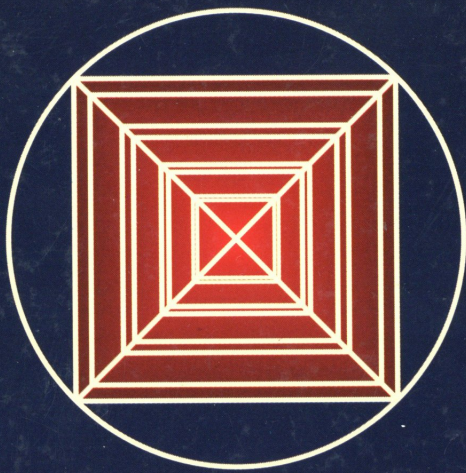


MOTHERCARE and PARENTING: Key to Social Structuring



by
G.K. ANANDA KUMARASIRI



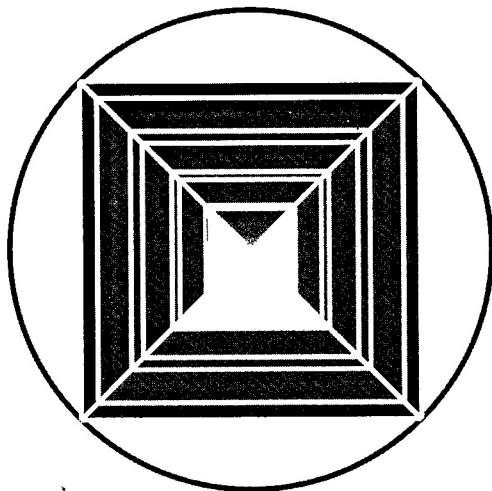


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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated with *mettā* (unconditional friendliness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (altruistic or sympathetic joy) and *upekkhā* (equanimity) to my beloved late mother, Madam Paragoda Udugampala Leelawathie; my loving wife and foremost friend for over thirty years, Asoka Senviratne; my dearest, darling daughter, Prasadani and all girls and women around the world, irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, religion or social status.

SUKHĪ HOTU!

(MAY YOU BE HAPPY AND WELL ALWAYS!)

COVER DESIGN

The cover design incorporates symbols connected with key concepts on human life and society. The circle represents the *saṅgha* (four-fold community) ideal of a close-knit community. It also stands for *saṃsāra* (cycle of birth, death and rebirth). The eye of the circle marks the birth of a child who is to be nurtured in accordance with the principles and practices of *Gabbhaparihāra* (protection and development of the foetus) and groomed skilfully by the parents from infancy.

The bird's-eye impression of the symmetrical pyramid portrays a healthy and cohesive society that is firmly bound together by contented and happy families. Its different hues of red convey the message that despite its heterogeneous nature, a peaceful and harmonious society is possible. Red reminds us that all living beings bleed red and that, *"we are all born of a woman."*

The lotus represents a profound lesson regarding personal development. Our lives are rooted in a mire of defilements. However, we can develop and purify our mind to rise above them and remain unpolluted, serene, beautiful and fragrant, just as the lovely lotus rises above the murky, filthy water in which it grows. Thus, the captivating lotus has remained a motif to represent the Buddhist ideal of personal perfection and purity that one can achieve through self-reliance and self-effort, here and now, in this life.

The two gentle hands holding the magnificent lotus is the humble act of *"pūja"* (pious offering) in which spirit this book is offered. Hopefully, it will inspire the reader to work towards his or her happiness, well-being and success, and simultaneously, foster a wholesome family that is essential for promoting a harmonious and progressive society.

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FOREWORD

I am delighted to write a Foreword for this landmark book for a number of significant reasons. Firstly, Dato' Professor Dr G.K. Ananda Kumarasiri's book on mothercare and parenting is certainly a creditable accomplishment. Secondly, it is most timely in view of the unprecedented social ills and crimes we witness around the world today. Thirdly, to the best of my knowledge, a comprehensive work on mothercare and parenting of this nature has not been undertaken hitherto. Fourthly, his insight on human development and behaviour has direct relevance to contemporary society. This no doubt helps to dispel misconceptions, unfounded beliefs and dogmas which impede the creation of stable societies.

Among other things, the book points out the root cause of unprecedented social ills and crimes today. It highlights the need to adopt a proactive and holistic approach to mothercare and parenting as the cornerstone of social structuring. The importance of providing spiritual fortification to help mothers go through childbearing and nursing their newborn baby with confidence and courage is rightly stressed.

As in the case of his previous books, Dato' Dr Kumarasiri has maintained a diagnostic approach. This is evidenced in his critical observations and objective analyses of issues as well as the corrective measures recommended. I feel sure that his work will be enthusiastically welcomed, particularly by those involved in the fields of social science, education and human resource management. Political and religious leaders, decision-makers and administrators involved in addressing challenges and opportunities in social development will also benefit greatly from his insight.

Above all, parents, regardless of their religion, social background or cultural orientation are bound to gain from the wealth of ideas covered on adopting a proactive and holistic approach to mothercare. Parents would also be better equipped to cope with the important task of nurturing their childrens' emotional, mental and spiritual development as well as in moulding their personality and character as they learn and adjust to the fast-moving world.

Faithful adherence to the principles and life-ideals advanced in the book would help to promote healthy human development and ensure happiness, peace and harmony in the family as well as in society – regardless of the readers' religious beliefs, gender, race or social status.

I have no hesitation in recommending this remarkable book as a must-read text.

Bootawatte Saranankara
Nayaka Mahā Thera
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2nd February 2007

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ambassador Dato' Dr G.K. Ananda Kumarasiri has had a distinguished diplomatic career (1966-1995) which included the rare distinction of setting up and heading the Centre for International Relations and Strategic Studies (1979-1981) for the Malaysian public service. The assignment stimulated his interest in education, human resource development and training technology. He was appointed High Commissioner to Nigeria in 1984 and retired as Director-General ASEAN in 1995.

Dato' Dr G.K. Ananda Kumarasiri has carved a niche for himself in espousing the concept of "*Living Buddhism*" by emphasising the practice and practical application of the Buddha's Teachings in daily life. His landmark books include:

My First Word Book: Buddhist Pedagogical Approach

A Compendium of Buddhist Personal Names: Heritage and Significance of Adoption

Living Buddhism: The Way Forward

Living Buddhism: Advancing from Knowing to Being

My Alphabet Book: Buddhist Pedagogical Approach

The Terrifying Drug Menace: Relevance and Role of Buddhism

Welcoming the Birth of a Child

Āṅgulimāla

Mātū-Posaka: A Paragon of Filial Piety

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In embarking on this study, I have had the good fortune of receiving assistance from a number of persons to all of whom I wish to record my sincere appreciation. I will remain forever grateful for the help they had so willingly and generously extended. There are too many of them to list individually. I would, however, like to specially recognise Ms Toh Gaik Hoon, Prof A. Jayasuriya, Ms Hema Cheah Saw Lin, Dr Premadasa Udu-gama, Mr Vincent Pandita, Mr Vijaya Samarawickrama, Mr N.B. Dayananda, Ms Prasadani Abeyagunawardene, Ms Helen Chuah Lok and Dr Goon Meng Soon, for going through the text and proffering valuable suggestions and improvements.

I wish to also place on record my profound appreciation to Ms Visaka Fang, Mr Chew Beng Hock, Mr Cheng Meng Fatt, Mr Ajita Szetoo Yu Ming and Ms Kalyani Low Cheng Ngoh for helping out so diligently in the demanding task of preparing the final text for print. Without their commitment it would have surely taken me many more months to complete this book.

It has also been my good fortune to have been extended all manner of encouragement and support from the dedicated President Ir Chim Siew Choon and committee members of the Subang Jaya Buddhist Association and other *kalyānamittas* (virtuous friends) from the *vihāra*. To all of them I wish to say a very big *Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!* (excellent).

I will indeed be remiss if I fail to acknowledge the many sacrifices my dear wife, Asoka, and my children, Priyantha, Prasadani and Sanjaya have all had to bear with as a result of my preoccupation with writing this book. Their moral support has helped, in great measure, to sustain my efforts to complete the

text in the quickest possible time. I will be forever indebted to them for their love and compassion. Their understanding and patience have indeed served to strengthen the resolve to fulfil my *Dhammaduta* (Envoy of the Dhamma) aspiration through this publication.

Sukhī Hotu

G.K. Ananda Kumarasiri

16th February 2007

DIACRITICAL GUIDE

The Pāli alphabet consists of 41 letters, 8 vowels and 33 consonants.

Vowels

a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, e, o

Consonants

Gutturals	k, kh, g, gh, ṅ
Palatels	c, ch, j, jh, ñ
Cerebrals	ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ
Dentals	t, th, d, dh, n
Labials	p, ph, b, bh, m
Miscellaneous	y, r, l, v, s, h, ḷ, ṃ

The vowels a, i, u, are short; ā, ī, ū are long; e, o are of middle length. They are pronounced short before double consonants, e.g. *mettā, khetta, koṭṭha, sotthi*; and long before single consonants, e.g. *deva, senā, loka, odana*.

PRONUNCIATION

a	is	pronounced	like	u	in	cut
ā	"	pronounced	"	a	"	father
i	"	pronounced	"	i	"	mill
ī	"	pronounced	"	ee	"	bee
ū	"	pronounced	"	u	"	put
û	"	pronounced	"	oo	"	cool
k	"	pronounced	"	k	"	kite
g	"	pronounced	"	g	"	good
ñ	"	pronounced	"	ng	"	singer
c	"	pronounced	"	ch	"	church
j	"	pronounced	"	j	"	jam
ñ	"	pronounced	"	gn	"	signor
ţ	"	pronounced	"	t	"	hat
đ	"	pronounced	"	d	"	good
ŋ	"	pronounced	"	n	"	now
t	"	pronounced	"	th	"	thumb
d	"	pronounced	"	th	"	they
n	"	pronounced	"	n	"	now
p	"	pronounced	"	p	"	put
b	"	pronounced	"	b	"	but
m	"	pronounced	"	m	"	mind
y	"	pronounced	"	y	"	yes
r	"	pronounced	"	r	"	right
l	"	pronounced	"	l	"	light
v	"	pronounced	"	v	"	vine
s	"	pronounced	"	s	"	sing
h	"	pronounced	"	h	"	hot
l	"	pronounced	"	l	"	light
ŋ	"	pronounced	"	ng	"	sing

kh, gh, ch, jh, ʒh, đh, ʒh, dh, ph, bh are aspirate consonants which have to be pronounced with an audible breath.

Pali and Sanskrit Glossary

Abhidhamma The Third Basket of the *Tipitaka* (The Buddhist Canon). It is fundamentally an analysis of the mind and matter and their inter-related processes based on a comprehensive systematisation of the Buddha's Teachings that combines philosophy, psychology and ethics.

ācariya teacher; tutor or instructor

adosa non-hate; kindness

akālika timeless relevance or application

akusala unwholesome or demeritorious

akusala kamma unwholesome thought, speech or action

alobha non-greed

amoha non-delusion

Ānāpānasati mindfulness; Buddhist meditation practice concentrating on one's breath

anicca doctrine of the impermanence of all things

apāya state of woe or hell; demon or animal realms

Arahant a liberated person who has eradicated all defilements; saint

ariya noble person, one who has attained any of the four stages of enlightenment/sainthood, that is, the stages of *sotāpatti*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi* and *arahant*

bala power

Bhante Venerable Sir (used to address a monk)

bhāvanā cultivation of a wholesome mental culture; meditation

bhikkhu Buddhist monk

bhikkhunī Buddhist nun

bhisakko doctor, physician

bodhi Enlightenment, Awakening

Bodhisatta (Sanskrit: *Bodhisattva*) one aspiring to be a Buddha.

Bodhi-tree The “*Tree of Enlightenment*” under which the Buddha meditated and attained Supreme Enlightenment

Brahmā supreme being; Creator of the Universe (according to Hindu mythology) Creator God

Brahmavihāra Sublime mental states, Heavenly Abodes, Supreme Dwellings

Buddha The Enlightened One; The Awakened One¹

Buddhasāsana The Buddha’s Dispensation

cetanā volition

cetasika mental factor

citta mind or thought

cuti citta last thought moment before death

dāna giving, generosity, charity; an offering of food or other requisites

devā celestial being, deity or god

devaloka heavenly realm

devī female deity

Dhamma (Sanskrit: *Dharma*) Teachings of the Buddha; the Truth, doctrine, righteousness

dosa unpleasant mental state ranging from subtle dislike to intense hate or anger

dukkha unsatisfactoriness, unhappiness, physical and mental pain or suffering

ehi-passiko literally means, “*come and see*,” a phrase used to underline the scientific and rational foundations of the Buddha’s Teachings for one to critically examine

Gabbhaparihāra protection and nurturing of the foetus

Gandabba life-force that is to be conceived in a mother’s womb

gāthā hymn or song

indriya a powerful positive faculty of the mind

jāti birth

jarā-maraṇa old age and death

kalyānamitta (Sanskrit: *kalyāṇīmittra*) virtuous friend who leads you along the righteous path

kāma sense-based pleasures, sensuality

kamma (Sanskrit: *karma*) action, deed. The Law of Kamma – the universal or natural law of the consequences resulting from one’s thoughts, actions and speech

karuṇā compassion

lobha mental state of craving or greed

magga path, way

Mahāyāna Northern tradition of Buddhism which became popular in China and the neighbouring regions

Majjhimā-paṭipadā The Middle Path or Way

mana mind

manussa human being

mettā unconditional, all-encompassing friendliness, goodwill

micchādiṭṭhi wrong view or practice

mitta friend

moha ignorance, delusion

muditā sympathetic or appreciative joy derived from others' success, well-being and happiness

nāma mental factors

Nibbāna (Sanskrit; *Nirvana*) the Buddhist *summum bonum*

Pañcakkhandā Five Aggregates comprising matter, sensation, perception, mental activity and consciousness

paññā (Sanskrit: *prajñā*) insight, wisdom

paṭisandhi citta re-linking consciousness

pāramī meritorious deed that will conduce to the attainment of Enlightenment

Parinibbāna final passing away of a Buddha, a Pacceka Buddha or an Arahant

paritta protective *sutta*

piṭaka literally means basket; collection of palm leaf manuscripts on which Theravada Buddhist scriptures were first written and forms a major component of Buddhist scriptures

pūjā devotional offering

rūpa corporeality; physical form or body

saddhā (Sanskrit: *śraddhā*) confidence based on Right Understanding; faith predicated on knowledge as opposed to blind faith

samādhi mental discipline; concentration attained through higher meditation

samagga the ideal of kinship

samaṇa renunciate who wishes to pursue a spiritual life

sāmaṇera novice monk in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.

Samatha tranquility meditation practice

Sammā-ditṭhi Right Understanding or Right View

Sammāsambuddha The Buddha, i.e. One who after innumerable lifetimes of perfecting *pārāmīs*, attains Supreme Enlightenment and teaches the *Dhamma* for the benefit of all humankind

saṃsāra cycle of birth, death and rebirth; continuity of one's existence

saṅgha fourfold community comprising *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*, who have renounced a household life, and *upāsikās* (female) and *upāsakas* (male) lay followers.

Sāsana Dispensation of the Buddha

sīla virtue, moral integrity

sutta (Sanskrit: *sutra*) discourse, sermon of the Buddha presented in verse

taṇhā craving, desire

Tathāgata One who has arrived at the Truth, a term generally used by the Buddha to refer to Himself as a Teacher

Theravāda System of original teachers, or School of the Elders, used in referring to the orthodox form of Buddhist practice followed mainly in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Bangladesh

Tipiṭaka literally meaning the “Three Baskets” that form the full set of *piṭakas* (canonical Theravāda scriptures), comprising the *Vinayapiṭaka*, *Suttapiṭaka* and *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*

Ti-ratana Buddhist trinity comprising the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Mahā Saṅgha* (Bhikkhu and Bhikkhunī Orders)

upāsaka Buddhist layman

upāsika Buddhist laywoman

upekkhā equanimity

vihāra monastery or temple

vinaya discipline; the monastic rules and regulations for monks and nuns; one of the three *piṭakas*

vedanā sensation, feeling

Vipassanā insight into conditioned phenomena; seeing things as they really are; mindfulness meditation practice

viññāṇa consciousness

vipāka result, consequence

virīya positive energy, resolute effort

PREFACE

Humankind has achieved unprecedented progress in the scientific and technological fields, especially over the past five decades. However, in terms of moral values, attitudes and behaviour, the profile is one for serious concern. The twin pillars of society namely, the institutions of marriage and family have been sharply eroded. This has led to social instability. The essence of humanism is fast disappearing as a result of people being concerned with only their narrow personal interests. The accumulation of material wealth and power has overridden the cultivation of moral values as the top priority in life. Yet, it cannot be said with any conviction that modern society has found the lasting happiness and inner peace that it longs for.

The frightening erosion of humanism and its consequent deterioration of moral and social values represent a serious and urgent problem. Harmony and peace are scarce everywhere. Societies are plagued by cankerous divisions, distrust and violence that need urgent attention. All manner and forms of socially destructive forces are being unleashed every day. Alarming accounts on social and moral decadence are reported in the mass media daily. The extent of social ills and the increasingly violent nature of social crimes have reached a point that many wonder whether there can ever be a return to normalcy and peace. We need to prevent society's moral fabric from being destroyed irrevocably and with devastating consequences.

Most societies today are sufficiently endowed with social infrastructures. They are vested with a sizeable intelligentsia, a good pool of professionals and capable political, religious and

community leaders. In addition, they have sophisticated legal and administrative systems and structures. But despite the abundant resources and scientific and technological advancements, modern societies generally lack social cohesion. A disturbing fact is that no comprehensive strategy is in place to arrest the ever-rising tide of deviant human behaviour such as rape, incest, teenage pregnancies, abandoned babies, drug abuse, gangsterism, delinquency and child prostitution.

Developing a Wholesome Mental Self-Culture

The author contends that an untrained and uncultured mind is the root cause of deviant thinking and behaviours plaguing contemporary society. Social structure refers to the patterns of relationships between individuals based on inter-related statuses, responsibilities and roles. Taking the family as a social unit or group, we then have the individual status of the wife, husband, daughter or son who collectively fulfil their respective and reciprocal duties, responsibilities and roles. The challenge of social structuring is to nurture a wholesome mental self-culture in people. This would prevent mental defilements such as *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (hatred) and *moha* (delusion) from defiling people's minds. Mental cultivation would ensure a greater sense of humanism, understanding, tolerance, goodwill, peace and harmony. Society can then expect its citizens to be responsible in their thinking and behaviour and live contented and purposeful lives.

The point to note here is that there is life before the birth of a baby and that the mind begins to function from the foetal stage. It is influenced significantly while forming in the mother's womb and during the infant years, well before a child begins formal education. The development of the mind during this important formative period has a direct and profound influence on moul-

ding the way of thinking, speech and behaviour of the child and ultimately, the adult. This being the reality, parents should begin to nurture in their child a wholesome mind from the foetal stage. Equally important, they should skilfully bring up the infant through effective parental guidance and education in a conducive social, cultural and spiritual environment at home.

Unfortunately, most parents are ill-equipped to fulfil their responsibilities and role with respect to nurturing their baby before birth. They are primarily concerned with the physical growth of the foetus. Many are not aware of the importance of nurturing the emotional, psychological and spiritual development of their yet-to-be-born baby. A sound knowledge of, and a firm commitment to, nurturing the life before birth is important. This involves not merely providing adequate nourishment and physical comforts for the expectant mother but also ensuring her emotional, psychological and spiritual fortification and that of the unborn baby. Coinage of the term “*mothercare*” in this book is precisely aimed at emphasising the “*care*” aspect to motherhood that is to be conscientiously extended to an expectant mother and the unborn baby by all concerned persons, especially the husband and immediate family members. The same can be said with regard to parenting. Most parents tend to overlook, even neglect, their responsibility to nurture their child’s mind during the crucial infant years. Parents should painstakingly ingrain humane sentiments and values in their child from infancy. When parents succeed in inculcating in their children a wholesome mental self-culture, we can expect healthy human development and for society to be cohesive, harmonious and peaceful.

A critical starting point for ensuring healthy human development that is essential for social cohesion, peace and harmony is to adopt a proactive and holistic approach to mothercare and

parenting. Husbands and wives should be properly educated and guided in parenthood. For its part, society should rightly treat the two basic responsibilities of mothercare and parenting as the cornerstone of human development and social structuring.

The birth of a baby brings forth a great sense of joy to the parents. Likewise, parenting which is aimed at bringing up a healthy, well-mannered and responsible child, can be quite a delightful and a rewarding undertaking. Once the interesting and challenging formative infant years are past, parents will have lost the opportunity to mould their child into a wholesome human being. Against this backdrop, the author provides an insight into the spiritual and rich cultural heritage in holistic mothercare and parenting that is found in Buddhism.

The vital ingredients for enjoying a happy married life and fostering a wholesome family that is necessary for ensuring a peaceful and harmonious society were extensively dealt with by the Buddha. Similarly, important principles and practices connected with mothercare and the upbringing of a child are stressed in Buddhist scriptures and literature. These can be adopted and adapted with positive results by anyone, including those professing other faiths as they transcend religious beliefs. Of primary importance are Buddhist principles and practices that provide spiritual fortification for an expectant mother to confidently fulfil her sacred mission to procreate. Spiritual support also promotes a favourable *'foetal environment'* for the physical growth as well as the mental, emotional and psychological development of her yet unborn baby. In addition, Buddhist thought on conception, birth and rebirth promote healthy relationships in the family and society. These Teachings of the Buddha, in fact represent an invaluable framework for

healthy human development and to forge sound and stable societies.

A Plea for Open-mindedness

Human development and social structuring have been adversely influenced by unfounded dogmas, prejudices and misconceptions. In the interests of developing a rational approach to social structuring, beliefs that impede the attainment of sound and stable societies ought to be reformulated. We need to outgrow our biased mindsets. Only then can we evaluate objectively and rationally, misguided beliefs and practices that have been handed down from past generations. A number of fundamental questions readily come to mind in this regard: Is society ready for a drastic reorientation of mindset to promote a genuine sense of humanism? Can we free ourselves from parochial, self-serving interests? Do we have the courage of conviction, intellectual honesty and integrity to adopt objective and balanced strategies and measures for human development and social structuring? These critical questions need to be addressed if future generations are to live purposeful lives and create healthy societies.

A pathway to intellectual freedom, honesty and integrity is readily found in Buddhist culture and civilisation. It is a tribute to Buddhism that, in the course of its over 2,500 years history, not a drop of blood has been spilled to spread the Buddha's Teachings. Important lessons can be drawn from the gentle, humane and peace-generating characteristics of Buddhism and its culture and history. Moreover, from the Buddhist standpoint, human beings have the capacity and capability to inquire and investigate independently any belief rationally, arrive at a right understanding and act intelligently upon it. It is in this spirit that the reader is urged to adopt an open mind and evaluate

objectively the numerous issues and remedial measures proffered at the conclusion of this book.

A Buddhist Perspective

This book provides a Buddhist viewpoint to mothercare and parenting in the context of human development and social structuring. In order to better appreciate the Buddhist perspective, it would be helpful for the reader to first understand what the terms “*Buddhism*” and “*Buddhist*” connote. This has become necessary because the religion conjures different impressions to different people due to the lack of a proper understanding of what the Buddha taught. The term “*Buddhism*” is an Anglicised word that was coined by the English-speaking world to refer to the Buddha’s Teachings. The English coinage was simplistically derived by affixing the suffix “*ism*” on to the term “*Buddha*”, in the same way as the English did with regard to the terms socialism, humanitarianism, capitalism and so on. Those who embraced the Buddha’s Teachings were hence referred to as “*Buddhists*”.

A technically correct and preferred term, used since the time of the Buddha, to refer to His Teachings, is “*Buddha Dhamma*”, or simply, the “*Dhamma*”. In Pāli (the language in which the Buddhist Canon and scriptures were propagated and preserved) the term “*Dhamma*”, or its Sanskrit equivalent “*Dharma*”, is derived from the root word “*dhar*”, which means, “*That which supports*”, or “*The reality*”, or the “*Truth*”. The *Dhamma* is a Universal Doctrine the Buddha taught which is *akālika* (of timeless relevance and application) to humankind. It is predicated on the realities of life and that of nature around us on which the welfare, and indeed, the very survival of all life forms rest. It would be more appropriate to refer to those who follow the Buddha’s Teachings, as “*Dharmaputras*” and

“*Dharmaputris*”, meaning sons and daughters, respectively, who follow the *Dhamma*. The hybrid Pāli-Sanskrit coinage, “*Dhammaputra*” and “*Dhammaputri*” would also be acceptable.

The English term “*Buddhism*” was obviously coined without a clear understanding of the honorific “*Buddha*”, meaning the “*Enlightened One*” or the “*Awakened One*”. The term “*Buddha*” is not a proper name but a spiritual title reserved for the One who has attained Buddhahood or Supreme Enlightenment, that is, the realisation (*dassana*) of the *Dhamma*. The appellation “*Buddha*” denotes a religious Teacher who has attained Supreme Enlightenment. There have been many such great Teachers in Buddhist cosmology since time immemorial.

From a historical perspective, Siddhattha Gotama (Sanskrit: Siddhārtha Gautama) is the founder of the spiritual tradition known today as Buddhism and is honoured as the historical Buddha. The Buddha’s insightful wisdom is a supreme spiritual achievement attained not by mere chance or coincidence. Rather, His Enlightenment was the product of a sustained and resolute determination. His spiritual quest represents an indefatigable self-effort to perfect virtues and purify the mind. Significantly, the Buddha never referred to Himself by His spiritual title. Instead, He used the term “*Tathāgata*”, meaning, “*One who has arrived at the Truth.*”

The Buddha discovered and taught a way to wholesome living for all humankind. He is not to be regarded as a supernatural being. Neither is He regarded a Son of God, or a Messenger of God, or a Prophet. He was a “*highly developed being*” who, through self-effort, totally liberated Himself. He was also a master physician and psychologist *par excellence* (*Bhisakko*) who showed the Noble Path to realise happiness, well-being and success in this very life. Buddhists, and millions of non-

Buddhists alike, openly respect the Buddha as a compassionate and Enlightened spiritual leader. He is universally acknowledged as the peerless Teacher, Trainer and Communicator.

Universal Relevance and Application

The terms “*Buddhism*” and “*Buddhist*”, unfortunately, have become labels to distinguish the Buddha’s Teachings and the community of followers as a specific religious group respectively. They tend to infer that the religion is exclusive to a particular community. This is grossly incorrect, for Buddhism certainly does not apply only to a specific community. Rather, the Buddha’s Teachings are of universal relevance and application. The use of the terms “*Buddhism*” and “*Buddhist*” as religious labels tends to deny the universal validity and timeless relevance of the *Dhamma* the Buddha taught. However, for practical considerations, it is convenient to continue to use them because they are easily recognised and are already widely used in English.

In its essence, Buddhism provides a realistic and effective framework for humankind to live a noble and contented life and enjoy real and lasting happiness. The Buddha’s sole motive was to alleviate the plight of humanity. He expounded a wholesome way of thinking and living that is eminently applicable to all human beings. His Teachings are especially meaningful to our contemporary high-pressured world where people live hurried lives and are uncertain of how to cope with the ever-mounting demands and stresses they encounter daily. By His life-example, the Buddha taught us to develop our spirituality by cultivating our mind and eradicating it of de-filements. If we were to remove the religious labels “*Buddhism*” and “*Buddhist*” and objectively examine the Buddha’s Teachings, we will find a comprehensive and effective framework for humankind to achieve contentment and happiness.

Apart from the profound spiritual revelations and Universal Truths Buddhism embodies, one will also find within the Buddha's Teachings, a complete system of education and training for personal self-development and a way to actualise one's innate skills and talents. In addition, the Buddhist way of life is based on a sound moral and ethical code which ensures the well-being of oneself and one's family. On a wider social-achieving scale, Buddhism provides a realistic framework for realising universally sought objectives such as mutual understanding, tolerance, patience, goodwill and peace, essential for fostering stable societies.

Common Heritage of Humankind

The *Dhamma* the Buddha discovered and taught is based on the cumulative experience of humankind. In this sense, Buddhism is to be regarded as the common heritage of all humankind. The Buddha disclaimed outright any notion of monopoly over the *Dhamma*. The forty-five-years He spent in dispensing the *Dhamma* was undertaken purely out of His *Mahākaruṇā* (All Encompassing Great Compassion) for suffering humanity. He repeatedly declared that anyone, including those belonging to other religions, can practise the *Dhamma* and benefit greatly from it here and now. This is because in essence, Buddhism calls on us, *“To avoid evil thoughts and actions; to do what is good; and to purify our mind.”*

The thrust of Buddhism is the cultivation of a wholesome mental self-culture essential for personal development and happiness. Objective analysis and dispassionate judgment are fundamental to Buddhism. The Buddha was rational in His thinking and approach to spiritual as well as temporal matters. He maintained that a person should accept a doctrine or belief only after proper investigation. This means that the *Dhamma* must firstly be

A landmark book on holistic parenthood that everyone should be familiar with. It provides an excellent guide to nurturing a child from the foetal stage and a deep insight into human development, thinking and behaviour that directly addresses the serious exacerbation of social ills and crimes in societies. The author's comprehensive framework for developing a wholesome mental self-culture will certainly enhance innate talents and skills in children and foster happy, responsible and peace-loving future generations.

Saranankara Nayaka Thera, Malaysia.

This well-researched book is a complete guide for all adults. It provides comprehensive scientific and medical explanations about the physical, and equally important, the mental and spiritual development of a child from conception. Without question, this masterful scholarship is an invaluable reference regarding motherhood and parenting.

Helen Lok, Associate Professor, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.

A firm believer in the importance of the family for effective nurturing of the young, Dato' Dr G.K. Ananda Kumarasiri has written several books on the subject. This latest effort is especially useful to guide newly married couples for parenthood, in particular to adopt a pro-active and holistic approach to motherhood and parenting, according to ancient time-tested principles.

Vijaya Samarawickrama, Taylor's College, Malaysia.

A very timely treatise which pays tribute to women who have contributed tremendously to society through their feminine role of nurturing and caring. This book serves as an inspiration and reminder that men and women have their respective roles to play, of nurturing the present and future generations

Dr. Chan Kah Yin, INTI University College, Malaysia.