

Jayadeva who had succeeded Dharmapāla as *upādhyāya* of Nālandā and took the name Śāntideva.

It appears that his *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and *Śikṣāsamuccaya* were written during his stay at Nālandā. He then left Nālandā and lived in Srī Dakṣiṇa, in the city of Kāliṅga in Triliṅga. Certain scholars from Nālandā went to request him to return to Nālandā but he did not agree. He devoted his entire life to the service of mankind with the noble and ultimate aim of seeing them across the ocean of *Samsāra*. Mahayāna sources mention Śāntideva along with other great teachers like Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Candrakīrti, Bhāvaviveka and Bodhibhadra.

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SANTUṬṬHI can be derived from the verb *tussati*, 'to be satisfied', and the prefix *saṃ*, and thus stand for 'contentment'. Standard expositions of the gradual path of training regularly treat the need for a monk or a nun to develop such contentment in regard to robes and food (D. I, 71). Contentment with these two requisites leads to a degree of material independence comparable to a bird, who uses its two wings to fly here and there, but is not burdened by anything else apart from these two wings (*ibid.*). The importance of developing contentment in regard to robes, in regard to food and also in regard to one's dwelling place has caused these three to be included among the four 'noble lineages' (D. III, 224 and A. II, 27: *cattāro ariyavaṃsa*), qualities held in high esteem among monks and laity alike.

In addition to contentment in regard to robes, food and dwelling place, the same quality needs also be developed in regard to medicines. These four constitute the basic requisites of a monk or a nun and form the

topic of the *Santuṭṭhi Sutta* (A. II, 26), the 'discourse on contentment', in which the Buddha praised the blamelessness and easy gain of rag robes, begged alms food, the root of a tree for lodging and cow's urine as medicine. If contentment in regard to these four requisites has been developed, so the Buddha explained on another occasion to *Anuruddha*, such rag robes will seem to a contented monk just like a chest full of garments, alms food like choice curries, the root of a tree like a gabled house equipped with comfortable furniture and cow's urine like butter and honey (A. IV, 231).

The *Sabbāsava Sutta* describes a standard reflection in regard to these four requisites as a way of abandoning the influxes through 'using' (M. I, 10: *paṭisevanāpahātabba*). This reflection explains in more detail the implications of contentment in these four instances. Extrapolating from this reflection, contentment in regard to robes is to use them merely to protect one's body from the vicissitudes of climate and insects and for the sake of decency. Contentment in regard to food is to eat only for physical maintenance and not for pleasure. Contentment in regard to one's resting place entails using it merely for the sake of seclusion and to protect oneself from climate and insects. Finally contentment in regard to medicine consists in taking medication just to mitigate painful feelings and to ensure bodily health.

To be contented with these four requisites as one's basic necessities of life requires a considerable degree of mental maturity and detachment. Hence it is no wonder that on numerous occasions the Buddha had to restrain monks or nuns who had not yet developed such maturity. This caused the promulgation of numerous *Vinaya* rules and regulations in regard to food and other requisites, a central purpose of which is none other than to inculcate a sense of contentment.

The same purpose features also prominent in a set of special practices known as the *dhutāṅgas*. These 'ascetic practices' cover such activities as to wear only rag robes, to subsist by begging one's food and by eating only once a day, and to live under a tree, or out in the open, or in a cemetery (e.g. at M. III, 41). As the *Puggala-paññatti* explains, out of the various motivations for undertaking such ascetic practices, the development of contentment stands out as the supreme type of motivation (*Pug.* 69).

The Buddha's emphasis on the development of contentment did not always meet with the approval of his disciples. The *Bhaddāli Sutta* and the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* report monks refusing to follow the Buddha's commandment to eat only once a day (*M. I, 437* and *M. I, 474*). Yet, as the monk *Udāyi* reported in the *Laṭṭukikopama Sutta* (*M. I, 448*), even though such instructions can at first seem disagreeable, once put into practice they lead to the development of wholesome qualities and thereby to increasing happiness. The development of contentment yields much happiness indeed, a happiness due to blamelessness (*M. I, 180: anavajjasukha*).

For a monk intent on gaining such happiness, the proper attitude in regard to food should be perfect equanimity, even if he did not receive any (*Sn. 712*). As a verse in the *Dhammapada* proclaims, a monk or a nun who feels displeasure at the type of food received will not be able to gain concentration (*Dhp. 249*). This last statement indicates why contentment has received so much emphasis in early Buddhism. This emphasis is not merely because contentment is a praiseworthy quality for a renunciate, but also because contentment forms an indispensable foundation for the development of concentration and therewith for the meditative path. In order to be able to gain deeper levels of concentration contentment and detachment in regard to worldly pleasures are of crucial importance. The happiness gained through contentment is the happiness of renunciation a type of happiness that easily leads over to the deeper stages of happiness achieved through the development of concentration.

Therefore a monk without contentment is not fit to withdraw into seclusion and will lead the celibate life with dissatisfaction (*A. III, 145*). But a contented monk will come to growth in the dispensation of the Buddha (*A. V, 154*) and will moreover be regarded by other monks with respect and affection (*A. V, 91*).

'The Buddha's teaching is for one who is contented and not for one who is without contentment'. This reflection forms part of the eight thoughts of a great man (*A. IV, 229: mahāpurisavitakka*). Thus it is no wonder that the Buddha proclaimed to his foster mother Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī that whatever leads to contentment can without any hesitation be considered to be his teaching and instruction (*A. IV 280*).

The discourses explicitly mention the Buddha (*M. II, 6* and *A. V, 67*) and the monks Kassapa (*S. II, 194*), Piṇḍolabhāradvāja (*Ud. 43*), Puṇṇa Mantāniputta (*M. I, 145*) and Sāriputta (*S. I, 63* and *Ud. 43*) as examples for contentment. Such passages often extol the fact that these monks were not only themselves contented, but also encouraged others to develop the same quality. The importance of encouraging the development of this quality in others may well also underlie the inclusion of 'talk on contentment' (*santuṭṭhikathā*) among the range of topics recommendable for conversation (e.g. *M. III, 113*).

Though the discourses treat the topic of contentment mostly in regard to monks and nuns, the same quality is of equal importance to the lay disciple. From among the five precepts that form the foundation of Buddhist lay practice, to abstain from taking what is not given and from sexual misconduct directly relate to this topic, namely to the development of contentment with one's possessions and marital relationship.

The principle of contentment could in fact have far reaching consequences on the political, economical and ecological level, if thoroughly applied. This rather unobtrusive quality may hold an answer to many of the ills of modern society. Yet the first steps to implementing contentment have to be undertaken by each one on the personal level. These steps are nothing else but the ever recurring little decisions taken in every day life between either yielding to the manifold wishes arising in the mind, or else following the sober voice of reason and practise frugality and renunciation. The key to stirring safely through this dilemma is the experiential realisation that true happiness cannot be gained through desire satisfaction, but only through letting go of desires and thereby gaining the happiness of contentment. Once this is understood, the development of contentment becomes increasingly easy and one comes to appreciate ever more why the Buddha spoke of contentment as the highest wealth (*Dhp. 204*) and as a supreme blessing (*Sn. 265*).

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