understanding to the five laymen. Then it spread many places in India. Under the principle of spreading the Dhamma without violence (Dhammawijaya), followed by Emperor Dhammasoka, many messengers were sent to nine countries in the world. One of them named Arahath Maha Mahinda Thero, the son of the Emperor Dhammasoka was sent to Sri Lanka in 247AD.

After Buddhism was established in Sri Lanka in 19th century, it started spreading to Europe, America, Australia and etc. Some monks from Sri Lankan, Myanmar, Tibet and Thailand, contributed their part of spreading the Dhamma in these continents.

In 19th century, in Africa especially in Tanzania, Sri Lankan people established Buddhist temple after they came to work in Dar es Salaam around 1915. This is the oldest Buddhist temple in Africa. They were about 400-450 people.

They worked together and formed “Singhalese Buddhist Association” and then asked for a piece of land from the government of Tanzania. They were given a piece of land from the government as donation at city center. They then brought a seedling of Bodhi tree (this was the tree under which the Buddha attained full enlightenment) from Sri Lanka and planted it in 1919. It has grown up now covering about quarter acre.

The Buddhist Association hall was built in 1927. In those days Tanzania was still under the British protectorate. The association was then registered under the societies in 1955.

Not only the Sri Lankan Buddhists who supported the building and maintenance of the Association hall, but also the Sri Lankan Muslims, Christians, and Hindus who worked in Tanganyika that time gave their support.

In the past, the association was called the “*Sinhalese Buddhist Association*”. But it did not include the Thai, Burmese, Chinese, African and other Buddhists hence it was then changed and named as “*Buddhist Association*” so that all Buddhists and others could come and practice together. This happened on 09th July 1968. Since then it is open to the public to come and do their practice. Even former president Mwalimu Julius K Nyerere also offered Dana (food) for monks in the temple.

There was no Buddhist monk in Tanzania or in Zanzibar until early 1960s. In 1962, Venerable Palane Narada was the first Buddhist monk to go to Zanzibar for a short visit. Infact, he was the first Buddhist monk to come to Africa. From Zanzibar he then visited this temple as well. After the Zanzibar Revolution in 1964, all the Buddhists in Zanzibar moved to mainland (Tanzania). Since the establishment of this temple there was no resident monk until 1983.

Bodhi Tree

In Buddhism we have three most respectable and sacred things. The first one is Pagoda/Chetiya/Dagaba, second is Bodhi tree and third is Buddha’s statue/shrine room. The Buddhist community in Tanzania discussed on what should be firstly be done in order to make this place more sacred. Then they decided to bring a seedling of Bodhi tree from Sri Lanka. In 1919 AD it was taken from Anuradhapura City of in Sri Lanka and brought and planted to Dar Es Salaam Tanzania. The mother tree was brought to Sri Lanka by nun Arahath Sanghamitta therie from India. That is the one branch of main Bodhi tree where Gautama Buddha attained full Enlightenment. The tree is now big in

such away it covers almost a quarter of an acre. It is now 88 years old. Since then it never bear seedlings until 2002 when the seeds germinated to seedlings. Some of these seedlings were planted in other parts of Tanzania like Butiyama (former President Nyerere's home), Morogoro and Botanical garden, where other seedlings were planted in other African countries like Kenya, Malawi and South Africa.

Old Buddhist temple Building

The old building was completed in year 1927. It has two rooms, sitting room, kitchen, store room and bath room. In those days the country was called Tanganyika which was a British protectorate. She got her independence from the British on 9th December 1961. In 1964 Tanganyika and Zanzibar united to become Tanzania. Sri Lankan community used this hall for their social meetings; religious services and other activities.

Shrine room and Pagoda

Until 1956, the devotees used the old association hall as a shrine room. After a while they started collecting donations for building a shrine room, a pagoda and statues of the Buddha. It was big and expensive project for that community. In the same year of 1956, they succeeded to build a pagoda and a shrine.

Multipurpose Hall

The process of building multipurpose hall began in 1984 when Venerable Devalegama Dhammasena and Venerable Badigama chandaloka laid the foundation stone. They finished the first 1984 which was the residents for the monks. In 1996 Venerable Ratwita wimalajothi started building the main hall. It was completed by Venerable Ilukpitiye pannasekara – the chief monk for the African continent in 2000. Many donations came from Nan hua Chinese Buddhist temple, which is in Bronkhorstspuit South Africa, under master Hui Lee. He donated more than 20,000 US Dollars and building materials. The length and the width of the hall is 100 x 45 feet respectively. It is now used for meditation classes, Yoga classes, meetings and other activities.

Residents Monks

Since then until 1983 there was no resident monk. All religious functions and other activities were arranged by devotees themselves. In 1982 committee members decided to find a monk. They then wrote to chairman of (WFB) World Fellowship of Buddhists –Dhammaduta committee.

The first resident monk to come to Tanzania was **Ven Puhulwelle Vipassi thero**. He was from Gangarama temple in Colombo. The arrangement of taking him from Sri Lanka to Tanzania were made by ven Galaboda Ghanissara thero and Mr. Albert Edirisinghe .They came with him to Tanzania. This was a very historical moment of Buddhism in Africa and particularly in Tanzania. He stayed here for a year and went to Brazil in North America.

The Second monk who came to Tanzania was **Ven Witarandeniye kassapa** . He also came from Gangarama temple in Colombo .He succeeded to build the wall around the temple and he is now in Birmingham London. 1985 ven kassapa went to Birmingham

in the United Kingdom. Up to now he is working there. He has started many projects for helping the needy people. He established International Buddhist Relief Organization doing many relief and charity activities around the world.

03rd Ven Pidiwille Piyatissa

After a while venerable Piyadassi also came to Tanzania. He stayed in Tanzania for nearly two years. In that time the first president of Tanzania, Mwalimu J.K. Nyerere's elder son Andrew Nyerere came to the temple to learn Buddhism. Then he went to Sri Lanka for further practice for nearly one and half years

04th Ven Devalegama Dhammasena

He also came from Sri Lanka as fourth resident monk. He traveled to Kenya, Botswana, Zambia, and some other African countries to do religious services

He started to build new resident for monks and finished before going back to Sri Lanka. He went back to Sri Lanka in 1987. He is now the chief incumbent of Tissamaharama ancient temple in Sri Lanka. Once he went to Botswana to inaugurate the sacred pagoda.

05th Ven Badigama Chandaloka

He came here and stayed for nearly one year and went back to Sri Lanka. He is now in Sri Lanka.

06th Ven Kanumuldeniye Dhammasoka

He was the Chief Incumbent monk of The New Polonnaru Rock temple in Dehiwala Sri Lanka. After receiving invitation from Tanzania Buddhist association, in 1993 came and stayed here for a while. During his stay he also visited Zambia, Botswana and other countries. He went back to Sri Lanka in 1994. He made all the arrangements for Chief monk Rev I Pannasekara to come to Tanzania.

07th Ven Thailand Channawanno

Few Thai people who live around the Buddhist temple decide to find a Thai monk for a while. After discussing with committee members they brought a monk from Thailand. He stayed here few months and went to Sri Lanka.

08th Ven Kahanda Amarabuddhi

While he was here, he managed to visit other countries. Once he went to Botswana and laid down a foundation stone for the pagoda of the Botswana Buddhist temple. Now he has his own temple in USA.

09th Ven Rathvita wimalajothi

He came in 1994. The arrangement for him to come to Tanzania was made by World Fellowship of Buddhists. He stayed in Tanzania up to 1999. While he was in Tanzania he started to sending Tanzanian students to African Buddhist seminary in South Africa.

At his time he carried on building multipurpose hall and started nursery school for neighbor children. He also traveled to Kenya, Malawi, south Africa, Zambia to attend

some religious services.

10th Ven Vilachchiye Vijithananda

The arrangements for him to come to Tanzania were made by Venerable Wimalajothi. He stayed few months here and went to teach at the African Buddhist seminary in South Africa. After few months then he went back to Sri Lanka now he is living in America.

11th Ven kahalle chandrajothi

He came to Tanzania during Venerable Wimalajothi's time. He was brought here to assist the resident monk with other duties. He stayed for nearly two years and went back to Sri Lanka. Currently he is living in Sri Lanka.

12th Rev Ilukpitiye Pannasekara

Chief Monk for the African continent and the twelfth resident monk to Tanzania. Currently he is residing at the centre and is working hard to establish Buddhism in Africa.

IN TANZANIA SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PERFORMED:

1. In charge of Buddhist temple –Dar Es salaam, Tanzania.
2. Teaching of Buddhist philosophy
3. Free library services
4. Running a nursery school
5. Trustee—world conference on religion and peace—(wcrp) Tanzania
6. Making arrangements of sending young Tanzanians to learn Buddhism in South Africa.
7. Holding meditation classes every Sunday in the temple

13th Ven Madagampola Pannaseeha

He was a teacher in Sri Lanka and came to Tanzania after all necessary arrangements were made by Rev .I. Pannasekara in 2003.

The monk who lives in Dar es Salaam Tanzania has numerous responsibilities to do. He has to travel to other neighboring countries like Kenya, Malawi, Botswana, Zambia, South Africa, Zanzibar etc. to perform various religious ceremonies, because there are no any resident Buddhist monks up to now. Tanzania Buddhist center is used as the Buddhist center for the whole of African continent,

Visiting Monks

- **Ven Palane Narada**

He was the first Buddhist monk to the African continent born in Sri Lanka . After learning Buddhism, he started traveling to many countries to propagate it. In 1962 he came to Zanzibar for a short visit. At that time there had a Buddhist association office in Zanzibar. It was at Don Millan's house. Don Millan was a merchant and jeweler in Zanzibar. From There Ven Narada gave a short visit to the temple.

- **Ven Galaboda Ghanissara**

He is a well known monk in Sri Lanka. He is living in the

Gangarama Buddhist temple in Colombo Sri Lanka. He was supported by WFB – Dhammaduta committee to send monks to Tanzania Buddhist temple. He also came with the first monk and stayed here few days and went back to Sri Lanka. But after a while he came again while Ven Devalegama Dhammasena and Ven Badigama Chandaloka were here. He came and ordained one Zambian young man named Edvin Nawa who became a Buddhist monk. After few days he went to Sri Lanka and India. So far do not know where he is.

- **Ven Piyananda**

He is a friend of Ven Wimalajothi. He just came to Visit Tanzania and went back to Japan.

- **Ven Hui Lee**

He is the founder and first Director of Nan Hua Chinese Buddhist temple in South Africa. He is traveling to many African countries one of which is Tanzania. He came here in 1998. When he saw this oldest center decided to help, develop and protect it. He donated more than USD \$20,000 to develop the center.

- **Ven Hui Guan**

He is a Chinese monk who came to Tanzania for student recruitment. He was the dean of students at the African Buddhist Seminary in South Africa.

- **Ven Hui Fang**

He is a Chinese monk living at Nan Hua Buddhist temple, Bronkhorstspuit in South Africa. He came recruit Tanzanian students to enroll at African Buddhist Seminary. He came with Mr Harold Lemke who is now called **Ven Ben Kong** who has returned to United States of America. Ven. Hui Fang is now the abbot of Nan Hua Temple and director of African Buddhist African.

- **Ven Hui Xiang**

He is also a Chinese monk from Nan Hua temple in South Africa. He came here twice for students' recruitment.

- **Ven Anuruddha**

He was traveling through Africa and made a short visit to this temple.

- **Ven Buddha Dathu (a Vietnam monk)**

Ven Pannasekara met Ven Vietnam in Thailand in the year 2000 while attending a WFB meeting in Thailand, he, Ven. Buddhadathu, wanted to pay a visit to Africa. After inviting him, he came to the temple and stayed for nearly a month and went back to Singapore.

- **Ven Ananda(a Indian monk)**

This was the assistant monk to Ven Buddhadathu at that time. Both of them came to this temple at the same time.

- **Ven Walpola Piyanada**

He is a Sri Lankan monk currently living in Geneva Switzerland. He traveled with Buddha's relic which was offered to the United Nations from Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand. While doing this, he then received invitation from Rev I Pannasekara to come to Tanzania and in August 2003 he managed to come. He stayed for three days he went back to Switzerland.

- **Ven .T.Y.Lama Shresta Gangshen Tulku Rinposhe**

He is a very famous Tibetan monk living in Italy. He has many branches in other countries. He came to Tanzania with Buddha's relics on 02.08.2003. After two days he left.

Services

In this center we have a nursery school for poor local African children. It is a special project helping African community. The previous old building which was built in 1927 is now used for the nursery school. No any religious based teachings in the nursery syllabus. The medium language is English. The age for the kids is from two and half years to six years old.

We give library services to others on demand. Any body can get books for reading in order to develop their knowledge.

From time to time resident monks go to Secondary schools and universities to give talks about Buddhism.

From 1996 up to now, we have been sending Tanzanian students who have completed advanced level (matric) education to African Buddhist seminary, which is under the Nan Hua temple in South Africa, to learn Buddhism for three years. A total of nearly 150 young Tanzanian matriculants have been sent to South Africa to study Chinese Buddhism over the past six years. Those who passed the examination well could go to Taiwan for more few years in Buddhist studies. It is their decisions whether to become monks or not without any obligation from the seminary.

Future Plans

1. Africans still do not know much about Buddhism. More practical activities have to be done for them to understand about this new philosophy. Much have to be done for them irrespective of their color or tribes. Because of that we have to improve our social services.
2. We have to add more and valuable books in the library and improve other facilities.
3. Every Sunday there is meditation class. Nearly 15-20 students attend. We can improve it to get more students.
4. We have a nursery school for poor local children. We can add more facilities and if possible we can provide free education to these children which will be of a great help since primary education is now free.
5. Every day many people die from HIV and Aids. We can arrange some counseling programs at the temple premises to decrease the misery.
6. No free medicine and free health services. We can arrange any kind of service to help needy people.

7. In rural areas there are no good facilities like drinking water, houses, food, clothes, schools and other important things.
8. In 1927 we had about 400 Buddhist devotees around the temple. But as time went on they decreased and now we have very few people. It is very difficult to run the temple without help from outside. We have to help the resident monk to maintain the temple
9. There are fifty four (54) countries in Africa but temples are only in Tanzania, Botswana, Kenya and South Africa. In South Africa there are Chinese temples. We have to try to establish temples in each and every country and make local monks every where. Without local monks Buddhism will not go through Africa. Arahath Maha Mahinda thero's action should be taken as an example. He came to Sri Lanka and made local monks.

What are the present difficulties for the spread of Buddhism in Africa?

- 6.1. Poverty – food and security before teaching dharma**
- 6.2. Low Education – superstitions and illiteracy**
- 6.3. Conceptions of God**
- 6.4. Material support from other religions**
- 6.5. Difficult living conditions: i.e. illnesses, infrastructure, food accessibility...**
- 6.6. Loss of African culture and traditions**
- 6.7. Lack of Buddhist materials in local languages**
- 6.8. Lack of Dharma Teachers**
- 6.9. No habit of giving (Dana)**
- 6.10. Easy access to drugs and alcohol**
- 6.11. Families slaughter their own poultry and animals**
- 6.12. Economically tied to animal slaughter (I.e. Botswana supplies meat to Europe)**

Buddhist teachings mainly target to change people's intension. It always tries to find the cause for any result. After finding the cause it teaches ways to destroy it, otherwise there is no success. Its teachings must be activating in body, speech and mind. Its main concept is to change and develop mental activities, for MIND is the first runner for all the things. After creating from mind, body and speech, then follow that target, for this it is very important to develop and change the mind. Lord Buddha explained about this in the first two stanzas in the Dhammapada:-

*“ Mano pubbangama dhamma, mano settha manomaya,
manasa ce padutthena, bhasati va karoti va,
tatonan dukkha manveti, cakkhan va vahato padan.”*

Mind is the forerunner of (all evil) states, mind is chief; mind made are they. If one speaks or acts with wicked mind, because of that, suffering follows one, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught – ox.

*“Mano pubbangama dhamma, mano settha manomaya,
manasa ce pasannena, bhasati va karoti va,
tatonan sukha manveti, caya va anapayini.”*

Mind is the forerunner of all (good) states, mind is the chief, mind made are: If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, HAPPINESS follows, just like one's shadow that never leaves.

Before control or development of the mind, two things have to be controlled. Body and speech. If one fails to control these two items, then it is not easy to control the mind. Therefore before controlling the mind which is difficult, we have to control these items which are easier. If we can catch mind, clean, control, purify and develop, it, then we can solve many mankind problems.

After starting this Buddhist teaching in Africa, we find ourselves facing many difficulties. The people have lots of physical needs to fulfill before developing their mental status. Without fulfilling their basic needs, it is not easy to work with minds. There are therefore many challenges for those who try to promote Buddhist teachings in Africa.

7.1. Poverty – food and security before teaching dharma:

This part is about level of poverty in Africa. There is detailed information I have given about Tanzania. It is the same to most African countries.

*“The prevalence of **income poverty** is still high in Tanzania. According to the Household Budget Survey¹ of 2000/01 the proportion of the population below the national food poverty line is 18.7 % and that below the national basic needs poverty line is 35.7 %. There is also a big disparity between urban and rural poverty for both food and basic needs. Poverty remains overwhelmingly in rural areas where 87 % of the poor population live, and is highest among households who depend on agriculture. Comparing these results with those of the Household Budget Survey of 1991/92 there has been a small decline in the proportion of the population below poverty lines. As the population is growing, the absolute number of the poor raises concern.”*

*“An area of policy concern is that of rising **unemployment**. However, the measurement of unemployment in Tanzania is not a simple one. There are limited economic opportunities in rural areas. This is reflected rather as underemployment than unemployment. Estimates show that unemployment stands at 2.3 million people (1.3 million women and 1.0 million men) equivalent to 12.9 percent of the labor forces (ILFS 2000/01). The employment to population ratio (the proportion of the target population that is employed) is 76 percent nationally. This ratio is lower in urban areas (58 percent) than in rural areas (81 percent). Unemployment is worse among the youth, including the educated youth. Employment opportunities for people with disabilities are limited, and for specific support for them in the work place is frequently lacking.*

According to the Integrated Labor Force Survey (2001/02) the total labor force (age 15 years and above) has increased from 11.2 million in 1990/91 to 17.8 million in

2001. This implies that **650,000** new people have been entering the labor market every year.”

In most of African countries people are living with very poor conditions, no food, no place to sleep and no income. They just survive with lack of living conditions. They do not have the faintest idea where tomorrow's food will come from. If it comes they will eat, otherwise, they will make do without. They will live in sorrow all the time, with no food and drinking water. No development of the mind but only thoughts of living without dying. Their minds are always concentrating on their material needs of day to day life. People always concentrate on their lives and the mind lives with that. It is difficult to separate the two.

Here in Africa lots of people experience this poverty and can only think of survival of materialistic needs and not of mental development or concentration. They need shelter, food, water, clothing, money, medicine and etc.. If anybody offers these they will automatically follow the religion of the provider. So materialistic needs overtakes religion.

Buddhist missionaries do not suppose to make any material support to their followers as their principle. Instead followers have to donate to the missionaries, thus people are not going to follow these missionaries who have only mental happiness to offer instead of their daily needs for survival.

7.2. Low Education and illiteracy:

In this explanation I have given some statistics from Tanzania. This is because, I know many details information about this country. It is where I am residing since 1998. I think on this explanation any body can imagine about other parts on many African countries.

*“ the pace of transition to secondary schools is low, despite the growth of private secondary schools. There are also large gender disparities in enrolment at secondary and tertiary levels. The vulnerability of girls to cultural belief and customs, early pregnancies and sexual abuse remain challenges to enrolment and completion of schooling. Illiteracy remains high. About **28.6 % of Tanzanians cannot read and write in any language. There is more illiteracy among women (36 %) than men (20.4 %).**”*

Most of African countries still do not have enough free education system. From beginning up to graduate they have to pay their own expenses for study. Because of that most of the children do not go to school. And some of them study just only few years until their parents can no longer afford to pay school fees. Whenever they fail to pay school fee that is the day of termination of his or her education. I understood such situation when I introduced and taught Buddhism in some schools and people in Botswana, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa and Kenya. I also found this information from different young male Africans who came to study at African Buddhist seminary in South Africa. I met others who are from Mozambique, Swaziland, Madagascar, Uganda and Congo. Many of them gave me the same information about such situations in their countries. This situation causes many unfortunate situations. Education is the way to upgrade one's life. Literacy guides one to maintain their life in a useful way. Educated ones know how to find money, a necessity in life. One of the reasons for increase in orphans and HIV Aids everywhere, is lack of education. Due to lack of education the Buddhist teachings and philosophies are very difficult for them to understand. One of the reasons Buddhism is fast spreading in Western countries is that they are able to understand the concepts. This

word has also been mentioned in the thesis of Dr M. Clasquin when he talked about Class, caste, race and Buddhism 6.1 as “ though Asian monks and lay people have provided encouragement and some material assistant, the growth of Theravada Buddhism in Britain has been instigated and fostered by mostly white, middle class and well educated people” He further mentioned about South African situation “ The general pattern would appear to be the same: non – Asian South African Buddhists too are white, middle-class, and highly educated.”

If somebody has good education, it is very easy to understand this Buddhism. This is because it has very deep philosophical and psychological teachings.

7.3. Conceptions of God:

The African community are very faithful in their belief in God and his creations. Should anything take place, it is always referred to as God’s willing and so it is very difficult for them to revert their beliefs that God is not the creation. Therefore it is quite a task to convince that Buddha a human being not a God, that things happen naturally not because God wanted it to happen.

If somebody teaches anything based on God, quickly they accept and follow. It is like their part of life. Always anything happened they think, it is the power of the God. In Buddhism we can not find creator God, no final judgment, no repentance or forgiveness for your evil actions, no eternal life and ultimate God. Everything depends on you and your actions. You are the judge, creator, and everything. According to your action will get the result.

Majority of the African communities already have strictly touched with this God conception. They are ready to devote their life in the name of Allah or Jesus Christ. If somebody talks or teaches something against their faith, it will be a beginning of a conflict among them. It is because those religions came to Africa long time ago. Buddhism is very new to them. Because of this God concept it is very difficult to convince and change people’s minds to believe that there is no God concept in Buddhism.

Even though some religious teachings came to Africa recently like Bahai, Hinduism and Sai baba, they are growing among Africans a bit faster than Buddhism. This is because they have this God conception. But Buddhism is growing very slow.

7.4. Material support from other religions:

Basically there is no materialistic support from Buddhism. The monk and the monastery can give a lot of development in generosity and give talks on how to reduce sorrow. Like the Buddha who gave up all his materialistic pleasures to preach Buddhism, thus Temple and the monks can only preach to one. Like the Buddha has followers who followed him and believed in him, thus the monks practiced the same hoping to bring peace, love and harmony to the people.

Buddhism helps to purify and control the mind thus bringing along happiness. Because other religions give material support, which Buddhism does not, this is a challenge to the Buddhist monk. Thus the slow speed of preaching Buddhism in Africa.

Other religions donate food aid, building materials and money for their followers. They have also started many charity activities like building hospitals and schools. They propagate their religious concepts through these services. To continue these services main donations come from their head quarters all the time.

But there are no such activities on the Buddhist side in Africa. Only Nan hua Taiwanese temple in South Africa have little access with material support to communities. But still that challenge is there.

7.5. Difficult living conditions: i.e. illnesses, infrastructure, food accessibility:

To attain success in life, one must be you have a good health. Sickness does not permit you an education or work. To develop Buddha's way of life, it is very important to have a good health and a sound mind to enable you to succeed in life.

Especially in Africa there is a serious epidemic HIV/AIDS. Which is spreading rapidly and this prevents on going life. People are unable to think of life, family generation or self development and just await death. This again is another challenge to spread Buddhism.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region of the world that is most affected by HIV/AIDS². An estimated 26.6 million people are living with HIV/AIDS and approximately 3.2 million new infections occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2003. In just the past year, the epidemic has claimed the lives of an estimated 2.3 million Africans. Ten million young people (aged 15-24) and almost 3 million children under 15 are living with HIV. An estimated eleven million children have been orphaned by AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The figures in the following table are, however, figures from at the end of 2001. A new updated figure for individual African countries will be published in July 2004 by UNAIDS

These figures are estimates at the end of 2001, published by UNAIDS in the 'Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic, July 2002'. These estimates include all people with HIV infection, whether or not they have developed symptoms of AIDS, alive at the end of 2001. For each of these countries, the 1999 prevalence rate published by UNAIDS was applied to the country's 2001 adult population to produce estimates given in the table. The estimates are given in rounded numbers. However, un rounded numbers were used in the calculation of rates and regional totals, so there may be minor discrepancies between the regional/global totals and the sum of country figures.

*“From the most recent UNAIDS Statistics (UNAIDS, 2004) estimates for the period as at the end of 2003 on the HIV/AIDS Situation in Eastern Africa show that countries here experience prevalence rates above 2% with exception of Somalia where no data was available. Experts say that these **prevalence rates** become significant in as far as impact on the economies is concerned at this point. The lowest rates are reflected in the Sudan (2.3%), Eritrea (2.7%) and Uganda (4.1%), climbing to higher rates in the Democratic Republic of Congo (4.2%), Ethiopia (4.4%), Rwanda (5.1%), Burundi (6.0%), Kenya (6.7%), with the highest recorded rates being in Tanzania (8.8%). In some of the countries, the difference between UNAIDS estimates and official Government rates are big, but it suffices to note that in both cases, there is great need to respond firmly and strategically.*

*In the majority of the cases, **HIV/AIDS is spread through heterosexual sex and to a certain extent (for infants) from parent to child.** Numbers even give a more*

sobering picture with adults living with HIV/AIDS (ages 15 to 49 years) ranging from 55,000 (in Burundi) to **1,500,000 (in Tanzania)**.

*The Burden of orphans is still great with five of the ten countries having numbers above 600,000 (the lowest in this range being Kenya with 650,000 orphans as a result of HIV/AIDS and the highest is Tanzania with an estimate of **980,000 orphans**).*

It is essential to say that the epidemic exhibits diverse trends from country to country, with women and children most affected and urban areas worse hit than rural areas. Contextually, other factors such as poverty, conflict, gender, harmful traditional practices, stigma, shame, denial and discrimination as well as impact of the epidemic among young people are important.” “In recent times, the food security situation has been threatened by famine as a result of drought and floods. Survival tactics for some individuals may mean adopting risky behavior that may escalate the spread of HIV/AIDS. Harmful traditional practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are still prominent in certain parts of the region, while at the same time there are examples of how FGM is being overcome in various parts of the region. This also applies to stigma, denial and discrimination that vary in magnitude and form from country to country. Stigma in this case also includes self-stigma. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) such as churches and mosques have been found to exert strong influence in the majority of the communities in the region, sometimes culprits in spreading attitudes and practices that would only worsen the spread and the impact of HIV/AIDS.”

Because of this epidemic they do not have a good family structure and good life. Then do not access to follow or practice good morality. They just survive. Children take to street, they do not have a family, and they do anything to find money to eat and sleep anywhere. These orphans increase day by day; this is another challenge of spreading Buddhism in Africa.

7.6. Loss of African culture and traditions:

Human beings in Africa have a very long history. They had some good practices among them. recently new religions came to them like Islam and Christianity. With the coming in of different religions African lost a lot of their own customs and good behaviour. They lost valuable lifestyles and traditional cultural values. Previous to this, they cared for family life, family structure, sexual behaviors and a lot of ethics. After discussing with elders in the society and after finding out their activities in the past through books and other ways we can understand how they had developed their own practice and how they have got some benefits for their lives through those practices. Here below you can see how Rev. Peter E. Adotey Addo have seen it. He has explained on his research “The Loss Of African Traditional Religion In Contemporary Africa” as follows:

“The desecration of Africa in the past by the Western European powers seriously and adversely affected the traditional cultures of the indigenous African people to the extent that many traditional beliefs, social values, customs, and rituals were either totally destroyed or ignored. In most cases they were considered to be nothing more than pagan values and superstitions that played no part in traditional African culture. Culture after all is the way of life developed by people as they cope with survival. True culture then must include the traditional beliefs and spiritualism. The introduction of European Christianity

and values separated the indigenous Africans from their traditional ancient spiritual roots as well as their traditional identity as a spiritual people.

Traditional African religion is centered on the existence of one Supreme High God. However, the Europeans who spread Christianity in Africa never understood or properly appreciated the African's own conception of the Great Creator. They saw no similarity between the God they preached and the African's own belief in the One Supreme God and creator who was, king, Omnipotent, Omniscient, the Great Judge, Compassionate, Holy and Invisible, Immortal and Transcendent.

In the private and public life of the African religious rites, beliefs, and rituals are considered an integral part of life. Life then is never complete unless it is seen always in its entirety. Religious beliefs are found in everyday life and no distinction is made between the sacred and the secular. The sacred and the secular are merged in the total persona of the individual African. Life is not divided into compartments or divisions. Thus there are no special times for worship, for everyday and every hour is worship time. There are no creeds written down because through the traditions of the Elders all creeds and functions are carried in the individual's heart. Each individual by his very nature and life style is a living creed from the time one rises until one retires at night. An understanding of the basic nature of the African religious tradition surely illuminates the meaning of spirituality in contemporary Africa”

During my discussions with them it is accessible to realize that they feel that now most of them are devoid of all the good values of the past and have taken up a western attitude which has resulted in things like HIV – AIDS and other diseases. This again is another challenge in Buddhist teaching. Should they have remained with their cultural ethics it would have been feasible, like in Sri Lanka where it was easy to develop the traditional values even after Buddhism arrived in 247 BC. Once a society loses its traditional values, it is very difficult to implement new philosophies. It can do, but getting a long time. Because their mind and activities have changed to another way and generation to generation their old practice disappears. After foreign teachings (Christianity and Islam) come to Africa people started follow them with many reasons. Some one does it because they can get some material support from them. Some one by force. After practice those new teachings within 15- 20 generations, new generations completely do not have any signs about previous practice. They are completely new people with new practice. But those old practice has more good values within them. Those practices have gone. New conception running within them. It is not easy to come out from their new practices because they are more attached to them. If they had remained with their previous practices, it would be easy to connect to Buddhist practices as I mentioned about Sri Lanka.

“Christianity and Islam are clearly the two dominant faiths in Africa today, while the law of diminishing returns have befallen the indigenous religions. A vast majority of former members of the traditional religions have abandoned the ancestral rituals and symbols to embrace Christianity, or Islam or some religious systems. The statistics of the current religious affiliation in an African country like Nigeria provides an interesting example. Out of an estimated total population of about a hundred million, some forty-eight per cent (48%) or forty-seven million people are professing Christians. Some forty-seven (47%) or forty-five million are Muslims, and a little over six million or five per cent (5%) are traditional religionists (25).”

Here you can understand how fast these religions grew up within these communities. Only 5% remain as traditional practitioner. They can understand Buddhism faster than others because they still have some traditional values and practice.

7.7. Lack of Buddhist materials in local languages

In Africa different countries has different tribes and languages. English, French and Portuguese is not a main language for all African countries. Those with higher education can use fluent English, but others not. Most of the people who are educated now have high knowledge of the English language.

If really want to deliver the Buddha's message to other local communities in Africa to be translate into local languages. There are not enough books with local African languages. there is a need to translate many books for free distribution which is again another challenge.

7.8. Lack of Dharma Teachers

Africa continent is very big area with very few temples and less than 50 Dharma teachers working there. It is not easy to find a monk or other dharma teachers to work in Africa due to lack of income and lots of disease. Most of the monks and others prefer to do their services in Western and European countries. We need many qualified teachers who know well about dharma to pass this message on, but unfortunately they never come to help this vast continent to develop the understanding of Buddhist way.

In Tanzania we have a temple with two monks for 33 million people. In Kenya there is a temple and one monk. Botswana has a temple but no monk. South Africa has few temples and few monks. Other few countries like I mentioned in the second chapter you can find some dharma centers and teachers, but it is not enough to pass the message we need many dharma teachers and we have to encourage local monks to deliver this message of Buddhism unless if we don't have local monks it is will not grow fast.

7.9. No habit of giving (Dana)

Buddhists monk and temple always depend on devotees' hand out to survive. Monk's duty is to preach dharma to followers. Devotees have to offer needy things to the monks. Buddhist countries know the principles of the Monk and the Temple, but other communities do not understand that they are expected to give. Many a time people come to the Temple and the Monk asking donations and help, expecting like other worship places they would receive something. They expect the Monk and the Temple to make their lives better by giving them.

After comparing other Buddhist countries and African situation, still in Africa there is little practice of giving. They do not have enough things to donate to others. They are still struggling to keep their life. While they are suffering with lack of income and facilities it is not easy to help others by giving donations. They do not have that habit and facilities together. This is another challenge facing Buddhist missionaries in Africa. Therefore if any monk comes to do some service in Africa, after few months go away to another countries where he can survive without more suffering.

7.10. Easy access to drugs and alcohol

Drugs and alcohol are very dangerous things to one's mind and body. The younger generation like to imitate elders and then get into the habit of using them. We

should try and keep these harmful things away from youths and children. An easy access to these things take away all the good values in people and replaces them with bad habits. So, as much as possible every effort should be used to refrain people from using them.

In many developed countries there are restrictions on their availability and this assists in their usage. It is sad that when traveling in Africa, I noted that the stuff are easily available. This again is a challenge to preaching and teaching.

In Buddhism fifth precept in the five precepts is abstaining from intoxicants, drugs and alcohol. But if we go to teach it most of the people are not ready to follow our guide lines. Many times the whole do it together, thus there is neither fear nor discipline.

7.11. Families slaughter their own poultry and animals

In most of the African countries, they follow many different religious beliefs where they kill animals, for food and think nothing about it. Most of the people have their own animals at home, which are to be slaughtered for food, with no thought of the bad results of killing.

Some Buddhist countries also eat meat. But they are not killing animals. They are very afraid of killing. It is not the main foods for them. Very rarely they have it. Some countries like Tibet have mixed their cultural activities to practice Buddhism. That is why those countries some time eat meat. But, there and here situation is different. Most Africans have no idea like killing animals is an evil. They think animals for food. But Buddhist conception is different. Buddhists have similar respect for all beings. Destroying any being is bad and evil thing.

To change this conception to kind heart and develop similarity among all beings will take a very long time which again is a challenge to give this Buddhist message to the people in Africa.

7.12. Economically tied to animal slaughter (I.e. Botswana supplies meat to Europe)

Some countries already tied their life and economy system with animal slaughter. They can not go away from that system or they can not change that habit. It is tied with their personal life as well as government income. One example of this is Botswana. That country is supplying number one cow meat to European market. They have a big factory complex for slaughtering and exporting more or less 1000 cows daily.

“A slaughterhouse, opened at Lobatse in 1954, helped to modernize Botswana’s livestock industry. In 2000 the number of cattle was 2.4 million; goats, 1.8 million; and sheep, 250,000.”

This is one of the government main incomes. How can we change this situation? It is not easy to do so. According to Buddhist teachings we have to abstain from five main things. Abstain from killing, abstain from stealing, abstain from lying, abstain from sexual misconduct and abstain from liquor. These five precepts is the foundation of Buddhist community. Without followers and practitioners with these five precepts there is no Buddhist way. If we want to start a Buddhist community first they have to

understand the five precepts well and practice them then they can get the good result from Buddha's teaching. Without they never get good result from that teaching.

Although the first precept is abstain from killing. In these countries it is impossible to implement this and thus the challenge of trying to spread Buddhism in Africa.

My Experiences of Africans Achievements in Buddhism

- 1. Power of Chanting Pirith (for blessings)**
- 2. Teaching**
- 3. Group Meditation**
- 4. Counselling**
- 5. Library**
- 6. Nursery School**
- 7. WCRP**

Introduction

I came to Tanzania on 7 November 1998. It was my first visit to Africa. After arriving, I was very afraid to see the local people. I saw that they were very black. And I could not recognize one from another. It seemed to me that everyone's face was the same, and so were their body structures. I could not find any differences between them. So for the first several days, I did not go out of the temple alone. At first, I went with a boy in his car to see the town. But I did not get out of the car, and did not walk around because I was so afraid of these people. One of the reasons for this is that, before I arrived, I heard that Africans eat flesh. In Sri Lanka, we still have some Africans who were brought there in war time. Our people say that they ate human flesh, and that they were very dangerous. At that time they had their mouths locked with a padlock. This is just a verbal history. It was not written. I was afraid after seeing these black Africans. I thought they would catch and eat me. Then slowly I started to go to town, and started to talk with people who passed our temple. Soon enough, I understood that they do not eat human flesh. But still I could not recognize them separately. Further, they do not know who I am, and for this reason they think about me in a very different way.

i. Masai

Some people think of me as a Masai. In Tanzania there is an old tribe called Masai. They wear red clothes, and most of them still live in the remote areas and herd cattle and goats. That is their main duty in life. They are not afraid of anybody and brave. After spotting my monk's robe colour and way of wearing it, people thought of me as a Masai. Up to now many country people think this. If I go to a new area still they look at me as a Masai. Many times when I pass they say, "Hey, Masai unaenda

wapi?” — “Hey Masai, where are you going?” Earlier, I did not give an answer because I did not know their language, Kiswahili. At this point, I decided to learn the language in order to communicate with the local people. Afterwards, I used to answer these types of questions accordingly, in Kiswahili.

There is a government hospital near our temple named Muhimbili General Hospital. It is the main hospital in the country. There are some foreign students studying, practicing, and training there. I have many foreign friends at the hospital. From there to my temple is almost half a kilometer. If any of them want to know something about Buddhism, they come to my temple and talk with me, and take some books to read and reference. Our library is a very good resource for these people, and benefits the community very much.

One evening I went to the hospital with a friend from Singapore. I chatted with him until 7.30pm and then left his third-floor room. There are iron steps going up and down. While I was coming down I met a few students there on the stairs. They asked me, “Hey Masai unaenda wapi? Kwa nini uko hapa saa hivi?” — “Hey Masai where are you going? Why are you here now?” I replied, “Bwana, mimi nimekuja kumwangualia rafiki yangu. Ninarudi nyumbani yangu sasa. Asante.” — “Mister, I came to see my friend. Now I am going back to my home. Thank you.” As I came down, my friend wanted to follow me up to gate because I was unsure how to go out. The students who had asked me the question stopped him and asked him, “Why did that Masai come here? Where you did find him? Do not bring him here.” Then my friend said, “He is not a Masai. He is a Buddhist monk who is living in the Buddhist temple near the hospital. I am going to his place sometimes to get information and do meditation. So he came to see me today.” The students responded, “Okay, my friend, very sorry about that. He knows Kiswahili well!” My friend: “Yes, because he has now been here a long time. Thanks!” Finally, I headed back to the temple. It is in this way that many people still use the Masai name with me. But I do not get angry, because normally local people are afraid of Masai. And others think they are very brave. Thus, I also feel I am a very brave person. So, others are therefore not coming to do anything wrong to me.

ii. Shavoling temple

While some say “Masai,” some people say “Shavoling temple.” Who has not seen Chinese and martial arts films? Everyone has noted some people wearing clothes like me doing so many amazing things like fighting, jumping, flying, and many other activities. Logically, people thought of me as one of them. They used to call the temple the shavoling temple. Most of the time they say “Hey, bwana, usicheze na yeye. Yeye shavoling. Hatari sana.” — “Hey friend, do not play with him. He is a shavoling. Very dangerous!” Some times some young people have asked me, “Do you know shavoling? Can you teach us?” I tell them to come to the temple, and then I will guide them. If they come to temple, I can connect them with the Chinese temple in South Africa.

iii. Hare Rama, Hare Krishna

Some people also think I am from the Hare Rama Hare Krishna group. Especially near the Tanzanian and Kenyan border do they make this association because Kenya has some branches of this group. Whoever has seen them thinks I am also one of them because they at times wear similar clothes.

iv. How I learnt the Kiswahili language

In Tanzania there are nearly 120 tribes. In the past, tribal languages were the main form of communication. Recently, Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere selected Kiswahili as a national language after Tanzania got freedom in 1964, and since the language has become widespread. Kenya and Uganda also use this language to a lesser extent. However, if one learns Kiswahili, he or she can easily work in three countries amongst a majority population that does not know English.

So I decided to learn this language, but I did not go to classes for this purpose. I started by speaking with a guard at the temple. While he was cleaning and working, word by word I learned from him. He knows English. I talk with him in broken Kiswahili. In this way, I began to learn the basics of the language from him. Afterwards, while I was riding the bus and doing some work with other people, I learned more. Now I can manage to speak Kiswahili with people. This is a big benefit in understanding local people's feelings, and in helping them. Most of the time now I am using their language. This makes people think I am really African. They do not see me as a Sri Lankan or other outsider, partially because my body structure is also similar to that of Tanzanians. And, of course, when they ask me anything I answer in Kiswahili! This has made people like to work very closely with me. Without knowing their language, we can not help people properly. After I learned Kiswahili I could visit many local people and do good works to help them.

1. Power of Chanting Pirith

i. Twelve-year-old child's life saved

One day in September 1999 I was talking with somebody at the temple around 7.00pm. At that point, one white car arrived with an African couple inside. I thought they were husband and wife, but later I understood that they were just friends. Upon coming, they asked me, "Is this the Buddhist temple?" I said, "yes."

"Can we meet a lama here?"

"Here we do not have lamas. I am living here. Lamas belong to Tibetan Buddhist sects, but they are not here in Tanzania. I myself also belong to one of the Buddhist sects. If you need any help, I can try to assist you."

"Yes, we need your help. We have a problem to talk about with you. Is this possible?"

"Yes, you can talk with me. If I can help you I will do so. I'd also like to know from where you got the idea about Buddhist temples and lamas."

"Okay, this is my friend here who came from Congo. He has a tourist magazine. We found Buddhist and Lama Names in it, but we really do not know anything about Buddhism. We are Christians."

"Ok. No problem about that. Tell me about your problem, and then we will see what we can do."

"Yes, sir. I have twin daughters. They are 12 years old. One of them got sick six months ago. We gave her many medicines and said lots of prayers for her, but nothing works. Now she is almost dead. For six months she has not been to school, and medicine does not seem to work."

“Ok. I understood a little bit of what you said. But I’d like to know more about the history of what did you did for her, and what where the results leading up to the current situation.”

“Ok, sir, my two kids go to school together. One day they came back from school and the elder one started to do some unusual, nonsensical things. Her behavior was changed. We could not understand what she was doing, so then we decided to carry her to the hospital. They gave us many medicines. There were sleeping tablets, neuron control medicine, and other things, too. She took them many times, but day by day the sickness worsened. So we started to try other African medicines and traditional healing systems. We went to get African medicines up to Moshi, 500 kilometers from our home. They did many things up there, including presenting some flowers and other things to get her nose to smell properly, amongst other attempts. We did them all in good faith to cure our daughter, but we did not see any difference. Thus, we stopped those types of medicines also. We thought to go to our church and perform some prayers for her. We did so many prayers for her but nothing happened. Now, there is nothing left to try. We are suffering so much. After seeing that tourist news magazine we decided to try to find a lama around here.”

“Yes mama, I understand now...you are trying to figure out what to do. I can do something for you. What is your daughter’s present situation?”

“She is now not going to school, instead lying at home. In the evening she is doing many bad things, all the time trying to commit suicide. Some times she gets a rope and tries to hang herself from the roof. Some times she attempts to burn her body by using electrical power by putting her fingers inside the plug points. She breaks things inside her room, and cries and cries up to 1, 2am. She is always fighting with us, and she can not understand what we say. We also cannot understand what she is saying. Only after a long time spent crying does she go to sleep. Then she sleeps as if she were a dead body up until 11am, 12pm the next day. Up to that time she does not wake up nor react to any sensation, just like a dead body. We can carry her body here and there, but she does not feel anything. Then next day she wakes up, but not in a normal way. Rather, it is as if she is afraid of something. She is in a very bad way.”

“Thanks mama for your explanation. I think this is not a sickness as you have thought. I think this another kind of sickness. That is why she was not cured through those medicines you have used. We will try to use our Buddhist blessings for her sickness. I believe we will see some benefit from them. But this Buddhism, how it works and who I am, are very new things for you. But we can do an experiment. It will not be bad; we just are using pure water, flowers, thread, and lights. There is no harm in it for anybody. I will use the Buddha’s word (Pirith) for the blessing. After chanting three times in your home near the child she can drink this water and tie a piece of thread on her hand. That is all. We do it in this simple way. Let us go now.”

First we went together to the Bodhi tree. I tied a coin covered with a piece of cloth as a vow to the sacred tree, and to present her problem and request help from the noble triple gem. Then we went to the sick girl’s home and began with the white blessing thread. Everyone sat down. I told the family to keep bottles of water, joss sticks, an oil lamp, a Buddha’s picture, flowers and other things on the table. Then I told them to hold the thread, and explained what I was going to do. I said, “These chants you will not understand, but I know all their meanings. I believe that this child is plagued by bad

spirits. After finishing this chanting they will be driven away. They will not be able to stay with your daughter in your home. You can properly hear the blessings with faith.”

Then I performed the chanting as usual for about one hour. I used many sutras from Buddha’s teaching. After finishing that evening, I gave some water for drinking to the child and tied a small piece of thread on her hand to begin. I then returned to the temple.

The next day I went again to do a second prayer at 6.00 am. Before starting I asked the mother if she saw any difference yesterday night. She said, “She did not do many things. Just cried a bit and said that somebody was beating her. ‘Some body is beating me!’ Then she went to sleep.” It was at that point that I understood that my chanting would work. I began the preparations for the second round of blessings. The child was still sleeping as before. Her mother carried her daughter and put her on the chair, still sleeping like a dead body. I did the chanting and came back to the temple.

Again that evening I went to the home for a final chanting at 7.00 pm. I asked the mother, “How did she wake up to day ? Did you see any difference there?” She replied, “She woke up without any frustration, just in the normal way at 10am.” I started to do the chanting. After finishing, I gave holy water to everyone and tied the blessed thread on their hands. Then I sprinkled spring water inside and outside the home. Before leaving, I advised the mother to come to the temple tomorrow morning.

She came in the morning and said now her child is behaving in a normal way. I explained to her the situation: “This child had something wrong caused by bad spirits. Now these spirits have gone away. They will not come back again. You need not give her any medicine anymore. Just stop all the medicines and other cures. And try to make her mind and her work as usual. We have to change her behavior because for six months she hasn’t woken up early or gone to school. Give her positive ideas to change her time to wake up. Day by day make the time change. For example, tomorrow she should rise at 11am, the next day 10am, and so on. Then tell her that next week has to go to school. And have the teacher prepare an examination. She will start school again.”

The mother followed this advice, and the girl started to go to school. Up to now she is doing well. I am very happy to see that child’s good behavior. She is improving every day. She was saved because of the power of the Buddha’s chanting. The family did not know the meaning of the words or who I am, but the power of the Buddha saved her life. Afterwards, the family understood something about the Buddhist way. This incident gives us an idea as to how Buddhist chanting can help to cure some kinds of disease.

ii. Another student cured

After finishing the healing chanting, two or three days later another child of one of our devotee’s had a problem. The family regularly comes to the temple, but they were born in and grew up in Tanzania. The woman’s mother, however, was born in Sri Lanka as a Christian, and grew up in Italy. Therefore, the family was not familiar with Buddhist works.

One day evening around 8pm all the family members were watching television. Then suddenly the daughter ran away to her room and then went out from the house. After waiting for a while, the family realized that she had not come back. The mother went to see what happened to her. Then she saw that the daughter had fallen down in front of the toilet door. Her body was very hot. They carried her to the doctor, who gave

her medicine for a high fever, malaria and to help fall asleep. The doctor advised them to collect her tomorrow morning and take her to Muhimbili General Hospital to check her brain. Before going to the hospital, the mother came to me and explained what had happened. I said to wait for a while, as the sickness may not be a malaria or brain problem. We will check for ourselves before going to the hospital, I advised her. Immediately we went to her home and three times did chanting for the ill daughter. We gave her water and tied a thread on her hand. I advised them to stop giving her the medicine. And in this way, she became cured.

iii. A university student cured of her sickness

One student who was studying at the university college in Morogoro suddenly got sick, on the right breast and in that general area. While she was in the university she had some wounds appear on her breast which burned like boiling water. For this, she got some English medicine from Morogoro, but she was not cured. Then, to find a solution for the illness, she decided to come to her home near the Dar es Salaam airport.

While she was getting medicine and trying other traditional systems of healing, one of her friends, who know a little bit about the Buddhist temple, saw her. The friend discussed with sick woman and came to my temple to explain the situation. Thinking I may be able to help her, I went to her home to see her condition. I saw realized how serious it was, since she could not wear a shirt for her sore upper body. It was a big wound which was not cured by the medicine. I told her that it would be difficult to cure, since maybe some kind of poison liquid has been rubbed into her, or some bad spiritual power has embraced the wound and is preventing her from healing. I told her that we can do some blessing which would help to remove bad spiritual things from her body, allowing her to heal.

The first blessing just as before was given. The next day, in the morning and the evening the final blessings were performed. After finishing the three blessings, I gave her sacred water to drink, applied water to her body, and tied a piece of thread on her hand. I advised her to drink medicine continuously and at the same time drink and apply water for few days. Fortunately she started to heal and went back to university. Up to now she is feeling better.

2. Teaching

i. Botswana

I went to attend a religious service in Botswana in September 1999. At that time I went to a place 1200 kilometers from Gaborone, to a city named Moun. After going to that area I visited a school. They are teaching students there despite a lack of facilities. I talked with the principal and he took me to the highest class in the school. The students asked so many questions about me, my robe, bald head, and about several other topics. I explained to them about Buddha and his duty, and about his teachings. The students were very happy with the discussion.

During the same trip, we got an invitation to go to the University of Botswana in Gaborone city. The Buddhist lecturer there is a Christian father. He wanted me to be a guest in his class to have a discussion about the topic of dharma with his students. We talked for about two hours, and once again the students were happy with the discussion.

ii. Malawi

In 1999 I got an invitation to go to Malawi to perform some religious services there. First I went to Blantyre city and on the way back to Tanzania stayed few days at Lilongwe city. While I was in Lilongwe I visited one school near my residence. I met the principal and told him that I would like to see the highest class in the school. He was very pleased with this idea, so we went to that class. When we arrived, the teacher was lecturing. The principal stopped the teacher and asked the students if they wanted to gain an understanding about Buddha from this father. The teachers and students asked me many questions about Buddha and his teachings. In fact, they had never seen what Buddha looks like! I drew the Buddha's picture on the blackboard and explained his biography. They asked me if Buddha is a lady or man! And also queried me about my robe, shaved head, Buddhists' conception of God, how I became a monk, and so on.

Some body asked me if, after shaving and putting on this type of robe, anybody can become monk. So I explained the full procedure. Everybody asked many questions. After listening and discussing with me they attained some knowledge about the Buddha and Buddhist monks.

That same day I was standing on the road while students left to go back home. They said to me that Buddha and his worship are like normal followers of any religion. I thought that if we taught them a lot about Buddhism, then they would be good Buddhists in future.

iii. Tanzania

My residence is the Tanzania temple. If somebody comes to ask about Buddhism at any time, I am happy to teach them about different topics. Many people come to ask about meditation. Some others come to get general knowledge in order to understand these unfamiliar ideas. After coming one day, often they come again and again to talk with me. They hold different ideas about Buddhism. Most of them are young or middle aged, such as secondary school students or university students and lecturers. There is not another place to get information about Buddhist teachings. In particular, it is important to be able to talk face to face with a monk. They can also read books from the temple's library, but after reading about new teachings like these then so many questions come to their mind. At that point, they need a qualified person to get a deeper understanding. Without this human interaction, many people become stuck and are not successful gaining an understanding of Buddhism simply from reading. After a discussion with me about dharma, for example, many visitors come to do meditation. Every Sunday we have meditation classes at the temple. Afterwards, we hold a class for one hour on dharma.

Sometimes I go to the University of Dar Es Salaam thanks to invitations from the Department of Religious Studies. Normally they teach only western philosophy in the university. But occasionally they also like to give students a chance to understand other teachings. I have gone many times to the university to give a lecture introducing Buddhist teachings. It is not difficult to teach the students, because all of them are beginners. They do not need deep teachings about dharma. Most of the time first I explain the biography of the Buddha and secondly, the concept of the middle way. Then they come to understand many things about these topics. After finish the introductory lecture many students write me emails and come to the temple to get books and clarify

other details. I understand that many of them now like to follow Buddhist teachings, in part because they said it is scientific and logical.

3. Group Meditation

Most people come to the temple to ask about Buddhist meditation. Their first inspiration is learn more about it: how to do it, what is the benefit, and other details. However, according to our Buddhist way, meditation is the third step. Before it we have to practice the other two main things named Dana (generosity) and Sila (morality). Thus, if somebody comes to practice meditation straightaway it is not always easy.

Meditation is working with the mind, learning to control and develop our mind. Before control of mind is accomplished, we must first be in control of our speech and actions—and this also means control of the body. Body control is easier than mind control, because the body is tangible and the mind is intangible and immaterial. Before learning to control invisible things it is easier to begin with material and tangible things. After practicing control of these things, it is easier to gain control over the mind.

To get a good result from meditation we have to come to it step by step:

- i. Sila – morality = right speech, right actions and right livelihood
- ii. Samadhi – concentration = right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration
- iii. Panna – wisdom = right view and right conception

These main teachings also include the middle way and the eight-fold path as main teachings in Buddhism. Wisdom is generated through the insight meditation provides. Before this insight is achieved, meditation has to practice Samatha, or concentration meditation. To perform Samatha we must be have good morality within oneself. All of these aspects link together, and must come step by step. We cannot skip any one of them. Most of the time people like to do meditation on its own, without morality and concentration. Then it will not successful, but at the same they also need this meditation. This is one problem we face with beginners. We can guide them to practice meditation alone, but then most of the time they will not be enjoying good results from it.

In our center every Sunday we have public meditation classes. Some people like to do group meditation, in which case we then can arrange the time. One group of young people also came in 2002 to practice and get benefit of meditation, and these visitors numbered 100 young boys and girls. They came to learn about Buddhist practices, and gained many benefits from the lessons.

4. Counselling

i. One day one lady came to the temple. She wanted to marry a person who had divorced his first wife. He had one child who is almost ten years old. This lady had never been married before. She decided to marry this person without a care about his divorce or the child. On her wedding day, the child was presented to everyone because she also loved the child. After marriage she started to live with his parents. What followed were some misunderstandings. The parents started to say that this lady did not like the child. This led her to become very confused in her mind.

When she was crying and crying, she came alone came to the temple and went

inside the Buddha's room to sit. I spotted her inside Buddha's shrine room. I reached to her, sat down, and started to ask what was the cause for all the crying. According to her explanation, she had a family problem which I knew all about. Both parties couldn't understand each other properly. I started to try to make her understand: "You got marry this man with the boy. If you did not love him you could have refuse them earlier. You did not do this. You loved the child as your own. That is why you decided to marry this person with the child, as you already had accepted them earlier. There is not anything wrong there. But your father-in-law and mother-in-law still do not understand who you are. That is why this problem has started. Do not worry about this situation. Do not think about what others are saying or what they are thinking and doing. We cannot control them or their intentions, but you can control your ideas and yourself. That is what we have to do to resolve this situation. One day they will understand you. Do not be confused in your mind. Purify your mind and work properly." Then she understood the situation and went back home, with a deeper understanding about life.

ii. Another evening a different lady came to the temple. She is not African or Indian, but Chinese. She is married to an Indian man. I saw her when she sat down in front of the Buddha's statue. I went to her and started to talk with her. She told me about her Indian husband, and how they waited for a baby. Sadly, she suddenly she got in a car accident and the unborn child died. Her husband and his parents were unhappy and blamed this lady. After this happened there was no peace in the home. Thus, she came to get some blessings from the Buddha.

Fortunately I was at the temple that day. I explained to her about life, impermanence, and karma. Everything in this world is impermanent. We cannot have children, for example, if we do not have good karma for it. Everything depends on karma. We could not blame her according to this philosophy: if you have good karma you can get a child in future. If the karma is bad, you will not. In this world everything is impermanent, meaning that we can plan but not everything happens in this way. Unplanned things occur, and this is life and its nature. One cannot worry about these things. You should be worried because of a lack of understanding about these laws of karma and dharma. They also blame you because of this ignorance. Try to understand things as they are. Then you can live without any worry in this world.

After finishing this explanation I did some chanting to her give blessings and to calm down her mind. She went back home and started to live with a peaceful mind. Up to now she is doing well and does not worry anymore about life.

iii. Here in Africa it is a huge problem for people to understand why they are sick or what is happening to their health. Without a real understanding about diseases, they have many practices to try to heal the sick. Unfortunately, then the final result is that the sick person dies. One day I got a message from an African woman that her elder sister, after delivering a child, became ill after one week. One breast was swelling larger and larger. Instead of taking her to the hospital, they kept her home to do some rituals involving witchcraft and other things. Her husband is Muslim. They brought one Muslim woman who practices witchcraft to do many superstitions things. One of the sick woman's sisters called me to do some blessings to save her life. When I went there she had a very high fever. I started to do the blessings to destroy fever and other illness.

After finishing chanting I gave water and other things as usual. The next morning I went to check what happened. I saw that the high fever is still there, and nothing good had happened. I advised them to take her to the hospital as soon as possible, but they continued with the witchcraft. I came back to the temple and met one of my Tanzanian doctor friends. I explained the situation to him and took him to the ill woman's home. When he checked on her he understood that the patient was in a very serious condition, and it was too late to save her. He still tried to have them take her to the hospital and to give her some medicine, and the doctors there tried many things to cure her sickness. After that she slept through the night. The next morning she felt well, but just before 1pm she passed away. She was brought to hospital too late, so doctors could not do enough. If they had taken her in at least one week before they could have saved her life, according to the doctor. This kind of thing happens too often in Africa. Without true understanding, it is natural to try many superstitious things. But the final result too often is death.

5. Library

In our temple we have a small library. There are some books there donated by the Sri Lanka community and by other foreign donors. These books help to get information to needy people in Africa. Not only Tanzanians, but also people from other neighboring countries come to get some information. Sometimes they come to the temple to ask us for some information. Then we guide them by writing something or sharing some books. It is very important to have a complete library. If a visitor would like to know something about Buddhist teachings, it is very important to be able to provide some books to answer their questions. Then they can come a second time with many questions for discussion. This is a very fruitful way to teach and learn. The problem is that most people do not like to return books, but instead keep them to read again and again. I also like to allow visitors to keep these books with them, but we do not have enough books in our library for everyone to own them.

6. Nursery School

In Tanzania free education is not easily available. Most of the time students have to pay school fees to study at school. For this reason many students do not go to school. They have no money to pay school fees. Unless the family can afford to pay school fees, the children must stay at home. If children must stay at home, then their life will go to hell. This is the one of main reasons for the growth of HIV-AIDS and the problem of street children in many poor countries. Without school, automatically children enter a sexual life and get into more trouble in their lives. Still, countries do not have a good plan to give free education to the whole population. Instead, people have to find their own way.

In particular, every nursery school is also run by a private institution. They charge large amounts of money for entrance fees and study fees. It is not easy for poor local parents to afford to send their children to these nursery schools.

Therefore our Buddhist community decided to start a nursery school as a way of helping the local community. It started in 1996. We do not get a significant admission

fee or other large amount of money from the people, but just the bare minimum in order to pay the teachers' salaries. Parents can pay the small fee monthly, and we even allow some students to come without any payments. We do not teach religion in the nursery school, but just basic instruction using the English medium. We understand that if we can give free education more students will come to study. If they study well most of young generation will not become street children or fall into prostitution. They will be able to maintain their lives in a proper way.

7. WCRP

The World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) is sponsored by a famous organization headquartered in New York, USA, after getting its start in Japan. One branch of it started in Tanzania in 1998. From the beginning up until now I have been working with them. The branch is maintained by a few top religious leaders as trustees. All the religious leaders are from the country and contribute their valuable ideas to make peace in the in the region. If any sort of conflict happens in the country, we gather and brainstorm solutions to bring peace. We have been very successful in this way. If every individual follows their own way, there will be no peace here. When we come together to find a good response to a crisis, solution will arise to end the conflict in question. After coming together, we all agree that everybody can follow one shared solution. This is a very successful way to make peace anywhere. We live in a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-national society. To achieve peace among everyone we have to honour all faiths. And everyone has to agree to one decision built on a consensus of all members of society. If we follow this path, then there will not be conflict again. Without this strategy, again and again conflicts will come up with no end in sight.

To WCRP-Tanzania my contribution is very valuable. Others involved like our teachings of cause and effect, among other Buddhist social teachings. I give my contribution to them through a Buddhist view. Participants really appreciate this and gain a new perspective for their work in making peace in the country. Once I explained to them how five Buddhist precepts can help to control HIV-AIDS and how Buddha's advice can contribute to economic development and poverty eradication in the country. Following this strategy, we have decided to target five main areas in the country.