

A Blueprint for the Revival of Buddhism: Reflections on the Fiftieth Anniversary of 2500 Buddha Jayanti

By Ananda W. P. Guruge

An Event of Dual Significance

It was my enviable privilege and fortune, as a junior officer of the now defunct Ceylon Civil Service, to be called upon to play a lead role in the celebrations of the 2500th anniversary of the death of the Buddha and of the founding of the Sinhala Nation by Prince Vijaya. Popularly called **Buddha Jayanti**, this event of dual significance was due in May 1956, according to the traditional chronology as maintained by the Southern Buddhist tradition of South and Southeast Asia. Mr. Abeyratne Ratnaiké, Minister of Home Affairs, urged in 1954 that the occasion was of the utmost national importance as to merit full-scale state participation. Accordingly, the Prime Minister, Sir John Kotelawala, entrusted the proposal to be examined by a Cabinet Sub-committee comprising Messrs. A. Ratnaiké, J. R. Jayewardene, M. D. Banda and Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara. As Assistant Secretary to the Prime Minister, I was named its Secretary. It was a memorable experience for me who had just celebrated my 25th birthday.

The Report of the Committee was duly approved and the Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya was created with seventeen Committees and an Executive Council to undertake a wide-ranging program of religious, literary, educational and commemorative activities. Transferred to the Ministry of Home Affairs to function as the General Secretary of the Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya, I was entrusted with the implementation of an impressive array of projects. They ranged from the complete restoration of the Dalada Maligawa to its present form to such massive literary undertakings as the translation of the Pali Tripitaka into Sinhala, and the compilation of the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism and a Sinhala Encyclopaedia.

This period of service for the cause of Buddhism has had a lifelong impact on me and, despite the diversity of my career as a national and international civil servant, a diplomat and now an academic, my interest in the promotion of Buddhism has been a driving force. I have been called upon on several occasions to address international parleys on my views of the future of Buddhism and what I thought were the issues and tasks, which the Buddhists would encounter.

Once again, on this auspicious occasion when we observe the golden jubilee of the worldwide celebration of the 2500 Buddha Jayanti, I am invited to look into the future. I begin by restating the tasks and issues which I had already identified for the attention of the International Buddhist community.

Issues and Prospects: Tasks for Decades to Come

In 1982, Sri Lanka in collaboration with the World Fellowship of Buddhists convened the **World Conference of Buddhist Leaders and Scholars**. It was an august assembly consisting of all traditions and schools of Buddhism.

Deliberating on the theme of “**Survival and Development: the Buddhist Perspectives,**” it identified ten areas of concern for immediate international action. They were

- Peace, Human Rights, and Disarmament
- Preserving the integrity of Buddha Dhamma through the prevention of distortion and misinterpretation
- Studies and research and missionary services
- Inculcation of Buddhist values and practices in daily life
- Effectiveness of the Sangha
- Need to organize and mobilize Buddhist women
- Channeling of youth power
- Buddhist communities in disadvantaged positions
- Protection of Buddhist monuments and prevention of the desecration of sacred symbols and objects
- Improving the economic capacity of Buddhist communities.

Though twenty-four years had passed since these concerns were identified and much has been done and accomplished, much remains to be done. The growing international leadership of the Buddhist movements has a tasks cut out for decades to come.

Development of Buddha Sasana in the Asian Region

In 2003 Sri Lanka celebrated the 250th anniversary of the Buddhist renaissance with the reintroduction of Higher ordination from Thailand and the founding of the Syamopali Mahanikaya, I had the opportunity to examine the question: **How can the Buddha Sāsana be developed in the Asian Region?** Taking the word Sāsana, derived for the Pali root sās – to instruct, admonish or preach, to mean the **Dispensation of the Buddha** and thus signifying all aspects of Buddhism as an organized world religion, the analysis was based on the following three aspects which traditionally comprise the Sasana:

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

I analyzed the current situation in each case as follows and identified under each several issues for study and action.

Pariyatti – the Literary or Textual Component (Theory)

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

The Pali Canon, the **Tipiṭaka**, in its present printed form in Roman script is a five-foot library of 45 volumes. That it evolved from the initiatives of the Buddha and his immediate senior disciples is borne out by internal evidence. Equally well established by

fragmentary manuscripts is that its contents and structure had been maintained in versions of the Canon in other languages such as Sanskrit, Prakrits, and Khotanese. The **vgama Sftas** of the **Chinese Tripitaka** in the Taisho version maintain a very close resemblance in content and structure with the Pali Tipitaka.

The extensive and intensive scholastic activity of the Sangha extended to the development of the Abhidhamma, the quasi-canonical works like MiliØdapañha, NettippakaraØa and Peðakopadesa, whose authorship is unknown other than in the case of KathSvatthu of the Abhidhammapitaka. The author of this work was Thera Moggaliputtatissa, the President of the Third Buddhist Council of the third century BCE. Pali literature continued to grow with the enormous exegetical literature of AðhakathSs, ñokSs, ñippaØis and glossaries, many chronicles, and prose and poetical compositions of a wide variety.

The great Buddhist Sanskrit works, MahSvastu and Lalitavistara, dealt mainly with the biography of the Buddha and have inspired many works of Buddhist art in Asia which depict events of the Buddha's life and career. SaddharmapuØðarokka (better known as the Lotus Sfta), documenting and elaborating the major development of Buddhism as a popular religion, has gained the stature of a revered scripture.

The rest of the voluminous **MahSnySnasftas** and the copious **AvadSna** literature in Sanskrit and their many translations and versions in Chinese and Tibetan singly and collectively serve as the textual and scriptural foundations of the major Northern Buddhist traditions and schools. PrajnSpSramitS of 8000 verses, LankSvatarasfta, Avataosakasfta, Sfrangamasfta, Sandhinirmocanasfta and VimalakortinirdeØasfta are particularly important. Their impact on the understanding and practice of the Buddha Dhamma has lasted many centuries and in recent years has drawn the special attention of Buddhist scholars.

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

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

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

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

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

The strategies for action also need to be reviewed. Digital modalities have simplified publication, access and retrieval. Already modest efforts have been made in this direction. Mahidol University and Dharmakaya Foundation of Thailand has the Thai edition of the Tripiṭaka available on a CD-ROM. S. N. Goenka has the Tripiṭaka, the Pali Commentaries and major works of the Pali literature accessible in six different scripts in one CD-ROM and search for words and expressions has been facilitated with requisite mechanisms. The Electronic Buddhist Text Initiative of Lewis R. Lancaster of Berkeley has similarly bought the Korean edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka digitally to interested scholars. The Internet is used for similar results by enthusiasts in Cambodia and Australia. But more has to be done, and that, too, urgently.

Digital libraries, however, cannot replace the traditional library as long as the printed word remains the foremost medium for knowledge. Especially in the traditionally Buddhist countries of South and Southeast Asia, books and libraries will continue to be the major need. Hence the recommendation of a multi-pronged approach to the questions we raise on the **Pariyatti** component of the Sāsana.

Pariyatti – the Educational Component

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

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

Taken as a whole, the traditionally Buddhist countries of the whole of Asia need to revamp their Buddhist educational activities, both formal and nonformal. Japan and Taiwan have been reaching out to Buddhist societies beyond their shores and their contributions have been substantial. Others have problems to solve nationally.

The dearth of resources, mainly trained human resources for Buddhist education, is a problem in which international cooperation might provide some relief. Especially urgent is the insufficiency of effective teachers, suitably developed curricula, courses and course material, and modern textbooks and reference works. Here, again, the challenges and opportunities of the electronic digital age have to be heeded.

Pariyatti for Missionary Activities

Though Buddhism is not engaged in active proselytization, *Dharmadīpa* activities to bring the knowledge and the practice of Buddhism within the reach of seekers remains a primary concern of Buddhists. It is true that several generations of Buddhist monastics of Asia have succeeded in taking Buddhism to far-flung places. They, however, face new problems and it does not appear that these problems are being seriously dealt with.

As far as *Dharmadīpa* work in the West is concerned, the need for suitable literature in required languages to serve diverse categories of seekers is paramount. Good translations of the Word of the Buddha are vital, as these new seekers prefer original scriptures to interpretive manuals and treatises. In addition, they need books and articles, which are specially prepared for their level of interest and general knowledge.

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

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

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

Paṭipatti – Observance and Praxis (Practice)

Laity

Whatever be the value and the importance of the Pariyatti aspect of the Śāsana, the Buddha's own admonition was to know a little but practice diligently. He compared the bookish scholars to cowherds who protected other people's cows without themselves deriving the benefits of milk and milk products (Dhammapada 19-20). In short, Pariyatti is a stepping stone to Paṭipatti.

No objective statistical data are available on how Buddhism is practiced either in the traditionally Buddhist countries and societies or in new Buddhist communities elsewhere. All information available is in the form of anecdotal evidence, which by nature is highly subjective. Some would report extremely favorable conditions while others would say the opposite. Both could be correct as they assess the nature of practice

according to their own criteria and experience. The absence of congregational worship and registration of temple membership adds a further difficulty.

The issues to be examined as far as the laity is concerned are as follows:

- **What constitutes Buddhist practice – frequent or regular visits to temple for worship, chanting of Paritta or Mahāyāna sūtras, and meditation? Regular observance of Eight Precepts on the Buddhist Sabbath? Attendance at the preaching of Dhamma? Providing requisites for monastics? And such other temple-centered activities?**
- **To what extent do home-based activities such as individual worship, meditation, family chanting, and the repetition of such formulas as *Namo Amito Fo*, *Namu Amida Budsu*, *Om mani padme hum* or *Namo myo horeng kyo* constitute Buddhist practice?**
- **Do the triple practices of *Dāna*, *Sīla* and *Bhāvanā* (giving, observance of precepts, and meditation) define a comprehensive set of Buddhist practices which can be universally accepted by all traditions and schools of Buddhism?**
- **What is the place of ritual, which vary from tradition to tradition (e.g. *Buddhapūjā* and *Bodhipūjā* of Southern Buddhism; Protective rites connected with Avalokiteśvara and other Bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhism; Kālacakra initiation and other elaborate ritual of Tibetan Buddhism)?**
- **What is the relative importance of Pañcasīla (five Precepts), Aṣṭaṅgasīla (Eight Precepts), Dasasīla (Ten Precepts) and the four Bodhisattva Vows as Buddhist practice?**
- **Is temporary ordination, as practised in Southeast Asia, an aspect of Buddhist practice worthy of universalization?**

Sangha

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

Many are the issues relating to the Sangha:

- **Why does a person become a monastic – For the pursuit of one's own spiritual development and deliverance? To serve the Sāsana as an educator, scholar, missionary, institutional builder or mobilizer of human and material resources? To safeguard the Buddhist heritage? To lead a life of relative comfort with minimum obligations? Or what else?**
- **Do the Sangha and the laity share a common understanding of each other's role and mutual obligations?**

- **Is the training of monastics systematic, adequate, and in keeping with the highest standards of the Vinaya?**
- **Is there a growing consensus on the recent efforts in Southern Buddhism to revive the Bhikkhuv Order? How else are the aspirations of the women to be satisfied?**
- **How can a steady growth in the Sangha be guaranteed with special attention to motivating the educated youth to become monastics?**
- **Are reform and innovation in Vinaya possible and desirable to make the Sangha cope with current social and economic conditions?**

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

“The lay and the homeless alike
 Each supporting the other
 Accomplish the true doctrine
 The peerless refuge from Bondage.” (Itivuttaka 107)

Paḍivedha – Penetration and Deliverance (Realization)

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

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

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

Issues pertaining to this aspect of the Sāsana are as follows:

- **Should the Buddhists have a common understanding about the attainment of Nibbāna as a goal in current life?**
- **If so, what facilities need to be available for those who seek it?**
- **How can the pursuit of Vipassanā meditation be instituted into regular Buddhist practice?**
- **How can meditation centers and forest hermitages promote meditation for the purpose of developing *Dhyānas* and various stages of the Path and the Fruit (*maggaphala*), thus attaining the end of suffering?**
- **Or, is this aspect of the Sāsana to be left entirely to the interested individual without any societal involvement?**

Whatever be the conclusion, these issues need to be noted.

Unity in Diversity – The Goal of Universal Buddhism

An issue of great significance for the advancement of the Buddha Sāsana in the Asian Region is the multiplicity of traditions, schools, sects and other divisions. This diversity creates the impression that the Buddha Sāsana is a splintered organization with little hope for unity and cooperation. This impression is further strengthened by the writings of early Western scholars who assumed that the Buddhist traditions originated in cataclysmic rifts and struggles similar to those of the Christian Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. But the Buddhist situation has been totally different.

Divisions in Buddhism have been caused by isolation and independent development, and not by any confrontation. These diverse groups have existed without contact until recent times. In the traditionally Buddhist countries this isolation and mutual ignorance persist even today. It is in the big cities of Europe, America, and Australia that the various traditions, schools, sects and other divisions have come to co-exist as a result of the influx of ethnic Buddhists.

Every upheaval in the Asian Region has brought Buddhist immigrants to these continents in sufficiently large numbers to augment earlier waves of migration: e.g. the rise of Communism in China, the Korean War, the exile of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama from Tibet, the Vietnam War, and the political and economic situation in Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. Taiwan's and perhaps also Korea's presence in these continents stemmed from spectacular economic growth and its impact on the expansion of Buddhism.

As a result, Mahāyāna schools of Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea and Vietnam, the Vajrayāna tradition of Tibet, and the Southern Buddhism of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar could establish contact, become familiar with one another, discover the unity and common base of the teachings and practices of each tradition, collaborate on common projects and movements, and approach the goal of universal

Buddhism. These experiences have brought about enormous benefits to all Buddhist societies thus unified.

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

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

Buddhist communities of Asia have much to learn from one another for our common benefit and mutual reinforcement. But many issues need to be addressed:

- **How can centuries of prejudice, nurtured further through total isolation, be replaced by a better understanding and appreciation of the strong common base of the Buddha’s teachings?**
- **How can the friendly and productive co-existence of different traditions, schools, sects and other divisions of Buddhism in Western countries be extended to the traditionally Buddhist countries of the Asian Region and emulated?**
- **How open will Southern Buddhist countries be to the establishment of Mahāyāna or Tibetan monasteries on their soil or to the popularization of teachings, practices and literature of other Buddhist traditions?** (In this regard, the Northern Buddhist countries have already demonstrated a significant openness: e. g. China which in Yunnan has a well-established Southern Buddhist tradition; Nepal and Vietnam which had been receptive to Sri Lankan missionary initiatives of especially Venerable Narada and continue to have the Sangha trained in Sri Lanka and Thailand; and Japan and Taiwan

where important Southern Buddhist monastic institutions have come into existence in recent years).

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

The least that needs to be stressed is that unity and cooperation are indispensable to Buddhists to meet the challenges of the modern world. We cannot stay divided or remain ignorant of the strength which diversity confers on Buddhism.

In the first place, the more we learn of the specificities of each group of Buddhists, the more we become convinced of the underlying unity of the fundamental teachings of traditions, schools or sects. Henry Steel Olcott's Fourteen-point Common Platform of 1891, Christmas Humphrey's Twelve-point Statement of 1942 and Ratanasara-Guruge's Ten-point American Buddhist Congress Convention of 1997 have highlighted this unity. But their impact is restricted to scholars and intellectuals. An effort, which encompasses the whole Buddhist world, is a vital necessity.

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

Conclusion

Prospects for the future are indeed very bright for Buddhism to redouble its effectiveness in the traditionally Buddhist countries of the Asian Region and also to expand substantially its influence in the world. The issues we have identified for action are in no way insurmountable. We have, however, to act severally and collectively.

The more we meet and discuss the tasks at hand, the more we equip ourselves to solve them. "*Samavāyo sādhu* (coming together or cooperation or collaboration is excellent)" said Asoka the Righteous, the paragon of Buddhist practitioners. He urged for a collective search for the inner essence of all religions. In the context of our present efforts, we should begin by seeking the inner essence of our common faith.

To revamp the Buddha Śāsana, urgent steps need to be taken in all three aspects of Pariyatti (Theory), Paṭipatti (Practice) and Paṭivedha (Realization). No single group can address all the issues without collective action, because our resources are diverse. A group with abundant monetary resources may have a dearth of qualified human resources to teach, manage and write. Scholars capable of solving problems in the Pariyatti domain may lack access to publication. Or their need could be for specialists in the digital field to utilize electronic modalities to an optimum degree. It is urgent therefore to pool all available resources.

But far more important is the will to act. There is no time to waste. The present good times may pass before we can fully utilize its advantages. Hence the need for commitment. It is time for us to heed the Buddha's own final message: *mā nivatta abhikkama* (Do not turn back. Go forward).

XXXXXXXXXX