

# Prabarana Purnima and Buddha's teaching

**The Buddha asked for observance of these rules for householders or laity. These words have been proclaimed by the Buddha. If these principles and rules are followed, one can lead a peaceful life and attain prosperity. Observance of these rules will be helpful in the advancement towards Nibbana, the supreme bliss of Buddhism. Sabbe sattva sukhita hontu -- may all beings be happy.**

SUKOMAL BARUA

**T**ODAY is Prabarana Purnima. The Prabarana Purnima is the most significant and the second greatest religious festival of the Buddhist world. The Buddhists perform religious rites on some specific days, especially on the days of the full moon. This is due to the fact that most of the memorable events of the Buddha's life took place on the days of the full moon. In commemorating those events, the Buddhists all over the world have been observing the rites and rituals on the same day for ages. The festivals on the occasions of full moon are universally observed by the Buddhists. These performances delight and purify our minds, encouraging us to do good deeds. They, eventually, bring peace, and happiness in our lives, and progress in the society and the states well.

The Prabarana festival is observed with dignity and religious

fervour in the month of Aswin. The Purnima in this month is known as the Asvini Purnima. The three months long "Barshavasa" of the Bhikkhus starts in the Ashari Purnima and continues up to the Prabarana Purnima. The Buddha, on this day of the full moon, directed his disciples to go all around for the propagation of the Dhamma. After attaining Buddhahood, Goutama performed his seventh Barshavasa in the heaven of Tavatimsa. He explained the Dhamma to his late mother Mayadevi with many other deities for three months. In the night of this Prabarana Purnima he descended to the Sankashya Nagara from the heaven. In this very full moon, the Buddha displayed the miracles of spiritual power to his disciples. So it holds a unique position for the Buddhists as a sacred festival. The observance of the auspicious Kathin Civara Dana (yellow robes offering ceremony) begins from the day after this Purnima. The celebrations of offering yellow robes

to the Bhikkhus continue for one month in different monasteries. The day-long program includes the religious procession singing religious songs in the early morning. Religious discussions and candle lighting are held in the afternoon and evening respectively. In the evening, rocket balloons made of coloured paper are ignited and set free to flow towards the sky. The Buddha has given much emphasis on self-power development of mankind. Unity growing out of strength of weapons does not last long. True unity grows from courtesy and self-sacrifice. The Buddha advised the Sangha to develop morality, through which men in the society are careful. For this, the Sangha develop self-reliance and dutifulness and, at last, proceed towards the goal. As a result of their self-sacrifice, Nalanda, Ajanta, Elora, Vikramasila, Taxila, Paharpur and Maynamati came into existence. Hence, they have contributed much in the development and progress of edu-

cation, culture and knowledge.

There is no worshiping of deities in Buddhism. Hence, there exist no temples of the gods. In their place, Cetiya or Pagodas are built for religious performances. In ancient times the Buddhist monasteries provided residence for the Sangha, and Buddha's rules, orders, discourses, philosophy and doctrines were taught there.

Later, the big monasteries were converted into the best seats of learning, education and knowledge. But, at present, we understand the Viharas as the Buddhist monasteries or prayer halls.

The Buddha wanted to establish a good society for mankind. So, he said, the good help to develop humanity. Good conduct and self-reliance take man to a higher stage of life day by day. To live in the society, these two are urgently needed.

Pancasila, or the five precepts, are to be observed first as the Buddhist faith. Pancasila are known as the main structure and power in Buddhist thought. One has to abstain from killing, theft, lying, sexual indiscretion and intoxication as the principle of Pancasila.

The Buddha combined all these rules to be followed by householders or laity in the Pancasila. For example, abstinence from intoxication means that one should refrain from taking all kinds of harmful

intoxicants, such as liquor, opium, ganja etc.

When one is addicted to these, normal healthy life is hampered. Intoxicated persons do great harm to the society. They do not hesitate to do wrong deeds after losing the sense of balance through intoxication. The Buddha, therefore, called for abstention from all kinds of intoxication.

Buddha said do not use harsh, abusive and sarcastic words. Do not support those who have wrong views. Do not be guided by revenge. Do not cause harm to anyone under somebody's influence. Do not be engaged in any business involving harm to living beings, like poison, intoxicating objects, arms and meat. Never deceive anybody, and be happy with what you earn.

Always try to do good to others. Be happy in the happiness of all beings and sorrowful in their sorrows. Provide shelter to one who is fearful. Do not forsake friends in times of their danger or misfortune. Help relations in times of need and treat them well. Protect the property of relations. Give them courage if they feel afraid. Never renounce them in times of danger. Invite them to festivals and blissful ceremonies.

The Buddha framed Seven Conditions for the Sangha unity, by which they are able to acquire



matchless strength. These Seven Conditions are:  
• Assemble at one place frequently and continue the habitual gathering.  
• Perform the prescribed duties together as the members of the Sangha.  
• Adhere to rules prescribed by the state and observe discipline.  
• Respect, honour, and make offering to the elders, and listen to

them.  
• Protect the dignity of women.  
• Observe the national code of ethics.  
• Ensure respect to religious teachers and look after their comfort.  
The Buddha asked for observance of these rules for householders or laity. These words have been proclaimed by the Buddha. If these principles and rules are followed,

one can lead a peaceful life and attain prosperity. Observance of these rules will be helpful in the advancement towards Nibbana, the supreme bliss of Buddhism. Sabbe sattva sukhita hontu -- may all beings be happy.

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## In truth

**I would like to add one more question, which may ultimately prove to be the most difficult one: who would qualify to be the members of this commission? Needless to mention that they ought to be competent and respectful senior citizens having a good track record of high moral integrity and completely non-partisan outlook.**

HUSAIN IMAM

**M**AY I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate The Daily Star and Mr. Zafar Sobhan for the excellent post-ed titled, "We can handle it" published on October 15. To me, it is the most constructive and positive discussion on the truth commission I have come across since the idea was floated by the information and law advisor of the present caretaker government.

I personally do not see much (in fact anything) to disagree with Mr. Sobhan in his argument in support of a truth commission for Bangladesh.

Who can deny the fact, as pointed out by Mr. Sobhan that corruption was so institutionalised in the country, that it would require turning the country upside down to fix things, or that, as he says, "decades of shameless and self-serving rule by colonisers, dictators and putative democracies alike had left the legal and judicial apparatus required to affect the necessary changes utterly dysfunctional."

How far the anti-corruption drive, in its present form and approach, has succeeded or will succeed in achieving its desired goal has, however, been a matter of debate, and will continue to be so. The reasons are simple.

Firstly, the drive had to be targeted mainly against the politicians and some business magnets having political connections, although everyone knows that the abysmal

situation we are in is the outcome of a prolonged and vicious nexus between the politicians, businessmen and the bureaucracy, conveniently patronised and fanned by a section of our professionals and so-called civil society.

Secondly, corruption, criminal offences, and abuse of power are so deep and widespread in the society that, given the resources available and the various constitutional and other limitations of a caretaker government, it is probably too much to ask of the present government to clean up the debris of decades of misrule and misdeeds in just a year or two.

The predators in the garb of politicians, businessmen, professionals, media tycoons and bureaucrats having access to the corridors of power have plundered and siphoned national wealth worth billions of takas and bled the nation white. The corruption and misuse of power that the nation had witnessed in recent time, and exposed by the courtesy of the armed forces and other agencies, are considered only tip of the iceberg.

It is under these circumstances that the idea of setting up of a truth commission is not only pragmatic but also may be the most appropriate step in the context of the prevailing socio-economic and political situation in the country.

Though one may have reservations about the performance of the law advisor as an adviser to the caretaker government, one cannot but admire his appreciation of the simple reality of the situation and his idea of a truth commission to

deal with the situation.

The idea of having such a commission only for the corrupt businessmen to help them get off the hook with less or no punishment in order to gain momentum in the trade and business of the country is, however, not only anti-constitutional, but is also fraught with the risk of negating the purpose of the ongoing anti-corruption drive.

The law adviser may be, to some extent, right in his thinking that the country's business cannot run without the businessmen. Whether he wants to admit it or not, the same argument holds good for the politicians as well as for the bureaucrats and persons of other professions also. The way business cannot run without businessmen, politics cannot also run without the politicians, nor the administration without the bureaucrats.

The problem is that corruption is so widespread and deep-rooted in our society, any attempt to uproot it overnight or bring it down to an acceptable level is bound to land us in a tough situation.

The caretaker government of Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed will do a great job if it can set up a proper truth commission having a large canvas, where major incidences of war crimes, genocide, rape, murder, political killings, corruption, abuse of power, violation of human rights, violation of constitutional obligations, distortion of history and similar other offences of most serious nature committed between March 26, 1971 and January 11, 2007 (1/11) would be painted in their true colours and perspective.

And the key players of those events, irrespective of whether they are businessmen, politicians, bureaucrats or members of any other profession, would then be categorised by the commission and brought to trial either before the court of law or before the truth commission, depending on the nature of crimes committed.

It is very important, as suggested by Mr. Sobhan, that the commission be structured in such a way that no community or class of people in particular are targeted, and that the commission would operate as a parallel judicial option where participation would be totally voluntary.

Under no circumstances should the commission favour or disfavour a person just because he or she is a politician, bureaucrat, businessman or a professional.

The last, but not the least, important task would be to address the issues raised by Mr. Sobhan regarding formation of a truth commission, and how such a program will be administered? Who would qualify for inclusion? How will the truth commission complement the existing legal system?

I would like to add one more question, which may ultimately prove to be the most difficult one: who would qualify to be the members of this commission? Needless to mention that they ought to be competent and respectful senior citizens having a good track record of high moral integrity and completely non-partisan outlook.

Unfortunately, people of such calibre are hard to find in this country nowadays. I dare say so because our experience with people of even the noblest of professions, like university professors or supreme court judges, hasn't been that encouraging, to put it mildly.

Capt. Husain Imam is a freelance contributor to The Daily Star.

## Administration officials' audacity

**Now, it is evident that not only had the successive political governments obstructed the separation of judiciary process, the bureaucrats had also played a vital role in this regard. The power-hungry politicians did not dare to anger the bureaucrats by disregarding their will of not separating the judiciary from the executive.**

NAZRUL ISLAM

**I**T'S sheer audacity, breaking of service rules, and contempt of court. The way the officials of the administration cadre vented their so-called grievances is simply outrageous. In the name of holding a seminar, they held a trade union-like rally defying the state of emergency. Had it been anyone other than administration officials, by now, he or she would have been put behind bars and dismissed from the service of the republic.

In the so-called seminar held on Sunday, the administration officials directly threatened the government not to go ahead with implementation of the directives of the Supreme Court to separate the judiciary from the executive. This is nothing but intimidation and coercion, intended to get the government to bow down to their demands. They threatened to paralyse the government machinery by abstaining from discharging their duties.

Let us look at why the bureaucrats are so outraged at the decision to separate the judiciary from the executive? What would they lose if the constitutional obligation that was not executed during the last 36 years is implemented?

In fact, 700-plus lower and middle-ranking officials (assistant secretary to deputy secretary level) of the administration cadre discharge magisterial duties as

quasi-judicial officials. They are neither law-graduates nor do they undergo long-term judicial training.

After completing three months training on CrPc, these administrative officials become magistrates and deliver judgement in criminal cases. The educational and training background speaks of the quality of their judicial dispensation. These few field-level magistrates are the source of power of the whole administration cadre.

Although the administration cadre is one of 29 cadres of the republic, the magistracy power they are enjoying now make them the most powerful. However, except the administration cadre, all cadres are technical cadres (as specialised education or in-service training is needed for the officials of the respective cadres). Now, when they see that their magistracy power is going to be taken away they have reacted.

Moreover, over the years, they had built a myth that without the bureaucrats government functioning would collapse. But in reality, this is totally baseless and false. Out of a total of over 40,000 cadre officials in the republic, the number of officials in the administration cadre is only 7,000. That was also raised from 5,000 to the current strength during the last few years. Due to their closeness to the power centre in the prevailing administrative structure, they had a great deal of influence. The

politicians and dictators in power also believed the myth, and they all along appeased them. And, thereby, they created a hegemonic situation in the entire administration of the republic. They infiltrated into and captured almost all vital posts of other cadres.

The current bureaucracy is the successor of the pre-liberation bureaucracy. It inherited the colonial and subservient mentalities of its predecessors. The successive governments since independence did not take any initiative to dismantle their hegemony, perhaps because the quasi-judicial officials were the tools of the people in power for implementing their wrongdoing.

In fact, bureaucrats have little to do in running the country. During the British and Pakistan eras, they were used to collect revenues. Now, for revenue collection there are separate departments and they have specialised cadre officials. The most significant duties the district commissioners perform are coordinating some activities. But an elected zilla parishad chairman can do the job better if our local government bodies are adequately strengthened. Apart from the coordinating duties, collection of land revenue is another function of local level administration officials. For that purpose, separate land cadre can be created.

At the central level, there is no need to maintain a huge secretariat for keeping the records of the

technical officers of other cadres. The concerned cadre officials are more enough to maintain their own records. Currently, the ministry officials unnecessarily create hassles and obstacles in the workings of the technical personnel. The BCS Coordination Committee, an alliance of 28 cadres, has long been demanding abolishing of the administration cadre, citing its inutility in public services.

Now, it is evident that not only had the successive political governments obstructed the separation of judiciary process, the bureaucrats had also played a vital role in this regard. The power-hungry politicians did not dare to anger the bureaucrats by disregarding their will of not separating the judiciary from the executive.

The struggle for an independent judiciary was started long ago. Each ruling party since 1990 had pledged to separate the judiciary. But they did not. Finally, the matter went to the Supreme Court, which finally ordered implementation of the 12-point directives of the Mazdar Hossain case verdict.

The whole nation has eagerly been waiting to see the judiciary separated from the executive. There might be some imperfections at the initial stage. Those can be corrected through trial and error. But the threat to undo the court verdict by a section of government employees is not only unacceptable but also punishable. We hope this government will not bow down to the illogical demands of the administration cadre officials.

Naazrul Islam is a freelance contributor to The Daily Star.

## Haditha unraveled

**Why did Dela Cruz and Mendoza get immunity in the first place? A Marine spokesman refused to comment on the process. But a person close to the case, who did not want to be named so as not to prejudice its outcome, says it appeared investigators had marked Wuterich from the start as the instigator and the "guy to get."**

DAN EPHRON

**L**T. Col. Paul Ware can be blunt. As the investigating officer in the Haditha affair, he has the job of assessing how strong a case the prosecution has against Marines suspected of killing 24 civilians after being ambushed two years ago in western Iraq.

Haditha is the highest-profile atrocity case since the start of the war. For more than a year, prosecutors have assembled evidence against four shooters in Lima Company, including Staff Sgt. Frank Wuterich, 26. But in a painstaking, 37-page report written earlier this month and obtained by Newsweek, Ware tells the military

lawyers their case is weak: "The evidence is contradictory, the forensic analysis is limited and almost all the witnesses have an obvious bias or prejudice."

The Haditha case seems to be unravelling. Already, all charges have been dropped against two of the shooters. Marine Gen. James Mattis announced last week that a third Marine, Lance Cpl. Stephen Tatum, would face a court-martial for involuntary manslaughter, far less than the original murder indictment.

And Ware has recommended a similar reduction in charges against Wuterich. (In a separate proceeding, a lieutenant colonel will be court-martialed for failing to accurately report and investi-

gate the killings.)

Until not too long ago, the case had the aura of an unambiguous revenge massacre -- after losing a buddy in an IED attack, the Marines killed five unarmed men who pulled over and stood outside their car. Then the Marines moved from one home to the next believing they were under fire, and killed men, women and children.

But the sinister reality of insurgents' hiding among civilians in Iraq has complicated the case. And even in conventional wars, battle-zone murder charges can be hard to prove.

Investigators did not start gathering evidence until months later, when Time Magazine published an account of the killings.



By then, forensic and ballistic evidence was scant and autopsies weren't feasible; Iraqi families refused to let the military exhume the victims' bodies.

Prosecutors were left to rely largely on the statements of the Marines. Earlier this year they gave immunity to two of the shooters in exchange for their

testimony. But Ware suggests in his report that prosecutors immunised the wrong guys. Both witnesses, he writes, "have very low credibility," and he believes their accounts will not hold up in a cross-examination.

One of them, Sgt. Sanick Dela Cruz, told investigators under oath last year he opened fire on the five Iraqi men after the IED attack because they started fleeing. But he changed his story after getting immunity, testifying in a pretrial hearing in August that the men had not run and that Wuterich had done the shooting.

Dela Cruz told the court he'd fired only at their dead bodies. Though Wuterich himself admitted to shooting the men in a "60 Minutes" interview earlier this year, conflicts in the sum total of testimony led Ware to recommend dropping the murder charge.

As for Lance Cpl. Humberto Mendoza, the other witness, Ware describes his testimony as a "desperate attempt to cover up lies

with more lies." (Ware declined to comment, but a lawyer close to the Haditha case confirmed his report's authenticity. Dela Cruz's lawyer declined to comment; Mendoza's attorney could not be reached.)

Why did Dela Cruz and Mendoza get immunity in the first place? A Marine spokesman refused to comment on the process. But a person close to the case, who did not want to be named so as not to prejudice its outcome, says it appeared investigators had marked Wuterich from the start as the instigator and the "guy to get."

While still in Iraq, he alone among Lima Company Marines refused to answer investigators' questions without a lawyer, a fact that might have heightened suspicion against him. Ware, more than a year later, predicts in his report that prosecutors will succeed in convicting Wuterich of nothing more than dereliction of duty. On the prospects of convicting

Tatum on any of the charges, Ware says, "the evidentiary hurdles are too great."

Ware, described by colleagues as meticulous, shows sympathy for the Marines. He says Wuterich's suspicions regarding the five Iraqis standing outside their car were understandable: the Marines had been told by intelligence officers to watch for an IED attack followed immediately by a car bombing.

Ware also says some training the Marines received conflicted with their rules of engagement and led them to believe that, if fired upon from a house, they could clear it with grenades and gunfire without determining whether civilians were inside.

After the Haditha killings, the commandant of the Marine Corps himself clarified the discrepancies to his men. But by then, the sad legacy of Haditha had already been inscribed.

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