

**The Chief Female Benefactor
“Visakha”
Withakhar Yahan Ah Ma**



Generosity will carry us to Deva world

**Compiled for the Serene Joys and Emotion of the Pious
A Gift of Dhamma**

PREFACE

There are many rich and intellectuals who have good and wealthy lives; they said as long as we do not harm others and not caused harms to others, this is the best way to live. This is the wrong view. Buddha therefore expounded the *Noble Eightfold Path- Maggin Shit Par*. He started the Noble Eightfold Path with the: The Right View – *Samma Ditthi*.

Buddha said that we all sentient beings are living in the vicious round of rebirths – *Samsara* – the cycle of births and rebirths incessantly, until one is liberated from the Samsara, he ends the round of rebirths. *The belief that there is only one life to live; and that there are no more lives to live after this is the wrong view.*

Buddha said, before we are liberated from the Samsara, our journey is a long and tedious with many pits and pot holes on the road; there are many lives to live. Living from one life to the next we could improve on our next lives by doing good meritorious deeds. It is the meritorious deeds done today that we could enjoy the fruits in our future lives to come. Believing in the Samsara is the Buddha doctrine of Patichsamupada, the dependent origination. One should have the right view in life - *Samma Ditthi – the right View.*

Only with this belief, with this right view, we will see what we need to in store for those future lives to come and with this right view we will know what we need to do in this life . Buddha said, the generosity of making offerings to Sangha, alms food, the four requisites to the Monks, building roads and bridges for the good of the many are meritorious deeds that could bear fruits immediately or in many future lives to come. The story of Visakha has many examples that we lay people could use as examples for proper living as lay Buddhist..

Buddha use Visakha as an example to illustrate that, only when we have accrued wealth of merits for the future (*the meritorious wealth that will follow us through the samsara; not the material wealth*), could we enjoy not only the stay food (the wealth from the past lives) in this life, but the rich foods for many lives to come.

Our Generosity will take us to Deva world (Heaven); we are now in an era where it is getting difficult to attain the holiness of – *Sotapanna, Sekadagami, Anagami and Arahatsip*. We are in an era where Sangha could only attain Anagami (non-returner) holiness. The most we as lay householder could gain is a place in the blissful world of Heaven. (*Nat Pyi*). At the time of Buddha, the Chief female lay disciple – *Visakha* – because of her merits from generosity, at the end of her life span of 120 years, she was reborn in the Deva world. Many are not aware of the fact of what Buddha prophesied:

- a. The first 1,000 years – age of arahat
- b. The second 1,000 years – age of arahat for those who have analytical mind

- c. **The third 1,000 years – age of anagami** – both lay and Sangha (Bhikkhu/Bhikkhuni) could gain anagami (Non-returner). We are now in this era.
- d. The fourth 1,000 years – age of Sekadagami – once-returner
- e. The fifth 1,000 years – age of Sotapanna – stream winner. At the end of this fifth 1,000 years, the teaching will disappear in this world and the world will go through the evolutionary contraction and the life span of human will be down to ten years.

Some said, to know and worry about the life after this is not practical; we are depending on the Buddha teaching and is incomprehensible by our current knowledge; and we are relying on what Buddha said on blind faith. Buddha understands that this is the way how people react to his teaching. He was hesitant at first, to preach the dhamma after he discovered it – the Four Noble truths. The Brahma who pleaded with the Buddha to preach by given the reason that there are some who have the right seeds planted in their past that could lead them to see the dhamma. Buddha therefore decided to preach the dhamma. That dhamma is the Noble eightfold path ([Dhammacakka-pavattana-sutta. SETTING IN MOTION THE WHEEL OF THE DHAMMA.](#)). As said in *Kalama sutta*, if anyone has any doubt on his teaching, he said practice it and see the result. If it is not proven to be true, don't accept my teaching.

If one says, it is impossible to recollect one's past lives by samatha meditation, let him go through the samatha Vipassana training practice. What said in the Buddha teaching could be repeated and proven to be true. Yes, divine eye could be attained through samatha Vipassana training practice. With the divine eye, once the divine channel is opened to you, one could recollect his past lives.

Generosity is easy to do if we have [Sadha](#) – volition of giving charity.

The training practice for lay householder is:

[Dana – Sila - Bhavana](#)

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The Chief Female Benefactor Visakha Withakhar Yahan Ah Ma

(Sathhadevamanusssanam)

He is the teacher of Gods and Humankind

"iti pi so bhagava araham sammasambuddho
vijjacharana sampanno sugato lokavidu anuttaro
purisa dhamma sarati satta deva manussanam
buddho bhagava ti".

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa

Buddhists Dhamma :

She explained to the adviser that the rich food her father-in-law was eating were benefits resulting from his past good deeds. As such, instead of performing wholesome deeds which would ensure continued prosperity, he was "eating stale fare".

1. The fruit of Dana (generosity)

In the City of Bhaddiya, in the kingdom of *Magadha*, there lived an extremely rich merchant named Mendaka. In a previous birth, during the time of a famine, he and his family had given their last provisions to a *Pacceka Buddha*. Resulting from this heartfelt gift, Mendaka and his family, (whom kamma had brought together again) had provisions in their home which could not be exhausted despite the fact that they still continued to practise generosity to the extreme. His son, *Dhananjaya*, and daughter-in-law, *Sumanadevi*, had an exquisitely beautiful daughter named *Visakha*. They lived in extreme wealth and comfort and were well-known for their generosity, which they practised to all.

1.1. Attain Sotapanna at Seven

One day, when Visakha was seven years old, the Buddha visited Bhaddiya with a large retinue of monks. When Mendaka heard of the Buddha's arrival he called his young granddaughter and instructed her to gather her maidservants and go out to greet the Buddha. Visakha did as she was told. She paid homage to the Buddha and prepared to listen to His teaching. The Buddha instructed Visakha on the Dhamma and established her and her entourage of 500 maidservants in the first stage of sainthood, *Sotapanna*.

Mendaka, his wife, son, daughter-in-law and many other servants of the household who were present, also attained the first stage of sainthood.

The kingdom of Magadha was ruled by the righteous King Bimbisara. *King Pasenadi* Kosala, feeling that such a generous and well-respected family would be an asset to his kingdom, asked his friend, King Bimbisara, if Dhananjaya and his family would move to Kosala where they could be an example to his subjects. King Bimbisara complied with his friend's request. Dhananjaya and his family moved to Kosala where they lived an exemplary life whilst practising the Dhamma.

“Visakha grew up in luxury with the opportunity to practise generosity and the Dhamma, to which she listened frequently.”

At that time, there lived in Savatthi a rich merchant named *Migara* who had a son named *Punnavaddhana*. Despite his parents' pleas, Punnavaddhana had refused to marry, insisting that his bride should be an exquisite beauty who possessed the five maidenly attributes:

- beauty of hair,
- teeth,
- skin,
- youth and
- form.

Her hair had to be glossy and thick, reaching down to her ankles. Her teeth had to be white and even like a row of pearls. Her skin had to be of golden hue, soft and flawless. She had to be in the peak of youth, about sixteen. She had to have a beautiful, feminine figure, not too fat and not too thin. Migara, in desperation, sent a team of Brahmins to search throughout the kingdom for one who possessed all of his son's requirements.

1.2. Lady of exquisite beauty

At this time, the exquisitely beautiful Visakha, accompanied by her maidservants, was on her way to the river to bathe when they were caught by an unexpected storm. The maids ran for shelter while Visakha walked calmly and gracefully to the shelter. Migara's Brahmins, seeing the graceful Visakha, questioned her as to why she had not run to avoid getting wet. Visakha informed Migara's men that it was not appropriate for a maiden in her fine clothes to run, just as it was not appropriate for a king in royal attire, a royal elephant dressed for the parade, or a serene monk in robes, to run. Pleased with her reply and her exquisite beauty they went back and informed Migara that a suitable bride had been found for Punnavaddhana.

Both families were happy with the arrangement. And so it was that Visakha, with great ceremony, was given in marriage by her father to Punnavaddhana. Her father, who was devoted to her, provided Visakha with many gifts and an exquisite jewelled headdress that reached all the way down her long hair to her feet, as a wedding gift. He also advised

her on the appropriate conduct for a married woman. The advice he gave his daughter was as follows:

1.3. Advice to the daughter in marriage

1. As long as you live with your in-laws you should not tell the faults of your husband and in-laws to outsiders.
2. If any of your neighbours speak ill of your husband or in-laws it should not be encouraged or repeated to them.
3. Lend money and articles to those who will return them.
4. Do not lend anything to those who will not return them.
5. When a relative or friend is in need you should help them without seeking repayment.
6. When you see your husband or in-laws approach you should stand up with respect.
7. You should not eat before your husband or in-laws.
8. You should not go to bed before your husband or in-laws.
9. You should regard your husband and your in-laws as a flame; carefully and with respect.
10. You should look up to and respect your husband and in-laws as divinities.

Whilst this advice that Dhananjaya gave to his daughter would not be acceptable to most modern women, it was what was expected of women at the time of the Buddha. Visakha, who abided by this advice and instruction, was considered a model wife.

As Visakha's beauty and generosity were well-known many well-wishers came to honour the beautiful bride and shower her with gifts. With her love for generosity, Visakha distributed these gifts to the needy in Savatthi. So pleased were the people with her act that she soon became everybody's favourite. As was the custom at that time, Visakha lived with her husband's family.

Visakha's father-in-law, Migara, was a devotee of a clan of naked ascetics. Even though the Buddha and His disciples lived in a monastery close to their home, they were not invited to Migara's house. One day Migara invited the naked ascetics and asked Visakha to attend to their needs. Visakha was horrified at their lack of modesty and refused. This caused much anger among the naked ascetics who condemned Migara for bringing a female devotee of the Ascetic Gotama into his house.

1.4. My father-in-law eats stay food

Shortly after this incident, when Migara was eating rich rice pudding in a golden bowl, a Buddhist monk came for alms. Even though Migara could see the monk he ignored him and continued with his meal. Visakha, who was fanning her father-in-law, requested the monk to leave by saying, "Pass on, (*Gadaw soon par*)

"Venerable Sir, my father-in-law eats stale food."

Migara, who ate rich, fresh food in a golden bowl, was furious at these words which he felt were an insult. He commanded Visakha to leave his house and go back to her parents. Instead, she called in an independent mediator to judge her conduct.

She explained to the adviser that the rich food her father-in-law was eating were benefits resulting from his past good deeds. As such, instead of performing wholesome deeds which would ensure continued prosperity, he was "eating stale fare".

When Migara understood the meaning of Visakha's words he asked her forgiveness. Visakha, however, decided that she no longer wished to live with her husband's family. This was not the first time that she had been accused wrongfully by Migara. She decided to go back to her parents. Migara, who had finally realized the noble qualities of his daughter-in-law, was horrified. He begged her to remain.

Visakha agreed to remain if she was allowed to invite the Buddha and His retinue to their home for meals. When Migara agreed, Visakha invited the Buddha and His retinue of monks for their meal and made arrangements for the preparation of rich food.

1.5. Father in-law attains Sotapanna because of daughter-in-law

After the meal the Buddha dispensed the Dhamma. Migara and his wife, who were both spiritually developed as a result of past meritorious effort, both attained the first stage of sainthood, **Sotapanna**. After this, Migara, who was deeply grateful to Visakha, called her **Migara Mata**, or mother of Migara, and respected her as he would his own mother. He also became a devotee of the Buddha.

1.6. Donate a Monastery to Buddha

In great joy, Visakha continued to perform generosity to the Buddha and His retinue of monks. She had ten sons and ten daughters whom she brought up in the Dhamma. Being fond of beautiful clothes and ornaments, Visakha indulged herself, always dressing her best in exquisite garments. One day she accidentally left her priceless jewelled head-dress at the *Jetavana (Zaytawon)*, the monastery in which the Buddha was residing. Feeling that an item left in the monastery should not be taken back, she offered it to the Buddha. On being told that priceless treasures were of no value to His retinue of monks, Visakha offered the jewelled head-dress for sale with the idea of building monasteries and providing the requisites with the money generated. Unable to find a buyer who could afford the exquisite jewelled head-dress, she bought it herself and used the money to build the **Pubbarama Monastery** (also known as the Mansion of Migara's Mother) to support the Buddha and His retinue of monks and nuns.

Visakha was overjoyed with her gift to the Buddha. On the day that she gifted the monastery to the Buddha, she sang songs of joy and walked around the Pubbarama together with her children and grandchildren. The Buddha informed the people that Visakha was singing songs of joy because she had just fulfilled an aspiration made many world cycles ago to be the chief female lay disciple of the Buddha.

The Buddha spent nine rainy seasons at the Pubbarama Monastery, during which time He dispensed many Suttas and helped many persons. On one occasion, He was residing at the Pubbarama when a disturbance attracted His attention. He saw a dishevelled Visakha in wet clothes running towards Him in tears. Visakha was bathing in the river when the news of the death of her favourite grandchild, Datta, reached her. Unable to control her grief, she ran to the Buddha for solace and comfort.

The Buddha questioned her as to the cause of Visakha's grief and was told that it was because her beloved grandchild had died. She went on to explain how much happiness the child had brought her. The Buddha then asked her if she would be happy if she had as many grandchildren as there were citizens in Savatthi. Visakha confirmed that she would indeed be very happy as her grandchildren brought her untold happiness. The Buddha then asked Visakha how many of Savatthi's citizens died each day. Visakha replied that many died each day. The Buddha then explained to her :

The impermanence of life.

"Death," he said, "comes to all living beings.

Think then how unhappy you will be, for you will have so many more grandchildren, some of whom will die one day. Surely then you will be coming like this to me for comfort many, many more times."

Visakha reflected on the Buddha's words and realized that the stronger her attachment, the greater would be her grief at separation. Understanding through realization that all component things are impermanent, she composed herself and left the Buddha. Visakha was able to understand this because she had reached the first stage of sainthood, Sotapanna, at a young age after listening to the Buddha's teaching.

1.7. She helps others in Dhamma

Visakha also helped many noble ladies in the Dhamma. Once when she took a large gathering of ladies to hear the Dhamma she was horrified to see that they had consumed large quantities of intoxicants and behaved in an unladylike manner. She then asked the Buddha how humans had first become involved with intoxicants. The Buddha then dispensed the Kumbha Jataka, where a man had found fermented fruit and water in the crevice of a tree and started to consume the fermented liquid to obtain a false feeling of well-being.

1.8 Craving and Attachment caused Anger and stress

The Buddha also helped Visakha on another occasion, when she was upset at some unfair taxes that had been levied upon her. Visakha had mailed a parcel to some relatives and the border guards had charged an unreasonably high levy on the goods. Visakha had complained to the king but, due to pressures of state affairs, he had ignored her

complaint. Annoyed and angry, Visakha visited the Buddha for solace. The Buddha calmed her mind by saying:

*"Painful is all subjection,
Blissful is complete control.
People are troubled by common concerns,
Hard to escape are the bonds."*

These words of wisdom from the Buddha helped Visakha put this minor irritation in perspective. The Buddha's advice is as valid today as it was 2,500 years ago. So strong are the bonds of craving and attachment that often we are angered and affected by small issues, quite a number of which are outside our control and trivial when compared to other issues of greater consequence that afflict mankind.

Visakha often questioned the Buddha on subjects that interested her, and the Anguttara Nikaya contains three suttas that the Buddha dispensed to her in answer to her questions. In one instance Visakha asked the Buddha what qualities in a woman would enable her to conquer this world and the next. The Buddha replied:

"She conquers this world by industry,

Care for her servants,

Love for her husband and by guarding his property.

She conquers the other world by confidence, virtue, generosity and wisdom."

1.9. Generosity will carry us to Heavenly world

The Buddha also instructed Visakha on the appropriate way to observe the religious holidays (uposatha). Visakha had observed the religious holiday and come to Him for instruction on the best way to observe the holiday. After first informing her of the wrong ways of observing the holidays, the Buddha informed her of the correct way by saying that she should observe the eight precepts, reflect on the greatness and good qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, reflect on the virtues of the Devas, and reflect on her own virtues. The Buddha then went on to describe the happy and carefree life of the Devas and concluded by saying,

"Miserable is the glory of the humans compared to such heavenly bliss." The Buddha described the wonders of heavenly birth as He knew that Visakha, who was a Sotapanna, would at death enjoy such heavenly bliss.

One day when the Buddha was residing in the Pubbarama, Visakha approached the Buddha and asked for eight boons. The Buddha informed her that The Perfect One was beyond the practice of granting boons. She then informed Him that these boons would be

of great benefit to the Sangha and that they were allowable boons. With the Buddha's consent, Visakha asked the Buddha to be allowed to give the following gifts to the Order:

1.10. Beneficial Gifts to the order

- 1. Robes for the rains, as monks trying to preserve their robes sometimes ran half-naked in the rains, which was not appropriate.*
- 2. Food for arriving monks, as monks who had arrived in Savatthi after a long journey were tired and did not know the town. As such seeking alms would be difficult for them.*
- 3. Food for monks setting out on a journey, so that they would be strong and well-fed for the journey ahead.*
- 4. Medicine for sick monks, as sick monks were in pain and suffering.*
- 5. Food for sick monks, as sick monks were not in a position to seek alms.*
- 6. Food for monks tending the sick, as they often did not get food because they went on the alms round after tending the sick and were late for their alms round.*
- 7. Regular distribution of rice gruel for the morning, as it was healthy and nourishing for the Sangha who do not partake in food after noon.*
- 8. Bathing robes for nuns to bathe in the river, as nuns who did not have bathing robes often had to expose their bodies while bathing, which was not appropriate.*

The Buddha then questioned Visakha on what inner benefits she expected from the giving of these gifts. Visakha replied that often the Sangha who have spent the rains at different locations come to the Buddha and ask Him about a monk (or nun) who has passed away and question Him as to the place of rebirth. The Blessed one will then explain his (or her) attainment and place of rebirth. I shall approach the monk and ask, ?Lord, did that Bhikkhu (Bhikkhuni) ever come to Savatthi? And if he answers yes, I shall conclude that surely a rains cloth will have been used by this Bhikkhu, or visitors' food, or food for one going on a journey, or food for the sick, or food for those tending the sick, or rice gruel.

And when I reflect thus, I shall be glad and happy. When my mind is happy my body will be tranquil.

When my body is tranquil I shall feel pleasure. When I feel pleasure my mind will become concentrated.

This will result in the development of the spiritual faculties and powers and the enlightenment faculties. This, Lord, is the benefit that I foresee for myself."

Praising Visakha for asking the eight boons, the Buddha granted her permission to give gifts to the Sangha as requested. The manner in which Visakha gives gifts is noteworthy. Not only is the intention intense but she holds the intensity during the time of preparation (before), during the time of giving and when reflecting on the gift (after) the act of generosity.

This intense happiness or volition before, during, and after the act of generosity ensures maximum results.

Giving with the intention of purifying oneself, developing one's mind, and attaining Enlightenment is the proper way to give a gift and we should all learn from Visakha, the Buddha's chief female lay benefactor, on the appropriate way to practise generosity.

Because of her generosity to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, the Buddha declared that Visakha was His chief female lay benefactor. In addition to providing the requisites to the Buddha and the Sangha, Visakha also helped with issues and disputes that arose among the nuns. She led a long and healthy life and passed away at the age of 120. Visakha, who possessed the five attributes of maidenly beauty, was said to have been exquisitely beautiful to the end, retaining her youthful form and beauty throughout her latter years.

A Buddhist must have the right view to do the training practice in the most beneficial way; every thing depends on the right view. **Right View (Samma Ditthi).**

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

Appendix – A

The Story of Sakka

I will like to cite the story of Sakka (Thagyarmin).

A.1. How to become a Thagyarmin or a celestial King

In one of the **Jataka tales**, the tales that relate the former lives of the Buddha, there is a description of how the dynasty of Thagyarmin

Once, there was a man named **Magha** who organized to do meritorious works, such as *repairing roads, building bridges, digging wells*. He gave all his energy and resources for the cause. When he died, he was reborn in the celestial world (heavenly world) known as *the King of the thirty-three Devas*.

The story of Thagyarmin has become a road map, an exemplary life style for all Buddhist, how one could take rebirth in the next existence in the celestial world. Thus many Buddhists to use him as example: repair roads, build bridges, dig wells, hoping that one of these days; you might be reborn in the celestial world of – the realm of thirty-three Devas

A.2. Thagyarmin's duties and obligations

The life of Thagyarmin's, the king of the Devas, is filled with bliss and sensual pleasures; with four chief queens and attended by beautiful nymphs. A life time of eons of years, but how long?. The life span in this world is pretty long; but it will last as long as his good meritorious deed will permit. The current Thagyarmin has attained the first stage of sainthood- *Sotapanna* when he met our lord Buddha Gotama. He is always on the look out to do good deed to maintain his stature as King of Devas.

As the story goes, the Buddha before he enters the Parinibbana, he summoned the Thagyarmin and entrusted him with the responsibility of seeing that the Buddha's teachings – *Buddha sasana* – will last for the period of its natural life span of 5,000 years. It is his responsibility to see that humans being receive the Buddha teaching within the Buddha dispensation. In Theravada, countries, Myanmar Buddhists considered the period beyond 2,500 as the era of **Thagyar Sasana**

It is his way of helping and guiding human's beings by descending to earth on every New Year days, as a reminder to people to practice the *Dana-Sila-Bhavana*. New Year is the time for people to cleanse themselves of the defilements (*Kilesa*) they might have accrued during the year and look forward to a better life ahead

A.3. The Spirit of New Year

Thingyan festival, as the Water Festival with legends filled with fantastic tales and folklore mostly related to Buddhist religion. Thagyarmin will be in the human abode to see that people live and practise the Buddha's teaching. On New Year days, it is time to do good deeds and make up for all the neglects and omissions that-one might be guilty of; and of course, resolve to do better during the coming years. People keep sabbatical fast, give alms to Sanghas and do good

deeds. Even the poor will help out to fetch water for older folks; give them personal service, like-washing and shampooing their hairs. Shampoo made of boiled soap acacia fruits and strips of lenden -bloom tree' bark is made .at home and distributed among friends and neighbours. The spirit of goodwill and loving kindness flourish on these auspicious new year days

A.4. True Spirit of the Water Festival

The true spirit of the water festival is to have nice clean fun with friends sprinkling scented water (water mixed with scented Tanakha) on one another. Among friends, all the teasing and playing and joking go with the spirit of the season. It is not all fun and play however; there are chores to do, like preparing shampoo water and giving personal service to older folks. With the sound of the Ohzie drums, cymbals and flute in the air, every task is a joy .With sacred duty to perform; the fun is more wholesome and enjoyable.



Perhaps, this Buddhist traditional spirit is not so evident in the metropolitan areas like Yangon, where; there is rough play with water hoses. The revellers seem more intent to embarrass and aggravate than to be playful and give pleasure. Much of the finer aspects of the festival are to be seen in small towns and villages. Yet even in cities, while the wild celebrations are rampant, the monasteries and pagodas are teeming with people of all ages. Most of them are there with the serious purpose of doing good deeds. Young people sweep the grounds, wash buildings and help older people with the chores of cooking alms food for monks, while the old will go on for their meditation retreat. . It is indeed a feast of doing merits, for both young and old, as the revelry goes on for three days

A.5. A Season of Giving

The entire April days, there is music in the air. Wherever you go, you see temporary shed Marquee (Mundhat) by the roadside. Inside are sets of yellow robes, alms bowls, umbrellas and leather slippers, laid out amidst flowers and coloured paper steamers. Right at the entrance a notice board announces that a mass novitiation ceremony is to be held during the Water Festival and that your contribution is welcome. Such Mundhats [are centres of activity during the Water Festival. The centre is organized by people of the locality or by those who work in the same place, office or markets or stores or those who belong to the same profession, like trishawmen, taxi drivers or busmen. Such pool their resources to do deeds of merit like novitiation

A.7. An Important Family Ritual

Novitiation is of vital importance, in a Buddhist family. Boys are sent to the monastery where they stay for a week or more. Their heads are shaved and they wear yellow robes, go on alms rounds with their alms bowls and keep Buddhist novice's precepts.



Novice must show their face to the Tree Deities at the tree-shrine

It is a village tradition to show the novices to the village tree deities at their tree shrine as a way of paying respect to the terrestrial Devas, the village spiritual guardian Deva that this young novice-t-be will soon enter into samanera (novice). This ritual is not so evident in urban areas.

Parents consider it a great privilege to novitiate their sons; that is, in fact, giving their own flesh and blood into the Buddha's Order of Sangha. Those who don't have sons of their own will offer to donate and novitiate other people's sons so as to accrue this deed of great merit. Many well-to-do families will offer to novitiate orphans at New Year time.

It is a must for a Buddhist man to receive initiation into the novice hood at an early age of seven. People consider it to be a gross omission if they fail to novitiate their sons. One of the New Year activities is to organized novitiation with contributions in cash, in kind or personal services. Thus it is a common knowledge for a Buddhist boy will have to go through either private initiation or organized initiation. A novitiation ceremony can be simple or it can be done with all the trimmings of folk music troupes and processions. There is such a wealth of tradition and custom in the colorful processions that are part of the Thingyan Festival scene