Revelation Of The Truth

Posted on
Professor M M J Marasinghe

***'Prathyakshaya Saha Vishvasaya',* authored by Prof M M J Marasinghe, follows a series of books that endeavour to reveal the truth about misconceptions associated with Buddhism. In keeping with its objective of enlightening the reader, this book brings out the distinctive differences between the Buddha's teachings about gods and the way that gods are believed in and worshipped by Sri Lankans.**

Words Hansani Bandara **Photographs** Isuru Upeksha

There is a thirst in society for this knowledge. And we have to sate it. Buddhism that is based on worship is not pure Buddhsim, Professor Marasinghe states. He says that the teachings of the Buddha, taught with extra sensory perception, are more substantial and accurate than many commonly held beliefs. Many of these beliefs, he argues, are merely the results of Buddhist traditions succumbing to ritualistic practices and interpretations influenced by other religions.

From the very begining, this book exposes the reader to the thought provoking revelation that the post-canonical texts, or *Attakatha,* originally in Sinhala, were

translated into Pali around the 5th Century AD. These include commentaries, detailed explanations and analyses of the original Pali canons. The writer points out that during this attempt at translation, the commentator misinterpreted the content of the original texts, and therefore post-canonical texts do not convey the untampered teachings of the Buddha.

He argues that it is these misconceptions that have been deeply rooted in the *Theravada*tradition in practice today, which has paved the way for common societal beliefs of gods, leading to certain Sri Lankan adaptations of Buddhism. He emphasises that this is a serious miscomprehension of the non-theistic philosophy of Buddhism.

The existence of gods is accepted according to the teachings of the Buddha. However, gods in Buddhism are not superior to humans. Pali canons state instances where gods have voluntarily paid homage to the Buddha and *Bhikkhus*. Yet, today it is laymen and Buddhist clergy who revere gods. Contrary to what is believed today, making offerings to gods in expectation of the fulfillment of wishes is considered to be obsolete. It is clear that gods cannot in any way interfere in the *'Vimukthi Magga'* (path of attaining *Nibbana*) or in the worldly welfare of humans. Moreover, the donation of merits to gods is also regarded as yet another malpractice.

Another myth that has no substantial basis is the existence of evil sprits or demons who bring disease and misfortune. Narratives of such spirits, often found in post-canonical texts such as *'Pretha Vaththu',* are merely stories associated with beliefs of society. The idea of demons and other evil spirits is believed to have derived from tribal communities who existed in India during the time of the Buddha.

Enlightening the reader, who is on a path of realisation, the writer stresses that it is only through exposing oneself to pure Buddhism and choosing the path of truth and wisdom leading to *Nibbana*, that one can end the cycle of *Samsara*.

Through '*Prathyakshaya Saha Vishwasaya'*, Professor Marasinghe sets forth on a journey upstream to ensure that pure Buddhist teachings find their way towards the misguided laymen of today. He opines, "as a scholar, I believe that it is my responsibility to reveal the truth to my readers, and I have done just that. You must be brave to accept the truth." The book is available for purchase at Sarasavi Bookshops Island-wide.

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