

The disciples of the Buddha were known among their contemporaries for the high regard they had for silent behaviour (e.g. *M. I*, 514), and the *Kandaraka Sutta* reports how a visiting wanderer expressed his admiration for the silence of the congregation of monks (*M. I*, 339). The silent behaviour of the Buddhist monks caused suspicion to arise in the mind of king Ajātasattu, who on being led to the vicinity of a large assembly of Buddhist monks feared being ambushed, as he could not imagine that such a great congregation could maintain total silence. On finding out that his suspicions were unfounded, he was so impressed by the silence of the monks that he wished for his son to be endowed with similar calmness (*D. I*, 50).

Even the gods knew about the reputation for silence of the disciples of the Buddha, and on one occasion Sakka praised the Buddhist monks as wise and silent ones, *dhīrā tuṇhībhūtā* (*S. I*, 236). Such silent behaviour of the Buddhist monks would have been in accordance with an injunction by the Buddha that they should either converse on the Dhamma or else keep noble silence, *ariyo tuṇhībhāvo* (*M. I*, 161). "Noble silence" in its true sense, however, would require attaining the second *jhāna* (*S. II*, 273), since it is only when the last vestige of mental activity has been abandoned through overcoming initial and sustained mental application, *vitakka* and *vicāra*, that total inner silence has been attained.

Yet, silence for its own sake was not approved of by the Buddha. According to the *Mahāvagga* of the *Vinaya*, he criticized a group of monks for having spent the three months of the rainy season together in silence, comparing their behaviour to dumb sheep (*Vin. I*, 159). This passage needs to be examined in conjunction with the *Cūḷagosiṅga Sutta* and the *Upakkāḷesa Sutta*, two discourses in which the silent cohabitation of a group of monks met with the Buddha's explicit approval (*M. I*, 207 and *M. III*, 157). This shows that it was not the fact of observing silence as such that the Buddha found objectionable in the case of the monks in the *Mahāvagga*. A helpful detail is provided by the (Mūla-)Sārvāstivāda *Vinaya*, according to which these monks had taken a vow to live together in silence in the sense that they would not criticize each other even in the case of a breach of conduct (*T. XXIII*, 1044c16 or Derge 'dul ba ka 222a1). This suggests that the Buddha's criticism was directed

against the foolish idea that to live together in harmony is to simply turn a blind eye on improper behaviour.

What becomes clear from the criticism voiced in the *Mahāvagga* is that the observance of silence needs to be paired with wisdom, a requirement that also becomes evident in the circumstance that, according to the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, clear comprehension should be practised when keeping silent (*M. I*, 57). As a verse in the *Dhammapada* points out, one does not become a sage by dint of mere silence (*Dhp.* 268).

Though silence undertaken just for its own sake and without wisdom was not encouraged, silence as an expression of deeper realization was certainly valued in early Buddhism. A discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya* reports the complaints of a deva that a monk, who earlier was regularly reciting the Dhamma, had fallen silent. In reply, the monk explained that he had stopped reciting because he had reached realization (*S. I*, 202). According to another discourse in the same collection, a group of monks had come to the Buddha and complained that a newly ordained monk was keeping silent to himself, without taking part in communal activities such as sewing robes. The Buddha exonerated the monk, explaining that he was an arahant and was spending his time attaining *jhāna* (*S. II*, 278). Abiding in such a mental condition, the monk in question would have indeed reached what according to early Buddhism is silence in its ultimate sense.

#### Anālayo.

U BA KHIN, 1899-1971, a Burmese lay meditation teacher and government official. Through the efforts of his student S. N. Goenka, the *vipassanā* meditation taught by U Ba Khin has by now become one of the most widely practised forms of insight meditation in the world.<sup>1</sup> In courses taught on a pure *dāna* basis, meditators from any cultural, religious or social background are at first taught mindfulness of breathing to develop mental tranquility, followed by instructions in contemplating bodily feelings in order to develop insight into the impermanent and therewith unsatisfactory and selfless nature of all aspects of experience.<sup>2</sup>

#### Anālayo.

## References

- 1 A survey of locations at which courses are conducted can be found at [www.dhamma.org/alphalist.htm](http://www.dhamma.org/alphalist.htm)
- 2 For a more detailed account of this meditation practice cf. J. Kornfield: *Living Buddhist Masters*, Kandy: BPS 1993, pp 234-255, or A. Solé-Leris: *Tranquillity & Insight*, Kandy: BPS 1992, pp 136-152.

UBBĀHIKĀ - A committee of the Saṅgha formally approved by a resolution, put to the Saṅgha, followed by one repetition (*ñattidutiya-kamma*), to which a dispute unable to be resolved by the whole Saṅgha is referred to for settlement. The names of the referents also have to be formally put to the Saṅgha and approved by them. However, once the committee starts its work, if any of them is found wanting in any quality expected from them, the committee members can propose to the Saṅgha to remove him and, once it is done, continue with the work assigned to them. The point cited is that of a monk who is well conversant with rule (*sutta*) but not with its analysis (*suttavibhaṅga*) and, therefore, interprets a rule merely on the letter of the law without considering the deeper implications. (*Vin. II.95 ff*). If the committee is unable to resolve the dispute handed over to them they should hand it back to the Saṅgha who can then try to settle it with the method of majority decision (*yebhuyyasikāya ibid 97 f*).

The Buddha, in laying down the rules regarding the referendum, also enumerated ten qualities expected to be possessed by the referents appointed by the Saṅgha. He should be "one who is moral in habit, who lives restrained by the restraint of the *Paṭimokkha*, who, possessed of good conduct, sees danger in the slightest faults, who takes up and trains himself in the rules of training, who has heard much, an expert in the heard, a storehouse of the heard; those things which, lovely at the beginning, lovely in the middle, and lovely at the ending, declare with the spirit, with the letter the Brahma-faring utterly fulfilled, wholly purified-things like this are much heard by him, learnt by heart, repeated out loud, pondered upon, considered carefully, well penetrated by vision; both the *Pāṭimokkhas* are properly handed down to him in

detail, properly sectioned, properly regulated, properly investigated clause by clause as to the linguistic form; he comes to be clever in discipline, unperturbable; he comes to be competent in convincing both of those who are hostile about the matter, in winning them over, in making them consider, in understanding, in reconciling them; he comes to be skilled in settling a legal question that has arisen; he knows what is a legal question; he knows the uprising of a legal question; he knows the stopping of a legal question; he knows the course leading to the stopping of a legal question".<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these ten qualities the *Parivāra* (*Vin. V. 197 f*.) also gives thirty others in six groups of five. But as four in the last two pentads are common, there are altogether twenty six in this collection. viz. a monk should not be selected if he is not skilled in meaning, in Dhamma, in language, in syllables, in what precedes and what follows. Further he should not be selected if he is angry, overcome by anger, if he is harsh, overcome by harshness, unmerciful, overcome by unmercifulness, envious, overcome by envy, infected by worldliness, grasping it tightly and not letting go of it easily. He also should not be selected if agitated, malevolent, offers resistance, causes anger, intractable and incapable of being instructed. He is also not fit to be selected if he is one who confuses the mind and does not make remember, if he is a teacher who has not obtained leave, if he reproves not according to Dhamma, not according to discipline, not according to the offence; if he carries out not according to Dhamma, discipline or the offence and he is an expounder not in accordance with right view. Further one should not be selected if one follows a wrong course from partiality, hatred, confusion, or fear and if one is unconscientious and not skilled in *Vinaya*. On the other hand if these negative qualities are absent in him and he possesses the opposite positive qualities he may be agreed upon for a referendum (*Vin. V. 197 f*)<sup>2</sup>

If a legal question settled by means of a referendum (*ubbāhikāya*) is once again opened up by those who carry it out, it becomes an offence of expiation (*Pācittiya*) (*Vin. II.95*).

An historic occasion of the application of this *ubbāhikā* method is seen in the account of the Second Buddhist Council, held at Vesali, one hundred years after the Buddha (*ibid 304 ff*). When at this Council the

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