Chapter VI

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THE BHIKKHUS AND OF THE LAYMEN
OF THE KHAMTI AND THE SINGPHO VILLAGES AND THE PSYCHO-
LOGICAL IMPACT OF THESE PRACTICES

A. Religious Practices of the Bhikkhus:

The Khamti people believe that their ancestors left
their original home in search of the way to Vaisali, the
place of Lord Buddha. But on their way, they faced different
barriers and so they had to settle in the vast green splendid
beauty of Arunachal Pradesh, the north east frontier of Assam
at that time. They could not reach Buddha Gaya, but gradually
transformed their villages into different editions of that
sacred place. In every village, they built a temple or vihar
by the logs and timbers found in the surroundings. The vihar
is called Chang or Bapu-Chang in Khanti language and it is
the abode not only of Lord Buddha but of his dedicated
followers also.* Every Buddhist is a monk for some period
of his life. In Khamti society, it is not compulsory to
become a monk but most of them observe the principle
willingly. Buddhism recognizes mental actions as more

*From the life-time of Lord Buddha, the mendicants used to
reside in monasteries that had been presented to the
community of monks by wealthy lay adherents.
important than the outward performances. So it gives no
stress on the individual choice. It is the individual himself
who is to determine his own course of action. Such psycholo-
gical background is displayed in their actions. Even today
some persons are there, who come to the temple as a samanera
or disciple and remain for the whole life in the vihar as a
monk, whom the Khamtis call 'Bhante' or 'Bapu'. It is a very
honoured and beloved word for them. Some of the monks are
Sthavira and some Mahasthavira, the most respected ones.

The word 'Bhikkhu' indicates that the Buddhist monk
must live on 'bhikkha' or alms. He cannot take anything from
home or from his own earnings for his own living. They come
with the begging bowls in hand roaming from door to door in
the village. During the period of 'vaccavasa' only, they do
not go outside the monastery and the villagers manage to
bring the food for them to the monastery.

They maintain full restriction of food and cloth. The
monk never take any food after midday, i.e., twelve O'clock
at noon. They never wear other clothes except the 'civara'
or yellow robe prescribed for the monkhood. A monk must obey
the regulations of monkhood or he must leave the monastery.

In their own language the Khamtis call a monk as
Chau-mun and the novice or the boys newly ordained as Chau-
sang. They are not bound to stay in the monastery or in the
same monastery. As shown by the Lord Buddha himself they move from one monastery to another to meet their colleagues for religious discussions and to attain new knowledge from them. Only during the period of 'vaccavasa' which is called Nao-va by the Khamtis, they must remain within the same monastery. The 'vaccavasa' continues for three months, every year starting from the Asarapurnima and ending in the Asvina Purnima, i.e., the period from the full-moon of July to that of October. During this period, the monks must depend upon the people of the same village. They also have to depend on the villagers for their necessary robes. The civara or yellow robe used by a monk has three parts: 'uttarasanga' or upper garment, 'antara vasa' or inner garment and 'sanghati' or over-robe. Without having the full dress with all the three parts, a monk cannot move away from the monastery. Those who have no such dress, must take some special ritual formula for ten days, as for the penance of the violation of civara discipline. The Khamtis observe a 'Kathinavrata' for one month in which they offer to the monk a 'Kathing' or yellow robe. It should be made preferably within one night. Traditionally, if the robe is made within the same day from spinning to stitching, then it is a great merit for the donator of the cloth. Now-a-days, they stitch the robes out of readymade cloth within the same day, or they prepare the cloth in the handloom within one month and stitch it on the same night. This auspicious day
falls on the full-moon of November (though they do not follow this calendar). From the point of the monk also this is very important to get such a robe. He cannot move outside the monastery for one night also without having a 'Kathina robe'. If one gets it, he need not get another for five months. Otherwise he must use his Ordination robe.

Ordination is of two types. The lower ordination or 'pabbaja' which is called Kham-Chau-sang in Khmti language, is given to the boys of the minimum age limit of eight years. Then he is called 'samanera' in Pali and Chau-sang in Khmti language. The higher ordination or 'Upasampada' is called Chau-mun-kham-chauke. To take this vow, the boy must be of at least twenty years of age, and he must have twelve years' experience of monastic life. This rule of ordination proves how much insistence they give on mental factor of an action. By the experience of long twelve years the boy can realize the determination of his own mind and then only he can proceed to accept 'Upasampada' or higher ordination. This is a great occasion of his life by which the man enters the Sangha of monks. In such a religious function, at least four monks from different monasteries must be present, because it is the rule of Buddhism that Sangha must constitute of at least four monks. To accept monkhood, the person has to fulfil some other conditions also as that he must not be a
slave or in debt to other persons, that he must be free from contagious disease and has the consent of his parents.* He must have the general knowledge of Pali language to read the religious books of monastic rules and disciplines. This again proves the psychological impact of their religion. These Theravadins respect the religious rules so earnestly that they wish that a 'bhikkhu' must know Pali so that he can properly understand the rules of monastic discipline. Of course the Khamti boys get this much of education in the monastery itself when they stay there as novice or Chau-sang. It is one of the daily routine works of a monk to give such lessons to the boys staying in the monastery and also to others who come to learn there. Most of the boys in a Khamti village, so also in the case of the Singphos, come to the monastery for education, which was the only centre of learning until recently. Even now many of them like to come to the monastery rather than going to the government schools. Some of them even like to stay with the Bhikkhus and the novices in the monastery and serve them. These boys are called Chang-kapi in Khamti language. Thus the monks even living away from family life form an essential part of a Khamti and also of a Singpho village. The whole society depends upon the Bhikkhus for

*It is believed that when Rahula (son of Gotama Buddha) was ordained to monasticism, King Suddhodhana was deeply hurt and then he asked his son (Buddha) to make it a law that before ordination a boy should get his parent's consent.
its basis, i.e., education which is not simply formal education of other schools but the true education of building the character of the whole society. Thus the religious preachers of these societies think it more important to teach the villagers about the religious texts than to lead them blindly to perform some rituals. The monastery is situated generally at the eastern corner of the village and the monks stay outside the direct contact of family life. They never come to settle other family problems. But this function of building the family as well as the society is done by them wholeheartedly. The monks enter the village only for alms or in connection with some religious function in the household life of the villagers, when they are invited to do so. Even when they enter the village for begging alms, they follow a definite route always at a definite time, so that the housewives may wait for them outside the houses with rice and curry or whatever they can give to the monks. On other occasions they come to the village only to guide the householder in a specific religious function. On such occasions the first thing to do is to recite the vows of 'Panca-sila' which they call 'Cinha' and pray for the good of the family. But the monks use a face-cover just like a big fan made of fine bamboo-stripes which is called 'bi-ho-tra' by them. They keep it before them when sitting in a social-religious function to avoid the sight of forbidden things, specially the women.
In their daily routine the monk rises before sunrise and after cleansing himself says the morning prayer. After taking tea, they generally go out for begging and then at about nine they take some light food. The only meal for the day they must eat before noon. The rest of the day, they have nothing to do except religious thinking, discussions and teaching. Some of them read for themselves and some also do some literary work such as writing some commentaries or translate some Pali books into their own language. At night they say the evening prayer before going to sleep.

On 'Uposatha' days when the villagers come to the temple, the monks, generally the older one of the monastery, recite the panca-sila vow to the gathering and lead them in chanting the prayers. These are done in Pali language in the Khamti villages and so also in the Singpho. The Uposatha is observed once in a week on the full-moon, new moon and the days lying in between these two days which is called Asthami in Solar calendar. All their religious functions are held mainly on the day of full-moon. The 'Buddha Purnima' is the most important of all these Uposatha or Satang as they call it. The monks lead all the religious functions in public ceremony as well as family rites. The bhikkhu of the Khamti society, thus, performs the duty of a spiritual leader. The villagers take him in good respect and think that merit is
impossible without his guidance and help. The villagers are called 'dayaka' or taka, because they give to the monks their necessaries as food, cloth, etc. The pious one of the Khamti-Singpho village would not take his meal without offering food to the monks. The monks live on the minimum requisites with a devotional attitude. They take food only to sustain the life, cloths only to cover the body and shelter in the monastery is needed for protection and medicine is essential to recover health for the pursuit of devotion. This ideal of living with the minimum necessaries is based on the ideal of removal of Tanha, i.e., extinction of desire, which is the main psychological condition of the ideal of nibbana.

The villagers regard the death of a monk as achieving Nirvan or 'Nipan' as they call it. They keep the body in a separate house which is called Chang-Nikpan for several days. Then the villagers arrange a great function called Pavalan in which the dead body is taken out on a chariot of six or eight wheel and the people being divided into two groups draw the chariot in both sides. It is a great occasion for the Buddhists. Villagers from remote areas also attend this function. The body is taken to the cremation ground along with a big procession.

It is the most valuable impact of Buddhist psychology that it prepares the minds of its followers to accept the fact
of death as an intentional goal. The most evident fact of life is that it is essentially related with death. As Martin Heidegger says, human being is essentially temporal. As these existentialists try to accept death fully and frankly, so Buddhist psychology tried to explain death. Death is inevitable for every one, nobody can take the other's dying away from him. So the only way is to accept death deliberately. Buddhist psychology has that impact upon its true followers, because the analysis of the skandha theory and its correct understanding can bring that level of mind to accept death authentically. Each person dies for himself and by himself. Nobody can share death with others. So mortality is the proof of individuality. To accept the fact of death deliberately, the only easy way is to accept the idea of individual salvation, which is the goal of the Theravadins. This intentional goal of individual salvation is again possible only by observance of moral principles.

The life of a Buddhist monk is bound by the two hundred twenty seven 'patimokkha' rules. The first four of these rules are called 'parajika'; their violation leads to expulsion from monastic life. These rules forbid sex-relation first. Secondly, a monk should not take anything which is not given freely by somebody to him. He must not destroy any life and should not claim to achieve superiority. These are the
fundamental principles of morality. To be moral, sex-life must be regulated and in case of monks it must be completely restricted. Forceful undertakings are another forbidden thing in moral life. Ahimsā or non-killing is the other basic principle and nirahamkāra or egoless mentality is the basic need for moral life. The monastic rules govern their behaviour to society, to other monks, their mode of life. All the rules are concerned with the regulations of desire, temptation and lust. The Buddhist religion of Theravāda is concerned with charity, morality and meditation. The Khamti-Singpho monasticism tries its best to maintain these characteristics of the religion. The monks recite the Sila-vows always along with the prayer. The laymen take panca-sīla whereas the monks and the pious ones follow astha-sīla vows. They make it in Pali language, as follows:

"(1) Panatipata Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami
(2) Adinnadana Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami
(3) Musavada Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami
(4) Suramerayamajja pamadattana veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami
(5) Abrahmacariya Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami
(6) Vikalabhojana Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami
(7) Nacca-gīta-vadita, Visuka-dasana mala-gandir vilepana-dharana-mandana vibhusanathana Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami
By these vows the monks remind themselves of their bindings of monastic life. They are so particular in observing the vows that in regard to the first one, the monks observe neovā, staying within the monastery, so that the growing sprouts of summer and low insects of rainy season may not be destroyed by their steps. Sexual rules are most important. They use behotrā, they enter village by giving signal; all these actions are related with the vow of Brahmacharya. After accepting monkhood, he cannot even touch his own mother, even if she should fall in some distress. The Theravāsins, being true to the teaching of the Master, try their best to overcome desire, 'tālhā' the evil. The monks suppress desire altogether. The laymen limit its scope.

As true Hinayāna Buddhists, the Khamtis and the Singphos believe in individual liberation and for this the guidance of the Bhikkhu is necessary for them. The Bhikkhus, however, keep themselves away from normal life of the village. When entering the village at a definite time, some boys accompany them giving signals of their arrival so that the women may be cautious and ready to come out with alms.

"Upon the forest tribes in His dominions His Majesty has compassion. For His Majesty desires for all animate
beings security, control over the passions, peace of mind and joyousness.²

B. Religious Practices of the laymen in these Tribes:

The general people of these two tribes - the Khamti and the Singphos evince supreme regard for their religion. They take it of great merit to maintain the village monastery and to support the monks therein for their own benefit, i.e., self-salvation. They believe that nirvana or 'nikpan' can be achieved only through the media of the village monastery. The monks guide them in their pursuit of this ideal.

In their daily life, the elders of the house make regular prayer in the morning and the evening before the household shrine on which the idol of the Buddha is worshipped for the welfare of the whole family. Coomaraswamy wrote about the Buddha images, "... probably to begin with in the first century A.D., the Buddha was represented in human form. It is significant that in its most typical aspect the image is not really the likeness of a man, but reflects the old concept of the great citizen (mahā-purisa)."³ But these Buddhist tribes are in the habit of making the idol in their own image of a Khamti or Singpho man; of course, the main idol of the temple and some others also represent the typical form of a seated
Yogi "in inseparable association with the idea of a mental discipline and of the attainment of the highest station of Self-oblivion." They use flowers (makya) candle (Simi) and food offerings (Khaw sam) in worshipping their Lord. The laymen recite panca-sila vow or five precepts along with their daily prayers. The sila vows are the same as that of the monks, but where the monks take eight vows, the laymen take only five of these in order from the first with the difference in the third vow that whereas the monks take it as 'abrahmacariya,veramani', the laymer would take as 'Kamesum-iccacara veramani', etc.

Recitation of sila vows in all religious actions even in prayers, marks the speciality of Buddhist religion. If we take religion in its Indian meaning as Dharma it is strictly ethical in character. Buddhism is the best example of religion in this sense, because it gracefully synthesises ethical principles with a devotional attitude therein. As Macnicol observed it, "Buddhism recalled the mind of the worshipper to piety and good conduct from the barrenness of the rituals, it set up in the teacher or Sakyamuni, a being infinitely gracious whom one could love, admire and trust."5

The Khamtis and the Singphos also believe in the solar influence but they follow lunar calendar in religious practices. In all important functions they would consult the
calendar and find out an auspicious day, even the most auspicious hour of the day, and follow it earnestly. For example, when the new born child is first taken out of confinement, in his first touching of food, if somebody is leaving home for a long journey, in settling the marriage date etc. they rely very much upon the auspicious day and time given by their calendar. On such special occasions they sometimes donate a 'tangkhon' or peace-flag either in the temple or in some sacred place such as the bo-tree. In the villages it is a notable sight near the bo-tree and sometimes even in the household compound. These practices are common to the people of both the tribes. Their practices reflect what Buddha said to his disciples that he (Buddha) could only be properly represented during his lifetime by a Great Wisdom Tree and after his death by bodily relics.

The New-year day of their calendar falls in the full-moon of April/May. It is called 'Samken' in Pali. It is celebrated in all the villages for three days. It is marked by water-libation rite which is called Ye-nan. This is an important ceremony because they believe that 'Nang-Vasung-Tuli' or earth-goddess 'Vasundhara' records the meritorious actions of them which is symbolized by pouring water down on earth for the peace of all beings for the year to come. The monk pours water on the Idol of the temple by taking it to
the Kyanq-fra (temporary temple) and the laymen pour water on each other. It is the utilitarian motive of the festival that all the villagers assemble on the temple ground under their religious flag. It is composed of five colours, red, white, yellow, orange and indigo. The Singphos use their own flag of three colours blue, green and red along with the two white 'daos' crossing in the middle from one end to the other diagonally. The dao is the symbol of force and activity to them. Community feast is arranged in such festivals by the villagers in the temple kitchen or in the rest house.

'Paya puthikham' is the Buddha Purnima celebrated all over India and also in other Buddhist countries. This is the day on which the Buddha was born, was enlightened and also attained Nirvana. The flag is hoisted, the idol taken out in procession and the day is celebrated as 'uposatha' by saying prayers, reciting panca-sila and discussing religious matters. The pious ones come to the temple and the monks guide them in their duties. The villagers also pour water on the bo-tree which is seen in the compounds of all Buddhist temple. This sacred tree is called Tun-Futhi by the Khamtis and the Singphos call it Photiphun.

The three-month-period of 'vaccavasa' or 'Neo-va' is regarded as auspicious by the Buddhist people. So they
observe uposatha as frequently as they can during this period. It is the rainy season in which germination is speedy and insects come out everywhere, causing inconvenience for a monk to come out of the monastery. The villagers bring their food to the monastery every morning. They do it cheerfully thinking it a meritorious duty. The beginning and ending of vassa is celebrated as two important religious festivals and the two days are holidays in their calendar.

From the end of this period begins the 'Kathinadana' observation. This continues for one month during which the villagers offer 'kathing civara' to the monks. The laymen take this robe as a sacred thing. In the absence of an honourable personality, the villagers simply honour the robe used by the person. The village women think it their sacred duty to prepare a 'Kathina-robe' for the monks living in their village monastery. If it can be made within the day of full-moon of November, in our count, then it is of great merit for them. Now-a-days they stitch it from readymade cloths or make a small robe within that night and drape it around a Buddha-Idol. In this Kathinadana ceremony other objects are also given with the robe. After the morning prayer and chanting of precepts, the monks bless the giver of all worldly prosperities. The Singphos are more interested in making 'Kalpataru' for the purpose of making charity or dana. All
the objects to be given to the monks by the villagers, would be hung on Kalpataru or 'tree of will' and then they would carry it to the monastery in a beautiful procession. For both the tribes it is very important to donate a Tangkhon or peace-flag, because they believe that the winding of the flag cools the mind when moving round in the world-circuit. Of all these religious functions of the Buddhist, 'Vaccavasa' is the most important, because they believe that this is the period in which the 'Buddha-dharma-cakra' was formulated.

As in other religions, the laymen here also pray and perform religious duties only to acquire merit which can help in the achievement of worldly prosperity and unworldly liberation. It is the notable speciality of this religion that the laymen also must take the panca-sila vows while saying prayers. The pious ones even take asthasila.

It is very interesting to note that religion in true sense is basically ethical. 'Religion', if the word comes from Latin 'ligare' (To bind), is the cohesive force of the society. In India 'dharma' also signifies the capturing force of a society and the individual. The sila vows of Buddhism only preaches to be a man in the true sense, by controlling the beastly nature of rude sensibility. To agree with Dr. Kondinya "In short, the layman like the monk, is
bound by the Buddhist notions concerning physical desires. The monks must suppress them altogether, the laymen unable to suppress them must limit their expressions."

The religious functions performed after death are all concerned with the happiness of the departed one in the life hereafter. The monk is requested to approach the dying person and recite some 'Paritta' or religious sermons. The dead body is kept for some days until the relatives gather in the house to attend the funeral. During this period every morning religious sermons are recited again and again by the monks. The monks also accompany the funeral party to the cremation ground and recite some paritta there also. Then on the seventh day of the funeral the final rites are performed. The monks first give the panca-sila vows to all present there. Then they would recite two or three paritta or sermons describing the impermanence, soullessness and suffering, i.e., anicca, anatta and dukha, which ends in pronouncing 'anicca-vata samkhāra'.

For the Khamtis and also for the Singphos it is very important to perform these after death rituals, so that he or she may rest in peace. Other religious practices which are

*According as their belief in transmigration they perform these religious duties for the good of the deceased in the next birth. But as Buddhism does not believe in permanent self, so these people do not observe other rites as śrāddha pīñḍādi actions.
performed in the life-time of the individual do not attract so much effort from all sides. In after-birth celebration, or in marriage or some important occasions, monks are invited; they guide the assembling people in prayer and in reciting the vows. Then a collective feast is arranged and that is all to do. But the rites which are performed after death, involve the relatives, friends along with the neighbours with their whole-hearted co-operation and good will. As they believe in transmigration these rites are performed for the good of the deceased person. In the opinion of Dr. Elwin, "The tribesmen have faced the problem of death realistically. They have devised means whereby it can be made more tolerable. The lengthy course of funerary ceremonial, the elaborate tombs, the carvings, the feast of mourning are not due only to a desire to propitiate the ghost; they give the mourner an opportunity of separating themselves psychologically, from the departed objects."

The Khamtis and also the Singphos believe in transmigration. But as to who or what goes to take rebirth, they are not sure about it. And so they possess a belief in ghost or spirit. The belief in spirit seems to be more prominent among the Singphos than it is in the Khamti society. Spong-yang-poi, in which the spirits are worshipped is the example of this faith. But this tradition does not contradict their
belief in Buddhism. They are speedily turning to become the
pious Buddhists as the Khamtis, and 'Spong-Yang' is taken not
as a religious function but as a cultural festival. I must
remember again some lines from Dr. Elwin's writings, "It has
been said that fear is the father of all religion and love
its later-born daughter, and it is true that there is an
element of fear in all primitive religion. ... but, tribal
faith has for its adherents just as much authority and dignity
as the faiths of outside world."8

By their living in the midst of various dangers of
forest life, they inherited some primitive beliefs which are
being removed gradually by the impact of Buddhism.

Psychological bearings of the religion upon the (a) social
and (b) the religious practices of these tribes:

The Khamtis and the Singphos have their own pattern
of social life. From all the records found about them it is
clear that the Khamtis are more advanced than the Singphos in
cultural and educational matters from the time of the British
rule in India. Their development owes much to the influence
of the religion as well as the fame of their ancestors. Even
today the members of the royal family of Sadiya-khowa-Gohain
are honoured as the chief of their society and these
influential personalities contribute largely to the development of the tribe. The distinguishing mark of the Khamtis which differentiates them from other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh is their own written script which they bore with them when they crossed the Patkai range from Burma to India. So all persons in their society even without knowing what a school is, can read the prayer book of their own religion in their own language. This matters a great lot in their social and religious habits. It is very interesting to note that even existentialists are in favour of such education in the modern world. 

"Every person should try to make imperfection perfect, faith in the preservation and progress of being. Education should give an understanding of his limited powers and imperfect existence." This is the type of education which the Khamtis get from the very beginning of their social life. Today many educated persons are found among the Singphos also. But their education is mostly institutional education of the Education Department of State Government. For religious practices and understanding of the precepts they are to depend only on the monks, living in the village monastery. So impact of Buddhism is not so strong upon them as it is seen upon the Khamti people. So samanism underlies the religious practices of Buddhism in Singpho villages. Of course, there is no compulsion or pressure upon them from the monks. They practise their duties completely out of their deep-rooted faith in Buddhism. In both
these societies the young boys accept 'Prabajja' out of their own will. The parents also like to send the boys to the monastery for their own good. This principle of staying in the monastery, for at least some period in the early life of the youth is very very important for society and it has a great psychological impact upon their lives. It helps greatly in the formation of character which is of the utmost necessity today in the modern world of scientific development, and after which modern life is struggling so desperately but without any success. To quote a great psychologist here "Evolution towards a better society continues to be the basic assumption and goal. On the other hand a somewhat alarmist attitude seems to pervade not only psychiatric and anthropological circles, but also groups of humanist, philosophers and scientists who offer gloomy predictions about the future of the world. They often advocate a return to more authentic (primitive) communities."

Not only in the case of the young, the religion has a strong bearing upon the adults also for leading an honest life. Their habit of coming to the temple and the process of reciting the five precepts or panca-sila vows everyday with every prayer and worship, is the most important factor of their life and society. This specific character of the Theravadins that sila-vows must be made with every religious function has a great bearing upon the social life of the Khamtis and so also of the Singphos.
They take the vow of 'Panatipata veramani . . .' and it prevents them from being cruel to any life. They take the vow of 'Adinnadana Veramani . . .' and it prevents them from taking others' property by cheating or by any evil means like stealing, robbing etc. The third vow of 'Kamesumicca-cara veramani . . .' helps in leading a disciplined life. The vow of 'musavada veramani . . .' encourages to be truthful in all affairs of life. The vow of not taking intoxicants etc., i.e., 'Suramera-yamajjapa-madathana veramani . . . ' helps in creating the habits of a somewhat detachment towards the objects of enjoyment or so-called enjoyment. Being under the influence of tribal culture, these people, specially the Singphos are habituated in taking 'lao-pani' (a home-made wine). But they use it with great restriction and are gradually giving up this habit. On an 'uposatha' day when they take the vow, they would follow it sincerely.

Of course, the complexity of modern life has placed some barriers in observing the vows accurately. They are conscious of that and they are also fully cautious that by taking the vows, they must not violate it. So while taking the sila vow they take it for a time limit. This also clearly indicates their regard for the religion and the faithful and truthful nature of their own mind. They take the time limit only to be true to the vows. So naturally, it is their
psychological binding to observe the vows in the practical life as much as possible under different circumstances. One fine and simple example of this is that the Khamti people, so also the Singphos, keep one part of their honest earning from the production of their own land or right from the salary separately for the purpose of making charity in different times. For earning livelihood or for maintaining the standard of the society of these days, they are adopting different ways of life. But they do not take it to be honest money and so do not use it for ritualistic purposes. This again proved their attitude and yearning for Samyagajiva or honest livelihood.

I must admit that the possession of wealth when it exceeds the needs of life, leads to the violation of morality in all societies. So I agree with the great scholar Coomaraswamy that "it is a doctrine for those whose wants are few, not for those whose wants are many."

For the adjustment with the modern life, the young generation of the Khamtis have given up the habit of vegetarianism. The Singphos were already in the habit of taking meat. But they are very conscious of their vow of non-killing. In religious festivals they take vegetarian diet. In other public feast such as wedding ceremony etc. they use to take meat and fish only by reciting 'paritta' or penance sermon. They also pray that the slaughtered animal may attain
a higher status in the next life. They do not make business on fish and meat and they do not like to have a fishery or a poultry farm of their own. They think that to keep hens and goats in the family would be the violation of the first vow, as this may encourage the family members and also others to kill them for meat. It is interesting to note that these people even do not milk the cow even if it is pet as they think it a forceful taking and against the vow of 'Adinnadana veramani'. This type of behaviour is evident psychological impact of the religion upon these Buddhist people of the east corner of Arunachal Pradesh. Their hospitality, their respect for women, their mild behaviour even of a very rich person, are rare phenomena in modern society. All these are possible only because of the religious influence which is constantly spreading upon them by the sight of the Bhikkhus who are contented with the minimum necessities of life. This influence is always kept alive by the constant reminder of the 'anicca, anatta and dukha' theory of their religion. They cannot think to be selfish, greedy, cruel and dishonest. Their religion enlightens them to give importance upon the internal virtues rather than external wealth.

But the possible question is that if the Khamtis and the Singphos are so good, then we should not find some of them possessing vast wealth and some others of very poor condition. Again the principle of keeping labourer for cultivation is
also not socially justified by reason. But we must be happy to find that there are very rich persons in their society but they are not selfish. The rich use their property for the use of others by creating employments and giving other helps also. Some roads are also constructed under personal expenditure. As regards the labour problem, this is also another employment practice. Moreover, they take the responsibility of the whole family of the labourer sympathetically. Of course, this habit has made them more reluctant to work. Wealth cannot bind them, cannot make them blind. One can easily realize the simple evidence of their negligence for worldly prosperity from their mode of living. Generally, every family possesses much of landed property and lives in a house with a vast compound. But this big area lies vacant without any fruitful use or aim of production. This may be interpreted as their sluggishness or laziness as such. But indirectly it is also the influence of their religion that makes them indifferent to this world. They have no ambition for more riches or high standard of living. They are satisfied with what is easily and honestly achieved without much effort and anxiety. Their food habit also shows the influence of Buddhism upon them. These people are habituated in taking two meals, one in the early hours of the day and the other in the evening, without any bothering for variety dishes. They are not in the habit of taking this and that at different times throughout the day. Their dress also proves
simplicity. The richest persons are also pleased with their traditional dress made in the handlooms.

Thus Buddhism has a strong impact upon the social and psychical habits of its followers. These people of Tirap and Lohit are living peacefully under the canopy of their religion. To remember Dr. Mathur, "There is no denial of the fact that religion influences the human life to a very great extent. It helps in the formation of the human personality and moulds the life of the individual in human channels which are morally, spiritually and socially desirable."\(^{11}\)

But Buddhism has done even more than this for its followers of the Khamti and the Singpho society. It performs the most important function of guiding intellectual life of these people. The Buddhist vihars keep many books written in Pali. In the Khamti village, monasteries, some books of their language are also found. The Singphos keep the English translations of the Pali Books. This nature of them to keep the books with care in such an interior place is surely a matter deserving great appreciation. This is made possible only because of the monks who are always engaged in consulting the religious books and conveying the message to the layman of the village. The word 'sikkhapadam samadayami' also indicates the same matter. These people are eager to get Sikkha in the true sense of the term as 'sasana' or ruling over the senses. Even
in the most interior places also, the boys are encouraged to read and write the religious books by the 'Bhante', as they call him. Those who are deprived of school education are blessed with the education given in the monastery. Even now the monks are the only teachers in most of the villages. The monastery is the place where they gather and talk and talk of good ideas. This is the pillar of their life, of their village, of their society. All these are possible only because of this system of Buddhism that they keep a village monastery as necessary element of life, maintain it with all their effort for spiritual guidance and ethical virtues.

In fact with the tremendous development of modern civilization we are feeling the need of such an education which can teach us to 'controle', to control over our impulses. Today science has placed in the hands of man tools of such power that he may destroy himself unless he develops the idealistic side of his character.

Though Gandhiji emphasized that 'the aim of education should be to promote the physical, mental and spiritual development of the child,' we the free Indians have forgotten it.

In fact education in all countries began with the religious institutions. Buddhism is famous for encouraging education from the days of Nalanda and Taxila. The very
meaning of education as 'vid of vidya' and 'Sas of Siksa' indicates that the aim of education should be to teach the person to control, to regulate his impulses by the faculty of reason and intellect.

During the last hundred years materialism has made tremendous progress and science has given to the people innumerable comforts and at the same time humanity is facing untold suffering. So the great philosophers of India including Radhakrishnan, Aurovindo and Tagore supported religious education. Not regarding Buddha's doctrine as a philosophical study we may take it to be an individualistic humanistic treatment of individual predicaments. As the great ethical teacher the Buddha was trying to bring his followers to this existential awareness of the contingent, secondary, dependent and fleeting status of empirical self so that they might, thereby, be helped to escape from self-centered standpoint of the 'beloved-ego'. Meditation upon one's own transitoriness and imperfection is a means to the transcending of egoism. So Buddha's teaching of 'anicca, anatta and dukkha' is a call to become morally selfless, moved by universal love which does not discriminate between self and others. The Khamtis and the Singphos are the living witnesses of the benevolent pragmatic teachings of the Lord Buddha and they have vindicated that psychological, epistemological and ethical investigations are intimately interrelated in so far as men's progressive change is concerned.
REFERENCES


8. Ibid., p. 216

