

WHERE TO FIND THE PRESENCE OF THE BUDDHA TODAY

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ABSTRACT

The presence or the absence of the Buddha is ambiguous in various contexts. Where to find his existence regardless of time is a practically useful inquiry. The Buddhist canonical teachings do not recommend any refuge in external power or authority. Yet the attitudes of the followers and other students seem to question why not. As a result we find various ways of manifestation of the Buddha in terms of statues and related rituals, symbols like lighting a lamp, or visualization of the Buddha. Is the Buddha present in terms of statues then? If yes, in which kinds of statues? Is he present otherwise, in terms of didactic stories? The more we find the Buddha externally the more we find a distance and gap between the Buddha and the practitioner. These inquiries will contribute to removing any distance and gap between them and bring to light the clarity and indepth relationship of taking refuge in the triple gem and practice of mindfulness.

Key Words: Refuge in the Buddha, Mindfulness, Practitioner, Canonical Teachings

INTRODUCTION

In religious traditions it is obvious that there is a teacher or authority behind the teaching. Even when the teacher is not living physically the followers honour and respect him so much that they make him present through an iconographic or symbolic means. In the meantime rites and rituals are introduced and developed

around these symbols attributing new values to them.

Traditionally Buddhists take refuge in the Triple Gem, i. e., the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Saṅgha*. In the context of meditation objects *Buddhānussati* (reflection on the Buddha), *Dhammānussati* and *Saṅghānussati* are three of the ten

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forms of *anussati* (reflections) and the *Buddhānussati* is again considered as one of the four ārakkha-s (protections). Given the situation where the Buddha is the authority how significant is it to interpret mindfulness as a ‘non-judgemental, objective, or present-centred observation’ as mindfulness is frequently defined by contemporary psychologists and therapists? Otherwise, how significant is it to take refuge in the Buddha while practising mindfulness? For either aspect to be meaningful one should bridge the gap between the refuge in the Buddha and the practice of mindfulness with reference to the canonical discourses. In a study of interpretations of a central teaching like mindfulness as a process of ‘non-judgmental and objective observation’ it is plausible to make an inquiry into the followers’ attitudes towards their teacher as the authority and the impact of these attitudes on their very practice of mindfulness.

I propose to make this inquiry under the abovementioned title based on the following headings: (1) Canonical references to the relationship between the refuge in the Buddha and the practice of mindfulness, (2) Manifestation of the Buddha in terms of statues and stories, (3) The Impact of interpretational variations on the practice, (4) The distance created between the Buddha and the practitioner, and (5) Conclusion.

METHODOLOGY

This study is both textual and empirical. The textual aspect will include relevant Pali canonical and post-canonical texts as well as modern publications related to this study. The scope of the empirical aspect being so vast it

will be confined to current Buddhist meditation practices in Sri Lanka. I also intend to use the same data collected through interviews, questionnaires, and participant observation for my PhD research on *Mindfulness: Classical and Modern Interpretations* for this study as the contents of this paper will eventually fall within my doctoral research project.

Modern scholarship especially in relation to cognitive dimensions has taken up studies on mindfulness for discussion from various angles. Georges Dreyfus, for instance, questions whether mindfulness is present-centred and non-judgmental pointing out the inadequacy of this definition, for it fails to emphasize the retentive nature of mindfulness and its role in non-conceptuality (Dreyfus 2011, p.41). It is clear with reference to the Pāli term *sati* (Skt. *smṛti*) that there are two basic meanings associated with this practice: recollection and being awake. Terms like *satānusārīviññāṇa* (consciousness that follows memory), *pubbenivāsānussati* (retro-cognition) and *atītāpaccavekkhanā* (reflections on the past events) represent the former meaning. The terms like *sato assasati ... sato passasati* (one breathes in mindfully ... one breathes out mindfully) and being mindful of one’s postures etc. refer to the latter meaning. Along these lines the Buddha’s teaching emphasises the importance of one’s ‘first-hand-knowledge’ as one is supposed to experience (*sacchikātabbam*) the complete cessation of suffering. In one context the Buddha summarises his entire teaching to two points:

*pubbe cāham bhikkhave, etarahi
dukkhañ ca paññapemi, dukkhassa
ca nirodham¹*

(M I 140)

(Formerly and now, O monks, I declare suffering and the cessation of suffering.)

The interpretation of any teachings of the Buddha should not contradict this message. The Buddha's teaching consists of two types of discourse: graduated discourse (*ānupubbikathā*) and self-elevating discourse (*sāmukkamsikā desanā*). The entire teaching is ethically edifying and practically useful. Therefore, a search for truth is not encouraged but a search for what is wholesome (*kim kusala gavesī*); 'a path to peace' is not recommended, but 'a path of peace'; a refuge outside is not introduced, but a refuge within oneself.

CANONICAL REFERENCES TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REFUGE IN THE BUDDHA AND THE PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS

Bhagavam-mūlakā no bhante dhammā bhagavam-nettikā bhagavam-paṭisaraṇā. Sādhu vata bhante bhagavantam yeva paṭibhātu etassa bhāsitassa attho, bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū dhāressatī ti. (S II 24).

Venerable sir, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, take recourse in the Blessed One. It would be good if the Blessed One would clear up the meaning of this statement.⁴⁹ Having heard it from him, the bhikkhus will remember it (Bhikkhu Bodhi 2012, p.550).

In this manner disciples wanted the Buddha to be the authority during the Buddha's time. The Buddha himself has interpreted: "yo dhammam passati so mam passati", 'seeing the dhamma (the teaching) is seeing me'.

Alam Vakkali kim te iminā pūtikāyena ditthena. Yo kho Vakkali dhammam

passati so mam passati. Yo mam passati so dhammam passati. Dhammam hi Vakkali passanto mam passati mam passanto dhammam passati (S III 120).

Is it enough for you to see this foul body, O Vakkali? One who indeed sees the dhamma, O Vakkali, sees me. One who sees me sees the dhamma. For, the one who sees the dhamma O Vakkali sees me and one who sees me sees the dhamma.

Kathañ ca bhikkhave bhikkhu attadīpo viharati attasaraṇo, anaññasaraṇo, dhammadīpo viharati dhammasaraṇo anaññasaraṇo? Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam, vedanāsu... citte ... dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyyaloke abhijjhādomanassam. Evam kho bhikkhave bhikkhu attadīpo viharati attasaraṇo anaññasaraṇo dhammadīpo dhammasaraṇo anaññasaraṇo (D 3 58, 77; D 2 100, 101; S III 42; S V 154).

How does a bhikkhu, O bhikkhus, dwell being an island for himself, a refuge for himself, without having any other refuge, making the dhamma an island for himself, a refuge for himself without making anything else his refuge? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu dwells reflecting on the body in the body, on feelings in the feeling, on the mind in the mind, and on the mind-objects in the mind-objects, having overcome covetousness and sorrow with regard to the world, being ardent, fully aware and mindful. It is in this manner, O bhikkhus, that a bhikkhu dwells being an island for himself, a refuge for himself, without having any other refuge, making the dhamma an island for himself, a refuge for himself, without making anything else his refuge.

Ye hi keci Ānanda etarahi vā mamaccaye vā attadīpā viharissanti attasaranā anaññasaranā

*dhammadīpā dhammasaraṇā
anaññasaraṇā tamatagge pete
Ānanda bhikkhū bhavissanti ye keci
sikkhākāmā ti* (S V 163).

O Ananda, those who dwell now or after I will be no more, making them islands for themselves, refuges for themselves without making others their refuge, making the dhamma (teaching) islands for themselves and refuge for themselves without making anything else their refuge, being eager in training, shall reach the topmost height.

The Buddha comments on how people, being frightened, take refuge in many kinds of external objects like hills, woods, groves, trees, and pagodas.

*Bahum ve saranam yanti – pabbatāni
vanāni ca*

*Ārāmarukkhacetyāni – manussā
bhayatajjitā* (Dhp v. 188).

The Buddha rejects any of these to be a refuge that is supreme, and resorting to such a refuge is one not freed from all ill.

*N'etam kho saranam khemam - n'tam
saranam uttamam*

*N'etam saranam āgama –
sabbadukkhā pamuccati* (Dhp v.
189).

One who takes refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha sees with right knowledge the four Noble Truths. This, indeed, is refuge secure and supreme. By seeking such refuge one becomes free from all sorrow.

*Yo ca buddhañ ca dhammañ ca -
saṅghañ ca saranam gato*

*Cattāri ariyasaccāni –
sammappaññāya passati.*

*Dukkham dukkhasamuppādam –
dukkhassa ca atikkamam*

Ariyañcaṭṭhaṅgikam maggam –

dukkhūpasamgāminam

*Etam kho saranam khemam etam
saranam uttamam*

*Etam saranam āgama sabbadukkhā
pamuccati* (Dhp v. 190-192).

In brief, seeing the Buddha and Dhamma meaningfully refers to seeing and knowing oneself with insight. Taking refuge in the Buddha and Dhamma is to be mindful of one's body, feeling, mind and mental contents. Who follows this teaching in this manner represents the Saṅgha.

MANIFESTATION OF THE BUDDHA IN TERMS OF STATUES AND STORIES

It is clear that for the last few decades the number of Buddha statues in Sri Lanka has been increasing to the extent that almost every Buddhist family has an altar with a Buddha statue varying in size from about ten centimetres to about half a metre in height. The shrine room of every Buddhist temple of each Buddhist village or town has a few larger statues from about thirty centimetres to a few of metres in height.

In a few areas of Sri Lanka we find a few Buddha statues erected outside shrine rooms exceptionally large in size and tall up to about fifty metres. Some of such large statues are even erected on top of some mountains to be visible from far distances. Except a few standing and reclining Buddha statues, most of these statues are in the half lotus posture.

At many a temple today we see twenty-four Buddha statues of sitting posture have been placed around the Bodhi tree to represent the twenty four Buddhas from the Buddha Dīpañkara to the Buddha Gotama. In addition to the Bodhipūja

ceremonies we find the sessions of worshipping the twenty-four Buddhas. About four decades ago this practice was quite often seen or heard in relation to the fund raising ceremonies coupled with *sūvisivivarana*² at most of the village temples. In some contexts four more Buddhas are added to the list starting from the Buddha Taṇhaṅkara.

In his keynote speech entitled ‘The Demoness Kālī and the Lord Buddha: Sense and Reference in a Buddhist Text on Revenge and Violence’³ at the Sri Lanka Conference on Peace and Development, held in Kandy, on Aug. 23-25, 2009⁴, Gananath Obeysekere referred to some significant ways of both ‘presence and absence’ of the Buddha after the historical passing away of the Buddha. By the presence of the Buddha Obeysekere means the sense of aliveness and vitality of the Buddha in the minds of the people due to having heard the many didactic stories which bring them the Buddha’s message made simple and exemplified. When he mentions the absence of the Buddha he is referring to the mere exhibition of statues without practising any qualities of the Buddha. My view is that the proper use of the Buddha images can conduce to inspirational motivation and spiritual edification. However, many of his observations about the improper use and propagation of Buddha images are worth considering. Therefore I am going to quote him at some length.

... I noted that Buddha statues were being erected in similar road junctions and outside a few public buildings. Formerly in Sri Lanka Buddha statues were found in temples and these temples were recessed from the normal village setting, somewhat cut off from the

hub of communal living, expressing through spatial symbolism the salvific distance of the monk from the village and the lay folk that inhabit it. I went on to say that it seemed to me that the Buddha was being brought out of its seclusion right into the market place, a sign of things to come. By the 1980s the Buddha in the market place has become an ubiquitous presence: he is found everywhere, outside public buildings, in every major road junction, at the entrance to towns, in almost every school, at the entrance to University campuses, at hospitals, and disconcerting to me at least even in parts of the tea country where the population is almost exclusively Tamil and Hindu. Catholics have always erected statues of Christ, the Virgin and the saints in the Catholic areas of the coast. Unlike in the Eastern Christian churches where Christ and the Virgin are unashamedly brown skinned, the Sri Lankan Catholic images have what I call in my prejudiced fashion a Scottish complexion. The Buddhists have imitated the Catholic example in their 22 expressions of projected nationhood but in recent times they have even invaded the Catholic market place with Buddha statuary. There is a kind of warfare between religions through their statue construction. The aesthetic ugliness of these statues, in contrast to the traditional signifies, I think, the uglification of the Buddha’s spiritual message and the inner uglification of the Buddhist conscience. Buddha statues can be erected without recourse to permission; only Buddhist business-monks can build temples wherever they want, often encroaching on prime government owned property or archeological sites. There is a statue on the road to my house sponsored, as is common practice, by local Buddhist businessmen. So is it with the private buses and trishaws owned by them: in front of the buses for all to see are slogans such as the following: “this

is the country of the Buddha." The Buddha has now become the flag of the imagined Sinhala-Buddhist nation and hence it is to be expected that the Buddha pictures, often lit with electric bulbs, are found in homes, once again producing a breach in the idea of the Buddha as anagārika, homeless and also placing the image of the arahant Sīvalī whose full-bowl signified prosperity and abundance and appeared at entrances to Buddhist homes (Obeysekera 2009).

Obeysekere ends his paper by the self-explanatory question : "What happened to the presence of the Buddha?" although Buddha statues seem to be present everywhere.

In the early part of his paper he shows how true, compassionate, unselfish and wise leadership is presented in terms of the Buddha's role in Buddhist stories like the one referring to that of the demoness Kālī. The *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*, (The Jewel Garland of the True Doctrine), the great compendium of Buddhist stories written in Sinhala by a Buddhist monk during the 13th century in Sri Lanka includes the story. Stories of this kind seem to have been used by the monks traditionally in preaching sermons for the devotees. Obeysekera points out that when he began field work in the late 1950s such stories were told and retold in homes and alluded to frequently in the sermons of monks. He says further that they were read aloud by literate village laymen at gatherings of lay devotees on Buddhist poya days (holy-days) and at pilgrimage centers during their annual festivals, "but, alas, no more!" (Obeysekera 2009). This particular story tells us how hatred and vengeance started by a mother- and daughter-in-law in a previous life went on through several lives of theirs being

born as animals who ate each other and finally one became the demoness Kālī and the other a human lady whose children turned out to be the prey of the demoness. After she had lost some of her children the lady finally rushed to the Buddha with her surviving child when the demoness was after them. The Buddha preached the Dhamma by which the demoness attained stream-entry level of the path of Enlightenment.

Obeysekera suggests that this text must be seen in the popular village context. The Buddha delivers a sermon, and then the text says that the demoness became a "Stream Enterer" (i.e., she attained the first state of the Path of Nirvana). The author dramatises the situation of the demoness in the Buddha's witnessing words referring to even more stories:

As if the weight of the child lying on his feet was too heavy for him, the Buddha now turned to the mother and said, "Give your child to the demoness to hold." "Lord, I'm afraid to give the child to her," she replied. "Do not fear. Angulimāla, the great Thera, once said, 'I will cut a thousand fingers to perform my sacrificial rites,' and killed many people and caused much trouble. I tamed him. Now he does not harm so much as an ant. The water with which they wash the seat where he recites the Protective Stanzas [pāritta] is now used to ward off all dangers. Women in labor drink this sanctified water and give birth painlessly. ... Did you think that I, now a Buddha, would ask you to carry your child to that demoness if she still ate human flesh? No harm will come to your child from her. No demon can harm one who has touched my feet". As he spoke, the demoness was given the child to carry. She hugged and caressed the child as if to gather to herself some of that radiance the child had got from the blessed body

of the Buddha, and handed him back to the mother. Then, as eyes struck by a powerful radiance gush forth tears, so she burst into weeping" (Obeysekera 2009).

I agree with Obeysekera's comments on how the Buddha is made present through telling stories where sublime qualities such as compassion, loving-kindness, and trustworthiness are exemplified. Let us now turn our attention to how society has been bound to interpret the presence of the Buddha (in terms of Buddha images, didactic stories, ceremonies which have therapeutic significance) in the modern society of Sri Lanka and what impacts these interpretations make on the practice of mindfulness.

THE IMPACT OF INTERPRETATIONAL VARIATIONS ON THE PRACTICE

As far as the historical Buddha is concerned it is generally accepted that the Buddha was born in the 6th century BC in the park Lumbinī, renounced his family life at the age of twenty-nine, attained Buddhahood (Enlightenment) at the age of thirty-five under the Bodhi tree at Bodhgayā, and attained the final passing away (*mahāparinibbāna*) at the age of eighty at a grove of Sāla trees in Vaiśālī. The significant events of his life: birth, enlightenment, and passing away all took place under trees. The presence of trees at the landmark events of the Buddha's life symbolizes detachment, freedom, peace and harmony.

I have heard monks interpreting the Buddha statues and offering flowers, lights, fragrant smokes, food items etc. to them in modern Sri Lanka in such a way that adults sometimes tend to reflect the behaviour of children. Just as children

need to play with toys, feeding the dolls with whatever they like and so on adults, too, offer flowers, oil lamps, candle lights, food items etc. to the Buddha statues, behaving like humble children of the Buddha showing their childlike behaviour in the presence of the Buddha. Naturally children follow the examples set by the adults. In this context too followers get directed to attending wholesome activities in a setting where statues and other symbols of the Buddha are present, their symbolic parent. The Pāli stanzas they themselves recite or recite after monks or other leading persons when they make such offerings as oil lamps, flowers and so on to the Buddha, seem to have come down to us for some centuries without an attributed authorship to them. One of the well known stanzas to offer oil lamps or candle lights to the Buddha reads:

*Ghanasārappadittena – dīpena
tamadhamśinā*

*Tilokadīpam sambuddham - pūjayāmi
tamonudam.*

(Indraratana n.d., p. 12)

With this mass of lights which dispels darkness I worship the Light of the Triple World, the Fully Awakened, the Dispeller of darkness (of ignorance).

Another stanza to offer flowers to the Buddha is as follows:

*Pūjemi Buddham kusumena ‘nena –
puññenam etena labhāmi mokkham*

*Puppham milāyāti yathā idam me –
kāyo tathā yāti vināsa bhāvam*

(Indraratana n.d., p. 12)

I pay homage to the Buddha with these flowers. May I attain liberation (*mokkham*, i.e., *nibbāna*) by the merits (accumulated here). Just as the flowers wither away my body too is subject to decay.

If one were to reflect on the meanings of these stanzas one would seem to take a further step towards insight. As the recital is often performed in the Pāli in a chanting rhythm the meaning of the stanzas seems to be blurred for the majority who do not understand Pāli. What remains with the majority, however, seems to be the echo of the devotional chanting and inclination towards the Buddha with reference to the image of the Buddha erected in a cross-legged posture. There may be a general understanding of the meaning of the stanzas despite the archaic language.

The history of statues in Sri Lanka goes as far back as to about fourth century AD of the time of the samādhi statue in the park Mahamevnā, Anurādhapura. The standing Buddha in Aukana (about 27 feet in height), the sitting and reclining Buddha statues in Galvihāra, Polonnaruwa are some of the ancient well known Buddha statues which are positioned in open air spaces and made of stone unlike most of the statues made of concrete in modern Sri Lanka.

Once a reporter from the BBC interviewed the Most Venerable Anandamaitreya about the size of the Buddha statues as to whether the historical Buddha was so big. His answer was that the Buddha had been at least of two sizes: one, the human size of the historical Buddha, and two, the size of the Buddha in the minds of pious artists and devotees.

It seems that the monasteries connected to the *granthadhura* (book-learners' position), or *grāmavāsī* (village dwellers tradition) have encouraged and maintained the construction of Buddha statues. In addition to the various meanings attributed to such sacred

objects as statues, pagodas and the bodhi tree they could have been used as a location for assembling the followers and educating them in the Buddha's teaching. These symbols and pieces of art like moonstones might have been used as a visual means of education at a time when most lay followers were illiterate.

The *vipassanādhura* (insight-practitioners' position) or the *aranyavāsī* (forest dwellers) does not seem to have encouraged the construction of statues or other symbols. Even today the focus on statues and other symbols is hardly noticeable at meditation centres and forest monasteries in Sri Lanka although a few of the forest dwelling monks whom I interviewed seemed to have been interested in having a small Buddha statue at a side of their rock caves or other *kuṭis* (rooms). It is worth considering that K M de Silva's *A History of Sri Lanka* (1981) attributes the popularization of Buddha images and offerings made to the Buddha in Sri Lanka to Mahāyāna influence.

Traditionally every Buddhist in Sri Lanka pays homage to the Buddha by reciting in the Pāli language:

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa (Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One) three times. Then they take three refuges:

1. *Buddham saraṇam gacchāmi* (I go to the Buddha as my refuge.)
2. *Dhammam saraṇam gacchāmi* (I go to the Dhamma as my refuge.)
3. *Saṅgham saraṇam gacchāmi* (I go to the Saṅgha as my refuge.)

Dutiyam pi (for the second time) ...

Tatiyam pi (for the third time)...

Then they observe the five precepts.

This recital has become the first item of an agenda of any formal Buddhist gathering, a day of a school etc. The practitioners of other religions use the same time for their particular beliefs, reflections or practices.

A monk's or nun's conversation with lay devotees generally comes to an end with either of the greetings: (May you be blessed with) the refuge in the Buddha or in the Triple Gem (*Budu saraṇayi* or *Teruvan saraṇayi* in Sinhala). This way of greeting each other has already become a polite manner of lay people, too. Mostly the Sri Lankan Buddhists either begin or end informal letters with one of these greetings.

When a construction of any building is in progress it is quite common in Sri Lanka today that the owners arrange to hand a banner or wooden board with the expression *Budu Saraṇayi* (literally Refuge in the Buddha) written in big letters so that those who pass by caste their eyes on the expression. This method seems to be used as a means of protection towards the construction and those involved in the construction. It is a wide spread superstitious belief that a glance of a person who is passing by the construction site or words spoken about it will turn out to be evil and destructive. So, this catchy greeting is used in order to prevent the construction in progress directly from somebody's first glance or expression of any words about it. If anybody were to say any words about the building afterward it would be after having read an expression of a wholesome

greeting anyway. However, this greeting is always found in the Sinhala script. The glance of a foreigner who does not read Sinhala does not seem to matter in this context.

A couple of decades ago 'refuge in the Buddha and mercy from God' was a greeting commonly used for the above discussed prevention. However, some Buddhist monks held their Dhamma talks for a few years criticizing the latter part of the phrase 'mercy from God' saying that it was wrong to expect mercy from God because it would not be compatible with the Buddha's teaching. As a result, although the devāla-s (gods' temples) still remain connected to most of the Buddhist shrines, the expressions such as mercy from God have almost become null and void from the Buddhist sites in modern Sri Lanka.

In the early periods after the Buddha's passing away erecting a statue seemed to be considered a sacrilege. The hesitation to directly portray the Buddha changed after several centuries and Buddha images became widespread throughout much of the Asian continent. How the Buddha was made 'present' or 'absent' in this manner in different situations from various perspectives seems to have caused interpretational variations that a practitioner may need to be cautious of.

THE DISTANCE CREATED BETWEEN THE BUDDHA AND THE PRACTITIONER

I notice that the Buddhist practitioners whom I have met and interviewed in Sri Lanka mostly stress the fact that we should be grateful to the Teacher for giving us great teachings like mindfulness. I also notice that they stress this aspect more for the fear that general persons may go astray by not finding a Buddha within themselves for them to take refuge in. In our hierarchical set of values it is natural that the Buddha comes first and then teachings like mindfulness. However, as a matter of practice, the Buddha seems to warn us that we should bridge the gap between the teacher and the teaching within ourselves reminding ourselves of the Buddha's message: "when I am gone let my teaching be your teacher".

The Buddha's message to the Venerable Vakkalī implies that the disciples are supposed to see the Buddha by actualising his teaching rather than seeing the Buddha's physical appearance even when the Buddha was alive. The dual approach to the Buddha and his teaching may be understood as the way of convention or linear way of understanding which is unavoidable as it is the means of communication of any message to society. Finding the Buddha and his teaching within the individual practitioner shows us the dialectical and absolute way of realisation. The more we try to find a refuge in any element or quality outside, the more it will lead us to a search of succession of truth which only finds "endless degrees of higher accuracy" as Sir James Hopwood Jean says in his article *About Stars*. Defining Science he says that "Science advances

rather by providing a succession of approximations to the truth, each more accurate than the last, but each capable of endless degrees of higher accuracy."⁵

Going in search of the truth as it is even translated into Pali, *kim saccagavesī*, is not the Buddha's message. Instead, the Buddha suggests *kim kusalagavesī*, meaning going in search of what is wholesome. This approach has an ethical basis and progress of edification, making no difference between the refuge in the Buddha and the practice of mindfulness. The Vietnamese Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of the relationship between the refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha and mindfulness practice metaphorically associating them with oneself.

The Sangha is a jewel, no less important than the Buddha and the Dharma. Please practice Sangha building. Stick to your Sangha. Without a Sangha body, sooner or later you will abandon the practice. Take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The Sangha always carries within it the Buddha and the Dharma. The Sangha is a holy body. Don't look for holiness somewhere else. Don't think that holiness is only for the Dalai Lama or the Pope. Holiness is within you and within the body of your Sangha. When a community of people sit, breathe, walk, and eat in mindfulness, holiness is there, and we can recognize it (Hanh 1997).

On my interest in visiting a kitchen in Colombo for a personal purpose the mother of the particular family, in the course of discussions, came up with a meaningful attribution to the kitchen as the 'house of Buddha'. She explained further: "Our kitchen is the house of the Buddha, not because there is a Buddha

statue at a corner there, but because we practice wholesome qualities that the Buddha expounded like mindfulness and love-in-action while washing dishes, cleaning the floor, preparing food for oneself and others. The food that we prepare in the kitchen benefits not only the family members but also monks, nuns and needy persons in society.”

CONCLUSION

The Buddha is present in didactic stories as they carry the message of the Buddha in simple dialogues to educate readers or listeners to develop qualities like right mindfulness associated with generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom and to get rid of wrong mindfulness associated with greed, hatred and delusion. Some Buddha statues and other Buddhist symbols function along the same lines when they are constructed at proper places and used for wholesome purposes. When any of these constructions are not used properly to bring forth the message of the Buddha, the Buddha cannot be present through them. Seeing the Buddha and Dhamma meaningfully refers to seeing and knowing oneself with insight. Taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha is to be mindful of body, feeling, mind and mental contents making these four foundations the domain of one's personality development along the awakening factors following the middle way.

ABBREVIATIONS

A	<i>Ānguttaranikāya</i>
BPS	Buddhist Publication Society
CST4	<i>Chattha Saṅgayaṇa Tipiṭaka</i> version 04

D	Dīghanikāya
Dhp	Dhammapada
M	Majjhimanikāya
PTS	Pali Text Society
S	Samyuttanikāya
Tr./tr.	Translation
v.	verse

NOTES

1. The citations of the Pāli texts here are from those of the PTS editions accessible through the *Chattha Saṅgayaṇa Tipitaka Version 4.0 (CST4)* - The Pali Tipitaka. <http://www.tipitaka.org/cst4> (Accessed on 29/04/2015).
2. A dancing ceremony where a few Kandyan dancers and drummers perform some traditional Kandyan dances together with singing detailed accounts of the aspirations that Gotama the Buddha made at the presence of twenty-three former Buddhas and how they in their turn assured his buddhahood in the course of four hundred thousand incalculable eons from his first aspiration made at the presence of Dīpañkara the Buddha.
3. This paper is based on an earlier version that appeared in *History of Religions*, vol. 29, no. 4, May 1990 entitled “The Tale of the Demoness Kali: a discourse on evil” by Ranjini and Gananath Obeyesekere as Obeyesekere himself has pointed out. He has also mentioned in the note that he had revised the text by dealing extensively with the reference of the text in the context of ethnic and political violence.
4. This conference was organized jointly by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) and the University of Peradeniya with the School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg and The Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University with financial support from Swedish South Asian Studies Network (SASNET).
5. Sir James Hopwood Jean is an astronomer and the author of the article About Stars which was one of the articles published in Sri Lanka as *Modern Prose Passages for English College Classes* in 1973. I referred to the quotation out of memory. I could not access to a copy of this publication through any library or other contacts, unfortunately.

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