

A Shady

Forest Tree



*The Short Spiritual Biography
Of*
Venerable Bhikku Kiribatgoda Ñānānanda

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DURING OUR LIFETIME, we do meet various kinds of people. Out of all these people, it is rare that we come across a person who would institute a significant alteration in our life. Those individuals of rareness are the ones who would point out blunders of our past and transform our lives in to characters of success by lighting the gray areas. No one would know that the sky was set in dark until the bright moon rises. Since brightness does exist, the darkness also does exist. Similarly, until we enlighten our lives we wouldn't know that we have been groping in darkness. Our teacher the great sage the Gautama Buddha could be undoubtedly recognized as the Sun, which brightened such lives. What is disclosed beyond this is regarding the miraculous tale of a great human being who performs like a moon which reflects the unmatched light of the Buddha. He is, namely Kiribathgoda Bhikkhu Ñānānanda. He became an indelible icon of the great Buddhist monks of Sri Lanka and continues to sermonize the sacred Doctrines of the Buddha in the same unfeigned manner and remain a resourceful treasure for all of us. You may also impressively feel the passionate chronicle of the life of such valuable persons and significant attributes of them. Senior

BUDDHAVISION is a seedling sprouted in the creative mind of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda, which is purposely designed to transmit the message of the Buddha. The architect of the BuddhaVision is Bhikkhu Ñānānanda himself. Hence, the appended biography belongs to the founder of the BuddhaVision, which is envisioned to proffer the pristine message of the Buddha to the limitless world.

Let's know his story through his own words.

I have no doubts about the fact that when I was born to my family, it had been a sprightly opportunity that caused exuberance to overflow in the family. I was born to a non-Buddhist family and so became an exceptional guest as they were yearning for a male child for a long time. They haven't missed a single church. There is no praying missed. My parents were of the untainted view that conceiving occur as a resultant wish of an omnipotent god. They were praying for a son since the three children elder to me were females. They loved their daughters yet they were extremely unhappy and worried over not bearing a son. I am unable to figure out how my father Cristy Kabraal and my mother Violet Perera were delighted over my birth.

"Sathya soya yama" - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

Unlike majority of the Sri Lankan Bhikkhus, Bhikkhu Ñānānanda was born as a catholic. It's miraculous that such a capable and devoted Bhikkhu was born in such a background.

Both paternal and maternal family streams being non-Buddhists, our major source of income was animal husbandry for meat. My father being an ardent catholic opted to engage in foundry as a secondary source of revenue. Although we were a poor family in general, our

parents loved us very much. I still could recall my mother reminiscing the period of their praying for a son. Their lived a Buddhist woman devotee who was closely knit very much with our family. She was Wimalawathie by name. She was a person who observed Buddhists precepts, meditated more often, and visibly regretted about our parents praying and grieving over a son.

“Brother Cristie! Please do not worry...! We will visit Kiribathgoda temple. We shall conduct a Bodhi Pūja there. Further, we shall observe a vow for deity Kataragama on this. He shall help us in having a son. Remember that if we are blessed with a son, then we have to visit Kataragama with him and accomplish the vow”.

My parents who had been lost without an alternative were exceedingly relieved merely hearing this suggestion. They plucked baskets full of flowers without the knowledge of the neighbours and close relatives. Oil and wicks were made ready. For the first time in their lives guided by Wimalawathie they entered a temple. That was Kiribathgoda Sudharshanarama temple. It had been completely an alien surrounding by all means for my parents. Fragrance of burning joss-sticks and aroma of heaps of flowers was novel with them. They were unknown to what has to be done. Wimalawathie had by then observed five precepts with much devotion and offered flowers and joss-sticks to the shrine room having my parents to be seated beside her. She had chanted Pirith there. She offered all the meritorious deeds to the gods. Wimalawathie had prayed deity Kataragama for a son in the name of my parents. She apparently had bound her with a vow that once a son is born, it will be accomplished at Kataragama. The whole process had been a novelty for my parents.

Time was apt, thus my mother’s placenta was the newest boarding for me in the human world. Once I saw the day light, Wimalawathie was deeply rejoiced looking at me. On the contrary,

none at home remembered that I had come as a vow. The traditional christening ritualistic ceremony had held at Dalugama church when I was just three months old. My name was **Jude Cabraal**".

"Sathya soya yama" - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Nānānanda.

Although a male child was born with Buddhist blessings, the Cabraal family who were Catholics even then had to take a vital step in their life when they had visited a key place of worship at Kataragama. It is interesting to go through his memory to find more details of same.

They were plodding towards Kirivehera Temple. When my father stepped in to the dagaba compound, what he had observed was many worshipping Buddhists kneeling down with both hands at the forehead. Having watched others performing religious rites very devotedly, he followed suit and first time in his life he worshipped a Dagaba containing The Buddha's relics. He next sat by the side of the Stupa. He had been silent whilst eyes not seeing. In a flash, he appeared out of his normality. Someone else seemed to have voiced through my father. Only way to describe same is as some eerie or spooky force. That had been a supernatural nature. This influential force frenzies my father only when he is mentally geared up for same. This occult might identified itself as a one who had been following my father. This supernatural force had exposed a marvellous story at the Kirivehera temple.

"This child was blessed to your family to convert and comply with Buddhism. It's time for you to follow suit."

This statement made by this mysterious occult force through my father was not something anticipated by my family even in dreams. This caused our family to change drastically. Our family who were

devoted Catholics even by then having all their love and tender care embraced the child and what a scandal he had entangled the same family? I am lost to understand what ran through their minds at that time when they saw me. Honestly, I shall proffer meritorious deeds to that miraculous supernatural power. Because as an infant with smell of milk still remaining in the mouth being six months old, I had become the cause for the entire family to become Buddhists.

Nevertheless, it had been very clear that my father and mother apparently had faced a severe dilemma. They never had any clue as to what Buddhism is all about. On the contrary, the spooky force continually enforces their conversion to Buddhism. Countless days were spent mindboggling over this by my parents. Their one and only world had been their ever-loving son who became a reality after so much of praying and waiting.

Finally, they had been able to figure out this unknown quantity through their mind's eye as a guardian from a mysterious world. They principally decided to be converted to Buddhism.

"Sathya soya yama" - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Nānānanda.

As a result, the Cabraal family became Buddhists. The traditions and practices of Buddhists, no doubt would have been entirely strange for my parents who had been Catholics from their birth. Nevertheless, they devotedly got acclimatized to those. Those had stood for their betterment at large.

Sandwiched between selling of live animals for human consumption and inability to eat without some meat, my father desisted both. On the other hand, what could be the alternate livelihood of a family who operated poultry and piggery as means of living? Dilemma had been that no way to sell Chicken and pigs for meat. Never could

breed them. Certain animals were given to neighbours. Owing to some sudden panic that had created at the piggery had finally caused a wall to collapse and as a consequence many pigs buried underneath and succumbed. As a direct blessing of the triple gems, our family had the opportunity to abstain from killing of animals. Although we were financially in a poor state, Could it not be regarded a good fortune to be able to refrain from evil act?

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Nānānanda.

The mother of Bhikkhu Nānānanda also was quite a magnificent character. He was indebted to her, amply demonstrated same by penning his great feeling about her in his autobiography “ Sathya soya yama ”.

One day my mother taught me a memorable lesson. Very often, I offer merits to her for same. Long ago when I was playing with peers in school, there occurred a discussion. That is how to net fish from water rivulets. Although fish or dry fish is cooked scarcely at home, no one was bothered to go after same. Nevertheless, when friends were merrily describing their experience I also felt a desire to engage in same. My brother joined me to fulfil our desire and we both in one evening secretly went to one water stream nearby. We caught some fish as well. As we have performed something great and like grown-ups we ran to the mother and handed over our catch, which was wrapped in an Alocasia leaf. Without uttering a word in a moment, she returned with a cane in hand. In a flash, I felt few lashes of cane.

“Take this back and throw everything back to the waterway. In case you are found repeating same, the punitive action shall be much to be desired”.

I cannot remember such capital punishment in my life. I whisked myself back to the rivulet crying aloud and threw the entire lot of dead fish back to the water. I could see the floating dead fish down the stream. I honestly repented about the dead fish. I strongly affirmed myself that never to indulge in such killing of animals.

Brahmātimātapitarō – pubbāchariyā ti vuccarē

Āhuneyyāca putthānanm – pajāya anukampakā.

The Buddha has advised in that way.

“Parents are Brahmas’ with qualities such as mettā viz. loving-kindness; karunā viz. compassion; muditā viz. happiness on children's all improvements; upekkhā viz. indifference. Those parents are first instructors who put right the worlds of the children. It's the parents who should be looked after by their children. Parents are such that they are always compassionately pitiful towards their children”.

How truthful it is! Although the other day when I had slain few animals I had known that it was sin to kill them, nevertheless I was beguiled by the words of my friends. My mother put me on the correct path in order to safeguard me from demerits. Let my mother always be a fortune to me forever!

Certain days we come across women and mothers who perform abortions through media. Moreover, we come across mothers who sell their children, abandon them or abuse them more often. Every moment I hear or read such a thing, my loving mother occupy my mind. *“Oh! How much did our mother love us? What a fortune is that she never possessed such dastardly mind even for a moment. How much do we owe her?”* These arise in our mind when we remember the vulnerabilities we encountered in of our past.

There was time that we experienced severe hardship when we were small. We all lived in anguish. Our main meal at that time was manioc. Certain days it was prohibitive to consume rice. Hence my father cultivated with manioc in the entire area of our garden. Chillies were also grown. We never owned any paddy fields. Rice was an uncommon commodity. Nevertheless our mother never allowed us to cry in starvation. The day that my father's corpse was taken for burial, I still recall how my mother was excessively wailing having her hand on the head and how my heart pulsed incrementally seeing that. If not for the strong bonds between born beings, what does cause our grieving over loss of lives?

Although my mother was less interested in sermons and meditating, she had faith. Therefore in spite of her ailing condition, I asserted that somehow I shall take her to Dambadiva (India) and let her worship Bodghaya, the meritorious land. I had the opportunity to perform the vow. She was convinced to worship the “**Vajirasana**” viz where The Buddha accomplished Nibbana.

*“Mother..! This is where our sage, the Buddha attained **Samma Sambuddha**. You may worship this place with a strong determination aiming that let you also be able to comprehend the four noble truths as soon as possible”.*

She followed suit accordingly and prayed for the release from "**samsara**" viz. perpetual wandering. She worshipped while chanting virtues of Buddha very loudly. Seeing the sported atypical smile in her face, I was convinced that her mind is filled with faithful contentment. I believe that this meritorious deed caused me to pay the debts to my mother which I owed her for raising me up.

The following demonstrate what the Buddha discoursed about how parents are to be looked after. Even if a child keeps his parents in his shoulders and protects them, cleanses them, feeds them, tends them for hundred years, never he could liberate him from what he owe his parents. Instead if a child instil faith in the parents, make them observe precepts, make them educate Dhamma well, convince them to offer alms, make them observe development of insight and wisdom, that child shall free himself from all the debts annexed with the parents. This message was strongly instilled in me. I was deeply in thought that not only tending them in this life cycle but also how I could engage them in meritorious activities more often which ensure my parents do receive a heavenly birth. After the rewarding visit to India, mother declared that “*I wouldn't mind even if I die now*”. I was pleased to hear that. Having gained a birth as a human which is rare, obtaining “**khana sampaththi**” viz. extraordinary fortune which is extremely exceptional gaining refuge of supreme triple gems, if my mother overcome the perpetual wandering thence thinking same even is pleasing for the mind.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

The life of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda is exceptionally wonderful one. The life of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda which enumerates versatile capabilities as a gem at lapidary being cut and polished, from the childhood shining evidence was clearly shown of his brilliance. Out of all, the entire creativeness is beyond words. What Bhikkhu Ñānānanda has to say is listed below.

What I liked was to draw pictures. In spite of its standards and beauty, my earnest attempt was to draw many colourful paintings. Filling countless number of art books, I enjoyed drawing various pictures being alone. I never had any liking towards sports. Instead

when I saw certain carvings and paintings, I used to marvel at those being lost in the magnetism in those. What my mind got drawn most were the paintings of Temple of **Kelaniya**. I was found lost with those paintings and carvings for long time having gone all alone to the Kelaniya temple. What I used to do was to remember the drawings and their lines as it is. Then I could redraw them having gone home. I had some other habits as well. That is to sketch in the open sky. This is how I do the same. First I lie down in the bed. After that whatever the picture in my imagination is outlined using my finger in space. Anyone who observes me could only see that I move my finger arbitrarily. More often than not I was subjected to ridicule by my sisters over this. Never, I considered that mockery seriously.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

Bhikkhu Ñānānanda has a compassionate mind towards all beings and he refrained from hurting any animal following that unforgettable advice of the mother received when he was very small. Extreme virtuous life was his inclination and it's amazing how he visualized life through the Buddha's guidance.

Although one day I was involved in killing fish after being misled by some foolish colleagues, I loved animals excessively. Injury to animals causing trauma is something I disliked most. When someone discharges injury to an animal, I get hurt. On the contrary I have no habit of petting animals either. When I learned through Dhamma that animal world is a hell, there is no provision for them to comprehend about life and that beings that are born in animal world carry a tendency to be born in the same world, I used to pity them a great deal. The beings that are born in the human world carry an extremely little prospect of repeatedly returning to the same world. What the Buddha had discoursed is that only infinitesimally few, such as an iota of earth retained on a nail have the opportunity to return to the human world.

But majority of beings in comparative terms such as soil of entire earth agonizingly suffer having born through nether worlds, animal reproductive areas, ghost-realms.

“ Kammassakā bhikkhawē sattā, kammadāyādā kammayōni kammabandhu kammapatīsanā yam kammam karonthi kalyānam vā pāpakam vā tassa dāyādā bhavanthi ”.

“Oh...Bhikkhu..! The beings have made “kamma” viz. action (performing something mindfully) as something of their own. They subscribe same. They have made same their birth place. It’s made their relative. The action is made their refuge. Either it’s wholesome or unwholesome if some action is performed then you have subscribed to same”.

(Samsappaniya pariyāya sutta – Anguttara nikāya 2nd chapter.)

More often than not birth is given in animal worlds owing to kamma result of the unwholesome volitional action.

“Oh Bhikkhu..! In this regard some indulge in destroying of lives. That means they become cruel. They shall have blood stained palms. Indulge in obliterating of animals. They become uncompassionate towards all the animals. They perform bodily unwholesome acts. Moreover they perform unwholesome actions through speech. Further they perform unwholesome actions through mind. His entire bodily actions become unwholesome. Similarly entire speech actions become unwholesome. Further entire mind actions become unwholesome. As a result his qualities become unwholesome. Thus his birth becomes unwholesome. Oh Bhikkhu! I shall recommend certain destination for beings that possess unwholesome virtues and unwholesome birth. That

is netherworld consists of misery for certainty and animal reproductive area which bears unwholesome nature”.

“Oh...Bhikkhu! What is the animal reproductive area which bears unwholesome nature? That is serpents, scorpions, centipedes, mongooses, cats, mice, bats etc. . . . Moreover if some animals arch when met with humans, they are the ones. Bhikkhu! This way the beings have made the actions as of their own. They subscribe to actions. They have made the action their birth place. The action is acknowledged as a relative. They have made the action their refuge. Either it's wholesome or unwholesome if some action is performed then you have subscribed to same”.

(Samsappaniya pariyāya sutta – Anguttara nikāya 2nd chapter.)

Many in the human world indulge in theft. Indulge in promiscuity. Perform acts of lying. Perform slandering. Use rough words. Become greedy for others property. Bear cruel and hatred feelings. Conduct themselves with a wrong view which consists of immoral vision. Many of them shall be born either in the nether worlds or in animal reproductive areas which are surrounded with intense misery. When you see the diverse nature of the animals, what you observe is the variety of their minds. We shall be able to indistinctly imagine how dreadful this perpetual wandering is when you see the animals who die having faced severe suffering and pain.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

The period of schooling of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda was also very interesting. The mild sun of the liberation was dawned on him during that era itself. We were also able to be aware of

that only after going through his autobiography “Sathya soya yama”.

During that time I was used to read novels. When I was studying in grade seven, while taking pleasure in reading the novel “**Gora**” of the great Rabindranath Thagor, simultaneously struggled to comprehend the same. I had the ability of reading a book at a stretch. I was also greedy to read cartoon story books. Although I studied Buddhism in school, it wasn’t that interesting to me. Nevertheless while at home I had the access to many Buddhist books. In one of them it was described how our **Bodhisatta** obtained confirmed empowerment at the behest of the **Dipankara Buddha**. Once empowerment was bestowed on him while being aside, he apparently had examined the required disciplines and accomplishments to become another Buddha. Thence he undoubtedly identified “**Pārami Dhamma**” viz. perfection or ten qualities leading to Buddhahood. I was enthralled entirely by the time I finished reading. The unmatched determination of the Bodhisatta to become Buddha was depicted through a verse;

***Buddhōham bōdhiyissāmi - Muttōham mōcayē parē,
Tinnōham tārayissāmi - Samsārōghā mabbhayā.***

“I shall accomplish Buddhahood and let others also comprehend Dhamma. I shall liberate myself from the misery of perpetual wandering and let others be freed as well. I shall cross the fierce currents of the perpetual wandering and let others do follow suit”.

I believe I was twelve years old at that time. I immediately learnt to recite above verse from memory. I felt excessively pitiful about the beings as a whole. Kindness towards them was overflowing. Unstoppable flow of tears started oozing from my eyes. I wiped tears from my eyes unnoticeably and determined to move forward.

*“Yes! I shall somehow attain Buddhahood. Become Samma Sambuddha. Then I should be able to let these beings set sail beyond the perpetual wandering as to how the **Gautama Buddha** determinedly helped many to go beyond perpetual wandering.”*

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

You may be eager to be aware of the period that had a significant change in his life. I would disclose now how he transformed himself to be robed whilst in environs of this nature.

We were living in an area called **Puwakwetiya** at **Kadawatha**. I used to secretly stroll in the evenings towards **Sri Sunetrarama Temple** which was right in front of our house. Holding a pot of water in both hands;

***Buddhōham bōdhiyissāmi - Muttōham mōcayē parē,
Tinnōham tārayissāmi - Samsārōghā mabbhayā.***

Chanting the above stanza I used to amble round the Bodhi Tree while thinking that I shall free the beings from the misery of perpetual wandering. How honestly I used to do that, my eyes get filled with tears. I am unable to fathom now how that happened with me. Nevertheless I held the fact that I was aiming Buddhahood with me.

After some time it started to engender dispassionateness within me. Especially when I used to come across yellow robes in the temple, I was moved with the scene. I felt inexplicable dispassionateness within me at that moment. I watched Bhikkhus at that time as some people in this world with supremely wholesome humanity. My mind was contented with the cleanliness of temples, compound of the Bodhi tree with whitish sand being swept in the shape of a branch of a coconut

tree, the fragrance of abundance of flowers. Gradually my mind was being fixated with monkhood. I could recall when I was a small boy I used to robe my mother's sarees. I do not remember my father having any pleasantly positive sentiments about Bhikkhus. I am quite unaware what caused so for him to be that negative. He used to get annoyed when I voice that

"I want to become a Bhikkhu".

"There he is trying to have free meals. He is lazy to study hard and qualify for a better employment. That's the reason why he is willing to depart so early. Aren't you ashamed to consume free meals?" What my response was to be completely subdued.

One day my father asked me;

"My boy! To be very honest aren't you ashamed of to be robbed in a temple?"

"No! I shall be robbed in a jungle...." *"Is that so..? Then you may have to remain starving..."*

"No! I shall take the bowl and wander for alms..."

My father remained silent beyond that. Never arrived the sanction for my plea. Finally there arrived the decisive discussion. At that time I was more rigid and straightforward with my father to be explicitly say that;

"Father! If you fail to give your consent, I may just walk out without any knowledge. I shall be staying in a jungle."

My father also reciprocated in the same firm character.

“If that is your stance, you may go ahead and do anything you prefer; no need to consult me”. It was permission for my plea.

Signs of gradual cessation of my school education were becoming prominent. I was more enthusiastic to be gallivanting somewhere out of home. During this indecisive period I happened to get introduced to a Monk. I was happy to be lodged at his hermitage. I had a vague feeling that it will assist me to ripen my long lasting goal. But this monk never was strongly affiliated to this robed life. Although he was quite old, it was evident that he has no deep feeling for the robe.

“Son...there is no purpose in this Bhikkhu life... Please rid the idea of becoming a Bhikkhu.” was his strong advice.

During this period of time I met a very innocent monk who lived only out of alms proffered and who occasionally visit our hermitage to reside. His impeccable charming character in addition for being self-minded drew me gradually towards him. One day I proposed my idea of shifting to life of a Bhikkhu to him secretly.

*“Son...! I have not had enrolled anybody as a monk yet. I reside in the area of **Seruwavila**. There aren't much amenities and facilities over there. Nevertheless I shall agree with you and assist you to meet your deep rooted goal of life”*.

This announcement was something unbelievable for me. Having gotten my home address, he had met my parents and had been successful in claiming the consent for my ordination. He was **Venerable Bhikku Dikvellē Paññānanda** by name. Although he neither possessed higher education nor recognition of some sort, I was more than convinced in many occasions that he carried some tender attachment like paternal love mixed with merciful kindness towards me. My

ordination occurred on March 26th 1979 early morning. My lead preceptor was **Venerable Bhikkhu Dambagas ārē Sri Sumedhankara**, the chief incumbent of the Seruwila Temple at that time.

My ordination was somewhat unintentional or can regard a pure chance. My tutor who spent a innocent unsophisticated yet coarse life was in search of an appropriate name for my ordained life when the current incumbent of Seruwila Temple was met and he apparently have proposed “**Kiribathgoda Ñānānanda**” as my name for the robed life. Following ordination I was taken to the Seruwila Temple by my lead tutor. That made my attachment to Seruwila.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

Having enrolled in supreme robed life, he continued education while residing in the temple. There were no restrictions to obtain university education under the Sri Lankan contemporary system of ordination thus leading too many Bhikkhus abrogating same. Nonetheless Bhikkhu Ñānānanda was able to foresee the shallowness or frivolity of the University Education being there hence it’s absolutely striking to see his competence to divert his life into a more precious alternate route compared with his peer Bhikkhus. The following statements of his confirm how much the Buddha’s discourses objectively influenced in his mission.

During my University education I stayed in a temple. I was occupying the “**Seema Malaka**” where all the valuables such as old Dhamma books, relics, Tripitaka are retained hence I had a grand opportunity to read as many as books including Tripitaka. For my chance none of the shelves were locked hence opportunity was apt for me. Although I was aware of **Digha nikāya**, **Majjhima nikāya** and so on as books of Tripitaka by then, yet never I had an occasion to read them

in order. The Universities were closed down at that time hence what I used to perform was to take one book at a time and go through. My memory confirms me that it was first part of **Majjhima nikāya** that I first had my hands on to. I was excessively glued to same while I was having exposure with Sutra discourses one by one. I could remember that I was very much interested with “**Vattūpama Sutta**”. How much I was emotionally involved with same while reading, in the recent past I happened to translate same in to plain simple Sinhala without much knowledge. Nevertheless it rose up in my mind how much it mattered those days while I was on translation of **Vattūpama**. When I read the section which discloses how **Brahmana Sundarika Bhāradvaja** having ordained became Arahant, surge of tears started pouring from my eyes. The passage refers as follows;

When it was told, Brahmana Sundarika Bharadvaja said the following to the Buddha.

*"Venerable Lord, the Blessed One! It's so pleasing....Venerable Lord, the Blessed One..!! It is so pleasing...It's similar to turning something upside down...It's comparable with opening something which was closed...Similar with path to destination was explained spot on to a person lost his way....Just like holding an oil lamp lit to a person with eyes in dark to see.... The Buddha sermonized Dhamma in various ways just like the same....Hence I shall take refuge with the **Buddha**....I shall take refuge with **Dhamma** and **Arya Sangha**...I shall observe ordination under you. I shall obtain higher ordination under you as well...!!”.*

“The Brahmana Sundarika Bharadvaja became a Bhikkhu under the tutelage of the Buddha. He obtained higher ordination. In a short while following higher ordination, Bhikkhu Bharadvaja became lonely. He decided to put up alone. Became diligent. When living with

*determination to contain defilements while certain high cast young males claiming some **Arahanthood** obtained monkhood from Buddhist order, he accomplished Arahanthood which is the supreme tranquility of the path of Nirvana in this life itself and lived peacefully within that. The birth was extinct. Attained completeness in the state of celibacy. Whatever needed to be accomplished was done. He in his instincts gained knowledge that never he would have a birth in perpetual wandering. Thus **Arahant Bharadwaja** became another great Arahant of all”.*

(Vattūpama Sutta - Majjima nikāya)

The ordained life of then and now is incomparable like sky and the earth. The Sangha now represent more or less some cultural needs and Nationalistic concept but be on the path to Nibbana. I felt lonesomeness of some unexplainable sort. I had no way to cast aside that. This monkhood is something namesake. You hardly observe Noble Eightfold path in this. What I envisioned that laymen’s life was a vacuous process also treading in agony and misery and gaining no contentment either in the other world. Similarly the lives of monkhood as well I could observe being sandwiched in so called rights in robed life and having held very temporary social strata and following demise without any gain after death, just a transfer to the other world. I was squarely placed in a dilemma as to what should be done about this. Finally I decided to renounce everything. What was residual in my mind was mere helplessness. If I were to die, I was not sure where would I be born. I could not recall any meritorious deeds gained during the robed life either. Silhouettes of a meaningless life were felt after me. Once this human life is over, what is basically lost would be the Dhamma I treasured so much. I was reminded of death very often. Instantly what flashed in my mind was my leading to the next birth. Truly I was in fear of another birth. The only liberation out of this chaos was to behave in Dhamma or administer Dhamma.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

Gradually I was occupied with the Buddha discourses. I was not strongly self-willed at that time to remain in such wholesome right-view arose from priceless Buddha sermons. Nevertheless I was sure to have had the born ability of critically visualizing something from a very independent mental platform. That’s something I believe blessed with me.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

Following all these he abandoned his University Education and aligned to associate with jungle monasteries. Wonderful era brightened his life after that significant eventful diversion. Meditating in jungle monasteries, getting used to jungles, being in pursuit of Arahants who entered the path of Nibbana what the Buddha clearly discoursed, his life started gaining miraculously rare experience and becoming more and more brilliantly colourful and strikingly vivid. Please give a moment of reflection that, had you been facing these events in a chronology, what have you had done? It will be a strenuous exercise to unearth a person who shall courageously stand up to the sequence of events without being unsteady like how Bhikkhu Ñānānanda was evidently determined until he reached his goal of life. It’s same for me. It’s more or less same for you as well.

Whilst traversing in Sri Lanka, the place which impressed me the most was the “**Kaludiyapokuna ascetic grove** “in **Mihintale**. When you reach the remote rock-cave situated right on the hill, naturally your mind drags towards the historical Arahants era. When you gaze at **Ruwanweli Dagaba** and **Mirisawetiya Dagaba** which are distantly placed from there, your mind gets healed and tranquillized. When you reside in **Araliya Kuti** at the Kaludiyapokuna hermitage your mind shall

be sprouted with wholesome facts of Dhamma. There was an old Monk by the name **Bhikkhu Dhamminda** who also was there during that time. Guiltless life he was adhered to by all means was an old and advanced in ascetic life as well. Similarly **Kalugala ascetic monastery** in **Baduraliya** was also a pleasing place which won a place in my mind. “**Samaradiwākara Rālahamy**” was the name of the philanthropist who was a devoted Buddhist, committed himself in building this beautiful monastery and spend his last lap of life as an ascetic and it is amazing how he was engaged in well being of the compound as well.

There lived so many virtuous and gracious Bhikkhus in this monastery and the lead Bhikkhu was an unmatched gem of a Bhikkhu by the name **Venerable Bentara Kondañña** who happened to be a wonderful character. To my knowledge he had not seen the sky beyond the monastery compound for fifty years. He was so much mindfully away from the worldly pleasures and his untainted life was further made to be gleaming being innocent and humble. Certain days he used to amble ably assisted by his walking stick towards my hut. We generally discussed Facts of Dhamma happily. I was delighted to see his earlobes being swung while he walked. Stainless profile of a good old foremost **sangha** was visualized in him. His company influenced me to fathom what faith towards **maha sangha** is all about. The faith he had won out in me was tremendously warm. Similarly Chief sangha Kalyanatissa was another leading noble Bhikkhu over there that I used to wholeheartedly respect. Visualizing them itself heals my mind. When I made an effort to imagine how the great **Arahants** could have been those days and their life style, what instantly arose in my mind was the image of charming behavior of the great sangha whom I used to worship.

There was another monastery at **Dodanduwa** in **Galle** which was known as **Polgasduwa Monestery** once again which stole my

heart. This ascetic grove had been initiated by one German Bhikkhu by the name **Venerable Nānāthiloka** and the lead Bhikkhu at the time I was there was one **Venerable Piyarathana**. I had tremendous respect even towards him. I have met two Bhikkhus who were unusually intrepid. One was Bhikkhu Piyarathana. He has now passed away. The other of that sort was the incumbent lead Bhikkhu of the Seruwawila temple.

The spiritual supremacy of Bhikkhu Piyarathana was amazingly powerful. Once he did a wonderful thing. One day a spotted iguana snatched a white crane. Having reached the scene immediately Piyarathana Bhikkhu trampled the tale of the Iguana. The white crane was instantly released. In the same way once a temple servitor boy went to have bath in the lagoon and was found drowned. Until the body was cleared by the kith and kin, the corpse was retained at the temple premises. By the side of the lagoon in front of a small hut on top of a wooden plank the dead body was laid down and only Bhikkhu Piyarathana was seated near the corpse. The Bhikkhu Piyarathana was deep in meditation around 12:00 mid night and he felt a very cold hand falling on to his body. When he opened his eyes, he found that all the hands and the legs were in motion up and down. ***“This corps has started shaking. Even the mucus (sap) had splashed on to my robe”*** murmured him smilingly and some strips from an old robe were used to tie the hands and legs of the body. Thereafter taking a lantern and had gone to the lagoon and washed all the dirty robes, put them for drying, having walked up to his hut and had changed in to a new robe, had walked back where the corpse had been and had started meditating. In this manner he possessed extremely courageous attributes of life and stunning fact was that he evidently possessed compassionate sympathy as well which had been soft as a flower. I used to tilt more towards reading of Tripitaka at Polgasduwa monastery. There existed one of the best religious libraries which I have seen.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

What I am about to recount is quite a perilous incident which Bhikkhu Ñānānanda had undergone. That hair-raising encounter was described to us as follows.

I was gradually getting accustomed to a lonesome life style and what I most welcomed were the monasteries where least number of people were patronizing. There was a secluded cave situated in the **Bundala** preserved jungle in the **Hambantota District**. It was one **Venerable Bhikkhu Ñānāweera**, a foreign national who first occupied there. He discussed Dhamma very independently and logically and he died for Dhamma finally. Thereafter occasionally some Bhikkhus occupied that cave and engaged in meditation and other Dhamma related activities. Even I had an opportunity to reside in that case for few months. That period of time was found very relaxing and gratifying. I spent that time happily. When I was on my way in search of alms, I enjoyed watching peacocks looking for their preys on either side of the road. There was no shortage of water in that area during that time. I used to be affectionately watching groups of whistling fowls tenderly swimming in small ponds adjacent to the lagoon. One day the devotee friends in the village forewarned me that sole elephant had entered the nearby jungle hence to keep an eye as its notoriously dangerous. Following that one night I heard trumpeting of an elephant by the side of my cave. I was quite convinced by then that the wild elephant was roaming around the hut.

One day around 5:30 pm having consumed water I thought of ambling outside. Being in same thought and murmuring the **Karaniya Metta sutta** while recollecting its meaning I set out on foot towards the main road. Reaching the main road I directed myself on the abandoned paddy fields by the side of a strip of jungle which looked like a play ground. Then it flashed me in a rush that two devotee friends having

stopped their motor cycle gesticulating me like their trying to pass a message. I was walking head down and I raised the head for no real reason hence I could not fathom the scene at a distance. I questioned in return what they were trying to convince me. Yet they continued gesticulating in various ways still trying somehow to draw my attention. Had they shouted for some reason I would have got frantic. Then I looked towards the strip of jungle. What I spotted was the same sole wild elephant digging and stirring the earth with its trunk raised and it was just moments before the chase after me. I realized everything in a flicker. I have not had anything left for decision making. I looked aside hoping for the best. I continued with my slow advancement as if none happened. The wild elephant was watching me. I entered the jungle and returned to my hut and performed my daily evening religious chores followed by meditation before falling asleep. It's a lantern that's to be lit in the night hence I did avoid same. I stayed in darkness merely because the obnoxious gases emanating from the lantern. Further there are two flaps in the door in the hut. One of it was made of wooden planks. The other was a frame with mosquito net being the rest. What I used to close was the latter. That caused the flow of mild breeze to enter the cabin creating some comfort to rest in the night.

Following day I shared what transpired the preceding night with the subscriber villagers. When they were made to understand that I spent the night in darkness they thoroughly warned me against.

“Venerable Bhikkhu..! Never stay in dark. When you have some light like the lantern you have, the wild elephant shall avoid the place”.

I did believe their advice. That night I hung the lit lantern, in front of the hut. As usual I fell asleep but something called me to be awoken around 1:00 AM early morning. That was the clattering of the water bucket being dashed on the ground. The elephant has entered the hut..!Being fully awoken, I decided to be silent. Next noise I was quite

disturbed was the pot of water flying away and dashing elsewhere. The barrel of water used for general purposes was the next target of the wild elephant and it rolled some far away and threw some further and returned to continue with the drama. Next items took off were the besom and the broom which were propped up to the wall. There were two windows in the hut. I had a habit of leaving both opened in the night. The wild elephant came closer to one and had a sharp look through. Instantly I moved to the other side and covered myself from its sight. Then the wild one ran to the other window and peeped through. My reciprocation to it was to cover myself from its sight. This frightening drama continued for nearly half an hour. What I did was to commit Buddha to memory. After few chilling moments the terrific noises outside my hut subsided. What I could guess was that the elephant would have had disappeared and in a flash I ran outside. Immediate next job of me was to extinguish the lantern. What had gone wrong in this life and death saga was the lantern being lit outside. To what extreme I was terrified, whether the elephant is yet out there or not the dire need was there for me to use the lavatory. The elephant would have assumed that some villager is occupying the hut owing to the glowing lantern. Never the lantern was in use thereafter. The following day around 3:00 PM the elephant returned again to inspect whether anyone lived there. I chanted virtues of the Buddha very loudly. Then the elephant calmly moved away from me.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Nānānanda.

Isn't this life amazing..? Though endless events of such nature nurtured and strengthened his character, on the contrary it was certainly a negating factor for his meditation. It may be that some force is against his accomplishing Nibbana. He overcame all these hurdles in venturing in to seek the truth and continued in his endeavour by deciding to travel to jungles of Himalaya in North of India.

It's puzzlingly unexplainable and oddly strange when you evaluate the disconcerting events taken place in most occasions where I engaged in meditating alone. It took me some time to fathom those events which signifies negative spirit that they were causative factors entirely to disturb the meditation.

My sole intention by this time was to enter Himalaya jungles. I went in search of one **Athmaganananda** from **Ramakrishna Mission** having come to Colombo. I had a very pleasantly welcoming dialogue with him. It was apparent that he was very pleased with me. He tendered a letter of introduction for me to take lodging at **Shivananda mission** at **Rishikēsh** and further assisted me with another letter to High commissioner of India with an appeal to obtain multiple entry visas to India. I was blessed with an opportunity to meet High commissioner of India at that time. When he was made to understand that my sole intention of entering India is to visit Himalaya Jungles for the purpose of Meditation, he stamped my passport immediately and wished me good luck as well. In the first week of March 1994 I set off to India leaving Sri Lanka.

Initially I went to **Delhi** from **Madras** by boarding a train, then to **Haridwar** and then reached **Rishikēsh** by bus. I wasn't aware where it will end up as I was travelling all alone. Rishikēsh appeared to be a Kingdom of **Sadhū's** (righteous people). Every corner where you could go, all hermitages were full of these hindu Sadhūs. This scenic town landscaped by the side of River **Ganges** wins the respect of every Indian. I was wordless to see how devotee people of India come there to get little bit of water of this river. Wandering around in search of **hermitage Shivananda**, I first reached a town by the name Shivananda. The huge expansion of the hermitage Shivananda could be gauged merely by the fact that the town owning the same name. This was

installed a century ago by **Swāmi Shivānanda Saraswati** who hailed from southern India and unarguably this is the largest hermitage in Rishikēsh.

I was permitted to lodge there only for a week. That again primarily because of the letter I possessed from **Swami Āthmaganānanda**. The chief Swami there was a strange person. Over and over again he conveyed me a message that since I was a Buddhist Bhikkhu, I could comfortably occupy in places such as **Bodhgaya** and **Sarnath**. He was unable to read that I was looking for esteemed liberation. Nevertheless I met a wonderful friend who could understand me properly. His name was **Swami Krishnānanda**. He immeasurably respected Buddhism and Buddhist Bhikkhus as well. With his introduction I managed to get to know another Sri Lankan Swami. He was quite old and a Tamil national who was very fond of me. His name was **Swami Nithyānanda**. I walked all over Rishikēsh in his company. That is to find a decent cabin to reside. It was not as easy as I imagined. Although there were massively built elegant hermitages were existent in Rishikēsh, singing **bhajan** were heard all over in Rishikēsh, a lonely ambler like me were unable to get a place to stay that easily. Once I was roaming around cabins belong to hermits of **Rāmjula**, some Brahmin hermits displayed annoyance. Many of them were of the view that I was trying to construct a Buddhist temple in that area. My reply to them still reverberates in my ears.

“Babaji...! I shall never construct a temple on this earth. I shall put up one up there” showed the sky to them pointing a finger.

Once I was convinced beyond doubt that remaining in Rishikēsh is inconvenient, I decided to move to **Himachal** where **The Dalai Lama** had located himself. Having come to **Haridwār** I set upon to go towards **Dharmasala** in **Himachal**. From there I had to go to a place called

Maclodaganji. Town of The Dalai Lama is situated there. The time that I reached there apparently was a festival time. Even The Dalai Lama was not available at that time. There I met a very old Lama by the name **Lathirenpuce.** What they believed and preferred to be involved were performing incantations, charms and offering oblations and teaching Mahayana doctrine.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Nānānanda.

The trip to meet Dalai Lama had made him to undergo unknown and unbearable climatic conditions which resulted falling him very sick and beyond that point in time he was compelled to return back to the fold of Sadhus and for him to spend some part of his life there as a Sadhu, you may try to figure out what sort of courage that he possessed in this regard.

That period of time gained exceptional experience. The worse climatic conditions had caused me to suffer from heavy cough and excessive panting or breathing difficulty. All the attempts to obtain a place for lodging became a lost cause. Every such place was occupied by Lamas. There was a centre for Meditation by the name **Thusita** in one of the hills. Finally when I was cornered without a solution, however cumbersome it was I opted to slowly climb the way to that place. I climbed there and I sat in the veranda there. The administrator of that place was an Australian Buddhist. Being seated I happened to peep in to the front office and what I came across was one European looking woman handing over some bunch of keys. Once she departed the office I entered the office. When I explained that I am an independent Sri Lankan Buddhist Bhikkhu, that I need a place to stay for a short period of time, for that I need some help from you, what he went on to say was;

“You are quite fortunate...This is the festive season....This place gets abundant with western travellers...Never you find a room in this place falling vacant...Today is one miraculous day...when you walk in, a room with a single bed fell vacant...The previous occupant lady just decided to vacate the place...You can register yourself for that room. Since you appear to be sick, you may take some rest as well...”

This experience confirmed me that in the transmigration of the soul (perpetual wandering) the cumulative meritorious deeds come in to effect as per the occasion. Having spent few weeks there I set off to **Rishikēsh** once again.

Once you travel nearly two kilometers from Rishikēsh you meet the **Shivānanda** town and there exist an overhung bridge over the river Ganges which flows by the side of the town. That bridge is named **Rāmjulā**. Beyond another one kilometer along the border of the river you will meet another bridge to cross the river and that is named **Lakshmanjulā**. Either side of this river there exist so many pleasant hermitages. Finally one hermitage close to Lakshmanjula which was built in the name of **Sai baba** offered me lodging facility. Sai baba is a one who meditated all alone and obtained some level of concentration. When I went to him and asked where would you find **Rishis** (Hindu religious righteous people who are believed to be spiritually at a higher plane) who train **Pranayama** Meditation, he was clueless on that. What he had to say was that if you go interior of Himalaya jungles you may find some. But you do not find any in the metropolitan area.

In many hermitages they conduct training programs of yoga merely to satisfy the devotees but hidden agendas of majority of the functions were income generation for the well being of those purported righteous people. There was one **Shanthima**, a German devotee hanging around **Bābāji**. She was also in reception of considerable respect from

these devotees. When she realized that I am a Buddhist Bhikkhu from Sri Lanka, she was more than happy. She happened to commune with me in a very pleasant manner. There was an appeal from her for me to participate in their “**Dharma Sathsangha** viz. Religious speeches and deliberations” which were to be conducted near the river Ganges in the evenings. Since I was a lonely ambler without proper permanent place to stay, I decided to take part in their evening sessions as per her request. Almost all of the participants were white people. In their eyes I was an Indian. Since there were tormenting harassments from Indians towards Whites, no permission was granted for the nationals to take part in those sessions.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Nānānanda.

I was residing in **Sāi** hermitage near Lakshmanjulā. Although I could have gone in the bus up to the Place of my stay, I alighted from the bus near Shivānanda town. My intention was to walk the distance crossing Rāmjulā up to Lakshmanjulā. When I was crossing the bridge, I met a friendly hermit.

*“It’s good that I met you. Is it not you who came with **Swami Nithyānanda** and was looking for a place to stay? I am going to Haridwār for some period of time hence you occupy my cabin.”* I profusely thanked that hermit.

This clay hut situated in between Rāmjulā and Lakshmanjulā by the side of river Ganges brought tremendous consolation to me. That hut which was 8 feet in length and 5 feet in breadth had flimsy plastic cape material as its roofing. The floor had a finishing with clay. There was another hut nearby. The resident was a Nepalese hermit in that. That young hermit by the name **Swami Varuna** instantly became friendly with me. He escorted me everywhere and showed me everything. He introduced me to many hermits. He basically taught me

quite a many things. He took me too many hermits who were residing by the side of the river. Thereafter I simply became one of them. Next he escorted me to one leading hermitage by the name **Githabhavan**. One service from Githabhavan is to supply alms on rations to hermits staying near the river.

“Baisahab..! Here is one lonely wandering hermit who is going to stay here for some time. Please offer him a ration.”

“What is the name of this Hermit?”

“Gyānananda” I replied.

I was also supplied with alms on a ration from that place. No one could recognize me now. Wearing the bottom robe, covering from head to toe with a dark yellow bed sheet, with the small metal pot in one hand, I visited where the alms are given. We were less talking. We had to be there around 9:30 AM. The hermits residing by the river and few other hermits passing by were there to collect alms. Those foods were very much watery and bland hence many hermits were not much attracted towards the meal. One **rotty** and one spoon of rise with watery potato curry were served as the complete meal. For the few months I stayed over there I had to survive with this meal. The way those hermits disciplined themselves without much conversation until the alms were served really startled me. They remained minding their own business. Even if they were discussing it was about **Bhagawath Githā**. Otherwise it was on **Rāmāyana**. If not they remained silent. Never had I used to chatter with anybody there. Maintained exclusive silence. I did not feel distressed once I returned to the hut with the alms. Yet owing to the bland quality of food I felt nauseating when I tried to eat. What I adapted was to have water with every mouth of food as an alternative. Time healed my problem of consuming food.

As I said earlier there were many huts nearby. Among the crowd there were few knowledgeable Brahmin priests as well. I was watching their followers coming to perform religious offerings and rituals with them. One hermit who was staying nearby cabin never talked with anybody. He did find his food on his own, ate alone and engaged in meditation alone as well. There was another who hailed from Southern part of India. He too spent his time alone. Only one who became friendly with me was **Swami Varuna**. Once he accompanied me to meet a Brahmin teacher to his cabin. Many surrounded me knowing that I did come from Sri Lanka.

*“Ha... Ha..!.Here comes someone from land of **Rāvanā**. We were of the view that demons only live there. But you are a very pleasant looking Bhikkhu. Are your people still following **Rāvanā**?”*

This statement made me laugh. I explained them about Sri Lanka. I managed to explain them that people live in Sri Lanka are a very decent lot and there are many who safeguard virtues and decent qualities live there as well.

When I walked for few weeks in the area, I got used to the surroundings very well. Chanting “**Dhamma Chakka Sutta**” and meditating after that every evening, for my protection I retained a small booklet of **Dhamma Pada** only. I made an effort to comprehend the exact meaning of Dhamma Pada one verse at a time. Though I understood little by little, overall I am unable to say that I exactly captured the connotation of those verses in entirety. Evenings I used to gaze at the river while seated on a rock there. Then I could see the **Himalaya** forest range beyond the opposite river bank. Bluish river water was slowly flowing down. What I could hear right round me was the noise of **Bhajan** coming out of vast number of loudspeakers and added to it ringing of bells. Gradually my mind started soaking in hopelessness.

*“Where have I come...? I have come here hoping that I shall be assisted by somebody... I assumed that someone may advice me in my mission for supreme liberation. But what I now made to listen is only Bhajan and ringing tones... When would I hear the pleasant chanting of **Buddham Saranam Gaccāmi..?** In case I die, would I never be able to hear the words **Buddham Saranam Gaccāmi..?**”*

Ideas in to this effect were echoing in my system. As a direct effect my mind was dipped in sorrow. When I come out and watch the deserted empty sky, tears started pouring. Sometimes I go up to the deepest point of river Ganges and watch blankly. I felt like disowning my life by tossing myself there. Yet what is the way to reach the words **Buddham Saranam Gaccāmi..?** Amidst all these feelings it never occurred in me to return to Sri Lanka.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

Bhikkhu Ñānānanda happened to stay at Himalaya area but never his mind enlivened accordingly. Spending his time mostly secluded with discourses of the Buddha and occupied in meditation he lived there for some time but finally returned to areas where the Buddha had been.

Two days hence I noticed that my mind had nothing emotionally involved with Himalaya area. The **Dhamma Pada** became my friend, heartiest buddy and trusted **Guru**. When I flip through verses of Dhamma Pada, I started confidently seeing the in-depth significance of each verse gradually. It became crystal clear to me that what I envisaged cannot be traced in Himalaya. I further comprehended that what is in search is definitely available in the eightfold Noble Path which I should pursue. I plentifully congratulated all the hermits and other righteous people who helped me. Thanked them. Offered merits to

them. They were really puzzled over my sudden shift. They could not fathom what caused this sudden diversion of the monk who was greatly fascinated with Himālayās and Rishikēsh area. They further went on to inquire whether anything contributed from their part for this departure. Having settled their minds when I tried to figure out where would be my next destination, **Jēthavana temple** of **Srāvasti** became the appropriate choice.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

Another miraculous incident which occurred during this period of time in his life is remembered pleasantly by him. According to this we are confirmed that he is not just another human but one who had the opportunity twice to witness and associate The Buddha. You may be hazy about what is conveyed here hence let us listen to Bhikkhu Ñānānanda himself.

During that time I was staying at the rest rooms belonged to **Sānci Temple**. I had a prospect of travelling with some devotees on a tour of worship. Honestly that was a very special trip materialized in my life. Initially we arrived at **Isipatana Migadāya**. We worshipped there in a pleasant mind. Then we came to **Bodgayā**. Even there with a calm mind we were engaged in worshipping. Our next place of arrival was **Rajgir**. We advanced to the old street which leads to the **Gijha Kūta** of Rajgir.

When we were climbing the old flight of steps constructed by **King Bimbisāra**, some unknown and never anticipated reminiscence started reawakening in my mind. When the fragrant house situated on top of the hill came in to focus, once again it recalled unprecedented wonderful images belonged to some unknown era. The **Venerable**

Bhikkhu Ananda sewing robes for The Lord Buddha was shown in my imagination. Images of Great **Arahant Kassapa** ambling towards the town of Rajgir for alms were further created in my mind. I could not imagine what was running in the memory.

"Oh...! Am I not a one who was ordained during Arahant era..? What would have caused me to be so ill-fated not to comprehend The Four Noble Truths being in the company of the great Arahants..? Why did I fall in to this world of becoming born over and over again and dying too happening over and over again..?"

Some issues of this nature started running amok in my mind. Being very silent along with rest of the crowd I slowly climbed the Gijjha kuta hill. Without intimating to others of the lively Arahants era very pictorially transpired in my mind I held all the feelings within my heart. We worshipped at the top of the Gijjha kuta hill. From there you could clearly see the **Shanthi Temple** at the very next hill top constructed by some Japanese devotees. Everyone else descended the Gijjha kuta and then ascended the adjacent rocky flight of steps on to the right to arrive at the **Shanthi Stupa**. I quietly parted from the rest of the crowd. I quietly squeezed myself through bushes to the jungle nearby. I sat on a flat rock bed there. I still could not figure out how this memory kept rising in my mind. As a matter of fact I was confident that a great opportunity of comprehending Dhamma had gone begging. The sorrow surged in my mind was immeasurable...All I did was crying for a long time being there. What am I to do now..? The era of the Arahants had faded. The Buddhist order had completely disappeared from entire **Dambadiva** (Old India). Whether you could comprehend Dhamma in this era has become a puzzle without a solution already. But from that moment onwards everything started settling down disappearing from the mind and sorrow started to subside. With a calmed down mind I appeared out of the jungle area and joined with the rest of the pilgrims.

The next special occasion in the trip was the arrival at **Srāvasti**. The time could have been around 6:00 pm. Once I landed at Srāvasti, what I did was immediately walk in search of **Jethavanārāma** and enter the sacred compound. Although it was not permitted to enter these areas after 6:00 pm, since at that time no charges were levied, comfortably you may wander in and out. Having entered, I also ambled looking either side of the compound. I went beyond the **Ananda Bodhi**. There I spotted a small construction of a monument just similar to a minute Stupa right opposite another ruins of a grand old building. By the side of it there was a notice from the Archeological Department of India. There the information said “Fragrant house”. It further said a religious dwelling where The Buddha resided for a long time...I was elated within my mind limitlessly. I spread my whole body on the floor in that place where it was identified as fragrant house and kissed same. I could not hold the flow of tears from eyes. As If I saw the Buddha alive, I was delighted so much that my words will be short to explain my feelings. I worshipped chanting virtues of the Buddha very loud. Although I possessed faith within me, I was perplexed to a greater degree in my undeterred pursuance of searching true Buddhism as I did not come across an appropriate person who could elucidate me on that. Moreover because of a rooted belief, I strongly trusted that with the help of an external assistance you could become an Arahant. But I have relieved myself from that belief.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Nānānanda.

After arriving at Srāvasti having abandoned Himalaya jungles, gradually he started to see the light of what that amazingly unparalleled Nibbana is. In those circumstances he realized that there exists no strong reason to remain in India hence to return to Sri Lanka.

After the visit to Rishikēsh, I came to Srāvasti like a destitute child looking for his parents. Having come to Srāvasti and taking the lodging at **New Jetavana temple**, I started meditating every morning and evening at that Fragrance House. Further The Tripitaka Manuscripts belonged to New Jethavana Temple became my reading materials. I felt that I have started completely a new life. The miseries and sorrows wrapped around my heart started slowly thinning and diminishing. I was able to gradually but firmly comprehend the supreme Dhamma discoursed by the **Lord Gautama Buddha** with extreme compassion. With desertion of life in search of supreme emancipation, my tour with a great purpose which commenced at Himalaya jungles ended up finally landing at **Jetavanārāma**.

After some time I felt no purpose being in India. I returned to Sri Lanka. Took lodging at **Seruwila Buddhist Centre**. Time to time I used to move over to jungle monasteries.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Nānānanda.

Having visited Sri Lanka he took up to meditation while reading and comprehending Tripitaka, once again decided to associate his life with jungles. The familiarity he gained from those stays in the jungles is magnificent.

What I was engaged mostly were reading Tripitaka. I used to borrow books from the library there but once the library was engaged in upgrading, the process of borrowing became ceased. Hence I started to find out Tripitaka for my own possession.

Somehow I managed to collect **Vinaya Pitaka** and **Sutta Pitaka** completely in this regard. Following that I used to spend time reading and meditating quite independently and sermonizing rarely when time permits. But I had no penchant of remaining in Colombo for long. What

I liked only to cease perpetual wandering. After sometime I contemplated to get in to **Sripāda Jungles** and engage in Meditation. I had no clue how to set about in that mission. Finally I received information that one Bhikkhu by the name **Venerable Baduraliye Chandima** reside in the deep jungles of **Sripāda** and if you meet him in person some opportunity could be obtained for this purpose. One day I visited the Temple **Sunandārāma** in **Erathna** on this matter. But **Venerable Bhikkhu Chandima** was not present that day. Nevertheless having known to the fact that few kilometers further down on the Sripada road, you meet a place by the name **Waranagala** and there exist a small hermitage, I set on foot.

When I reached that place I met one Bhikkhu **venerable Athrugiye Dhirānanda**. When scanned around the place what I noticed was a mountain range, thicket of greenery, blue sky but certainly not even an image of a village. I was admiring cheerfully the weaving of silver line like flow of water over a wide rocky flat bed. The enjoyment I had that day was immeasurable. By the evening the whole area gets immersed in thick fog. As if you are floating in the sky, you feel quite comfortable. The only frustration was the trouble over organizing of dry rations. I cooked rice and one curry in the morning and be content with that. Since food does not get rancid there, I could retain them for the following day. After one week the dry ration items became almost finished hence I had to descend once again for the material. I had a refreshing opportunity in associating with one **venerable Bhikkhu Balangoda Lankānanda** who possessed extremely good values and qualities. Also I associated with **Venerable Bhikkhu Baduraliye Chandima** over there.

Bhikkhu Baduraliye Chandima is a monk with miraculous abilities. His nose was totally damaged and healed with remnant scars. The reason for this was a scary ordeal he encountered at the **Pallegama**

Jungle facing an attack of a she-bear. He was praying for supreme Buddhahood and a very pleasant Bhikkhu with an uncomplicated approach to life. He was a very small made Bhikkhu and had strongly developed his mind through meditation. As per his narrative that owing to his compassionate mind, he could hold any live wires of any high voltage. He assures that nothing happens to his body because of that. He has deeply gone in to meditation such that he consumes only vegetables from the jungle and had no exposure with human lives over a long period of time as he remained in the Sripada hilly Jungle for quite a considerable time. At that time he seemed to have possessed sharp vision such that he could walk in the night without any external aid of a light. In short he even could see a leach at a distance in the night. When he was told that I am very happy to spend time alone in the Sripada hilly terrain, he showed keen interest by happily agreeing to it.

*“It’s very good...It’s very good..! Yet it’s not that easy to get familiarized with a jungle. It’s essential that you disregard the affection (greediness) towards village type food. Generally what you got to eat in a forest are such like **katukithul** and **netol leaves**. When you consume those things, the need for water does not arise. When you possess virtuousness, the absence of desire for food and serious separation of aspiration to live, you may survive in a jungle”.*

However much I lived in the society, my mind was attached to the forest. Certain days I spent just dreaming of how I shall live in a forest. What I did then was to put a roll of thin plastic material, long thick fibre chord and a knife in a sack, also be supplied with a piece of cloth and a box of matches shoved in a small empty **Marmite bottle** and proceed to **Sunandārāma** of **Erathna**. Then observe precepts from **Bhikkhu Balangoda Lankānanda** and hand over my identity card to him giving instructions that in case I am unable to return hand over that to somebody who matters. In most of the occasions I entered the Sripada forest not in the worshipping season. Following that what I did next was

to reach the forest monastery of Waranagala. From there I entered in to the forest with the advice given to me by Bhikkhu Baduraliye Chandima in the mind. When you trek in the off season you may clearly notice that grass had overtaken the path. My habit in general was to light a lamp in faith of the Buddha at the Waranagala Monastery and chant **Karaniya metta sutta** and offer the merits of that to deity **Sumana Saman** and then proceed to the forest. From that point onwards I used to chant **pirith** very loud while walking.

Certain days I used to notice impressions of a foot of a large dog. What the message for you in that is surely there had been a tiger around this place before me. Certain other days I used to hear breaking of branches by the wild elephants. Then my response was to silently walk very lightly on the ground so that it did not make any sound. There are many small sheds built at different intervals for the purpose of resting for pilgrims on the way to **Sripada** - Adam's peak – A sacred peak if Buddhists. In the season thousands of Buddhists climb the mount for worship the footprints of Lord Buddha, have installed on it -. While resting in those places I used to keenly observe whether any caves are situated in the vicinity where you could meditate alone. Once again I commence trekking having chanted pirith.

One day I advanced up to **Andiyā mala thenna** and had my alms brought and was looking for some water. There was no water in the off season. The thirst was so growing in to dangerous proportions. I was fainted and fell unconscious on the flight of steps. I fell dozed off right on the steps. Having awakened crossed a place called **Ehala kanuwa** at a snail's pace and then passed a place called **Mahagiridamba** and by the time I reached the pinnacle I had no energy left in me to do any walking. I met the watcher staying at the top and my immediate request was to ask for some water and gleefully consumed. That gentleman of a watcher treated me very well. He offered me a cup of tea as well. For

few days I put up at the watcher's hut. He prepared wheat rotti in the morning for me and set off for his usual work.

In the off season you will find heavy breeze in the morning at the top of the hill. To add to woos there was heavy rain as well. Moreover it was deadly cold too. I used to clean the Sripada compound and worshipped daily and chanted **Dhamma cakka Sutta** as a routine. Having spent few days up there I descended down with the intention of entering in to the Sripada forest. I was made to understand that at **Andiya mala thenna** cooperative building there was a very old person who is looking for **Diva guhava** (One of the places of Lord Buddha who rested little moment during His journey in Sri Lanka). I chose to stay two to three days over there. The old person was a very pleasant individual. I arrived in the morning and I had a long conversation with him. Towards evening something miraculous was happening which I could not believe my eyes. I saw two to three rats were moving just in front of us. I was not very happy to see mice moving just like that.

“Oh ... Bhikkhu ...! You may have noticed some mice here. Never have you chased them away. We are bound to stay the way they want us to. You may see their kingdom late in the night only”.

This statement was something I could not believe. I watched in disbelief some four hundred odd mice were running all over the compound. I rather helplessly was watching the drama happening right in front of me without any options left to do. Without any fear countless number of mice started running even over my body. The best option left for me was to test my patience being deeply inactive. In the late night I opted to sleep on the wooden planks of the shop. Shoving the bowl and the sack together as a pillow under the head, I covered my whole body from the robe I wore before stretching myself for sleep. Yet I had nothing else to do. I felt so many mice just like on a procession running

pell-mell over my body. I waited till the mild light the following day with patience of high calibre.

Early in the day I made up my mind to descend from there. The fog was so dense nothing beyond two to three feet was properly visible. Having asked the other occupant some coconut oil I lit a lamp in the faith of the Buddha and chanted **Karaniya Metta Sutta** and offered the merits to deity **Sumana Saman**. I prayed that I need to descend down hence clear the road as I may come across attack from wild animals. Within five minutes from then the fog was completely disappeared. The road then was clearly visible. Once again chanting **pirith** I set on foot down on the Erathna road.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

Having lived in jungles and meditated on and off like this; he was offered a grand opportunity to perform a meritorious deed. That is to offer an organ of his body to a needy in alms. It happened so like this.

I visited the centre for meditation at **Dikhena, Polgasowita** for my meditation. That centre was managed by a committee headed by one **Bhikkhu Dhammarathana**. One day when I was at the **Simāmālaka** where the Tripitaka, relics and other valuables were kept and the place of the meeting of higher ordained Buddhist monks for discipline procedures, one Bhikkhu approached me. What he informed me was that there is a seriously ill patient ailing from weakened kidneys, in order to save the patient there exist a grand opportunity where I could donate one kidney. What surfaced in my mind was that;

“Yes..! I got two kidneys...hence I can spare one and offer in alms for this patient”.

The patient was a fifty year old Catholic woman. Her name was **Seline Pāris**. She was a teacher in profession. What I saw was that her eyes were filled with some gel which looked like **aloe vera**. She was mentally collapsed and nearing the death and when I saw her I determined to donate one of my kidneys. As per the discussions held there, subsequently I visited **Sri Jayawardenapura** general hospital and sought advice from **Dr. Chula Herath**. He treated me very kindly and wished me as well.

The grafting of the kidney was to happen at the **Wellington Hospital** in **Madras**. I had to remain two months in that hospital. The necessary laboratory tests and experiments were happening slowly. I could hear Madame Pāris crying for a drop of water.

“Madame...! You need not worry... It’s just few days more for my kidney to be grafted on to you. Once it’s done you may be able to drink any amount of water”, I comforted her.

For them my life was a huge strength. The operation for removal and affixation of the Kidney was performed on the 04th January 1996. When they were transporting me on a stretcher to the operation theatre, I disowned my life as a whole.

“I firmly held in my mind that in case I do not survive as a result of this transplant of kidney, let this offer in alms as a meritorious deed causes me to comprehend the Four Noble Truths”. Until I was made unconscious I was on that stern wish.

When I regained consciousness I was under tremendous agony. What I could vaguely remember was that I had been groaning slowly. **Bhikku Kithulampitiye Vipularansi** travelled to India to look after me. As I was in dire pain it took certain time for them to regain my consciousness. Within two days of the operation, I managed to

comprehend that this pain was a cause of “**phassa**” viz. contact. Nevertheless at some point in time however much injections of painkillers were administered, the limitless and unbearable pain owing to the trapped air in the lower abdomen area could not be subsided. Had I carried some sharp object, my mind was so rigid at that time; I could have cut the abdomen muscles. With further two painkiller injections, I started revisiting Dhamma in mind. I could catch sleep. That was a very peaceful and healthy sleep. I saw a dream while in sleep. There was a glowing white colour huge Stupa in dark blue sky. Six colour Buddhist flags were flying in the sky. The pleasant sounds carrying “**Buddham Saranam Gaccāmi**” could be heard from all directions. I was in the sky too in an unmatched bubbling exultation; I caught a picture of the Stupa with my camera. When I woke up all pains were totally disappeared. From that moment onwards I had no serious pain. Being on a drip for five days, I stayed in the hospital for further five days. After all that I could come to Sri Lanka peacefully. This story was published in the papers as a mere coincidence. One devotee by the name **Chandrarathna** who happened to read this paper article from **Panadura** area who manages an organization called “**Vira podujana padanama**” which had been established to bestow honours had picked up me. The **Readers Digest** was also interested in this and following an interview published same in one of their volumes.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Nānānanda.

After some time following this incident the commencement of the Mahamevnawa Forest monastery for meditation which is well known locally and internationally as at now was launched. Even how that happened was wonderful as well. Every turning point which happened miraculously and totally unprecedented in his life had been for the advancement of the Buddhist order and also him as well. Being resolute and

unwavering in front of all hurdles and debacles and distributing proper and unadulterated Buddhist discourses to the world, the Venerable Bhikkhu Ñānānanda goes on to explicitly describe how the sun, the Mahamevnawa Forest monastery complex which ordain virtuous Sangha who are strictly and obediently following the path to nibbana as per the Buddha's sermons dawned in the sky.

One day **Venerable Bhikkhu Kotapola Amarakitti**, the chief sangha of the **Seruwila Buddhist centre** happened to call me.

“Ñānānanda, we have to visit one place tomorrow...You must accompany us...” I agreed.

Somewhere in June 1999 in the company of Bhikkhu Kotapola Amarakitti, Seruwila chief Bhikkhu and few other Bhikkhus I reached a remote land by the name **Kendagolla watta** situated in **Waduwwa, Polgahawela**. It was totally a cut off land with absolutely no access facility. With the permission of the neighbours we all reached the place having accessed from other lands. What was there to be held was a foundation laying occasion. It was unknown to me until that moment. Bhikkhu Amarakitti offered me something to be held in my hands. After that he said that;

“Ñānānanda..!...Please install this first stone in this place with your hands....Please do accept this place and go forward within your capability”.

At that moment of laying, the stone what I envisaged was let some Sangha who shine the Buddhist order emerge from here only. Afterwards I acknowledged the challenge. This was started with few huts and the place was named as **Mahamevnawa** with a wider

perspective. What **Arahant Mahinda** installed at the Mahamevnawa garden was the Buddhist order. The name Mahamevnawa was specifically selected aiming a long term vision that a great organization which propagates the satisfying and rewarding message of the Buddhist order be developed in this particular place. Thereafter gradually the voice of above message started spreading. This institute which was started on the 14th August 1999 became one of the leading organizations in a very short span of time which symbolize the Gautama Buddhist Order of Sri Lanka. The Dhamma service which was originated with a handful of people propagated in to minds of so many uncountable numbers of people. Very young people who look forward to comprehensive understanding of life signifying the great age of the Buddhist order were drawn in to Mahamevnawa.

With all my energy and dedication I launched in to instilling required discipline in Bhikkhus either in novice or ordained virtues required with all my honest heart. Over the time the Mahamevnawa broadened and proliferated spreading its wings just like a massive banyan tree all over Sri Lanka.

“Sathya soya yama” - The autobiography of Bhikkhu Ñānānanda.

As at now hundred thousands of lay people are in strong association with us listening to Dhamma and meditating and the Mahamevnawa monastery for meditation which commenced its operation in few huts have expanded up to thirty five operating centres. Currently the Mahamevnawa Forest Monastery has started propagating beyond the seas and our inaugural branch overseas was opened recently in Canada. Already operating centres have come up in USA, Germany and India. It's most assured that another operating centre will spring up in Australia too. Overall in all the monasteries under Mahamevnawa, there are three hundred and fifty odd

Bhikkhus who follow Dhamma-Vinaya while instilling virtues, concentration and wisdom under the guidance of Most Venerable Bhikkhu Ñānānanda looking forward to accomplish supreme Nibbana and further to that there exist fifty odd women ascetics in Mahamevnawa Anagārikā Nun's Monastery.

With the invention of this invaluable institute of Mahamevnawa Forest Monastery, the Venerable Bhikkhu Ñānānanda has added another great service by authoring many books explaining the Buddha discourses. It's unbelievable to know that he has published more than hundred books of that calibre and it's heartening to know that he is still actively engaged in it. Further to that there are more than two hundred cassettes and CD's including sermons of Venerable Bhikkhu Ñānānanda recorded which are very popular with faithful people. While devoted in above mentioned extensive and involving religious work, he has set his foot on another matchless mission of translating Buddha discourses which includes the Buddha's invaluable exact words. As at now he has completed translating Sutta Pitaka, Majjhima Nikāya-01, Majjhima Nikāya - 02, Samutta Nikāya - 01, Samutta Nikāya - 02, Sammutta Nikāya - 03, Samutta Nikāya - 04, Khuddaka Nikāya - 01, Vimāna vattu, Petha Vattu, Sutta Nipātha, Tera gātha, Teri gātha, Digha Nikāya - 01, Anguttara Nikāya 01 and Bhikkhu Pātimokkha from Vinaya Pitaka in to easy and simple Sinhala.

In this way the multifaceted organization of Mahamevnawa monastery for meditation, for the benefit of Sinhala speaking Buddhists living all over the world has incorporated a web site by the name www.mahamevna.org

Treading further in this concept of Most Venerable Bhikkhu Ñānānanda, another website www.buddhavision.com exclusively in English has also been integrated as a growth of his invaluable service of Dhamma. Through this website all who converse in English can obtain the books, Dhamma discourses of him in the future.

Hence always be linked to BuddhaVision.

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“Oh Bhikkhu...! Please listen extending your ears. I have accomplished that Supreme Nibbana. I shall explain you....I shall sermonize...

When you clearly and dedicatedly follow my advice, if for some genuine reason some faithful young people abandoning their homes come and enter the Buddhist order, that Supreme Arahant hood can be attained in this life cycle and live in same... ”.

(The Lord Buddha – Mahāvagga pāli – Vinaya pitaka)

“OH..!.Subhadra, if these Bhikkhus live exactly in accordance with how I have advocated them, this world shall never be void of Arahants... ”.

(The Lord Buddha - Mahā Parinibbāna sutta - Digha Nikāya)

“Oh..!.. Ananda...! After my “Parinibbāna” viz. absolute extinction, you may feel as follows. This Dhamma does belong to one who is in the history now...There is no great teacher for us now...”

“Oh..! Ananda...! Never, you think in those terms. Ananda..! Whatever Dhamma I have discoursed by then and whatever accord of discipline I have laid down by then shall stand as the ultimate sage cum teacher for all of you...”

(The Lord Buddha - Maha Parinibbana sutta - Deegha Nikaya)

