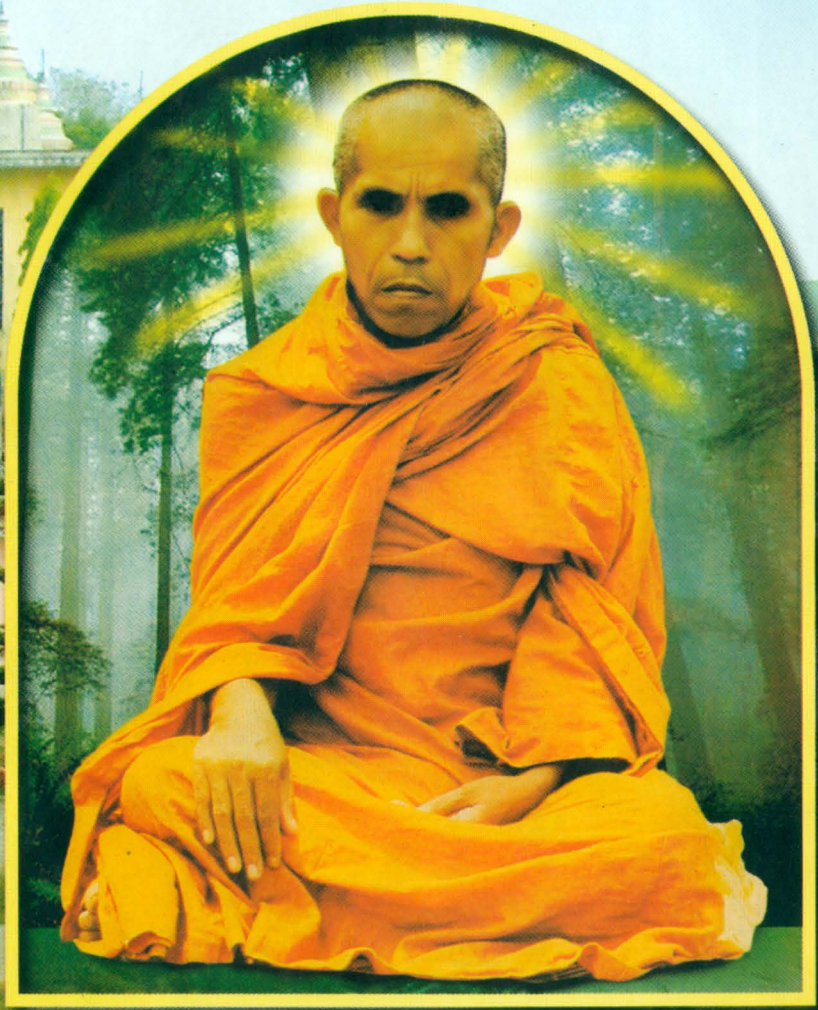
The Most Venerable Banabhante– The Enlightened One

Translated from the Book in Bengali
"Saddharme Alokita Keertiman Lokottar Mahamanab
Pujya Banabhante"



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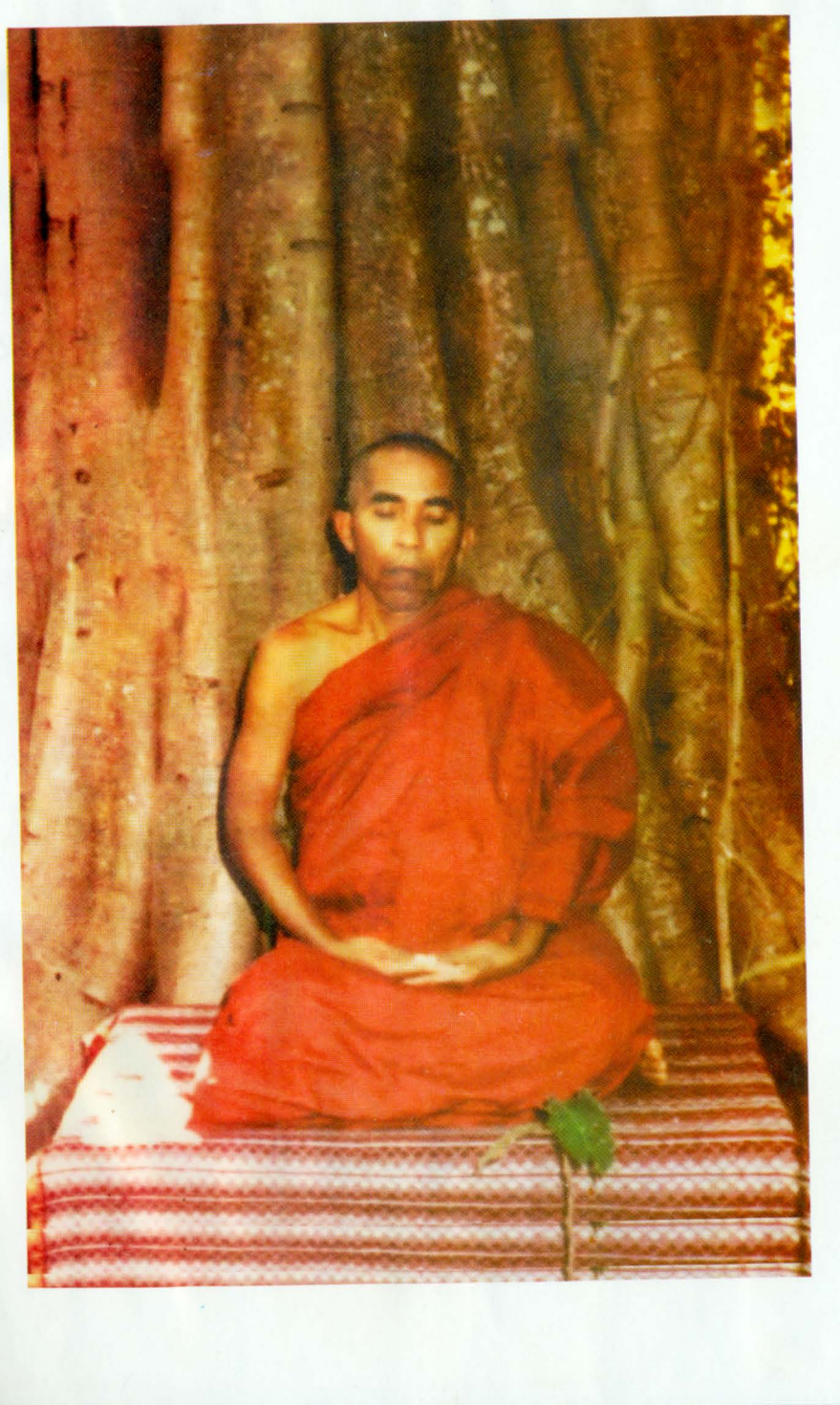

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আসুন ধর্মীয় বই পড়ুন, ধর্মজ্ঞান অর্জন করুন!
জ্ঞানের আলোয় জীবনকে আলোকিত করুন!

This book is scanned by Sarbajit Bhante

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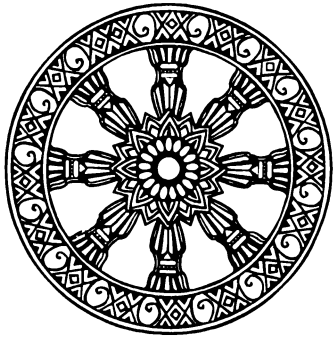

Translator:
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California, USA

The Most Venerable Banbhante-
The Enlightened One

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Dedication

To the Sangha of the Rajbana Vihar,
Late Mr. Jinadatta Barua,
and
Mrs. Smrity Kana Barua (Chowdhury)

-Sutapa Barua

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SEVEN DISCOURSES FOR BLESSINGS

As a result of writing this book, I urge for the following blessings from the Venerable Arhant Banabhante:

- May I be able to attain at least the *Sotapotti Magga* in this reign of the Gautama Buddha.

- May I be born in a well-educated and wise family, if I will be reborn.

- May I speak gently and mildly, be less greedy, and be a favorite to all devas and human beings at every stage of my birth.

- May I be healthy and handsome in all reincarnations.

- May I be practicing *Dāna-Sīla-Bhāvanā*, if I will be born as a layman; and may I follow the *Sīla-Samādhi-Paññā*, if I will be reborn as a monk.

- May the *Sangha* of Venerable Banabhante be guided, directed, and attain the highest *Magga*, and observe the *Dhamma* according to the Nine Supermundane religion.

- May all the devas and human-being followers of Venerable Banabhante attain *Nibbāna* (freedom from suffering and amalgamation of wisdom and edification), and those who do not have belief in him, may they obtain the right view and attain *Nibbāna*.

Venerable *Arahant* Banabhante, please bless to fulfill my prayers.

Sincerely,
Shobhita Bhikkhu,
Rajbana Bihar, Rangamati.

ADVICE FROM HIS HOLINESS VENERABLE BANABHANTE

You should not restrain anything except the feeling of self, the conquering of which is far better than conquering others. Restrain your mind, and thus rescue and win yourself. It is the way you will be happy. Those who are self-subdued and restrained in conduct cannot be defeated by anybody, even by a god or *Brahmā*. I am saying again, do not try to stop others, rather control yourself and rescue and win. If you are involved in greed, envy, and desire, you will not be able to win. If you conquer yourself, it is thus the way to win over the *Māra*. This will bring the ultimate happiness.

If you practice and obey the *Buddha Dhamma* and target *Nibbāna*, the *Māra* becomes disappointed. The *Māra* will become your enemies. No other teachings except those of the Buddha will lead you to the way of *Nibbāna*. The teachings and advice of the Buddha are available in the Tripitaka. So, everyone should read the *Ti-pitaka*. It is simultaneously important to give up lust, desire, and attraction. One cannot give it up just by reading books or listening to others. The knowledge should be attained by oneself. An analogy of this is not being able to ignite fire, if there is no fire inside ash. In the same way, if you do not have any knowledge, my advice will not work out. Overall you not only need to learn the *Ti-pitaka* but also should have the capability of understanding and knowing yourself. Then you will enlighten yourself for being an *Arahant*. So, please do not waste your time. Try to attain *Nibbāna* at the present time.

May all the beings be happy in this world and free from suffering.

Ven. Sadhanananda Mahathera (Banabhante)
Rajbana Bihar, Rangamati.

PREFACE

In this world, some are born great, while others have greatness thrust on them. However, in the *Buddha-Dhamma*, one becomes great only to the extent that one has progressed in ethical discipline and mental culture, and thereby freed the mind of self and all that it implies. True greatness, then, is proportional to one's success in unfolding the perfection dormant in human nature.

Banabhante is such a greatest person in the world, who is an *Arahant*, the perfect embodiment of Buddhist ideas, who discovers the true perspective in life first in the culture of the hill tracts in Bangladesh, and later in many parts of the world. He attained the highest possible apex of human evolution by giving up the false views of greed, hatred, and delusions, and by emptying himself from all selfish services. He is free from the bondage of selfishness and passions.

This book is the biography of Venerable Banabhante from his childhood to the final state of being an *Arahant* for those monks, laymen, and laywomen who follow him. The first chapter of this book introduces Venerable Banabhante's personal life, his birth, family background, his boyhood, school life, observation of many incidents in society, and the perspective on social life that made Banabhante a wanderer and meditator in the forests of all corners of the Rangamati district in Bangladesh.

The second chapter describes Banabhante's arrival in Chittagong, being ordained with yellow robes in Chittagong town, following Vinaya rules (monastic discipline) strictly, emphasizing the importance of following the rules, his austere practices of Buddha's lifestyle, living without keeping or accepting any money, eating from daylong alms, and finally deciding to go to a forest in order to seek a suitable place of meditation.

The third chapter presents the forests of Dhanpata, Ven. Banabhante's life at Dhanpata, his involvement in deep meditation, investigating the tranquility of body and mind, the emergence of the truth of existence, overcoming problems, hindrances, and defilements of the mind, his daring determination to realize *Nibbāna*, enlightenment, and the fulfillment of the spiritual path taught by the Buddha. This is important for young monks to step forward for the quest of wisdom.

The fourth chapter tells about Ven. Banabhante's arrival at Dighinala, the invitation to the Boalkhali Raj Vihar, meditation, teachings, spreading *Dhammas* among men and women, dealing with surrounding environments, changing the minds of some strange characters, and developing the true perspective of a life.

The fifth and sixth chapters describe leaving Boalkhali, arrival at Tintila of Langadu, Banabhante's invitation to the Rajbana Vihar, his teachings of *Dhamma,* meditative attainments, his ideas, the development of a mind as a meditator, and his ethical aspirations and knowledge.

Ven. Shobhita Bhikkhu's attempt to write this biography is an outstanding work to spread the messages of Ven. Banabhante to all the minds in the world. I hope this book will bring a new perspective of human life and spread Banabhante's sermons among monks and laypeople.

Indragupta Bhikkhu
Rajbana Bhabana Kendro,
Katachari, Rangamati

WRITER'S NOTE

On March 4, 2006, I was ordained with the yellow robe in the Rajbana Vihar, Rangamati, after which I went to the Maitripur Meditation Center at Khagrachari in Bangladesh. At that time, Venerable vimalananda Bhante was the principal monk of that center. Venerable Vimalananda bhante built up a *Dhamma* library in the temple where he collected many *Dhamma* books. I was fortunate enough to read those *Dhamma* books when I went there.

That time I realized that there were not enough books to know about Banabhante. There were some magazines or booklets in which information about Banabhante was put randomly. The messages from Banabhante were not conveyed to the general public. In most of these books, writers emphasized Banabhante's supernatural powers without talking about his messages on the Four Noble Truths, *Paticcasamuppāda*, or *Nibbāna*. Banabhante does not agree to emphasize the magical powers at all because magical powers can be obtained easily through meditation and can be depleted automatically if *Magga* cannot be attained, or if the person cannot be free from lust, anger, attraction, or any mean attitude. For example, a man at Jurachari of Rangamati used to show much magic by gaining some supernatural powers through meditation. People started saying this to Venerable Banabhante. Venerable Banabhante said, "Those magical powers will not stay long. He will lose his power soon." After a few days he really could not show any magic to others. Even the Buddha, at the birth of *Bodhisatta*, lost his magical powers after being attracted by lust. So, in Buddhist religion, magical powers are not valued, while the *Magga* and *Nibbāna* are called the ultimate happiness.

So I started realizing that I wanted to write a biography of Venerable Banabhante to compile the coherent discourses of Banabhante for general readers. Then, I started writing this book in Bengali and published a Bengali version of the book

on April 14, 2009 (1st Baishakh, 1416 Bengali year). **Saddharme Alokita Keertiman Lokottar Mahamanab Pujya Banabhante** was my first book writing. So, I still remember the peace I felt after publishing the book. Besides, to me, the greatest man in the world is Banabhante. After getting in touch with Venerable Banabhante, I am now able to see the right truth of life. For this, he can be also called my shelter-giver or post-familial father.

It was a matter of joy that many monks, Shramans, laymen, laywomen, and general people accepted this book with considerable praise. Outsiders came to know many things about Banabhante. However, I was thinking how to use this book to reach English-speaking people or the foreign guests who come to the Rajbana Vihar. People of every stage and profession, including ministers, government job-holders, army people, and general foreigners from India, Srilanka, Myanmar, Thailand and many other countries including Bangladesh come to the Rajbana Vihar to obtain blessings from Venerable Banabhante. It is therefore hard for us to convey a lot of information about Banabhante to a major fraction of these foreign bodies. So, I realized that I needed an English version of the book, "Saddharme Alokita Keertiman Lokottar Mahamanab Pujya Banabhante" at the earliest convenience. And at last this book has been translated by Sutapa Barua, and titled "The Most Venerable Banabhante-The Enlightened One".

For the translated version of this book, I need to acknowledge Ven. Priyaratna Bhante at the very beginning, without whom it would have been completely impossible for me to translate the book. I came to know about Mrs. Sutapa Barua, who is currently staying in California in the United States of America (USA). Upon Ven. Priyaratna Bhante's requests, she showed her immense interest in voluntarily translating the book. She worked on this book for almost a year and a half, in addition to her own studies, jobs, family work, and many other duties. She finished the translation quite well. I was familiar with her

writings before this work, and so I was very confident of her talent.

I gratefully acknowledge Ven. Priyaratna Bhante for inspiring me to translate this book into English. Also, I bless Mrs. Sutapa Barua for volunteering to translate the book. I wish she would be happy, have a long life, and be able to write and translate more books on Buddhism, thus contributing enormously to the reign of the Buddha.

I remain grateful to the Venerable Sourajagat Mahathera for publishing this book. Without his generous help, this translated edition would not have possibly been published within so short period (on January 8).

I would say this book is another piece of gem. As evenyone loves gems and takes care of them, I would request everyone to read this book and follow Banabhante's instructions to maintain his or her life in order to know the real truth.

Finally, I pray for every living being's happiness, including those who helped to translate, edit, and publish this book-may all of you attain *Nibbāna.*

Shobhita Bhikkhu
Rajbana Vihar, Rangamati.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

His Holiness Venerable Sadhananada Mahathera (Banabhante-the saint of the forest) is a name of great sanctity pronounced with high veneration among the Buddhists in Bangladesh. He is one of the *Arahant's* who has attained the *Nibbāna*. Thus, he has reached the state where one can stop his craving for being born, while an ordinary man is always driven by desire to seek for happiness. The ultimate happiness, *Nibbāna*, can only be found when one's mind is emptied of the desire for sensual pleasure and the pleasure associated with wealth. All of these things bring suffering. Ven. Banabhante showed how to destroy the suffering. He discovered the four-fold truths, which are all about the knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of the suffering, knowledge of the extinction of suffering, and the means of the extinction of suffering.

Due to Venerable Banabhante's uniqueness and with the requests of Venerable Priyaratna Bhante and Venerable Shobhita Bhante, I aimed to translate the book titled as, "Saddharme Alokita Keertiman Lokottar Mahamanab Pujya Banabhante" in Bangla language into English. However, it was not an easy task when the book materials were mainly condensed in the Bangla and Pali contexts. The English language lacks many of the words in Pali and Buddhist rituals, so I was stuck in many places to translate the book into English.

As a translator of this book, I changed some contexts, keeping the original meaning of the sentences written in the Bangla version. Where I felt it was necessary, some passages by the author have been omitted or rewritten. It is my hope that he will be satisfied with these changes, which do not affect the plan of his work. Ray Hardesty, a professional English writer and editor in USA for many years, has patiently edited the translated copy of this book. Special thanks go to Dibbya, Uma, Shubhasish and Dipak Barua for inspiring me to translate this book.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Ven. Priyaratna Bhante and Ven. Shobhita Bhante for allowing me to make this translation. It is hoped that this book will serve as an inspiration to all those who are endeavoring to tread in the Buddha's footsteps.

I ask forgiveness from the Venerable author and our readers for any inadequacies or mistakes in the actual translation. Any translation must inevitably fall short of the original, and in the end it rests with you, the reader, to complete the translation within yourself. Whether monk or lay person, from East or West, may this "life of Dhamma" inspire you to enrich your own life through the practice of Dhamma.

I humbly vow and pray to Banabhante to bless me and my family to attain *Nibbāna* at the earliest possible time.

Sutapa Barua
Cox's Bazar/ Hasimpur,
Chittagong, Bangladesh
Current address: California, USA

The Most Venerable Banabhante-
The Enlightened One

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa
Namo Sāvaka Buddha
Sādhanānanda Mahāthera (Banabhante)

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the Dhammapada, the Buddha said:

"Dullabho purisājañño na so sabbattha jāyati
Yattha so jāyati dhīro tam kūlam sukhamedhati." - verse 193

- *The greatest man like the Buddha is rare. The Buddha is never born everywhere. The country and nation where he is born have become rich and happy.*

It is incontrovertible that the emergence of the *Arahants*, *Buddha*, his disciples, and the *Pacceka Buddha* is the rarest. These greatest men are never born in all places, every nation or time. Upon their birth, people can find a path to get rid of all kinds of materialistic lust, jealousy, and attraction. They can get the chance to abolish all physical and mental demands generated from their ignorance. It can also be said that appropriate absorption and realization of the greatest Buddha's principles can be beneficial to human beings in avoiding the sorrows of birth, age, disease, and death. In addition, many *Devas* (celestial beings) and human beings are able to receive the Buddha's continuous blessings through the practice of *Dāna* (donation), *Sīla* (morality), and *Bhāvanā* (meditation). As the wisest person, Buddha's appearance would therefore bring enormous happiness, blessings, and prosperity to those countries and nations where he is born.

At present, the most Venerable Sadhanananda Mahathera, also known as Banabhante (a saint of the forest), is the greatest and

wisest person, like the brightest star in the sky of the Rangamati district of Bangladesh. He is a *Sāvaka Buddha* and an *Arahant*. He left his home and traditional family life around him at his young age of 29 to discover the ways of freedom from suffering as explained by the Buddha. Banabhante attained *Pabbajjā*[0] under the supervision of the Venerable Dipankar Sreegyan Mahathera in the temple at Nandan Kanan in the city of Chittagong. This was in 1949. Failing to find an atmosphere for spiritual freedom, a hospitable environment, and proper guidance there, he left the place. At last he came to his birthplace, Muroghona. He was thinking to find a calm, silent place where the Gautama Buddha and his disciples such as *Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākassapa, Ananda, Anuruddha* and *Rashtrapala* started their saintly lives. He entered a dense forest of Dhanpata near the Kaptai hydroelectric dam in Rangamati, started meditations for getting rid of all kinds of suffering, and immersed himself in a deep meditation for 12 years, from 1949 to 1960. In 1960, a large area of the forest suddenly became flooded because of some damages caused by the Kaptai dam. Venerable Bhante then moved to another forest at Dighinala by the invitation of a householder and worshipper, Mr. Nishimoni Chakma, and he remained in the state of meditation, maintaining a wild life until the end of 1970. Through these long-term practices of tracing out the truth of freedom from suffering, Bhante was gradually attaining a glory of light scattering from his body.

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[0] *Pabbajjā literally means "to go forth" and refers to when a layperson leaves home to live the life of a Buddhist renunciate among a community of monks (bhikkhus). This generally involves preliminary ordination as a novice (male-* ***sāmanera****, female-* ***sāmaneri****). It is sometimes referred to as "lower ordination." After a period of time or when the novice reaches 20 years of age, the novice can be considered for the Upasampada ordination (or "higher ordination") whereby the novice becomes a monk (****bhikkhu****) or nun (****bhikkhuni****).*

His bright appearance, calm movement, and peaceful personality attracted the villagers, especially Mr. Anil Bihari Chakma at Dighinala who motivated the people to invite him to a temple in Tintila at Langadu. Originally, the temple at Tintila was the place for the Venerable Banabhante to start spreading and announcing his principles and teachings. Later on, Banabhante came back again to Rangamati on the full moon day of Baishakh (Bengali calender month) in 1976 in response to the earnest requests of Queen Arati Roy, Chakma King Debasish Roy, and many other royal people.

Until Banabhante's stay in the Rajbana Vihar, starting from the deep forest, it has been said that there exists some super-paranormal energy around Him. Banabhante, after observing the solutions to attain *Nibbāna* (freedom from suffering and amalgamation of wisdom and edification), has been teaching the Four Noble Truths, the principles of *Paticcasamuppāda* (Dependent origination), the eight-fold noble path, and the importance and significance of *Nibbāna*. He re-initiated the similar *Kathina Civara Dana* like the one during the Buddha's lifetime, a variety of worships such as *Chimitong Pooja*, the worship of Upagupta Bhante, listening to the *Paritta Sutta* throughout the whole night, and many other varieties of donations, offerings, prayers, and cultures. He is our entire respectable and worshipped person.

Venerable Banabhante is the Brahmin who could restrain himself from the views of self, sense, mind, lust, desire, attraction, and thirst. He is the Arahant having the six spiritual powers of spiritual energies, divine perception, divine hearings, the ability to analyze other's minds, memories, and wisdom. Above all, he is the wisest person, the *Sāvaka Buddha*, who observed the continuous peace by achieving the same disciplines as the Gautama Buddha. There is no doubt that at present he is the pioneer of extending Buddha's principles among the people who are not aware of the post-interval effects of their own deeds, the Karmafal.

Venerable Bhante did not reach this point or become a Buddha in a day! It is the automatically flown blessing effects of righteous perceptions earned by him during his previous births. It should also be remembered that Bhante needed to do hard work to attain the stage of Arahant. In his own speech, "I received the *Pabbajjā* at the age of 29. During that time, I read not only the Bengali books about Buddhism but also the other religious books written for Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. Hinduism at that time had dominant effects in society, but I was very much attracted to the calm and quiet nature of Buddhism. That ancient society had no belief in *Pabbajjā* at all. As a result, I was the first young boy who remained unmarried during my whole life and spent my whole life as a Buddhist monk."

He also mentioned, "I had never thought to lead the life of the traditional Buddhist monks. I had only the Buddha and his greatest disciples such as the *Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākassapa, Ananda* and *Anuruddha's* livelihood in front of me. In order to obtain and hold their life livings, staying in a forest became essential to me after failure to find an environment in a village temple for practicing the *Sīla-Samādhi-Paññā* (morality-concentration-wisdom). I could not even meet an appropriate teacher who could help me in practicing meditation. As a result, I was not fortunate to know any specific technique to meditate to overcome specific stages of meditation or practice to destroy craving, envy, and attraction. I had to discover the paths by myself. That's why I needed to go through the long-term pains of staying in the forest to make my mind free from craving, envy, and attraction."

His speech describes as a whole how much pain he endured to enjoy and taste the principles of truth by setting himself in the greatest seat of religion. The greatest beings in the world die physically, but their contributions of great works fluoresce forever. The wisest person, Venerable Banabhante, will also

remain alive in our memories, having engraved his name in history in golden ink.

The Birth of Banabhante

On January 8, 1920, a sacred baby was born in a naturally beautiful village, Muroghona of 115 Maghban Mauza, which was located six miles south of the Rangamati hill tracts of Bangladesh. The village was surrounded by the river Karnafuli. It was the day of the twentieth century when an Arahant fulfilled with *Pāramī* (perfeption) was born in a malfunctioning Bengali Buddhist society. However, nobody realized that the baby boy came to pass the knowledge of liberation from sufferings, greed, hatred and delusion. He was born to teach the practice of Four Noble Truths, and inspire the then Buddhist society for devotion to the *Dhamma*. It was surprising that the baby boy did not cry at first after his birth and remained silent until he was laid down in his mother's lapse after giving a shower. Everyone was relaxed on hearing his crying voice though he stopped crying again when his mother held him in her arms. Everyone was astonished to see that strange behavior of a baby. The baby boy was named Rathindra.

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The baby Rathindra was different from other babies in many other aspects. He rarely cried for milk even though he was hungry. He was quiet, beautiful, and bright in physical appearance. Being the first child, he became lovely and joyful to his parents. Everyone felt boundless joy when they saw him. They used to think: what a calm, quiet, and heavenly

appearance this baby has! This baby might be coming from heaven. One day he will become the greatest!

From the religious perspective, the patience in baby Rathindra was logical. He was full of perspectives of truth and held the seeds for attaining *Arahant*. It is not very strange that the man who came to the world with full of the *Sāvaka-bodhi ñāna* would be different than others.

Generally, bi-sexual birth is tremendously painful. A baby is positioned inside a mother's womb by putting its head down on the pelvis, facing its chin towards the mother's backbone, and curling itself in a congested area full of peritoneal glands, worms, etc. The fetal position is considered as living in a hell, as if you are grounded up to your shoulders inside sand, keeping your head outside the sand, and then you are tortured by hammering your head with two pre-ignited red rods from two sides. It is said that a baby feels similar pressure inside a womb surrounded by darkness, bad smells, and peritoneal worms, and squeezes its body like a monkey in an inadequate space. The holy people, who have already fulfilled the *Pāramī* of morality and concentration, and who have stayed in heaven for years enjoying the boundless happiness, think the birth process is intolerable. They having full memories, and they remember the holy lives in heaven and repent to get out of the biological jail of the embryo.

The *Tathāgata Buddha* said, "If the bones of a living being could be stored in one *Kappa ('World-period' is an inconceivably long space of time, an aeon)* after its every death, it would create a huge mountain; the dead bodies would cover every inch of the thirty-one realms; the amount of tears would be larger in volume than the volume of water in four oceans." As it is hard and difficult to count all the living beings in the world, it is also impossible to know how many times one's dead body has been burnt at the same place. This reveals that in one *Kappa* a living being takes births and deaths many times, and thus it passes through an enormous number of birth

and death cycles. Can we imagine, then, how many times we were born in the past?

In *Sampasādaniya Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya* (Collection of Long Discourses), four kinds of entrance into the fetus are described: (1) the entrance and exit from the embryo in absence of any sense, (2) entrance with full sense while staying there and exiting in anesthetic motion, (3) entrance and staying sensitively but leaving in an insensitive stage, and (4) always being there and leaving with sense. Among these, human beings belong to the first kind; the *Mahasāvaka* and *Ariya Sāvaka* belong to the second group; the *Pacceka Buddha*, *Bodhisatta*, and *Agrasāvaka* are in the third group; and the wisest *Bodhisatta,* who will be the Buddha in that last birth, are always in the fourth group with full sense active all the time.

While normal human beings cry after their painful birth, the extraordinary greatest and wisest persons never do so by protecting themselves with the full memory of realization of *Dukkha* (Sufferings). So, the baby Rathindra, being a holy person and sacred *Arahant*, did not cry like many others. Having Him categorized in the second group of *Sampasādaniya Sutta*, it can be said that Banabhante might not maintain the memory during his stay inside the embryo and coming out from there, but he knew where he wanted to be born. He had the full memory of where, when, and to which mother and family he was going to be born. The analogy of this phenomenon can be defined by a drowning person who knows before submersing into water that he was going to be drowned. When he has been completely drowned, he cannot breathe and try to lift himself out of water or be relaxed after floating his head out of the water. In this context, the Venerable Banabhante gave a sermon like this: "I was sent to Rangpur. Being born in the nation of Chakma is like going to Rangpur. Previously, the corrupted government employees were transferred to an undeveloped place like Rangpur as their

punishments. So, the employees had to struggle to live. My condition was similar to that incident. I had to go through a lot of suffering to attain *Nibbāna* because of my birth here. Since the local inhabitants were unaware of the *Buddhism*, I needed to stay and suffer in the forests for a long time. If I would have been born in a Buddhist country, I would not have to have gone through that suffering in forests to attain *Nibbāna*. As the people in Buddhist countries strictly follow the *Sīla* and do *Bhāvanā*, they are aware of their responsibilities for the *Bhikkhus* (monks)." It can be predicted from Banabhante's sermon above that he was born in the hill-tracts area with the full knowledge of memory. Wasn't that for returning the people in this area from their false views and misdeeds? The greatest Venerable Banabhante used to ask his disciples very often: "If I would not be a *Bhikkhu* (monk) and show you the path of *Nibbāna*, you would not become a *Bhikkhu*, isn't that right?" It is of no doubt that previously aged people and people from the Marma community were the only *Bhikkhus* without following the correct disciplines of the Buddha; today there is a huge fraction of the *Bhikkhus* in Rajbana Vihar who are young people practicing the right livelihood of a *Bhikkhu* by sacrificing and keeping away from their materialistic family lives. Both the Venerable Banabhante and his disciples were definitely inspired and showed the right views of the Buddha, His disciplines, education, and the right way of practicing His philosophy among the general house-living people.

Home and Family-Introduction

Venerable Banabhante, named as Rathindra when he was a house-living person, was born in a middle-class family of farmers in the Chakma nation. His father's name was Mr. Harumohan Chakma, and mother's name was Birapudi Chakma. Both of his parents were honest, wise, and pious persons at that time in the Chakma nation. His father maintained their family by farming, but they did not have any

poverty. They used to lead a very simple life from their own grown paddies. Rathindra was his parents' first child, and therefore he was the most beloved to his parents. He was fulfilled with love, kindness, and the caring of his parents, relatives, and neighbors. He had five siblings: Baikartan Chakma, Padmainginee Chakma, Jahar Lal Chakma, Monoranjan Chakma (Bhupendra Lal Chakma), and Amrika Ranjan Chakma (Babul Chakma).

According to the genetic heredity from his father's side, Rathindra belonged to the family of *Pira Bhanga* of the *Dhamai Goja* colony. His father was a relative of that family's well-known and popular person, Kamini Mohan Dewan. It was the family of one of the leading, influential, and well-respected families that was titled as Khisa by the Bristish people. But his father, being modest, ego-free, and pious, never used the title 'Khisa.' Instead, he was habituated to using the last name of Chakma. He was satisfied and proud to use his own nation's last name. On one side, he was honest and pious, while on the other hand he was free from all kinds of egotism.

From his mother's side, Rathindra was a son of *Kambei Goja*. His beloved mother, Birapudi Chakma was the second daughter of Roichandra Chakma of Raikhong-Kengrachari Mauza under the district of Bilaichari. Birapudi's nickname was Mili. They were five brothers and sisters. The eldest sister, Mondodori Chakma, was married to Bhagaban Chandra Dewan, the step-brother of the Chakma king, Harish Chandra. Mondodori and Bhagban's son Shashanka Harumohan Dewan's father-in-law was Vismomoni Chakma. Vismomoni is more known as "napita" in their locality.

Rathindra's religious mother Birapudi was also an honest, pious, and family oriented woman. She had tremendous kindness, friendliness, and a cooperative attitude. She lost her husband, Harumohan, when she was very young. It was really amazing how she maintained the whole family even when Rathindra left home, having the desire for *Nibbāna*. Besides

being a woman in a joint family of her husband and his three brothers, Birapudi also showed patience and sympathetic and benevolent practices, and thus she became an ideal personality in the village.

All of Rathindra's siblings stayed in the Muroghona village until 1960, when a large area of the village was flooded due to damage by the Kaptai dam. His only sister Padmainginee chakma also stayed in the same village with her husband. After the destruction of the dam, everyone went to different rehabilitated areas. All the members of Rathindra and his father's family went to the Bangaltali area of the Kachalong Reserve Forest. When the whole family had been settled there for a couple of years, Rathindra's first younger brother, Baikartan Chakma, died in the year 1962 or 1963. The youngest, Amrika also embraced death in 2005 or 2006. Among others, Padmainginee has been living in the T.N.T. area of Rangamati town along with her husband, sons, and daughters. She is about 78, and her husband is close to 80 years now. The couple has three sons and daughters. They are Madhu Mangal Chakma, Binimoy Chakma, and Joytsna Chakma. Padmainginee's husband Hiralal became influential after their moving to the Bangaltali. He first became a member of the Union Parisad, and later he became a Headman in lieu of his younger brother, Motilal Chakma. He recently handed over the position to his nephew, Bishwajyoti Chakma, the son of Motilal. In addition, he has been carrying out the position of "Bazar Chowdhury" of Karengyatali Bazar of Baghaichari thana. Rathindra's other two brothers, Jahar Lal and Monoranjan, have been staying in Bangaltali until now. They lead their lives by agriculture.

Childhood Memories

Rathindra was inattentive and thoughtful from his childhood. Usually little kids play, scream, shout, and run all the time. Children love to play with sand and dirt and spread them on

their clothes and bodies. Childhood is the time of enthusiasm, emotion, and restlessness. The restlessness is not directional in their minds-their minds cannot fix on one thing for a long time. They become anxious to see or know a new thing. Whatever creates an influence on their minds, they learn that and grow older with that conception.

However, Rathindra was different from the other boys of his age. He was very quiet, calm, and thoughtful in his character, movement, conversation, and work. He could not concentrate or join with the other boys in playing or any other childlike activities. He loved to stay in a calm, quiet, and silent environment. Most of the time, he was found to be thinking about something -seemingly, he was trying to find out a solution to some problem. He was never attracted by any materialistic activities. He had always been like that from his childhood. Nobody knew at that time why he looked so thoughtful or what he was thinking of.

As Rathindra grew up to five years, he started to see a scene of bright light around him when he would lay down alone in a quiet place. At the beginning, he used to think, "What is this? Why is it revolving around me? Is it a sign of any bad symptom? Would I be hampered by this?" He thought about it quite often. Finally, he came to a decision that the light could be something symbolic. This might not be harmful. Realizing such, he started becoming amazed and surprised to see the dancing light around him.

One day, when Rathindra was six, a hawker of *muri* (puffed-rice) came to their village, hanging his products on his shoulders and shouting to the villagers, saying "*mola-muri, mola-muri.*" Thus, he passed by the narrow, muddy road beside Rathindra's home. Hearing the sounds from the hawker, mother Birapudi asked Rathindra, "Beloved son, please call the hawker for our home." He left home and called the hawker for their home. The hawker entered their home's yard and put down his products from his shoulders. After some time, a few

more women of the neighbourhood also came there and started bargaining with the hawker about the *mola-muri's* prices. After fixing the price, the hawker was weighing the quantities of *mola-muri* according to everybody's demand. Rathindra, standing a little away, was observing the hawker's activity. At the end of selling of the products, he went close to the hawker and said to him gently, 'my dear hawker, your weighing machine is not balanced correctly and not giving the buyers accurate weights.' The hawker was not only surprised at being caught by a little boy about his cheating in weighing the products but he also disagreed. He said "my dear son, my weighing machine is correct. You might see something wrong, but there is nothing wrong." Hearing the absolute lie from the hawker, Rathindra challenged him, "No, I didn't see anything wrong! You are lying. If you are telling the truth, remove the weighing seals from one side of your balance and then show us the machine's balanced position." Based on his demand, everybody present there became suspicious about it. They forced the hawker to put down the weighing seals from one side of the balance and found that the machine was not balanced properly; thus, the hawker used to cheat his buyers by giving them a smaller quantity of products than what they bought. The women were very disappointed with the hawker and scolded him for this kind of fraudulent behavior. The hawker was sorry for his misdeeds and weighed again the correct quantities for everyone. Rathindra then said to him, "dear hawker, telling a lie is the greatest sin; so is cheating. So, please never lie. Please do not engage in fraud with anybody in giving less quantity than what one buys." The overwhelmed hawker was thinking, "this boy is not a kid; he is just like an adult. How possible it is to receive advice such as this from a little kid!" Finally, the hawker told the women, "You please take care of this boy. He will be a great saint in the future. He holds all the symptoms at this young age." The hawker then blessed Rathindra, wishing him a happy future, and left.

Time passed by, and Rathindra was growing older. As mentioned before, the boy Rathindra did not like to become immersed in games like other boys. He was always involved in his own thoughts. He felt some kind of vacancy in his mind. As a result, he celebrated the silent time sitting under a tree like an unmindful saint. His parents and relatives observed his inattention, and they wondered why Rathindra was so quiet all the time. Why was he so unmindful and inattentive to the world? What did he think about? What can he think at this young age! It was the age of all kinds of naughtiness, playing, running, jumping, and enjoying life with happiness. Observing none of these activities in Rathindra, his parents Harumohan and Birapudi were very often anxious about him.

School Life

With time, Rathindra entered into his teenage life. He was tremendously inquisitive, helpful to others, sympathetic, courageous, and talented, but his apathy grew day by day. At the same time, he never got tired of helping his parents in daily family work. He remained his parents' hope for the future. His parents sent him to a local primary school at the age of 6. They were relaxed after getting him admitted to the school. They thought: if only their son could behave normally like other boys! But in his mind he still dreamt of something. At that time, there were not as many advantages of the education systems or facilities given in the schools as there are now. There was no compulsory education system. Also, in that society, people were not aware of education or the implications of education in daily lives. In this situation, though Rathindra was promoted to the upper classes, he did not feel any attraction to education. He was not even attentive. Failing to concentrate on the school's general education, he stopped going to school after the primary grades. But he did not stop reading different books and novels. Since his talent and memory were sharp from his childhood, he could memorize

and comprehend a book quickly after reading it with full concentration. He loved to read a variety of books. He used to collect books on Buddhism and read those carefully. He also read the life histories of the greatest scientists and their inventions, as well as books of different writers, poets, and novelists, etc. At leisure, he read those books under the shadow of trees. Besides reading, he had tremendous attraction and love for the religious songs. He liked to sing by himself and work them in his own way.

Close Observation of Different Incidents in the Society

Rathindra did not spend time in playing like other boys and girls. Rather, he observed different events and misconducts in the society and analyzed those by himself. It was very common in society that people used to slaughter animals to satisfy the gods. A few animals such as pigs and dogs sometimes were anesthetized and died. In addition, people became drunk and screamed and involved themselves in a variety of misdeeds on occasions like *Bizu Berana* and *Gojyagojya* (Bizu is one of the great festival of the Chakma society), etc. He also observed that pigs and chickens were slaughtered for worshiping in the *Chungulung pooja* in a marriage ceremony for the welfare of the new couple, and then the pigs' heads and legs, and the chickens' beaks and legs were presented in the names of the gods. Everyone in the ceremony, including the young boys and girls and teenagers, were so happy and joyful to see these events. However, after the marriage those couples were found to fight with each other after spending only a few days in happiness. The husbands used to beat their wives, or the wives did the same things with their husbands; they were sometimes found to quarrel and shout at each other, and after some days they were divorced. The desirable family then turned to be like a dry desert. Rathindra, being a teenager, observed those sorrowful phenomena and was surprised. His mind became filled with sorrow when he thought about those incidents. He

had been thinking about the ways of freedom from the surrounding imbalanced and distressful events.

Sight of an Incident

In Rathindra's village, there were two families who were fighting over land and filed a case against each other. Sateesh, a lawyer from the same village, visited the village to measure the land after being assigned to the case. At that time, the accuser of the case, Batye Chakma, was drinking alcohol and harassing Mr. Sateesh, saying, "you are a false lawyer!" Sateesh was disappointed to hear this unexpected speech and left, feeling insulted by Batye. He then submitted all the reports to the court against Batyey. As a result, Batye lost all of his lands. All the villagers then blamed him, saying, "why did you misbehave with the lawyer at that time? You have lost your lands by your own fault." To see this incident, Rathindra thought, "alcohol can turn a human being into an inhuman, causing a man to present the truth as falsehood or falsehood as the truth."

The "Thinker"

Rathindra always liked to stay in the noise-free quiet and silent places. Even when he did the daily domestic work, he was sometimes immersed in meditation. Sometimes he stopped the work and went to a solitary place. He was an easy-going, open-minded, religious, and holy person and he was devoid of any materialistic leanings. Thus, the neighbor used to call him a "thinker." He did not mind hearing that. In fact, he was never disappointed with anybody. All the time, he continued his meditation processes, remaining in a stable, normal condition.

Volunteering in Domestic Work

Rathindra's parents were anxious and worried about him, observing his unmindful and thoughtful nature. They thought

that he would be okay if he would be engaged in work. So, they told him to help them in household works such as taking the cattle to the fields. He used to take the cattle to the fields and bring them home in the late evening. During the leisure time in the field, he read a wide variety of books. Finding the opportunity to read books, he showed his interests in this work to his parents. His parents were very happy to hear that.

While going to the cattle field, he met a boy, Sudhir, who also took his cattle every day to the fields. Sudhir was very restless and energetic, while Rathindra was quiet and thoughtful. When Rathidra read a book with full concentration while sitting under the shadow of a tree, Sudhir used to disturb him very often. Rathindra was not disappointed with that, and he did not talk to Sudhir angrily. Rather, he approached in a friendly manner and talked to him about a lot of religious advice. It was interesting to see how the herd of cows grazed in the field in a disciplined way when Rathindra freed them. On the other hand, Sudhir's cows grazed randomly in the field and sometimes went a far away. So, Sudhir needed to be attentive to those cattle during the whole day. By the end of the day, he was very tired after spending a lot of time finding all the cows to bring them home.

One day Sudhir came to sit beside Rathindra while he was reading a religious book attentively while sitting under a tree. After a few minutes, he said, "Rathindra, let's play wrestling." As soon as he said that, he forced Rathindra to stand up without listening to him, and at some point he played a trick to lay Rathindra down on the ground. Rathindra was not upset about this; he stood up, cleaned the dust from his clothes, then sat down and started reading the book again. Sudhir was very surprised to see Rathindra's honest and unique behavior. After that, he sat beside Rathindra again and requested him to give him the religious principles. Rathindra merrily started reading out the Buddha's advice and explained those to Sudhir. Sudhir

became happy and delighted to hear the Buddha's advice. He never disturbed Rathindra after this event.

Padmainginee and Her Friends

Rathindra became involved in meditation inside a forest, by the side of a hill or in a quiet place, whenever he had a chance. One day, during his meditation, his younger sister Padmainginee and her friends went to the forest to collect timbers. The teenagers were playing there, shouting in boundless joy without knowing about Rathindra's presence near the place. He was distracted from the core of meditation due to the noises made by his sister and her friends, but he did not get up from his seat. He rather tried to be concentrated with strong commitment. At the end of the day, when he came back home, he was looking for Padmainginee. She realized that she probably made noises in the forest when she went there in the morning. She came in front of Rathindra and stood keeping her head down. Rathindra told his sister, "why did you go close to my meditation place? Do not try to go there next time. If you go there again, I will beat you, understand? You are the *Māra*. The *Māra*s create obstacles to concentration. They did the same thing with the Buddha but failed against Him. You will also not win with me. Now go, and remember not to go that place anymore."

Father's Sudden Death and Family Maintenance

Rathindra passed his days, spending most of the time in meditations and helping his parents with household work. In 1943, when Rathindra was 23 years old, his father Mr. Harumohan Chakma died suddenly. The whole family was astounded and overwhelmed with grief at their father's premature death. Rathindra was also burdened with sorrow over the sudden loss of his father, but he did not show an outburst of grief. He controlled himself, realizing that, "not all beings are immortal. Death comes after birth, and there is no

way to stop death. Death conquers over everything." Thus, he got consolation and faced the brutal fact. In the absence of his father, it became his duty as an eldest son to maintain the whole family.

Rathindra was a son of a middle-class family. His father Harumohan used to maintain the family by agriculture. They were able to lead their lives easily by cultivating a lot of paddy using the method called *Joom Chash*. The loss of Harumohan therefore created a barrier to the source of earnings for their family. The whole family was immersed in severe economic distress. Since Rathindra's siblings were very young at that time, the family's responsibility came upon on him and his mother, Birapudi. He and his mother started working hard in *Joom Chash* cultivation, which lessened the family needs temporarily. In that situation, according to his mother's wish, Rathindra started a business of selling silk in order to keep the family well maintained. He used to go to the Demagri town of Mizoram to buy a special kind of silk, the *"kookii silk,"* and bring it to the local villages to sell. That required burning a lot of physical energy, but he attained the characteristics of patience and tolerance by growing up in a combined family. Though this business could maintain the family well, he realized that this silk business was not for him. During his business time in different villages, he needed to talk to and keep in contact with women. He always tried to avoid contact with women, as he observed a variety of distresses stemming from making a family. He always led the life of a saint. So, he decided to discontinue the business. He gave up the job of silk selling and started looking for a new source of income. He found a job as a sarkar (manager) in a shop near the old Rangamati bazaar owned by the chairman of Maghban Mauza, Biraj Mohan Dewan. Rathindra managed the shop with honesty and hard work. Because of his presence, people who came to the shop needed to stand in a line to maintain discipline in buying things. He did not allow any breaking of this rule. Rathindra, being very organized, disciplined, and

sacred by nature from his childhood, never tolerated any injustice. He made the buyers understand that they needed to make a line to buy things from the shop. Because of his nature of braveness, honesty, intelligence, and creativity, he attracted the attention of many people in that bazar. To see his talent, intelligence, and other qualities, many people used to tell him, "Rathindra, you are tremendously talented, wise, and technical, and capable of of ruling a country. One day you will do it."

Rangamati Town: The Place of a Turning Point

During Rathindra's stay in the Rangamati town, he was able to read a variety of books and came to know more about the outside world. This was the time that was thought to be a turning point for him in his journey to become the Venerable Banabhante. He had the chance to study many religious books of the Hindu, Christian, and Islamic religions, including the Geeta, Ramayana, Mahabharat, and the Bible. He was also reading novels by renowned novelists, writers, and poets such as Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Kamini Roy, etc. He enthusiastically read scientific books about James Watt, Isaac Newton, Thomas Alva Edison, etc. He kept the books with great care and was alert not to make any folds in the book pages or tear them. While he was reading the books, he tried to understand the core of the subjects clearly. At some point, he found that many of the wise persons—those with the highest educational degrees—and researchers wrote books about their opinions on Buddhism and tried to establish the religion in a well-respected position. So, he started believing that there might be something of truth in this religion. Otherwise, why did these researchers carry out so many experiments and discuss this religion? From then, it became his habit to collect books about Buddhism and study them.

Besides the religious and scientific books, Rathindra had much attraction for the stage shows of theatre parties, different

songs, dramas, and folk religious songs like Keerton. He was attracted by the Buddha Keerton (songs about the cycle of Buddha), Hindu Keerton, and kobi gaan (poetic sings). He used to watch and enjoy different stage programs arranged by moving drama societies and theatre parties. Watching these different scenes and the conversations of the characters of the king, ministers, and secretaries, he thought to himself, "Alas! The people who acted the characters of the king, ministers, and secretaries during the whole night are all general and middle-class family people after the stage show. We also act similarly on the temporary stage in this world. Following the reincarnation process, sometimes we are born as a powerful king or as the king of celestial beings (devas) or a street beggar in a poor family. We can be highly educated, being born in a well-respected family, or completely ignorant, born in a rural area. Besides, a soul can be born into the world of evil beings, ghosts, and hell to suffer limitlessly, which means a life is led through many miseries, sufferings, and struggles. I can see that all of these materials around us are fragile and sorrowful. Then why do we immerse ourselves in a falsehood of attraction? After death, if we are reborn in a mysterious, sorrowful life, we have to go through another life cycle of all this suffering! And to avoid those miseries, all must lead an honest and sacred life and do as many good things as possible." Rathindra thus always thought about and observed the fragility of life with his full wisdom.

Ignorance of a Saint

One day, Rathindra went to enjoy religious songs arranged by a Jatra Dol. He was listening to a song sung by a saint, "*Who does not have the name of God/Please do not look at him.*" As soon as he understood the meaning of the song, he was thinking by himself that the verse sung by the saint was not correct. It showed a clear distinguishing line between a group of people with another that does not have belief in God. As a

living being, we-including the saints-continuously nurture the clash of good and bad, profits and loss. What is the point of attaining the human life if we cannot spread the feelings of equity, kindness, and friendly attitude among everyone and all living beings?

The Retentive Faculty

As a talented person, Rathindra could remember many things for a long time. Similarly, he could keep things in mind after observing them closely. Now, he, being the Venerable Banabhante, can recite the poems or quote lines from a novel of Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, or Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, etc. He can even recite the poems of his childhood correctly without any interruption. Even in old age, he could speak out the dialogues of the characters of a stage drama he used to see in his youth. He could easily sing a song once he listens to the music, tempo, and jingling sound with full concentration. This shows the devotion of his mind to full concentration and his retentive faculty. The Venerable Banabhante used to recite the songs, poems, and dialogues of a drama exactly as he used to read and listen to them during his family life. While he was giving the sermons to his disciples (*Bhikkhu, Shraman*) and *Upasāka-Upasikā*, the audience were not only delighted but also perceived the religious doctrines.

Sometimes he compared the thirty-one realms with prisons, uttering the poem of Kazi Nazrul Islam:

I will not stay in a closed room for looking at the world—
How human beings are rotating from one era to another!
From one country to the other,
How are they revolving?
How millions of soldiers are dying, and for what?
For what attraction are they embracing the sufferings of death?

On October 2, 1996, while the Venerable Banabhante was talking to his disciples, he gave the sermon by reciting a song of a prominent singer Bhupen Hazarika:

- *Why are you still holding the thirst of attraction quietly after listening to the screaming of many people who are covered with the darkness of ignorance?*

- *While you are still observing the drift from morality and falling off from humanity, why are you holding the personality of shameless idleness?*

- *Why is it important to not have a president when the people are illiterate and foodless?*

- *If a person could be extroverted and a group could be without any personality, then why are you not breaking the fragile society?*

- *Why can't you inspire millions of people with strong commitment and accelerate them?*

- *Why can't you give freedom to others?*

- *Why can't you be like a flowing river? May be you are not free yet; if so, why can't you show the path of freedom to others?*

- *Why can't you awaken millions of people who are surrounded by sorrow and grief under the control of Māra?*

After reciting these eight speeches, the Venerable Banabhante said that "at present, people are almost insane because of suffering from both physical and mental diseases. They don't even know where they eat or what to say. So, one has to be first protective from disease, which is a kind of obstacle (*Māra*) to meditation. You cannot go to *Nibbāna* without fighting against the *Māra*. You have to trash and trample down the attraction of a mind to a different sex, all sorts of other allurements, threats, and obstructions created by the *Māra*. It is not easy for a man to avoid the attraction of a woman and defeat the *Māra*. Even when Siddhartha went to the bank of the Noiranjana River with the determination to meditate, the Māra told to him, "Hey Siddhartha! You came here like a

coward, leaving your beloved wife Gopa alone at home. Go away from here. Otherwise I will kill you and throw your dead body in this river." But Siddhartha, being confident in his meditation, defeated the *Māra* and won the war of sensual allurements as defined by the *Māra*. Ven. Banabhante also said, "as a monk, you have to also fight against the five-fold Māra of defilements, aggregates, karma formations, deity, and death. Moreover, you have to fight against the soul. A soul creates barriers towards freedom or *Nibbāna*. If you can win over all these Māra, you can go for *Nibbāna*. Try your best to go to *Nibbāna*, which is free, independent, safe, and fearless."

Venerable Banabhante composed many religious songs. His favourite one is given below:

Please tell the names of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha wholeheartedly.
If you desire to cross the river of life,
Please hold onto those names.
The wife, sons, and daughters all exist temporarily and leave this world one day.
If the three names of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are mingled in your breathe,
You will definitely be benefitted from there.
Think about those three gems;
Your mind will become full with peace.
Also think about the temple of Brahmā;
You will get the results instantly.

Reading Books and Practicing Meditation at Leisure

Rathindra, after taking a job at Biraj Mohan Dewan's shop, used to read books and sit for meditation whenever he found some free time. In particular, after finishing the whole day's tasks, he sat for meditation after eating his dinner. His meditation continued until midnight. He never broke this rule no matter how busy he was. When he sat for the meditation, his mind became quiet and peaceful.

Biraj Mohan Dewan's business became profitable and prosperous after Rathindra came to the shop. Biraj Mohan liked Rathindra like his grandchild. Rathindra also showed a much respect and honor, and obeyed him. He also maintained the shop well, like his own grandfather's shop. To observe the high interests and commitment of Rathindra for religion, Mr. Biraj Mohan, with great affection, used to call him '*Dharma Pagla*' (a crazy religious person).

Increasing the Sense of being a Buddhist Monk after Observing the Surrounding Incidents

Incident 1

One day Rathindra found that an institutionally educated M.A. was imprisoned because of sexual misconduct done by his wife. When the gentleman used to go out to his office, his wife met with an outside person. One day, the husband caught up with them and got blind with anger. Instantly losing all his senses, he started striking the wife with a chopper. Due to his wife's screaming at that time, their neighbors gathered there, stopped him from beating his wife, and gave up him to the police. Observing this incident, Rathindra realized the falsehood of getting married and making a family. He was thinking to himself, "I would have to suffer the same way if I would be attracted to creating a social bond through marriage."

To understand the sexual thirsts, Venerable Banabhante gave a doctrine to his disciple Bhikkhu: "Women are like a monster. If you lust for them, you will be destroyed. They will destroy your blood, flesh, knowledge, merit, technique, and purity. The wicked *Māra* creates a bond between a man and woman. Its main duty is to bind the beings in sensual relationships. If you are committed to these falsehoods created by the *Māra*, you cannot go to *Nibbāna*. Women say, 'Hey guys, please stay with me.' Men tell the same thing to women. When men and

women start living together, the wicked *Māra* stays with them."

Venerable Bhante further mentioned, "It is usually seen that neither women nor men can live alone. So, they build up a family and give birth of many children. And this is due to their ignorance (*Avijjā*). It is your turn to destroy the generation of sins and stop doing new sins. Always be aware of doing sacred work and increase the volume of work until meeting *Nibbāna*. If *Nibbāna* can be attained, the Four Noble Truths (*Cattari Ariya Saccani*) can be explained easily. Acquiring and understanding the *Paticcasamuppāda* will destroy all kinds of ignorance and help you to attain *Nibbāna*."

Incident 2

It was the time when Rathindra was six. One day, he was sailing a small boat towards the wave-streams of a river. At that time, an old man called to him, wanting to cross the river to the other side. Rathindra acted like he did not hear the old man because the man used to make mockery or tease others. What's the point of believing that old man if he would deceive Rathindra later like the story of a farmer boy deceiving the villagers telling a lie about a tiger? Rathindra decided not to respond to him. Simultaneously, he was thinking, "I will be blessed if I would help him cross the river. Thus, if I would be in trouble on any day somebody would help me out. I will be benefitted from doing this good work in every reincarnation." Thinking these thoughts, he took the old man in his boat. After boarding, the man asked Rathindra to take him to a place. Rathindra was surprised and said to him, "what are you talking about? Didn't you tell me just to cross the river? Now you are asking me to go to a place!" The old man laughed and said, "you did not respond to me at the first time. If I had told you about this place, you would not have taken me into your boat. That's why I said that." Hearing that, Rathindra smiled, did not say anything to the old man, and was sailing the boat against

the river-streams. The old man was very talkative. He could not stop talking for a single moment and kept talking with Rathindra, who was sitting on the other side of the boat. Meanwhile, their boat crossed a bend of the river. Suddenly the old man saw a beautiful young lady at the riverside who was filling up her pitcher. He stared at the lady without any blinking of his eyes. He also whispered to attract Rathindra's attention towards the pretty lady and made various hints with his eyes. Rathindra did not pay attention to him and was sailing the boat, completely avoiding the lady and man.

He smiled to see the old man's misdeed. He was thinking that all the suffering in this world is generated from sexual addiction, no matter if he or she was young, adult, or old. Though the old man was aged, he could not control his mind! Mind leads people towards both proper and improper actions. The correct and right actions bring happiness and peace, while the impropriety creates all sorts of sufferings. Such sexual misconduct even mutated an old man's mind! On the other hand, Rathindra, having the characteristics of a controlled life and honesty, could keep himself away from the false amusements of the greedy old man.

Incident 3

After taking the job at Biraj Mohan Dewan's shop, Rathindra's life came to a turning point of a new horizon. His honesty, intellectuality, and simplicity impressed everyone, including men, women, and children. The days were passing by with joy and happiness through busy schedules. At leisure, Rathindra remembered his mother and younger siblings' faces thinking how well they are doing in the village! Sometimes his mind became extremely anxious to get in touch with the family. When he found any holidays, he used tc visit home after getting permission from Mr. Biraj Mohan. It was like a child went back to its mother's lap. He accompanied his siblings, met with their neighbours, and chatted with them. After

spending a few days, he used to come back to the busy schedule of his job in the town. Things were going well in this way except that once he observed a pathetic incident during his visit in the village. He encountered the death of an eleven-year-old girl. Everyone from the little girl's family was mourning and afflicted by sorrow. In particular, the girl's parents were crying loudly, being stunned with grief. Sometimes they were striking their heads on nearby trees or their chests with hands or they remained senseless in repentance. Nobody could quiet them or give them any condolence. Nothing could stop them from the pains of losing their beloved daughter. Their neighbors came to their house to have a glance at the dead girl. Rathindra also went to their house. He saw that the dead body was laid on one side of the hallway. Sighting the parents' pitiful screaming, his mind was depressed, and he thought how sorrowful the family life was! If I would be stuck in this kind of family bond, I would also be thrown in the same situation. May be I would become senseless to cry for a dead wife or sons and daughters. Realizing the truth, suddenly he decided not to be involved in family bonds in this life.

Incident 4

Rathindra came upon another similar incident of the death of a gentleman's beautiful wife in his village. The woman's premature death made her husband overwhelmed with grief. His pathetic mourning and lamenting created a heart-rending environment. He was crying, saying that "Oh, my beloved wife, why did you die? I cannot live without you. I do not want to live without you." Sometimes he was saying, "My beloved wife, where did you go leaving me alone? Which unknown place have you reached? What offense have I done that you left me? We spent such a nice conjugal life My dear, please wake up. Why don't you talk to me? Please do not be angry with me." He was lying down on the floor and crying and striking his forehead. Sometimes he was senseless. Though his

neighbors were giving him condolence, he could not convince himself. He was distressed to lose his benevolent wife.

Strong Desire for being a Buddhist Monk

Though Rathindra had been working in Biraj Mohan Dewan's shop, he could not pay much attention to it. He became more and more reluctant and disrespectful towards the conventional family life. Every moment, he observed a strange and tremendous sense of spiritual consciousness. He also found that his grandfather, like Biraj Mohan Dewan, was highly demanding in earning money-he earned a lot of money from his big luxury shops but also from the job of being a Headman of Maghban Mauza. In addition, he owned acres of land and properties. But he was always repenting in order to earn more and more. It was true that man's demands are endless. The more one gets, the more he wants. Rathindra often observed his supervisor's demand of growing more properties.

In this context, the following quotes of the Buddha are cited:

1. Manujassa pamattacārino tanhā vaddhati māluvā viya
So palavati hurāhuram phalam iccham'va vanasmim vānaro.

- The craving of the man addicted to careless living grows like a creeper. He jumps from life to life like a fruit-loving monkey in the forest.

2. Yam esā sahatī jammī tanhā loke visattikā
Sokā tassa pavaddhanti abhivattham'va bīranam.

- Whosoever in this world is overcome by base clinging, his sorrows flourish like well-watered Birana grass.

3. Yo ce'tam sahatī jammim tanham loke duraccayam
Sokā tamhā papatanti udabindū'va pokkharā.

- Whosoever in the world overcomes this base, unruly craving, from him sorrows fall away, like water drops all away from the lotus leaf. *(The Dhammapada: 334–336)*

The social instability, anguish, and collisions of various disturbances had shaken Rathindra's mind with a great impact. The incidents full of animosity envy, and malignancy influenced his mind deeply. The melancholy events left deep impressions on his mind. Sighting those woeful scenes, he felt very nervous on one side and observed those imbalances in the society as intimidating events. A family and society appeared as a Hell to him, which induced him to lose any attraction towards the worldly life. He questioned himself with the remembrance of the Buddha and his disciples like the *Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākassapa, and Rashtrapala*, etc. Their sacred, dedicated, and disciplined lifestyles inspired him to follow their pathways. He teased himself, saying, "for which attraction are your still tied up with this mundane existence?" He was continuously thinking, "Oh, the Buddha left his wealth, wife, son, and all the worldly pleasures in order to get rid of all suffering. He was a prince and owner of three luxurious castles, *Rammo, Surammo, and Suvako,* suitable for winter, summer, and rainy seasons. However, the divine luxuries and pleasures could not attract the Prince *Siddhārtha Gautama* while he was observing the mundane existence and tranquillity of the world. The same realization persisted with the Venerable *Sāriputta* and *Mahāmoggallāna*, who sacrificed all their wealth, worth millions of dollars. The Arahant *Mahākassapa* left his pretty and glorious wife, realizing the sufferings that can be originated from sensual pleasures. Hearing after the *Tathāgata Buddha's* sacred sermon and realizing the tranquillity of the worldly life, the *Rashtrapala* relinquished his wealth of eight hundred million as it was owned by the celestial beings. The Buddha and his disciples have so many other great and heroic examples of renouncements that they observed the luxuries, pleasures, and desires as spit and found a way to get rid of all the worldly pains by accepting the *Pabbajjā*. Oh, my lord, compared to their wealth and royalty, I don't have anything. They left the heavenly pleasures and materials while I don't have even a

single property. Then why I am still residing in this materialistic family and drowning myself in the sea of lust? Why am I not leaving all these? Why am I not following the ways to find the eternal happiness of *Nibbāna*?' Thinking in this way, Rathindra was determined that "I have to take the *Pabbajjā* as early as possible. How much suffering I have received from one birth to another! How long should I stay with this anguish? I had been wailing by burning myself in the flame of desire, just like the small bugs embrace death after being attracted to the flames. What did I get from there except absorbing more and more distress? I will destroy the root of all these regrets. How many years should I be burnt by the flames of desire?'

After the determination, Rathindra went to many places to become a monk but did not find any suitable place or advisor to help him in attaining *Nibbāna.*

A Temporary Abjection for Attaining *Pabbajjā*

Rathindra was waiting for the day when he will be able to find someone to give him t*he Pabbajjā* and show him the way of towards the *Nibbāna.* In the meantime, he met a gentleman who told him about a terrible violation of mass murders in India. He said, "I saw it when I was in India. Oh! How cruel human beings can be! How ferocious human beings can be! How can men kill other masses of men? I saw how thousands of people were gathered in a place and killed so inhumanely! It was like floods of blood everywhere. The blood-streams were flowing all over the place. Oh! How can people murder other people? Whenever those clashing scenes come to my mind, my blood becomes cold. My organs become numb remembering the blood. It makes me feel that in this world I am the only one—completely alone.'

Hearing the description of the mass murder, Rathindra did not know what to say. He started thinking, "people are now submerged in the darkness of ignorance. Being under the

control of passion and desire, they see falsehood as the truth, injustice as justice, and insubstantial materials as substantial. There are only enviousness, anger, fighting, and killing everywhere. Where will it end? Men cannot understand the origin of distress and the sources of happiness. This compassion is like the darkness of a no-moon night. The more men are under the control of lust and involve themselves in ambitions, the more their cries create the surrounding environment filled with grief. This is an endless attraction. The lust-filled people are not trying to come to light from the darkness. They are not trying to understand what the real truth is. In this case, if I would be an *Arahant,* what would be the benefits? People would not try to understand the real truth.

When Rathindra had arisen from these emotions, he was confused about taking the decision of *Pabbajjā.* He fought with himself, but he then remembered the *Tathāgata Buddha.* He remembered the sorrowful worldly life. He realized the insensate nature of a family life, and he had the desire of acquiring *Pabbajjā* once again. The *Tathāgata* was also discouraged to publicize Buddhism for a while, thinking about the illusions of human beings. When *Tathāgata* attained the enlightenment, he spent seven weeks in meditation in seven different places. After that, he started meditation under the roots of a *Nyagrodha* tree, where he perceived this debate: "I acquired a calm and wise religion. Human beings are involving themselves in sensual pleasures and desires. It would be hard for them to comprehend the activity-dependent *Paticcasamuppāda* principles that I invented. If I would give advice and the audience would not understand, it would be hard work and irritating as well for me.' The *Brahmā*, creator of the world, thereafter came to know about the Buddha's self-debating about spreading of the religion. He started telling himself, "Oh, my Buddha, the world will be diminished. Oh, Lord! The world will be destroyed. The *Tathāgatha Sammasambuddha's* mind has been bent down not to publicize the religion instead of spreading it." Thinking so, the

Mahabrahmā appeared in the world from the place of *Brahmās* and stood in front of the Buddha. Saluting the *Tathāgata Buddha*, the *Mahabrahmā* prayed his requests, "Oh, my dear Lord Buddha! Please advise and spread your teachings throughout the world. There are living beings who do not do much sinful work. These creatures will go to lower birth in their next rebirths if they do not hear the religious sermons. The audience of tasting the flavor of your sermons will definitely be found.' In such a way, the great *Mahabrahmā* requested the Buddha three times. The Buddha refused his urge all three times. The *Mahabrahmā* then recited,

There had been religions before;
Those were not thoughtful, correct, and pure.
Oh. Lord! You have discovered the source of the purest fountain,
To rescue all living beings from the cycle of birth, disease, and death-the three pains.
This arising religion is the brightest,
Thoughtful-please see its white luminescence.
It is stable like a big mountain,
Flows like the purest fountain,
Like these, oh my Lord! Please make the people wake up!
Having been residing in the religious palace, please look at the sorrowful world.
Oh, the foreseer! Please look at the distressed people there,
Who, temporarily surprised by the rebirth cycle, are shedding tears,
While you have discovered the solution of ceasing the rebirth.
Oh, my brave, please stand up! You are the winners against the suffering.
Doubtless successful, you are the meritorious.
Please look at those people as you are the Bhagaban.
Please advise your religion, you-the Greatest!
The knowledgeable audience must be found,
Who will perceive the religion and proceed further.

Understanding the wishes of *Mahabrahmā*, the *Tathagata Buddha* took a look at all living beings in the whole world and found that some are less sinful, sensitive to hearings, beautiful, obedient, and faithful in reincarnation than others. The analogy can be given of a lotus flower that sometimes grows inside water. Observing such discrepancies, the Buddha told to *Mahabrahmā*:

The door of heaven has been discovered,
In order to rescue people from birth, disease, and death;
For the audience who are eager to hear,
I will start delivering the religion.

Hearing the assertive answer from the Buddha, *Mahabrahmā* left the place after paying his reverence to the Buddha.

In the same way, after listening to the description of the notorious massacre in India from a visitor, Rathindra, like the Buddha, also changed his mind and determined to take the oath for *Pabbajjā*. He was thinking that if he could get rid of the worldly suffering and become an *Arahant*, then people would certainly come to accept the essence of my religion.

Meeting with Mr. Gajendra Lal Barua

Rathindra, while working in a shop in Rangamati, met with Mr. Gajendra Lal Barua, a villager of Nankhain in Potiya thana of Chittagong district. Mr. Gajendra Lal was a medical doctor in Rangamati. He was aware of the Buddhist religion because he had stayed at Yangoon in Burma for a long time. Rathindra and Gajendra Lal became friends since both of them were religious and honest. If they found any leisure time, they talked about religion for hour after hour.

Also thinking of undertaking *Pabbajjā*, Rathindra could not concentrate on his work. He always thought that if he would be involved in family life, he would suffer more. He would be anxious and afraid all the time. *Pabbajjā* is like a free bird. No

miseries can touch a monk. He was wondering when he would be able to leave the family life, go to a forest, and stay immersed in deep meditation after taking an oath for *Pabbajjā*. He thought, "When would I be able to attain the absolute peace of *Nibbāna*?" One day, Rathindra talked about his desire to take *Pabbajjā* to Gajendra Lal. Knowing about Rathindra's strong determination to take the *Pabbajjā*, and observing his knowledge, wisdom, and talent, he inspired Rathindra to take *Pabbajjā* and gave him a lot of advice. He inspired him to become an *Arahant* in this life. Rathindra was so excited to hear the advice from Gajendra Lal that he did not have any more confusion about going for a *Pabbajjā* life. Gajendra Lal helped him heartily to start the greatest life. They decided that they would go to Chittagong town to take the *Pabbajjā* from the first B.A.-passed monk and a learned person of *Ti-pitaka*, Ven. Dipankar Mahathera. They imagined that Dipankar Mahathera could give him correct directions for finding ways of getting rid of sorrows or miseries. Rathindra became very happy knowing that he would finally find a path. His life-long dream was going to come true! Rathindra felt indebted to Gajendra Lal, who showed him the actual path.

Getting Permission from Biraj Mohan Dewan

Rathindra fixed a date and time to take the *Pabbajjā*. He then needed to get permission to say "goodbye" to all. Rathindra first let Biraj Mohan Dewan know about his decision and said, "Grandpa, I know that you love me and you have a great affection for me. So, I decided to let you know that I would like to accept *Pabbajjā* to find the ways of getting rid of all kinds of suffering and attain *Nibbāna* in this life. This is my life-long dream!' Rathindra continued, saying, "you tell me 'Dharma Pagla, and I think that I deeply feel for the religion. I saw closely how much people suffered by being attached to a social life. Human beings suffer from miseries, but still they embrace more suffering by further searching for happiness. I

do not want to hold the miseries any more. I would like to destroy the birth, disease and death completely. I do not want to face the scary death again and again in every life of reincarnation. I do not want go through the pains generated from a regular social life." Rathindra further said, "Grandpa, please do blessings to me so that I can fulfill my whole life's dream. I have prepared everything. I will take my oath to accept *Pabbajjā* in the Chittagong Buddhist Temple." Then he requested his permission. Biraj Mohan Dewan was also delighted to know about the transient nature of the world. He was very delighted to see the enlightenments in Rathindra and gave him permission to leave. He blessed Rathindra, saying that "Rathindra, the way you are going forward is challenging, but I wish you will be successful in your way. Never go back if you face any barrier. You should proceed until you reach your destination. I wish that your dream will come true and that your life will be colourful. Your dream will be able to create more dreams in many other people-I bless this to you. Be happy, and may your future life be smooth and full of joy."

Saying Goodbye to His Mother

Getting permission from Biraj Mohan Dewan, Rathindra headed towards the Muroghona village to get permission and blessings from his mother Birapudi. On his way, he was upset thinking of his mother. He was thinking to himself, "My dear mother, you have sheltered me like a big tree. I cannot think to say goodbye to you, but I have no other way. I have to take *Pabbajjā* to get rid of miseries, to rescue you from these sufferings, and to show the paths to everyone."

On the other side, his mother Birapudi had decided to get Rathindra married, and so she thought of a girl who was beautiful, a hard-worker, and an expert in doing household work. His mother was drawing pictures of golden future and became determined to get her son married. She was thinking, "I will need to force him to marry. He did not listen to me

before, but I will make him agree this time when he comes to home. He will be more attentive after getting married. Everything will be fine after his marriage." Unexpectedly, Rathindra came home suddenly. His mother became very happy. She thought herself, "Truly, all is matched well with the horoscope. My son has come on time."

Rathindra's mother fed her eldest son a lot of food with great care and affection. After the dinner, when Rathindra and his mother sat down together, his mother told him about his marriage. Hearing that, Rathindra remained silent for a few moments. He then started saying with emotion, "Mother, I know that you love me very much, but if you want my happiness, please do not tell me to marry anymore. My mind is completely devoid of any kind of worldly happiness, desire, and lust. I am afraid of social rituals. My dear mother, I have seen deeply that this world is rough and dangerous. I have seen how people have fear at every moment of their lives. I have seen how people suffer year after year by being involved in different kinds of misdeeds. So, I have decided that I will never be involved in the regular social life. I want to stay without any restriction, just like a free bird. I want to be free from the traditional social life and be happy. Dear mother, I have come here to get a farewell from you. I am determined that I will go for a saintly life and look for a way of getting rid of suffering. I will destroy the desire that causes us to go through reincarnation, and thus I will destroy my desire from its root. I will arrive in the world as an enlightened person."

Mother Birapudi listened to her son's talk, and tears dropped down her cheeks. She could not say anything, but she could also not stop her son. On one hand, she had the fear of losing her son, and on the other hand, she could not stop him. She was thinking that her son was frustrated over making a family and afraid of making a family. She could not think how she would live alone when her son went for a saintly life. She could not protest against him either. She thought, "My son is

not affectionate to a worldly social life and is afraid of the social life. Being a mother, how can I throw him in the sea of miseries? Since I cannot do that, let my son's wish become fulfilled. Let him be happy by taking an oath of *Pabbajjā*."

Rathindra also understood his mother's feeling. He said, "Dear mother, please do not cry. If you cry this way, my mental strength will be diminished. Today you are crying because I will say goodbye to go for *Pabbajjā*. But please think, if I would die today, what would happen then? Please tell me, has anybody in this world won against diseases? All living beings are under the control of age, disease, and death. Nobody is free from these three processes. If somebody says that he or she would not take birth any more, has he or she avoided the process of reincarnation? Nobody can do it. Every living being has been reborn again and again because of the results of their own deeds. Only those who have gone beyond life and death and seen *Nibbāna* can conquer those three processes. So, I have decided to attain *Nibbāna* in this life by accepting the life of *Pabbajjā*. This is what I promised."

His mother realized his mental condition. So, she could not say anything. She accepted her son's decision. Her eyes became full of tears when she thought of her son's leaving for *Pabbajjā*. With wet eyes, his mother said to him, "Where are you going to take the *Pabbajjā*? Can't I see you anymore?" Rathindra said, "Everything has been planned. I will take the oath in a Buddhist temple in Chittagong town. I will go there with Gajendra Lal Barua, whom I met at Rangamati. I have decided that I will take the Pabbajjā on a lunar day of holy Falguni moon day (the eleventh month of the Bengali Calendar—the middle of February to the middle of March)." He prayed to his mother, "Dear mother, please bless me so that I can fulfill my desire." His mother said, "My dear son, I bless that your desire be fulfilled like a full moon. Please go ahead and be successful."

During these days, Rathindra was busy saying goodbye to all of his relatives and neighbors. He spent time with them, sharing their happiness and sorrow. Time passed by quickly. Finally, the day of departure came closer. Rathindra took the dust of his mother's feet. He prayed for her to forgive him for all the mistakes he made. His mother blessed her son from the core of her heart. She embraced her son to her chest. Oh! It was a mother's mind that was not so easy to make understandable. 'Rathindra, I was pregnant for ten months and ten days when you were born. I have brought you up going through a lot of joy, affection, miseries, and suffering. Now, you have come here to say 'goodbye' to me, but I don't know how to stay without you."Thinking by herself, tears dropped down by from Birapudi's eyes. She looked at her son with bewildered eyes. Her mind was full of fear, thinking of the unknown future of her son. She said to her son, "Rathindra, I will pray to the *Tathāgata* that you will be successful in your aim. But please remember that I have become aged. So, no matter where you will go, please stop by to see me before my death. I would like to see you at least once before my death.' Rathindra, feeling the pain, could not say anything. He felt on his mother's feet and took the dust from her feet for the last time. He said goodbye to his beloved siblings and relatives. Rathindra visited the whole village and watched the beauty of every corner of the village before leaving. Finally he started his journey, leaving behind his beloved mother, beloved siblings, relatives, known people, and beautiful village. Birapudi stared at Rathindra's path. She looked at him until he was seen. Her son also looked back at his mother. Suddenly, he disappeared beyond the vision region where the sky met the horizon. He came to Rangamati, took blessings from Biraj Mohan Dewan, and started the journey for Chittagong with the help of Gajendra Lal Barua.

CHAPTER TWO

Arrival in Chittagong and Getting Permission to Take *Pabbajjā*

With a lot of hope and desire to fulfill his long-time dream, Rathindra left for Chittagong with Mr. Gajendra Lal to reach the Chittagong Buddhist Temple at Nandan Kanan. Since the principal of that temple was Venerable Dipankar Mahathera, who was the first B.A.-pass-educated monk, Rathindra had the firm belief that the Ven. Dipankar Mahathera must have attained a deep knowledge. He might be able to answer all the questions that Rathindra had. Finally, they went to Venerable Dipankar Sreegyan, saluted him, and prayed for taking *Pabbajjā*. The Venerable monk was very much impressed to see Rathindra's mental strength and determination to take the *Pabbajjā*, and so gave the permission to him.

In the Trap of Allurement

After getting permission from Venerable Dipankar Sreegyan, Gajendra Lal Barua, and Rathindra went outside to see different places of Chittagong town. They enjoyed the beautiful scenic views of Chittagong. Rathindra's mind was full of joy to take *Pabbajjā* for getting rid of sorrows. On the other hand, Mr. Gajendra Lal was also delighted to help Rathindra find a way to get the *Pabbajjā*. He also realized the taste of being free from suffering. The pious Gajendra Lal believed that by helping Rathindra in this way he would also be blessed to be free from this sorrowful world. After roaming around at several places, Mr. Gajendra told Rathindra about a rich merchant who was previously known to Gajendra. Mr. Gajendra mentioned to him that the merchant was looking for

an honest and hard-working person with whom he could share a business and expand his business. If Rathindra wanted, he could accept this chance, Mr. Gajendra Lal said. To hear this attractive offer, suddenly Rathindra's mind was shadowed with the thoughts of becoming a rich man. He was thinking that he was the eldest son of his family. So, he had the responsibility of taking care of the family. Also, his mother was aged. If he would have a lot of money, no miseries could touch him. Thinking so, he looked nervous. But within a few moments he reproached himself: "What am I thinking? I have come here to get the *Pabbajjā* for getting rid of all kinds of suffering. I have reached here by crossing so many barriers! This must be an allurement by the *Māra*. It cannot be done, what I have been thinking. If I would be tied by family attraction, I would have to suffer the worldly miseries. Is wealth everything in this world? I have seen that Mr. Biraj Mohan had a lot of wealth, but still he wanted more. He was not happy for a single day. Budhha and his disciples attained the *Pabbajjā* by giving up billions of wealth. Thus, they obtained *Nibbāna* and enlightened their lives." Thinking this, Rathindra returned his distracted mind to the correct path of attaining *Nibbāna*.

Attaining *Nibbāna*

When Rathindra was taking the *Pabbajjā*, some Barua Buddhists asked him, "Are you married?" Rathindra said, "No." Then they said, "Aha! Why didn't you come after marrying? It would be better if you could do so." Rathindra just smiled as he knew that if men had even a tiny amount of attraction for women, their minds would always be involved with women. Mainly only a few men could cross the sea of this sorrowful world. The rest play on the seashore only. But those who follow the path of religion, the *Dhamma*, must succeed to heaven from this deathful, transient world. Finally, Rathindra Chakma received the *Pabbajjā* from Venerable Dipankar Mahathera on the full moon day of Falgun. The day was one of

the memorable and delightful days in his life. Thus, he ended the worldly social life by holding the great dream of getting rid from all pains. He was turned into Rathindra Shraman *(Sāmanera)* from Rathindra. It was the month of either February or March in 1949.

Life after Receiving the *Pabbajjā*

Rathindra started reading a lot of religious books borrowed from his spiritual adviser. Within a few days, he learned all the education, rules, and regulations of a Buddhist novice (Shraman). After taking this long desire and dreamful *Pabbajjā*, he promised that if the motion of his life should be stopped, then it would be, but he would follow the lifestyle of an ideal monk like those in the era of the Lord Buddha at every step of his life. No matter how many obstacles arrived, he would not be distracted from his aim.

After spending a few more days, he started practicing the *Dhutanga Sīla* (Austere Moral Practices) and begging food every day. He used to wake up early in the morning, finish all the daily work in the temple, and go out to beg alms in different localities of the town. Doing such, sometimes he needed to go to the houses of Muslims. One of the Barua Upasika said to him, "Shraman, please do not go to the Muslims' places. They can give you some bad food intentionally. So, it is better not to go to their houses." Some of them said, "Begging food without judging the nation or religion is Buddha's rule. We are happy if Shraman follows the Buddha's rules.

Sometimes when Rathindra went out to collect his daily food, he overheard the people gossiping in neighbourhood shops discussing different things about him. Some used to say, "look, look, a CID of Hindustan is going. This monk with colored robes must be a CID of Hindustan." To hear these kinds of comments, he was sometimes very disappointed with the saintly life in a modern, civilized town. One day, as he was

returning to the temple, a man most likely from an intelligent branch asked Rathindra Shraman, "What is your name? What do you do? Where do you live? Why do you live here? I will come to the Temple in the evening and talk to you then." He answered all his questions. Though he was facing these kind of obstacles, he kept continuing the search for collecting food for himself.

Friendship with Rabindra Shraman

At that time, there was a monk in the Chittagong Buddhist Temple named Rabindra. He stayed on the first floor of the temple. Rabindra Shraman became a friend of Rathindra Shraman because of staying in the same temple. They discussed many things about religion. Rabindra Shraman was surprised to see Rathindra Shraman's great affection and pure emotion for religion. Sometimes he also went out to collect food for himself like Rathindra Shraman did. But he went mostly to the area of rich people. After coming back to the temple, he said to Rathindra Shraman most of the time, "The rich Baruas are very miserly, but they are not human beings. See, what a small amount of food I was given."

Miracle Survival

During the time when Rathindra stayed in the Chittagong Temple, the Buddhist people at Mogaltuli or other places were not very rich. However, they used to give a lot of food to Rathindra Shraman in his bowl (the Savek). Thus, Rathindra used to go different places while collecting food. When he was collecting food, he needed to cross one of the busy roads in that area. One day, when he was crossing the road during his food collections, he saw a vehicle far away from him. But surprisingly he saw that when he was in the middle of the road, the vehicle was close to him, and he was about to be run over by the vehicle. At that time, Rathindra Shraman felt that somebody helped him cross the road, and suddenly the vehicle also braked. Rathindra Shraman realized that he had already

reached the other side of the road safely and that he was saved from an accident miraculously. It seemed to him that he dreamed the whole incident in a sleep, but it was a reality. So he felt a stream of cold air in his heart. Rathindra Shraman took a deep breath for being rescued from this accident.

In the Trap of *Māra* Daughters

Human lives are full of incidents. There are thousands of incidents in one life. Some have sweet memories, some have memories that are full of pains, and some neither have sweet memories or pains. On the other hand, some incidents bring prosperity and some bring failure. All depend on one's own deeds. The person who learns from the incidents that happened in his life, his future will become beautiful and peaceful. This is true for everyone. Just so, a lot of incidents also happened in Rathindra's life; he watched thousands of incidents around him. He thought and analyzed those incidents, and he received advice from those events. Such an incident occurred in Rathindra Shraman's life that was a good example. One day when Rathindra Shraman went to collect his food, he saw three pretty young girls on his way. They looked like college girls. Sighting these girls, Rathindra Shraman could not control himself. He kept thinking of these girls at every moment. When he came back to the temple, he repented for his sudden emotion He sat down in front of Buddha's statue and begged pardon for his feeling. He scolded himself for this feeling of lust. Finally, he came back to his room and started doing *Bhāvanā* (meditation) until he got rid of the sexual feeling. After this event, he checked himself carefully so as not to fall into this kind of sinful attitude. He followed this rule of keeping himself apart from any woman in his whole life. He thought that women are the principal obstruction to following the saintly life. Thus, the *Tathāgata Buddha* said,

Sududdasam sunipunam yatthakāmanipātinam
Cittam rakkhetha medhāvī cittam guttam sukhāvaham.

(The Dhammapada: verse-36)

The meaning of this Pali verse is "a wise man always protects his restless mind carefully, which moves anywhere spontaneously and cannot be understandable." One's mind is such that it needs to be involved in some kind of work. Otherwise, the mind moves to different places all the time. If the mind is involved in honest work, then the direction of mind will also be on an honest pathway. If it is involved in misdeeds, then its direction will also be dishonest. So, a mind needs to be under control by engaging oneself in good deeds and behaviours. A controlled mind is full of peace.

Being a Trustworthy Person of his Religion Mentor

Rathindra Shraman used to follow the livelihoods of the monks during the reign of *Tathāgata Buddha.* Besides these, he used to take care of the temple and be responsible, dutiful, and respectful. In one word, he tried to practice the characters of *Sīla* strictly as it should be and follow the rules in the *Ti-pitaka (Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka, Abhidhamma Pitaka).* He was a reliable and affectionate person to his religious advisor during his stay at the Nandan Kanan Buddhist temple. If his advisor went for a *fang* (an invitation to a family's house), he gave the authorities of the temple and its properties to Rathindra Shraman. On the other hand, Rathindra Shraman's friend Rabindra Shraman had no attraction or excitement for the principles and learning of a monk's life. He studied in a college and used to study different books from his college and work on assignments until midnight. So, he could not wake up early in the morning easily. Rathindra Shraman used to wake Rabindra Shraman up on many days. Rathindra Shraman used to wake up for a few moments in his bed, stretch, roll his body on the bed, and fall back to sleep again.

A Deep Respect and Reverence to Buddha's Principles

One day when Rathindra and Rabindra Shramans were discussing religion, Rabindra Shraman asked Rathindra

Shraman, "You do not touch or accept any money or save any money for the future. Why do not you do that? If you do not have any money, you will die. You cannot survive without money. How can you ride in a public transport without having any money? How can you ride in a launch? If you cannot give any money, a driver will put you off from his vehicle. He can even insult you. What will you do then?" Rathindra Shraman said, "I have taken the oath of Buddha's principle when I came for a monk's life. I cannot break these rules. You are not obeying these rules. Do you think that you are doing the right things?" Rabindra Shraman said, "What can I do without doing what I am doing? I have to live. You should do the same. You have to think about a place, time, and personnel. Otherwise you cannot exist. When people will not give any food to you, you will have to go to a hotel. Sometimes you may need to go to a tea-stall to drink some tea. You may need to buy foods from a grocery shop. Without having any money, you will have no other way except to die." Rathindra Shraman then said, "If death will come, I will accept that. If I will die, I will do so. But it will not change my mind about the Buddha's principles. Buddha did not talk about the characteristics in the *Ti-pitaka* to break the rules. Think that today if you do not die because of lack of foods, you can die by an accident or cross-firing by policemen, or an attack by a tiger, or a snake bite. Then what will you do? Humans' death never comes giving you a signal. Since death comes instantly, so everyone should lead an honest life until this human body has the life." Rabindra Shraman was surprised to see Rathindra Shraman's deep belief in, and respect for, the Buddha. He just said, "It is true that I have been surprised since I met you. Today, nobody has such belief in the Buddha or his principles. But you are exceptional. Your belief, respect, and worship of the Buddha are exemplary to all." After making this comment, Rabindra Shraman said to himself, "Oh, Buddha, please bless me that I can die with the same amount of belief in your and your religion."

A Conflict about the Buddha's Principles with Rathindra Shraman's Friend Rabindra Shraman

One afternoon, Rathindra Shraman entered Rabindra Shraman's room at the first floor of the temple. Entering Rabindra Shraman's room, what Rathindra Shraman found was unimaginable to him. He surprisingly discovered that Rabindra Shraman was eating a banana and puffed rice. Rabindra Shraman smiled looking at Rathindra Shraman and asked him to eat. Rathindra Shraman could not talk to see this and said, "I will not eat." He then asked politely, "Why are you eating banana and puffed rice? Do not you know that Buddhist monks cannot eat in the afternoon? Then why are you doing this unlawful work?" Rabindra Shraman said, "Tomorrow I have the higher secondary school examination. What can I do if I do not eat these? I cannot work without taking any food now. Then how can I study for the exam or appear at the exam tomorrow?" Rathindra Shraman listened to what Rabindra Shraman said and left his room without saying anything more.

Conflicts between Belief and Disbelief in the Buddha

On another day, an unexpected incident happened in Rathindra Shraman's life. He and Rabindra Shraman were praying to the Buddha. This time, Rabindra Shraman was yawning repeatedly. At this time, Rabindra Shraman asked him, "Rathindra, do you believe the Buddha when you vow to him. I do not think so." Rathindra Shraman was ashamed of himself hearing this. He talked to himself, "Why do not I believe in the Buddha when thinking about the results of doing sinful acts? I took the oath for the *Pabbajjā* because I believe in the Buddha." After this event, Rathindra Shraman avoided Rabindra Shraman. He thought to himself, "These monks have been doing all sinful acts even though they attained the *Pabbajjā*. They do not believe the Buddha, but they attained the *Pabbajjā*. Then are all these for the sake of self?"

Grieves of the Religious Advisor

Rathindra Shraman's religious advisor, the Venerable Dipankar Mahathera, used to do consultancy in a government office. He used to earn some money from the consultancy and spent the money for himself and the temple in Chittagong. Sometimes, a college professor, Pramod Ranjan Barua, used to come to the temple. When Mr. Promod Ranjan entered his room, the Venerable Dipankar Mahathera's stood up from his seat and talked to the professor humbly. Rathindra Shraman watched this phenomena several times. He also observed that his advisor used to regret and become frustrated saying, "Grieves and grieves; a life of a monk is full of grieves!" Rathindra Shraman thought at that time, "What makes my advisor regretful all the time? What causes him suffering this much? He is a B.A., highly educated, and a well-renowned monk. He does not have any need for food or clothing. Then why does he regret all the time, saying grieves and grieves?" One day, Rathindra Shraman asked his advisor, "Venerable Bhante, I have noticed that you are disheartened on many occasions and keep saying 'grieves and grieves.' What causes you so much pain and suffering? Why are you stressed so much?' But his advisor, Venerable Dipankar Bhante, could not give any explanation of his so-called suffering.

How Can the Extraordinary Knowledge Be Attained?

While Rathindra Shraman was staying in the temple at Nandan Kanan in Chittagong, he was fortunate to come in close contact with many educated and wise monks. He travelled to the Buddhist holy places located close to the Chittagong Buddhist Temple. Within three months of his stay in the temple, he had learned a lot by sighting these places, talking to the monks, and reading religious books. But the environment in the temple, including the monks' unethical behavior, disobeying the rules such as *Vinaya*, and apathetic behavior in meditation, went against his mentality. He therefore could not concentrate while

staying at that temple. He kept thinking all the time that learning the *Ti-pitaka* can make a person wise, but it cannot provide the knowledge of extraordinary wisdom, nor can it set one free from worldly sufferings. If one cannot attain *Nibbāna*, then what is the value of obtaining the *Pabbajjā*? One day, Rathindra Shraman came to his advisor's room to ask him something about religion. After worshipping his advisor with greatest respect, he asked many questions of his advisor. His advisor told him, "Rathindra, I did not attain the outstanding knowledge of *Nibbāna*. I don't know what the true wisdom is. How can I make you understand it? I would suggest you to go to a dense forest where you came from and do your research on *Nibbāna*. I bless you to attain the extraordinary knowledge of *Nibbāna*." Hearing this answer, Rathindra's long-term belief and thoughts about his advisor—"my advisor is a well-educated and learned person, so he must know about attaining the knowledge of *Nibbāna*"-was diminished in a few moments.

Another day, a Barua *Upasāka* told Rathindra Shraman, "Shraman, this is not the place of doing meditation. It is a public temple. If people see somebody has been meditating closing his or her eyes, they can interpret many things. This is not an ideal place to meditate; you should go to a forest." Rathindra started counting every day to reach the point of attaining *Nibbāna*. He thought if he could not do any meditation, he would not be able to find the *Nibbāna*. Is it possible to meditate staying in this place? Then he thought, "Chitmaram Buddhist Temple is the greatest and oldest Buddist temple. The principal of that temple might know about *Nibbāna*. I should go to him."

Leaving the Temple in Chittagong to Attain *Nibbāna*

Finally, Rathindra Shraman was prepared and ready to start for the Chitmaram Buddhist temple. Rathindra Shraman talked to Venerable Dipankar Mahathera and prayed for his permission as well as blessings. His advisor was delighted to hear

everything from Rathindra Shraman and gave him permission to leave. Rathindra Shraman was ready to leave for Chitmaram after spending three months in the Nandan Kanan Buddhist Temple in Chittagong. He was very glad to go in another direction to find the paths of *Nibbāna*. His friend Rabindra Shraman came to him to give him some money. He said to Rathindra Shraman, "you do not touch any money. You do not have any money now. But you may need money for buying a bus pass or launch pass. Please take this money." Rathindra Shraman could not accept that money when he was already strengthened by the sense of the Buddha. He started his journey towards the Chitmaram Temple. He reached to one of the temples, the Betagi Forrest Temple, to meet a monk known as Venerable Anandamitra Thera. He stayed there for a few days to get an idea about Ven. Anandamitra Mahathera's meditation techniques and a forest life. From there, he reached to the most famous sacred place and temple, the Chitmaram Buddhist Temple, by launch.

The Chitmaram Buddhist Temple

After reaching to the Chitmaram Temple[2], Rathindra Shraman met with the principal monk of the temple, Venerable Woo

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[2] *The Chitmaram Buddhist Temple at Kaptai of Rangamati was a branch of the original Chitmaram Buddhist Temple in Myanmar. The temple was established in Kaptai in 1925. The first founder and principal of this temple was the Venerable Woo Parakkama Mahathera. He was born in 1884 and died in 1961. After his death, the Venerable Woo Pandita Mahathera became the principal of this renowned temple. He was born on February 20, 1913. He took the Pabajjya and started his first Vassa in 1933. He led the life of a saint for sixty-seven years until his death on December 6, 1999 at the age of 87. During his lifetime, he took initiatives to reconstruct the old temple and move it to a new place at the east side of the valley. The temple was remodeled, architected, and named as the Chitmaram New Buddhist Temple. When Venerable Banabhante*

Pandita Mahathera. After he put his cloth at one side and devoted *Vandana* (salutation) to the Venerable Bhante, Rathindra Shraman was asked by Venerable Woo Pandita Bhante, "how did you come here?"

"I have come here by a launch," Rathindra said.

"You came here by launch? How did you get the fare?" Venerable Bhante asked.

Rathindra Shraman said, "I do not touch any money. So, I do not have any money. When I was asked to pay the fare, I said, 'I am a Buddhist monk. So, I do not have any money.' Nobody asked me any question after that."

"Sadhu, Sadhu; you do not touch any money, so you are a pious person. But why did you come by launch?" Venerable Bhante asked. "Monks cannot travel by a public travelling bus, launch, or any other vehicle.[3] If you would walk, you might need two or three days more to reach here. Did not you walk because you would not get any food or Siyong?"

Rathindra Shraman said, "Venerable Bhante, I did not know about this rule for the monks. I will not break this rule any more from today."

Rathindra Shraman spent several days at the Chitmaram temple. He spent time discussing with Ven. Woo Pandita Bhante about the extraordinary knowledge of *Nibbāna*, meditation, the Four Noble Truths, and forest life for meditation. Observing such a humble character, Venerable

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went to the Chitmaram Temple in 1949 and stayed there, Venerable Woo Pandita Mahathera was then the principal in that temple.

[3] *Riding on a public transport is completely prohibited for a Buddhist monk. Venerable Banabhante himself also emphasizes not to ride on a public transport, a vehicle driven by a woman, or a vehicle that carries any women. For details, please see the book titled "Pachittiya" of the Ti-pitaka.*

Woo Pandita Bhante used to address Rathindra Shraman as a *Pandit Mongsang* (wise Shraman). Rathindra Shraman asked the principal Bhante many deep, descriptive questions about religion. The questions often made the prinicipal Bhante surprised and astonished. He told Rathindra Shraman, "Dear wise monk, you must have been an expert of the *Ti-pitaka* in one of your previous lives. The extraordinary knowledge that you have been talking about is very good and praiseworthy work that can only be attained by a deep meditation. You will need a quiet and calm place away from any kind of public gathering-for example, a forest. It is a difficult task, but not impossible. I myself could not do it. But I think you have the blessings and *Pāramī* from your previous lives to go for this work. If you meditate, you will attain the mental state of the *Magga.*" Venerable Bhante continued, "When you go inside forest for meditation, you will see various kinds of symbols. You cannot be afraid of sighting these symbols, for there is no reason to be afraid. You need to be courageous and alert at all times. If you are afraid of anything, you will see the symptoms more." He added, "When you will need a place to live in the forest, you should not tell any family person to give you a cottage or give you this or that. Saying so goes against the behavior of a monk. If anybody donates a cottage to you, then you can stay there. Otherwise you have to stay under a tree, or in a bamboo garden, or under the sky in the forest." Venerable Bhante then said to Rathindra Shraman, "Dear wise monk, there are not many wise monks. You will not find a wise monk, no matter how hard you will try. You have to travel alone. But your aim to do meditation is certainly praiseworthy. See how many monks I have in this temple. I have the same number of pigeons also. All of them are waiting to attain the *Magga.*"

Hearing so, Rathindra Shraman was a little disappointed, but was not disheartened. He hoped that he still had the time to attain the *Magga* if he could go the right way. He started thinking where, when, and how he could start his new forest

life. He was worried about how he would start his meditation without a master. Who could give him the right advice and directions? Who could show him the right paths of attaining the *Magga*? Where should he go? Which place would be right for his meditation? Which ways of doing meditation could help him in attaining *Nibbāna*? He could not find anybody who could guide him. So, he decided to enter into a deep forest to start his meditation. He was determined to follow the footprints of the greatest men, the *Tathāgata Buddha*, *Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākassapa* and *Ananda Mahāthera*, etc. At that time the feeling of Venerable Banabhante was like the following poem:

I am a lonely traveller
Who will overcome all the obstructions and worries on his way
And thus take an oath to follow the path full of fear and suffering
To attain the wisdom of truth,
I am a lonely traveller.
What mysteries are hiding on top of the highest mountains
Or under the seashore or even in a desert?
I have to find out the truths of these mysteries.
I am a lonely traveller on this foggy trail.

[the poem *'Jatri'* (Traveller) by Ven. Anandamitra Mahathera]

Thinking of attaining *Nibbāna*, Rathindra Shraman finally left the Chitmaram temple after getting blessings from Venerable Woo Pandita Mahathera.

Looking for a Suitable Place for Meditation

Rathindra Shraman was searching for a calm and quiet place like a deep and dense forest that would be suitable for his meditation. By searching so, he reached Jali Pagojjya village. This was his birth place and adjacent to Muroghona village, where he was brought up. It was the middle of 1949. Rathindra Shraman went to the house of the Headman of Jali Pagojjya village. Then, he became infected by blood dysentery. His mother heard about her son's return, and she came to Jali

Pagojjya village to see him. Rathindra recovered slowly through his mother's continuous nursing and deep love. When he was fully cured, he asked, through his mother, if those in the neighbourhood could make a hut for him inside a forest. He also requested that the *Headman*, Mr. Biraj Mohan, allow him to stay in the forest near the Jali Pagojjya Village. The village people did not pay attention to his request and did not build any hut for him because they did not have any religious belief at that time. In addition, the people did not even think anyone could attain *Nibbāna* by doing a deep meditation.

Rathindra Shraman left Jali Pagojjya village after staying a few days there and came to the Dhullyachari Buddhist temple. After coming to the Dhullyachari, he started concentrating his mind on practicing *Dhutanga Sīla* and meditation. He met with a monk, Uchara, in this temple. One day, while they were talking to each other, Uchara told Rathindra Shraman, "You have worn this monk's robe. Now, you will realize what miseries are. You will see how distressful we, the monks are!" Hearing this, Rathindra Shraman thought to himself, "This monk is an illiterate, and he does not have any thoughts for religion. On the other hand, my former advisor was a well-educated, wise, and knowledgeable person. He knew about the *Ti-pitaka*. However, both of these monks are saying the same thing. Both of them are frustrated about a monk's life and grieved over it. Then what is the difference between an illiterate and a well-educated monk?" Rathindra Shraman then realized that no one could get rid of suffering without observing the righteous deeds, the *Nibbāna*.

Rathindra did not either like the Dhullyachari Temple and so he came to the Reingkhang-Kengrachari area to stay in the Kengrachari temple. He also did not like the Kengrachari (this area was his mother's home place, where his mother Birapudi Chakma had grown up). He found a place in a forest between the Kaushlyaghona and Dhanapata villages. He used to go collecting food in the Chongrachari village next to the forest.

He then went to Dokhaiya and did meditation in that area for a few days. Finally, he entered into a quiet and calm forest near the Dhanapata village at the site of the Karnafuli River. He spent eleven years in this forest doing meditation by his own, without help from a Teacher.

CHAPTER THREE

Dhanpata

From late 1949 to 1960 Venerable Banabhante was involved in meditation. At present, the place of his meditation is called the Dhanpata Sadhana Bana Vihar (Dhanpata Meditation Forest Temple). To date, it is the most renowned and well-known place in the world. It has been vowed, praised, and respected by many people from all around the world. Dhanpata is a place like Buddhagaya, where *Tathāgata Buddha* attained the *Nibbāna*. Dhanpata is therefore a place of pilgrimage for being the place of Banabhante's starting point of meditation.

Dhanpata is located at Jeebtali Union (Country) in the district of Rangamati. It is situated about 15 kilometres south from Rangamati town and about 5 kilometres north of the upstream of the Karnafuli River. A small fountain flows from the north, south, and west sites of the mountains located in the forest. The fountain falls to the Karnafuli River. The place is also surrounded by three counties, Maghban, Balukhali, and Dhanpata, where mostly Chakma and Marma people live.

Life at First at Dhanpata

When Rathindra Shraman reached Dhanpata by the end of 1949, its scenic view created a deep impression in his mind. He decided to start his meditation at that place. The area where Rathindra Shraman started his meditation was neither very close to nor far from any human locality. He liked the quiet and calm wildlife environment around him and to hear sometimes the roaring sounds of wild animals, the hissing sounds of reptiles, birds' chirping, the whistling sounds of wild

lives, or the murmuring sounds of hilly fountains and tree leaves. He used to sit under a Bohera tree at the place of *"Shelez Macher Ghat"* near the Dhanpata fountain. He did his meditation by practicing the *Dhutanga Sīla* as well as other Monastic disciplines. He tried hard to attain the *Nibbāna* enlightenment.

I sing the song of the Nibbāna-

I leave my life and youth with pride,

Let more obstructions come, let the storm be blown,

Even if I would die, I will proceed further to the path of the enrichment;

I sing the song of a desert traveller like a desert poet,

I sing the song of the Nibbāna

In order to cease the birth of sufferings;

I am all alone in this journey of crossing this sea,

I am a lonely traveller and searcher of a new life;

I will cease the cycle of life and death after attaining the Nibbāna.

Rathindra was conscious and effortful with strong mental strength to reach to his goal. It was said that there were celestial beings that lived in the mountain where Rathindra Shraman lived. Nobody used that mountain for growing any crop or any paddy. The place was called the mountain of Dhananjoy and was left unploughed year after year due to fears of sighting inhuman species. Rathindra Shraman, being fearless, not only stayed under the Bohera tree but he also travelled to different places on that mountain.

Venerable Banabhante later told his disciples, "The first time I lived in the forest, nobody knew where I was living. I did not have any specific place to live. I did not have any hut. I stayed under trees. Today at one place, and tomorrow in a different place. I used to gather leaves at one place under a tree and sleep on those leaves at night. In the daytime, I lived in the

forest, and at night I slept under the blue sky. After the crop collections from the paddy fields, I used to sleep in those paddy fields sometimes. I endured a lot of disturbance and pains. Even after that, I never said, 'make a hut for me.' Because the Buddha said, 'A monk should not say he is getting pains. A monk cannot say to make a hut for himself. If the general, family people make any hut by themselves, then a monk can stay there.' The principal Bhante at the Chitmaram Buddhist Temple told me the same thing. A monk cannot say 'Give me this, give me that.' The *Tathāgata Buddha* said, 'if you can destroy your lust, then you can stay in a palace like a king.' I never forgot this advice of the Buddha and did not mislead myself even for a second. So, I spent my days in the forest and collected food from the trees."

While meditating, Rathindra Shraman sometimes was wetted by the rain of the rainy season, bitten by various insects, heat-shocked by the scorching heat of the summer, and he had to endure the biting cold of the winter. He used to slide his hands over his body to keep himself warm. Sometimes he was frustrated by these natural difficulties, but consequently he got his mental strength back, thinking of the greatest people like the Buddha, *Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākassapa,* Ananda, etc. He thought that these greatest persons were kings and rich merchants, but they left all their wealth and went for strict, deep meditation for finding the ways of being free from suffering. He therefore asked why he could not. He needed to be successful like those successful monks during the time of the Buddha. He also thought, "These natural seasons will not last long. After some days, this condition will be changed. Then I will not suffer from the cold." He regained his mental strength and did his meditation without being tired. When his body and muscles became weak under the bright sun, he walked on the spikes in a bamboo garden, took shower during the rainy season, and stood in the ice-cold water of a spring in the winter. He used to say at that time, "Sleep, how can you come to my body now?" Thus, he removed all the laziness

without stopping the meditation. Now, he says to his disciples, "Since I did that practice for many years, now I cannot sleep in a bed for a single moment. I feel vomiting if I sleep in a bed. Please keep in mind that I will attain *Nibbāna* on the day when I will sleep in a bed."

Here it should be mentioned that laziness and sleepiness are known as sloth and torpor. Sloth and torpor are a part of the five kinds of hindrances to concentration (*Pañca-Nivarana*: desire for sense experience, ill-will, restlessness and anxiety, doubt and indecision, and sloth and torpor). Sloth and torpor bring listlessness, lassitude, lazy stretching of the body, drowsiness after meals, and mental sluggishness. These distractions impede our efforts to engage fully in meditation practices. These hindrances envelop the mind in many ways by obstructing its development. Without overcoming these five hindrances, it is impossible for a monk to know what good deeds are, what would be the good for others, good for both, and how knowledge and vision can be attained. If a monk can overcome these five impediments and hindrances, these overgrowths of the minds that stultify insight, he can know his own good, good for others, and good for both. He will be able to realize the superhuman state of distinctive achievement, the knowledge and vision enabling the attainment of sanctity. The five hindrances live on nourishment, depend on nourishment, and do not live without nourishment. The Buddha said, "There are forms perceptible by eyes that are desirable, lovely, pleasing, and lustful. If a monk's sense of sight is uncontrolled, unwholesome states will flow in him. If a monk does not delight in any forms of senses, is not attached to them, and does not welcome them, there will be no bondage. Therefore, a monk practices for the sake of control. If he watches over the sense of sight, he enters upon its control. Having heard a sound, smelt an odour, tasted a taste, felt a touch, cognized a mental object, he does not seize upon the delusive appearance as a whole...he enters upon his own control." The *Tathāgata* said, "Dear monks, there are elements of rousing one's energy,

the element of exertion, and the element of continuous exertion. If anybody can give wise attention to it, he can denourish the arising of sloth and torpor and decrease the strengths of sloth and torpor that have already arisen. Six things are conducive to the abandonment of sloth and torpor: (1) knowing that overeating is a cause of it, (2) changing bodily postures, (3) thinking of the perception of light, (4) staying in the open air, (5) nurturing noble friendship, and (6) engaging in suitable conversation. These six things are helpful in conquering sloth and torpor."

Venerable Banabhante reminded them about his saintly life and said, "To reach the highest point of my meditation, I went through indescribable sufferings. I avoided my life, youth, and bodily happiness, but I was able to remove ignorance, desire, and lust. My attainments cannot be seen with naked eyes. These things need wise eyes. Except the wise men and intellectual, nobody is able to realize my devotion. I suffered tremendously during my meditation, but now I do not have any feeling for woes or miseries. I am a complete and happy man. What I attained through tough meditation, I am spreading the lessons to you monks. What I express to you are my experiences in those eleven years of forest life. I do not tell these to you from reading a book or novel. To make others understandable, one needs to show to give up something; otherwise people do not believe. I do not have a kingdom, wealth, or a family (wife and sons), so I cannot make you understand what I sacrificed. So, the general public cannot believe me."

Austerity and Meditation

Rathindra Shraman concentrated his mind into a deep meditation in a calm and quiet forest that was a place of many fearful animals and reptiles. He started ascetic practices by strictly following twelve practices: (1) using only patched-up robes, (2) going for alms, (3) not bypassing any donors on

one's alms path, (4) eating no more than one meal a day, (5) eating only from an alms bowl, (6) refusing any food offered after the alms round, (7) living in the forest, (8) living under a tree, (9) living under the open sky, (10) living in a cemetery, (11) being content with whatever dwelling one has, and (12) not lying down. At that time not a lot of people were aware of the right practices of Dharma. So, at the beginning, when he was going out to beg alms, people asked him, "what do you need?" Some people tried to give him money and rice grains. However, Rathindra Shraman did not stop his food receiving on his alms round.

Rathindra Shraman never gave any advance notice to the villagers about his alms food collection. He went to every house periodically without paying any attention to whether a family was poor or rich. He stood silently at the outside door of a house. He never tried to draw anybody's attention by making any kind of noises or sound, not even sneezing. If nobody came to give him food within five minutes, he went to the next door. If somebody asked him later from his back, he never returned to get the food. If anybody ran in front him, he then accepted the foods. Sometimes he received enough food, but sometimes got nothing. He used to tell his disciples later that he liked to eat rice, butter, and sugar. Therefore, he never caught a disease. "The way general people become sick, if I would be sick this way, I would die in the forest. Nobody would know where I was living. Where could I get medicine in a forest, and who could give it to me?" This tells that he was a healthy person even though he was living in an isolated area. Rathindra Shraman followed the Buddha's discipline strictly. Sometimes, when he came back from his alms round, the sun was overhead. If he found that his own body shadow had just laid back to the west, he threw all the food in the water of a hilly fountain. He then drank only the water of that fountain. Thus he used to fast many times while residing at the Dhanpata. Sometimes, after his lunch, he brought drinking water in his alms pot and drank that water when he was thirsty.

The Forest Shraman

Usually it is seen that Buddhist monks live in Buddhist temples or pagodas. Rathindra Shraman was exceptional by not staying in any temple, rather living in a forest under trees. So, people in the adjacent villages were very surprised. Some wondered if he was a real monk or meditator. During that time, though people said that they were Buddhists, none of them followed any ethical teachings of the Buddha. Rather, Hinduism was the dominant religion in the Chakma society. There were only a few Buddhist Bhikkhus (monks) who followed the *Vinaya* and *Dhamma*. There were people who were trained by Bhikkhus and thus presided in cultural and religious programs. So, it was not possible for the householders to know about the welfare and benefits of devoting homage to the *Buddha, Dhamma,* and *Sangha*. It is needless to say that unbeliever and false-viewer Chakmas did not trust the process of meditation in a forest, while they believed it a technique to spellbind and deceive the public. The meditator Shivacharan was the only known meditator in the Chakma society. Moreover, not many people knew about him.

At that time, people from that area spread rumours about Rathindra Shraman. Some said, "Can anybody stay without being married at this young age? He is a young man of 30 years. Let's wait to see him leaving the monk's robe after a few days and being married." Rathindra Shraman heard those words and never paid attention to them. He thought, "What is the point of heeding these words? It is rather better to continue my own work. If I cannot reach the destination, then why do these people believe me?" One day a man in the Maghban village told him, "Shraman, you don't only need to stay in forests and trees, you also need to succeed to achieve the enlightenment. As a tree is known by its fruits, in the same way, you also need to show your success." The people who spread rumours about Rathindra Shraman all the time closed their minds to Rathindra Shraman's patience, reverence, and

refrain. Rathindra Shraman believed in his journey, in the Buddha, and his religion with continuous greatest reverence, trust, and dependence, no matter how many obstacles he needed to face. So the general people started believing him and paid respect to him. In fact, he became famous in the society. He was named "Banashraman" (a forest Shraman) since he was staying alone in the forest.

Be Careful About Women

Banashraman was used to not bathing for many days. He intentionally did not take any baths. This created stinky smells from his sweating body and robes. He did so to avoid young girls who would not like him for the bad smells from his body. One day when he went out to collect food, a woman met him on his way. She vomited by the stinky smell from Banashraman's body. He was always careful of making a distance from women. He advised his disciples the same—to keep themselves away from women. In one doctrinal meeting, he told to his disciples, "According to the *Aggikkhandopama Sutta*, embracing a great, burning, blazing, and glowing mass of fire is better than embracing a kshatriya or Brahmin, or householder woman with young and tender hands and feet, and sitting or lying down close to her. It is a very important advice. I deeply believed this sutra, followed the rule, and owned it. You should also be active to always follow this advice. The *Tathāgata* said, 'Please be prepared to stand in front of a hungry tiger, but not in front of a woman. Dear Ananda, let's say that you are standing in the middle of a street. On one side of the street, there is a tiger looking for its prey, and on the other side of the road there is a young girl with smile on her face. Which way should you proceed in this case? You must go to the side of the tiger. You cannot go towards the young girl.' Do you know why the Buddha asked to proceed towards the tiger, but not towards the girl? Because it would still be possible to attain *Magga* and *Nibbāna* by doing meditation

even by the time of being attacked by a tiger. But being in contact with a woman, a monk will destroy his character or *Sīla* and so will be thrown to a Hell." Venerable Bhante also alerted his disciples, "Remember, there are two kinds of tigers, a·tiger in a forest and a woman tiger. The tiger in a forest is safer and less dangerous than a woman tiger. The forest tiger eats only your flesh and blood, but it cannot eat your knowledge and blessings. On the other side, a woman tiger eats all your knowledge and blessings. So, I say that if a tiger in a forest eats you, you can still attain *Nibbāna*. But being attracted by a voluptuous woman, you will fall into Hell. This means leaving an unattainable monk life by being attracted by a woman and marrying her. So, please be careful! Please be careful all the time so that a woman tiger cannot eat you."

When Venerable Bhante was staying in the forest at Dhanpata, there was a ferocious tiger. The tiger was wild. It preyed on the domestic cows and oxen of the villagers. So, the villagers were afraid, saying that "who knows when this tiger will attack the Banashraman!" One day, Banashraman saw that the tiger had killed a big ox and was eating it sitting beside his cottage. Sighting this, Banashraman left his hope for his life and concentrated his mind into deep meditation. When he went out for begging alms, his neighbors used to say, "We don't know when this big tiger will kill the Shraman!" He laughed when he heard their conversation and said to himself, "I already gave up my body and its organs a long time ago." Remembering those days in the forest, he told his disciples, "Then I used to say, 'Oh, my dear tiger, if you can, please eat me. Rather I would not be a meal of a woman tiger. It is better to be killed by a forest tiger than being caught by a woman tiger.' Thinking so, I used to fall into deep meditation. Look at me now—no tiger could eat me!" Thus, Banashraman meditated at Dhanpata by absorbing scorching heat, rains, storms, bug bites, fear of animals, ghosts, hunger, idleness, etc. He realized what caused distress, the reason of distress, the ways to prevent grieves, and the solution of these the "Eight-Fold Noble Fath."

Debate in Forest Life

Like many other days, one day Banashraman went to the nearest fountain to clean his pots. After cleaning a pot and drinking some water from the fountain, Banashraman suddenly remembered his mother's face. His loving mother fixed a pretty girl for him. "Oho! If I could marry that beautiful girl, I would not need go through such pains." He was thinking to himself, "My wife then would give me some water, cook rice for me, and wash the household utensils. I would not need to do all this hard work." Suddenly he controlled himself and changed his mind, "What am I thinking? This kind of imagination is completely nonexistent. Alas! Finally I am thinking to embrace all the worldly distresses! I saw in my household life that two parents were crying boundlessly after losing their eleven-year old daughter. Sometimes they were hitting their heads on trees, or striking their chests in repentance, or frequently becoming senseless. I also saw that an educated person lost his mind after finding his wife engaged in sexual misconduct with an outsider, and so he attacked his wife with a sharp chopper. If I would bind myself in this life cycle, who could guarantee that I would not have to face these woeful circumstances? It is of pleasure in imagination, but the reality is very tough, sorrowful, and painful."

Another day when he was drinking water, it arose in his mind again, "Am I turning into such a poor person that I do not even have a cup to drink water." A different incident is also mentionable here. A monk, Venerable Bodhimitra Thera at Rajbana Vihar, commenced a suicide death on December 31, 2006. Regarding this, Venerable Banabhante said, "when I was staying at Dhanpata, the act of suicide also came to my mind. I wondered if I should go for a suicide death! But I controlled myself. There were also these kinds of accidents during the time of Buddha."

Sometimes Banashraman heard some knocking sounds of bamboo trees at midnight. Banabhante said, "When I heard the sounds at the beginning of my meditation, I came up with many questions. But I was never afraid. Rather, I gathered double courage, and so I became more and more brave day after day."

Thus, Banabhante went through many debates with himself during his forest life. He did not increase the impatient state of his mind. At that moment, he remembered the Buddha's doctrines, the acts of his disciples, and his own observations of the grieves in his household life. He spent most of his time concentrating his mind into deep meditation.

Building a Hut for the Banashraman

By the time Banashraman had spent almost a year in the Dhanpata forest, the religious people from that area were attracted by his religious practice and behavior. They decided to build a hut to make Banashraman's meditation and living easier. So villagers built a small hut for the first time at the place called "Shelez Macher Ghat" by the Dhanpata fountain, and they invited Banashraman to stay there. Banashraman did not agree to stay there at all; later, he changed his mind upon repeated requests and urging by the villagers, and he started living in that small hut. He used to go out to collect his alms, but he did not eat any other foods offered by the people except those collected from his alms.

The local people were becoming more respectful and trustful towards Banashraman as the days were passing. These days he used to give religious doctrine to the laypeople who paid the greatest respect to him.[4] The specialty of his doctrine was

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[4] *A year after Banashramon's entrance into the Dhanpata forest for meditation, his name and fame were spreading to the laypeople. People from long distances used to come to see this young*

omitting the word "self." Instead, he used the word "Shraman's." He was the only one who discarded the words "me" and "myself" completely. Later, the local people built another hut for Banashraman close to the west side of a mountain in the land donated by Tejamuni Chakma. The villagers requested Banashraman earnestly and with great reverence to move to this new hut so that they could take care of him more conveniently. After their several requests, Banashraman agreed to stay in the new hut they had made for him. Four family houses were at the four corners of the hut, at several miles distance—Tejamoni Chakma's house was at the east side of the hut, Sudhanya Chakma (Kenggorjya) was at the south side, Romesh Chandra Chakma (father of Pukkia) was at the south side, and Dinamoni Chakma was residing at the north side of the hut. These families earned a lot of *puñña* by providing food to Banashraman along with other villagers. Later, Nishimoni Chakma, a villager at Jeebtali village at the south side of the Karnafuli River, became well-known as Banashraman's principal worshipper.

The hut built for Banashraman was facing towards the east. It was a bamboo hut with fiber roofs. The hut was at the bottom of a hill. A river, the Dhanpata, was flowing from the north, south, and west side of the hut. At the east side, there was a narrow road between two mountains and a small river branch of Dhanpata fountain. The narrow road was known as "Bhuter Kijing," and the river was called the Panchari River. The branches of Panchari River were flowing from the bottom surface of the land of Banashraman's hut. Banashraman used to collect drinking water from a deep well beside the hut. A few miles away from the hut, there was the Dhanpata graveyard. It was told that there were fears of ghosts at the place of Kijing. In addition, there were forests, and there were tigers, bears, and many other ferocious animals in the forest at

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meditator. From then, he used to give religious doctrine to the laypeople. He blessed people for happiness, peace, and wellness.

the east side of the Kijing. So, people did not often go to that place alone. As soon as the sun went down in the west, the whole area of Dhanpata and the sides of the Karnafuli River become quiet and calm. Not a sound could be heard. Silence presided over the entire area. Only the sounds of night birds were heard at night that made people terrified. Such a silent and panicking place, full of animals, was Banashraman's living place. He stayed in this place for nine years until a wide area (approximately 450 square kilometers) was flooded by the damage by the Kaptai dam. It is told that he attained the *Sotapatti Magga* (the path of stream entry), the first step of the four supramundane paths (the *Magga*) at this time of his hard meditation.

A Courageous Forest Shraman

One day in 1951, Banashraman was invited along with other Buddhist monks to Muktadhan Chakma's house to attend a weekly funeral ceremony. The invited monks were assigned to sit on a stage, and Banashraman sat under a mango tree at the middle-north side of two houses. When the ceremony was almost over, the whole sky was covered with dense, black clouds. It was about to rain. Other monks and people left the place quickly to go to their own safe places. However, Banashraman neglected such a sky and bad weather and courageously left the ceremony place and went to his hut. After his going back home in half an hour, there was a heavy rainfall. This incident proved how brave-hearted and determined Banashraman was! Nobody else except him could stay in a forest alone avoiding the cloudy sky and storm.

Venerable Banabhante spoke in delivering a doctrine: "I always remembered the heroic dedication of the Buddha during my stay at the Dhanpata. Though the Buddha was a prince, he gave up all his wealth and went to a calm and quiet forest to endure fasting, sleeplessness, and various natural calamities. If he would not have the quality of absorbing all

sorts of pains, his meditation would not come true. His morality was the source of my inspiration for meditation. That is why I could tolerate all the fears from ferocious animals, disturbances from mosquitoes, flies, and other insects, obstructions from cold, rain, heat, and storm; finally, I was determined in my meditation by sacrificing my life and body."

Spreading the Name and Fame of Banashraman

Day after day, people's respect for and devotion to Banashraman were increasing. His self-sacrificing, excellent lifestyle was spreading like flower fragrances. People surprisingly observed his determination to do meditation with excellent patience. People started believing that he possessed some magical power. Otherwise, how would it be possible for someone to live in a forest alone for such a long time! How can he tolerate the extreme cold? Is it possible to survive with the bites of mosquitoes, flies, earthworms, and other wild insects? There was a big tiger as well as many predators in that forest where Banashraman stayed. These questions were everywhere among people in every get-together. There were many stories about Banashraman's magical power, though Banashraman never showed this power to others. But some miracles happened in such a way that they touched everyone's minds and surprised them. And all these made Banashraman a respectful person.

- One night, a few young men, Dinamoni Chakma, Jitendra Lal Chakma, and Tirendra Lal Chakma, went to Banashraman's hut to see what Banashraman did at night. When they were close to his hut, they saw two big eyes and an animal that was moving its two hands. Its body was as big as a tree. The three young men suddenly heard a fearful loud sound. They were so afraid to see such an ugly and monstrous animal that they fled. Two of them got fever that night. In the morning, everyone in the village came to know about this incident. The next day Banashraman's special layperson,

Kinkor Karbari, politely asked him about the incident. Shraman replied that he was not aware of that, and he forbade them to go to his hut in the evening or at night with any evil motive.

- One day a herd of wild elephants entered the Dhanpata village, invaded the village, and killed a villager. The elephants then went inside Banashraman's forest after being driven away by the villagers. The villagers thought, "Alas! The elephant herd may have killed Banashraman. Tomorrow we may see him dead." Surprisingly the herd of elephants went aside from him without disturbing him. The following day, when Banashraman came to the village for alms, the villagers' fears were removed, and they were relieved from anxiety.

- Sometimes Banashraman went to a few funeral programs. One day, he was going to a funeral occasion with another monk. After walking some distance, the monk broke a tree branch and told Banashraman, "There is a mad dog in this road. Be careful! It bit a lot of people. You should also take a stick. You never know when it will attack!" Banashraman replied, "I do not need any stick." It is a matter of surprise that they did not see any dog on their way.

The above incidences were very surprising! There is no doubt that these matters create deep impressions on everyone's mind and make everyone think of them. Though the second and third examples are not magical, it was surprising that he was not attacked by the elephants or saw the mad dog on his way to the funeral ceremony! It is said that respectable, moral, wise, loving, and kindly persons are always safeguarded by protective devas (the celestial beings). In the first example described above, it can be explained that a follower deva of Venerable Banabhante created the threatening act to make the evil-minded young men become afraid and leave Bhante's place. The second and third examples indicate his power of loving-kindness. A real meditator is not hampered by anybody, as his thoughts are always accompanied with loving-kindness.

Also, it is known that those who attain *Nibbāna* in the current life cycle should not die from any other means. This is why Banashraman was also saved surprisingly from a car accident when he was in Chittagong.

Banashraman never showed any superhuman power to anybody, but it was of no doubt that he had the miraculous power. It had been heard from the people at Dhanpata that Banashraman used to cross any river or fountain with his miracle power to reach to the other side. Nobody had ever seen him do such a magical crossing, but it was also true that nobody had seen him riding in a boat to cross a river.

Thus, Banashraman's name and fame were spreading among people from all different places who became acquainted with his character, meditation, compassion, on looking equanimity, and outstanding power. Many religious laypeople used to come from long distances to see him and hear his valuable doctrines. His doctrinal speech could make the visitors' minds peaceful and satisfied. His voice was thoughtful, impressive, and pleasant to the ear. His voice displayed such a religious feeling and enthusiasm that it touched everyone's mind and impressed all. Sometimes Banashraman used to rebuke a few people in order to make them aware of the disciplines. For example, a few reputable "Barua" laypeople of Chittagong came to the Banashraman. They saluted him by touching their foreheads on Banashraman's feet. He suddenly said, "Are you crazy?" The laypeople were afraid and surprised and wondered why Shraman was saying this to them! "Have we done any mistake out of our lack of knowledge?" they asked. Banashraman replied, "When I was in the Chittagong Buddhist Temple, all of you remained sitting on your seats. You never stood up or left your seats. You never even vowed me at that time! Why are you worshipping me now? It looks like you have lost your senses!" The laypeople realized their faults. They were ashamed and repented and so begged forgiveness from the Shraman. Banashraman gave religious doctrines to those

laypeople after which they left the place with peaceful and satisfied minds.

Receiving the First Robe (a Monk's Cloth) While Practicing the *Dhutanga Sīla* at Dhanpata

Banashraman spent several years wearing only two robes. The robes were too old from being used for such a long time. Moreover, the robes had gotten wet in the rains and were dried in the sun so many times that the cloths were about to be torn off. He sewed the cloths and walked carefully to save the robes. It is mentionable that he never accepted any gift or alms when he was invited to a layperson's house. Not only that, he never stored any food after eating his food before noon or accepted any food if anybody brought it for him. So nobody offered him any robe, and he never asked for one from anybody. Thus, he practiced his meditation with much determination. One day, he was going for a fang (Invitation) accompanied by another monk. On his way, his inner cloth was torn off when he was trying to cross a creek. What to do? He attended the program by tying the torn sides of his cloth. The other monk saw it and offered Banashraman an almost new robe that he had. The monk said, "Please take it." Though Banashraman was thinking of taking the robe because of his robe's poor condition, he instantly controlled himself. He thought, "if I would take this robe from this monk, he will get a chance to tell me 'I gave a robe to Banashraman one day; otherwise he would be almost naked.' If this happens, all my glorified moments of sacrificing things will be dimmed." Also, he promised not to take anything by other means except offered by a householder. Besides, it has been mentioned in the *Vinaya Pitaka* that a monk should not accept any alms by urging for it. So, he did not ask for a robe from anybody. However, he was facing too much trouble during his alms round walking with his torn robes. He used to think, "Previously, I had survived even without eating anything, but I may die this time because of not being able to go for alms.

How many days would I survive eating only fruits, herbs, and leaves?" In this situation, without finding any other alternatives, he started sewing a white cloth. But he realized at the next moment that "there is a rule against wearing white robes. So, it would not be acceptable for me as well." Then he arose a belief that "I may have my Paramis from my previous births, and I must get a robe cloth." No sooner was he thinking so than a householder, Mr. Pẽchagala Chakma, came to his hut with a pair of monk's robes on that morning. He worshipped Banashraman with respect and urged him, "Shraman, please accept this pair of robes that I promised, and give your blessings to me." It was no doubt that Pẽchagala was blessed with long-term welfare and infinite happiness by offering the monk's robes to a meditating monk who was on the way to attaining *Nibbāna*. Banashraman accepted the robes, covered his body with the robes, and dedicated himself to a deep meditation. This was the first time when Venerable Banashraman received the monks' yellow robe cloths during practicing the *Dhutanga Sīla* at Dhanpata.

Submerging a Wide Area Due to the Kaptai Dam

In the 1950s, the Chittagong Hill Tracts was a district of what was then East Pakistan. No science or technology could even reach this area; the district was underdeveloped in every way, including education, health, politics, and communications. The Hill Tracts district was connected to the Chittagong district before, but the then British government separated this district from Chittagong in 1860 because of cultural differences of the aborigines and for the establishment of law and justice in the area. The justice and internal laws were made by the local kings. This district was divided into three circles: (1) the Chakma circle: 2,497 square miles, (2) the Bomang circle: 1934 square miles, and (3) the Mong circle: 704 square miles. The kings had other designations like a district's deputy commissioner.

At the beginning of the 1950s, there was a rumor among the local people of Rangamati that hydroelectric current would be produced by making a dam on the Karnafuli River, and the Pakistan government was bringing many instruments into the area of Kaptai. Those who travelled to Kaptai brought this news of the Kaptai dam. In some villages, there were Barua primary school teachers who used to say that the areas around Kaptai would be drowned. The news of making a dam and its effects of flooding were not believable to the aborigines because they were not aware of India-Pakistan or any other world politics. A few leaders in that society discussed frequently about rehabilitation of people and their comfort after rehabilitation following the damage caused by the Kaptai dam. However, the their lack of geological knowledge, political ignorance, and inadequate education, and above all the inability of determine the damage created by the Kaptai dam did not help much to to solve the problem. Moreover, when the government decided to cut the trees in the woods due to the 120 foot flooding of the dam, it was unbelievable to everybody.

The dam was started about five kilometres away from the Kaptai area. The construction work to build the largest dam in Asia was finished in 1960 during the reign of Marshall Aiyub Khan. The first hydroelectric centre with a capacity of producing 220 megawatts of electricity was built in 1962. The dam required an increase in the height of the Kaptai Lake in 1960 that affected Dhanpata and its surrounding areas with floods. When the work of the Kaptai dam was close to the end, the government started planning and arranging to move the local people to other places. People were anxious and uncertain about their fates and destinations. They certainly did not want to leave their inherited lands where they had been living for more than a decade. Nobody wanted to be rehabilitated in dense forests of giant trees with a variety of fearful animals. The government opened some parts of the reserved forests of Kachalong, Reingkhang, and Thega for

rehabilitating the refugees. People were all confused about where to go and about being rehabilitated. The affected people talked about compensation for their lands and assets. However, they received only a tiny fraction of compensation and were relocated to places distant from their own lands. The affected Chakmas from Baghaichari, Durchari, Bangaltali, Rupkaree, Baghaihat, Sizok, and Khedarmara, etc. were relocated mainly at the Kachalong Forest Reserve. Many of them went to the valley areas of the Chengi or Dighinala and Panchari areas. The Bangalee communities were transferred to the Balukhali, Zograbil, and Shoil Poidang areas and mostly to the Kachalong Forest Reserve. On the other hand, people of the Marmas and Tonchongya communities were relocated to the Bandarban. Briefly, all the affected people were transferred to different places as refugees by the middle of July and August of 1960.

At that time, the Chakma king was Tridib Roy. The floods immersed the Chakma king's brick-built palace in the old Rangamati, the Gautam Muni's Buddhist Temple, the monk's meditation center, and a huge amount of land. The king later built a new palace, a sculpture of King Bhuban Mohan Roy, and a temple on a mountain of Rangapani Mauza. The hydroelectric project also flooded Venerable Banashraman's meditation place, Dhanpata, and its surrounding four hundred and fifty square kilometers, which is currently known as the Kaptai Lake. The dam not only immersed a wide area under deep water but also demolished the peoples' peace, happiness, and affections of their daily lives.

Banashraman after the Kaptai Dam

The people who had been giving alms to Banashraman and worshipping him were all transferred to different places. Nishimoni Chakma, who was Banashraman's principal worshipper, was relocated from the Jeebtali village to the Boalkhali area of Dighinala. All of the other people from the Dhanpata area went to other places, which left almost nobody

to offer food to Banashraman. However, Banashraman stayed there for many days even after all the people had left that area. Banashraman's mother Birapudi Chakma and his brothers, along with other relatives, went to the Bangaltali area. Finally, Banashraman went to the north and reached his birthplace between the borders of the Muroghona and Maghban villages. He went to a rejected house of Biraj Mohan Dewan. Since the house was on a high mountain, it was not affected by the flood. Some other people also stayed on that mountain. Otherwise, there was not any sign of other people around the area. There were none to bring or give alms to Banashraman. Surprisingly, some reverent laypeople used to come to his place to offer food to him.

CHAPTER FOUR

Invitation to Dighinala

Banashraman's most reverent layperson, Mr. Nishimoni Chakma, was thinking about Banashraman after being rehabilitated to Dighinala thana in the Khagrachari district. Nishimoni thought to himself, "What is Banashraman doing there? Everybody left Dhanpata for different places. Where would he go now for collecting alms? What would he eat? How would he survive without any food?' Mr. Nishinath felt deeply for Banashraman. He was thinking, "If I could bring him from Dhanpata to Boalkhali, I would get a chance to worship him. The local people would also get chances to receive many blessings from him. He will bring peace and welfare to all the people and devas. Thus, the Buddhist religion would gain a most prideful beauty. The world needs such a perfected meditator." Nishimoni talked about Banashraman to some established, educated people at Dighinala and proposed that they invite Banashraman to Dighinala. Agreeing with his proposal, the people as well as Mr. Kalparanjan Chakma, a former minister, took all initiatives to invite Banashraman to Dighinala.

To send the invitation message to Banashraman, Nishimoni asked his brother Tarani Sen Chakma of Jeebtali village in the Baghaichari area. He sent the message, "I would like to come to take you to Boalkhali." Toroni Sen was looking for Banashraman and finally reached the old house of Biraj Mohan Dewan. He found Banashraman there, saluted him, and told him his reason for searching him out. Upon continuous requests and invitation to Boalkhali, Banashraman finally agreed to go. But Banashraman told him, "Dear layperson, I

can go, but you have to hire a vehicle to take me there. A monk cannot ride in public transport like the householders."

At that time, the transportation system was not very good. There were only two muddy rods towards Panchari and Dighinala. People used to walk along the roads at that time. The only vehicles were jeep cars, which are recently known as "chander gari" (A local name of a jeep car in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh). The jeep cars were used to start from the entrance of Reserve Bazar. The cars were not run every day. They were started only when there were enough people to go. Nishimoni Chakma finally reserved a jeep car and brought Banashraman by this car after crossing all the under-developed roads and the Kaptai Lake.

Attending to a Funeral Ceremony on the way to Dighinala

During Banashraman's journey to Dighinala, he was invited suddenly along with other Buddhist monks to attend a weekly funeral ceremony by a family. Banashraman delivered a doctrine about the real rules, characters, and *Vinaya* that should be followed by a monk. He also mentioned about the offences done by many monks at present and alerted the monks by giving an informative doctrine. The other monks were ashamed and nervous after the facts were described by Banashraman. Like other monks, Banashraman did not take any money or *Dana* from the ceremony. The laypeople in attendance were all surprised to hear Banashraman's new and true doctrines and to see his Vinya behaviours of not accepting any money or materials. They also appreciated the summary of Buddha's doctrines.

A Few Days Stay at Boalkhali Raj Vihar

After attending the funeral ceremony, Banashraman reached to Dighinala at Boalkhali. He went to the Boalkhali Rajbana

Vihar (Temple). It was the only temple in the whole area of Dighinala. The principal monk, Venerable Gyanasree Bhikkhu, was a well-educated and religious monk. He was also known for doing social and human welfare. He played a special role in awakening, spreading, advertising, and developing the true religion. He was also devoted to the education of poor children. At that time, there was a hermitage beside the temple that was established by King Tridib Roy. Venerable Gyanasree Bhikkhu was very active in the development of education and religious practices among the children in that hermitage.

Banashraman met with Venerable Gyanasree Bhikkhu after reaching the Doshball Buddhist Temple and stayed there for a few days. In the meantime, he observed that Venerable Gyanasree Bhikkhu was also bound by lust, anger, and attraction like the other general monks. He also realized that nobody was on the way of freedom or *Nibbāna*. He left the temple after staying there for a few days and moved to a hut prepared for his living in a deep forest at Boalkhali. It is mentionable that no sooner had Banashraman reached Dighinala than there were breezes of joy and pleasure to keep him in the newly built hut. It was a very general bamboo-made hut, but it was built at a beautiful place on the southwest corner of Dighinala Thana, about a mile away from the locality. Before then, no Bhikkhu or Shraman was found to stay alone in a forest. So, groups of women and men with high curiosity went to see Banashraman.

Reaching Close to Death

Though people at Dighinala welcomed Banashraman with pleasure, they were not aware of the practice of giving (Dana) and moral conducts (*Sīla*). They did not know about their duties for a Dhutanga-practicing forest monk. Banashraman spent his days with both joy and grieve. He spent most of his time in meditation to meet his only expectation, *Nibbāna*. Sometimes he skipped alms collection and continued his

austere practices with hunger. Later, when he went outside for collecting alms, he would either get nothing or something in such a small amount that it was not enough to mitigate his hunger. One day, he became sick and so could not go out for getting alms. He spent three days this way (Banashraman later described this incident several times to his disciples). By this continuous fasting and pain of hunger, he became weak and sick, even senseless. Too much sickness almost stopped his movement. Later, he lost his energy to even sit up. His body was becoming numb with cold. He laid down with almost no sense. Venerable Banabhante said later that he really did not know at that time if he was alive or dead. He was confused if he was alive. He just realized by touching his chest, hands, and pulse that "I am still alive." He was suspecting that death was confirmed to his fate at that time, and he was standing just a few feet away from the death.

On the other hand, no laypeople understood that he was not going for alms because of his sickness. Alas! May be this is called the tragic fate, the worldly suffering! When Banashraman was approaching death, he was thinking senselessly, "My dream would not be fulfilled in this life. I do not have much time; I may die in a few minutes. Then this life will be ended. Another life will be started after this death. Will I be able to reach my destiny in the next life? But when and where? Where is *Nibbāna*? I have not met *Nibbāna* yet. Today I have passed so many years but still cannot achieve it. Alas! The king of death is coming. Nobody can avoid the fate of death. Who could conquer death using either of the elephants, horses, carts, army, or bows-and-arrows, swords, arms, firearms, bullets, or bombs? No king, rich man, minister, or Brahman could stop death. Even the best-known followers of the Buddha—for example, *Jyotika, Ugga, Mendaka, Puññaka, Anathapindika, Vishakha, Sujata,* etc.-never got rid of death. The superior spiritual power containing Mahāmoggallāna, and the wisest person, *Sāriputta*, all were bound by death. All the Buddhas who are able to destroy any kind of suffering by the

power of their own wisdom are also bound to death. The Buddha who attains thiry-two different super-human symbols and eighty special characteristics, and who enlightened the world with religious harmony—he also observed death. Who am I? My age has been reduced. I am going to die today definitely.' Thus, Banashraman laid on the floor of the hut with subconscious memory.

It was at that critical moment of his sickness, when Banashraman was waiting for death, that a Barua layperson suddenly approached his hut with a flask of hot milk. The householder was very sorry to see Banashraman on the floor and became involved in nursing him. When the householder requested, with great respect, Banashraman drank some milk. After drinking two cups of milk, Banashraman received back his sense for a few moments and felt better. He thus attained the living energy slowly. Having embraced death so closely, Banashraman woke up and blessed the Barua householder heartily. The householder left the place with a pleasant mind.

Venerable Banabhante told his disciples about this incident, saying that "By being sick, I fasted for three days and lost all the energy to walk. On that morning, a Barua householder brought some milk for me that saved my life. Otherwise I would have died before noon on that day." (Bhante told this to his disciples on January 5, 2009.)

The Full *Upasampadā* Ordination

The people at Dighinala humbly requested that Banashraman accept the full ordination of *Upasampadā*, an arrangement to become a Samanera or monk. Banashraman thought to himself, "If I cannot maintain the holiness of a monk's life after accepting the *Upasampadā*, and if I leave the monk's life without attaining the only desirable thing, *Nibbāna*, I will then have no other way except going to Hell. So, let my promise be fulfilled. Later I will agree to take the *Upasampadā*. Besides, if I accept it, the laypeople will invite me to different religious

occasions that will create obstacles to my meditation. So, accepting will create distresses for me as well as obstacles to reaching my destination of *Nibbāna*." Thinking of all these things, Banashraman did not agree to accept the *Upasampadā* even after several requests.

The principal monk, Venerable Gyanasree Bhikkhu of the Boalkhali Raj Vihar, the royal wise person, Venerable Agrabangsha Mahathera, and many other special people and laypeople of the society realized that it was important to arrange the *Upasampadā* for Banashraman for the welfare of the people and spreading the correct Buddha rules among them. Venerable Gyanasree Bhikkhu arranged to invite enough monks to convey the *Upasampadā* work. He, along with Mr. Indubikash Chakma, went to different temples in the villages in Chittagong to invite the Mahathera and Thera monks to attend Banashraman's *Upasampadā* ceremony. Finally, the ceremony was held at 5:30 p.m. on the full moon day of the Joistthyyo purnima in 1961. The invited monks built a Sima house, which is a large circular structure surmounted by a small golden pagoda, on a bamboo raft, and they finished the *Upasampadā* ceremony. Since Bonsamon's only lovely and desirable thing was sadhana or meditation, and since he enjoyed only doing the meditation, Venerable Gunalangkar Mahathera named him the Sadhanananda. But he became more familiar as Banabhante as he had been carrying out the meditation in deep forests from the Dhanpata forest.

Description of Venerable Sadhanananda Mahathera's *Upasampadā* Ceremony

Time: June 27, 1961
12th Ashar (the rainy season), the Bengali year of 1368
The full moon day of the Joistthyyo purnima, 2505 Buddha reign
Tuesday, 5:30 p.m.

The Bhikkhu Sima: Miinee, Boalkhali, Udak Sima,

The principal Bhikkhu: Venerable Gunalankar Mahathera (the second *Sangha Raj* at Raujan, Chittagong)

Reading out the proceedings:

1st reading:	Venerable Jinabanghsa Mahathera
	Venrable Agrabangsha Mahathera
2nd reading:	Venerable Gunalankar Mahathera
	Venerable Arindam Mahathera
3rd reading:	Venerable Arindam Mahathera
	Venerable Gyanasree Thera

***Punnanumodana* or Thanksgiving:**

- Venerable Gunalankar Mahathera (Raujan, Chittagong)
- Venerable Arindam Mahathera (Domdoma)
- Venerable Jinabangsha Mahathera (Pahartali, Chittagong)
- Venerable Agrabangsha Mahathera (Raj Vihar, Rangamati)
- Venerable Gyanasree Thera (Boalkhali, Dighinala)
- Venerable Priyadarshi Bhikkhu
- Venerable Dharmadarshi Bhikkhu, along with many wise bhikkhus

[Ref: Kallyanmitra Bhante]

A Speech by a Householder

It is mentionable that many people have been getting the lights of real truths after coming in contact with Venerable Banabhante since his meditation life in the deep forest at Dhanpata and his monk life at Dighinala. Such a fortunate person was Nihar Bindu Chakma. Let's hear the realization of Nihar Bindu Chakma from his own speech.

"In 1961, when the locality at Dhanpata and its surrounding areas were submerged under water, Banabhante came to Dighinala upon the request of Mr. Nishimoni. An ordinary hut was built at the southwest corner about a mile away from the Dighinala Thana. He used to sit in a Lotus position days and

nights at his hut. He ate only once in a day before the mid-day, and he did not have anything other than his yellow robes. People in that area were very much surprised and delighted to see his determination and acts of relinquishment. Banabhante used to say, 'Give up. The most happiness can be attained by giving up, and thus you will find freedom. Another name of giving up is Dana (the donation).' Then some laypeople started to donate. Some of them advertised that donating to this Shraman meant storing treasures for the next life. Some said that this was the building of stairs to heaven. Thus, the speed of Danas increased day after day. But he never saved anything to enjoy like a householder. On the other hand, he said to his disciples that enjoying the donated things by a general householder generated him or her into a Pretaloka or world of ghosts. So he used to throw all those donated things in the water or in the garbage in a forest.

"From my childhood, I was looking for such a technique that knowledge would generate spontaneously. So I asked Banabhante if I could have company with him. He agreed with that, and I was present in his hut on a scheduled date on May 18, 1962. According to Banabhante's order, a small house was made approximately 600 yards away from Banabhante's hut at the southeast corner. On that day, many people donated many things—for example, pillows, cloths, mosquito nets, etc. Different drinks, foods, and many important things had been arranged for me like many other monks and Shramans. I saw Banabhante after the evening and oathed for *Attha-sīla* (the eight characters). Banabhante explained to me the theories of the religion through his doctrines. During my meeting time with Banabhante and during the lunch time, I did not meet or talk to any people. I was completely separated from all the household works in that environment. I started realizing that the connections made between my five sensible parts and the external world that were increasing or decreasing before were not happening because of lack of any connection at that place. The environment Banabhante made for me was perfect to

know where and how to start working for getting rid of suffering. Banabhante said to me, 'wisdom does not come in a day; it comes suddenly, and definitely not before destroying the sense of desire. The techniques to destroy the sense of desire are *Sīla* (right conduct), *Samādhi* (concentration), and *Paññā* (wisdom).' Though I realized all these, I could not avoid my duty as a chairman of the Thana. I would come back after retirement from the chairman position. Thinking thus, I went home after staying fifteen days with Banabhante. Now I think that what I attained at that time will be my treasures in the next birth and will make it easier for me to get rid of suffering on that day. My life was truly blessed by being in touch with him."

Institutional Education is Necessary to Understand the Religious Doctrines

After achieving the Upasampad, Venerable Banabhante was practicing more and more mindfulness and involving himself in spreading the right *Dhamma* practice with correct views, acts, and senses. He was trying to explain the objective of practicing Buddhism by giving simple examples. At that time, people in the hill tracts were not developed at all in the sectors of education, culture, social behavior, religion, or economy because of the reign of the monarchy and socialism. People were bound by many false views or hallucinations. In particular, unconsciousness and uncultured actions prevailed in the society and politics because of the lack of education. So, people were surrounded by many false views.

A few educated people-for example, Dr. Sureshwar Chakma, Mr. Mukunda Chakma, Mr. Amrita Lal Chakma (Bala Chakma), Mr. Indu Bikash Chakma, Mr. Jyotimoy Chakma, Mr. Smriti Mohan Chkama (Thakujjya), etc.-came forward for the advertising, spreading, awakening, and promoting of Buddhism when they realized that general education was indeed necessary in order to be educated in religious

education. They invited the higher-educated society of the Chittagong Hill Tracts for the development of mass education and cultural heritage. Mr. Niladhwaj Chakma was the first who agreed and responded to their calls (currently he is a monk-Venerable Satyapal Bhikkhu, Rajbana Vihar, Rangamati). Later, Mr. Manabendra Narayan Larma (an undisputed leader), Mr. Priyadarshi Khisa, and Mr. Vabatosh Dewan responded to the invitation. Their combined efforts improved the Dighinala Junior High School to High School, where Mr. Neeldhwaj Chakma was appointed as the headmaster and others were appointed as assistant teachers.

When the quality of higher education was improved at Dighinala, it was easier to spread and understand Venerable Banabhante's religious doctrines. The cultures and social structures were improved somewhat as the uncultured practices disappeared slowly. So, the general education was essential for religious nourishment. If somebody does not have a general education, it is not possible to attain the knowledge in religion. In addition, the social development, and also the political intelligence, cannot be attained without education. So, general education is needed everywhere. There is no conflict between the religion and general education. Rather, the general institutional education is helpful for the religion.

The *Māra* Daughter, Arati

Banabhante never met with any woman since he started his meditation at the Dhanpata. Even at Dighinala, it was prohibited to allow any woman into his hut. At that time, a beautiful woman bedecked with many golden ornaments used to come to Banabhante's hut very often. That woman brought drinking water and water for his other daily needs. She also used to sweep off the yards around the hut. After a few days, Banabhante forbade her to go alone to his hut. If she wanted to go to his hut, she needed to go with a male friend. After that, he declared that only men, old women, or girls could go to his

hut to give him food. No single young woman was allowed to do his work. She must bring a man friend to go to his hut. Later, Banabhante said that "that woman at Dighinala was testing me." Usually old women and girls used to bring food for him. After accepting the food, he stayed behind a curtain. Thus, he avoided any kind of contact with women in order to practice the purest vow of chastity.

A Rumor about his *Parinibbāna*

One day, Venerable Banabhante was talking about his old life: "when I was a householder, I used to read the life stories and the adventurous discoveries of James Wates, Isaac Newton, and other scientists. I was the wondering what can be discovered from the Buddhist religion. When I entered the forest, I carried out many experiments remembering these great scientists' works. For example, James Watt discovered that if water vapour coming from a kettle can be tightened, it generates energy. From that concept he invented steam engine. I was also thinking that if I can close the lid of the five aggregates (the *Pañca-kkhandha*), particularly the feeling aggregate and the consciousness aggregate, I would be able to generate the wisdom. Thus, I started my meditation with wisdom and knowledge. In addition, I produced my mental strength sitting in the forest by thinking of Newton's invention of gravitational force, Jagadish Chandra Bose's plant life, George Washington's hard determination, etc."

It was really surprising how he carried out his meditation every day with determination, courage, and high mental strength from Dhanpata. In these days, it is quite hard to find a meditator like him who strictly follows the thirteen Austere Practices (*Dhutanga Sīla*). Banabhante's body became thinner by these austere practices of meditation. The internal power he was gaining day after day was illuminating his face. His name and fame were spreading everywhere in the villages, towns, and urban areas. Peoples' deep reverence and beliefs about him

were increasing by his power of meditation. At this time, in 1964, there was a rumor that "Banabhante is going to pass away with *Parinibbāna*. So please visit him to see him for the last time." Here, one of the eyewitnesses, Mr. Indralal Chakma, who was a first-year university student in 1964, presented his self-experience to give the readers additional information. "It was on November 19, 1964. I still remember that day when I was fortunate enough to see Banabhante at the Boalkhali temple for the first time. It was a late spring morning. A curtain of light fog covered the mountains on that day. When I was going to Banabhante's hut with my brother-in-law, Puranjan Chakma, and my brother Indra Kumar Chakma, we were all tensed about the various rumours about his *Parinibbāna*. We reached there at night after crossing three or four valleys. As soon as we entered the yard of his hut, we heard his voice, "He would not die because he was taking medicine." When we attended in front him with respectful minds, we saw that a middle-aged person was peeling potatoes to donate and worship Banabhante. Bhante said, "The outer layer of potatoes is full of proteins. It works like drugs." The middle-aged person left after watching us. Then I saw Banabhante for the first time in my life. His face was thin but bright. He always sat in a meditation mood.

"We vowed the Buddha first facing towards the Buddha's photos on a mud-made stage. Then we worshipped Banabhante. There was only a room. I looked around the room and found that Banabhante had no material wealth inside the room. He did not have any bed or cloths. He was sitting on only a Sital-floor mat. There was a pitcher with a piece of white cloth on its mouth. The hut faced to the east. It was about 10 feet by 8 feet in length and width, respectively. Where he was sitting, there was a bamboo stand. He was most probably taking rest leaning on that bamboo. The bamboo looked like an oil-polished rod because of its daily uses.

"Venerable Banabhante gave the *Pañca-sīla* (Five Precepts) to us and advised us to follow the rules of *Pañca-sīla* correctly. He never said 'me' to explain something; rather he used to say 'Bhante' or 'him.' After knowing that I was unmarried among the three of us, he advised me to accept the Shraman religion to find out the *Nibbāna Magga*. To make the *Nibbāna* peace understandable, he used to pronounce 'happiness' for a longer time. We vowed him again with full respect and left the place, leaving him alone in that lonely forests hut."

Rangachan

There was a person named Rangachan at Dighinala. He was like an influential leader in a village at Dighinala. He did not believe in the Buddhist religion at all. He used to think that the beliefs were false imaginations. Most of the time, he used to lie and debate on things that he believed. In addition, he used to drink alcohol. He used to show himself by speaking on many unrelated matters and asking questions to people. One day, Venerable Anandamitra Mahathera, the *Sangha Nayaka* of *Akhil India Bhikkhu Sangha*, met Rangachan in a fang (an invitation arranged at layperson's house). Rangachan asked the Venerable Bhante, "Venerable Bhante, you have spent so many years of your monk life and followed the rules of Buddhist religion. However, have you learned anything from these practices?" Venerable Bhante replied, "Oh, *Upasāka*, I have earned many things from these practices." Rangachan asked, "If you earn something good, could you show it to me?" Venerable Bhante could not show anything to Rangachan and so remained silent. Rangachan said instantly, "You could not show me anything! Look at me! I have two wives, and many sons, daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters. I also have acres of paddy lands full of rice paddy, ponds full of fishes, a cow shed full of cows, oxen, and sheep. I am enjoying my life by earning a lot of money. If we do not build samsara, the society, then what is the point of attaining this life?" Venerable

Anandamitra Bhante, not being able to answer anything, thought it would be the best to remain quiet.

The Solution by Venerable Banabhante

Another day, Rangachan asked some women who were fasting for the *Attha-sīla* (Eight Precepts-the eight chief rules followed by the Buddhists), "Have you ever seen the Buddha?"

They answered, "No, we have never seen the Buddha."

Rangachan then said to them, "Listen, if you do not see the Buddha, then on what basis are you following the *Attha-sīla*?"

Thus, Rangachan often put questions to the *Attha-sīla* followers. They also remained silent, not being able to answer his questions. One day, a few of these women went to Banabhante. They told Banabhante, "Bhante, there is a person, Rangachan, who always asked us if we have seen the Buddha. He asks if we do not see the Buddha, then why we are following the rules of *Attha-sīla*? We cannot answer anything. Dear Bhante, we are humbly asking an answer to this question."

Venerable Bhante asked them, "Oh, Upasikas, if Rangachan asks this question again, please ask him, 'have you ever seen your grandfather's grandfather? If you have not seen him, then did your grandfather not have a grandfather?' Then you will tell him, 'He must be there, because you are one of his offspring. If your grandfather's grandfather would not be there, then you would not even have any identity as his offspring."

Banabhante also said to the Upasikas, "In the similar manner, though we have not seen the Buddha with our own eyes, those who were born at the time of the Buddha, they saw the Buddha with their own eyes. So, Buddha was there. He showed the path of *Nibbāna* as well as the four-fold noble path, the *Paticcasamuppāda* principles, the eight-fold noble path, etc. His disciples and later were able to attain *Nibbāna* by

following the advice of the Buddha. It is of no doubt that people in the future will also be benefitted as long as the Buddha's religion and reign will remain. So there is no choice but to believe the Buddhist religion blindly." The *Attha-sīla* following women were pleased to hear the answers from Banabhante and accepted the doctrines with the salutations of "Sadhu, sadhu and sadhu." Later, they replied to Rangachan properly. Rangachan could not say anything after that. Though Rangachan used to make people foolish by asking many strange questions, surprisingly he never went to Banabhante.

Banabhante's Advice to Rangachan

Rangachan's sons and daughters became anxious and disappointed with his misbehaviour. Their dignity was about to be abolished in the society. One day, his son came to Banabhante to bring his father back to an honest way. He vowed to Banabhante, sat at one side, and asked him humbly, "Venerable Bhante, my father Rangachan is tremendously unfaithful towards the Buddhist religion. I have come to you to bring my father to an honest way and to promote his happiness for this birth and the next. Bhante, I would like to invite you to my house. Please accept my invitation and visit my house to advise Buddha's doctrine to my father."

Banabhante asked him, "Your father drinks alcohol-does he listen to me?"

Rangachan's son said, "that's why, Bhante, we humbly request you to come to our house."

Banabhante accepted his invitation. Everyone in that area came to know about Banabhante's visit to Angachan's house. They were saying, "Banabhante will come to fang to Rangachan's house on this day. It will be interesting to see how the war will be between a Buddha and a demon (the *Albok yakkha*)." Banabhante came to Rangachan's house on the pre-determined date. A lot of people gathered there. At some point,

Banabhante asked Rangachan, "I heard that you drink alcohol. Do you think that you should drink alcohol? Drinking alcohol is not good for your health. Please do not drink alcohol anymore, do you understand?"

Rangachan said, "yes." He did not say anything after that. Then Banabhante gave *Nibbāna* doctrine and made Rangachan promise not to drink alcohol anymore. People were surprised to see Banabhante's influence and strength of presence. That Rangachan, who used to make puzzles to everybody, did not make any sound at last. Truly, Banabhante was the greatest human being! He was showing the *Nibbāna* paths to general householders and saving people from four lower levels of existence (*Apaya*). The people saluted the meditative Banabhante by listening to his spiritual doctrines.

A Strange Incident

Banabhante's disciplines, hard meditation, deep wisdom, and spiritual power were spreading to people, and it was spread that any desirable thing can be obtained after approaching him. Hearing this, people from far places used to come to his place and bring many homages and gifts for Banabhante to obtain blessings from him in order to get desirable things. At that time, he did not accept anything other than food before noon. Women were not allowed to enter to his hut. They used to worship him from outside of his hut and pray for his blessings by paying the greatest homage to him. Hearing about Banabhante's spiritual power, the Thana officer of Dighinala Thana sent some gifts to Banabhante by his subordinate police officers. But Banabhante came to know by his spiritual power that the sent items were bought by the money earned in ill ways. So when the police came to donate the gifts to him, he declined to accept them and told the police officers the reason. The group of police went back to the Thana and told their officer about Banabhante's refusal of his donated things. The officer became very angry, and he ordered the police to catch

Banabhante and bring him to the Thana. Now, when the police were going to Banabhante's hut, various strange things were happening. It was not even the winter season. But surprisingly there were fogs and mists around the hut so that it was not visible to proceed further. The police crossed the mists somehow, and then they started feeling intolerable and burning heat in their bodies. They could not walk forward, avoiding that intolerable heat. So they came back and described everything to their officer. Hearing all these things, he became more angry and anxious. This time, he started going himself towards Banabhante's hut with many armed police, but unbelievable things were still happening.

About Miracle Incidents

Banabhante is a shadow of the Gautama Buddha. He was not only full of moral restraints (*Sīla*), meditative concentration (*Samādhi*), and the insight (*Paññā*), but he was also helpful in encouraging the sense of *Dhamma* among the laypeople at the right place and right time. It is very much noticeable how much devotion he contains toward the Buddha and his religion. In the Vinya of the Buddha, it is said that the magical power of mindfulness cannot be shown. So it is meaningless to say that Venerable Bhante never shows his meditative power to the general laypeople. The meditator can only show the spiritual power when he thinks that it would help people to grow the sense of *Dhamma*. However, Banabhante did not show this kind of supernatural spiritual power to anybody either at Dighinala, Dhanpata, or any other place. Here an incident can be mentioned. One day, a former general secretary of the Rajbana Vihar, Mr. Sneha Kumar Chakma, asked Banabhante. "Venerable Bhante, I heard about many incredible incidences concerning you. I am wondering if you had done these by yourself or those incidences happened for any other reasons. Venerable Bhante said, "All those were done by Devas. I did not do anything." An example of this kind of incident is given

here. It was the year of 2003. At that time, Venerable Nandapal Mahathera was staying at the Dighinala temple that was donated by a former Hill Tract minister, Mr. Kalparanjan Chakma. One day, an old man from the nearby Boalkhali Bazar came to visit Nandapal Mahathera at 4 p.m. He vowed to Bhante and asked, "Bhante, do you know me?" Venerable Bhante replied, "No, I do not know you." The old man said, "Bhante, I am a former layperson of Venerable Banabhante. At that time, Venerable Banabhante's hut was built exactly at this place. Banabhante stayed in that hut in 1960 when he moved from Dhanpata to Mainee. A general bamboo hut was built here for Banabhante. I used to come to his hut very often to give some food to Banabhante. He knew me very well. The paddy land beside his hut was mine. I also used to come to nurture the paddy land during the rainy season. At that time, something happened about which I was curious, and so I have come here today to discuss and know about that matter." Being curious, Nandapal Bhante told him, "Dear householder, please tell me without any hesitation." The Barua old man said, "One morning, I was ploughing the paddy land. Suddenly, I heard that Banabhante was giving his doctrines in a loud voice to hundreds of people. His voice was very loud. I was thinking how so many people came to Banabhante. There is also no ceremony today. Is it possible to gather this crowd instantly? I stopped ploughing and ran towards Bhante's hut. I could not stop until I saw that huge gathering at Bhante's place. But when I reached his hut, I did not see anybody except Banabhante! What a surprise! Did I hear something wrong? But how would that be possible? Impossible! I heard the sound just a few minutes ago! Bhante, could you kindly tell me who created that surprising event and how they did it." Venerable Nandapal Bhante said, "I think that was a symbol of Venerable Banabhante's future life. He would most likely give doctrines to numerous people in crowds. Thus, he would inspire people to do the right actions. The Devas showed a symbol on that day. It is very common that Devas come to the greatest people,

and sometimes they let the greatest people know about their future bright lives. It can be said that what you heard was an indication of Banabhante's future life."

Spreading the Smells of *Dhamma*

Banabhante-the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one, and the one who refrains from doing any form of clinging-continued his meditation of self-awakening at Dighinala for almost ten years. He showed others the correct practice of the *Dhamma* and gave his invaluable doctrines to the laypeople. He brought back many evil people to the *Dhamma* way by inspiring them to do correct deeds. He spread the light of the *Dhamma* in many people who did not have institutional education and who were mostly surrounded by wrong views and ideas. His contribution to the Chakma and Barua society was exceptional and memorable. At that time, Mr. Rupsen Chakma, the father of the former minister Kalparanjan Chakma, used to worship Venerable Banabhante. In addition, he tried and worked hard during the time of Banabhante's taking of Pabbajjā. A soldier of the Chakma King family named Rajendra Lal Barua was also a great worshipper of Banabhante. He used to go to Banabhante's hut very often and became delighted to listen to Banabhante's doctrines. Another person to be mentioned is Mr. Tarani Sen Chakma, who was the younger brother of Nishimoni Chakma, the main entrepreneur of inviting Banabhante to Boalkhali. The other laypeople who worshipped Banabhante regularly were a former minister Kalparanjan Chakma, Dr. Sureshwar Chakma, Ashwinee Kumar Chakma, and many unknown but respectable persons. It is also mentionable that the political leader Mr. Manabendra Narayan Larma and his younger brother, Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma (Santu Larma), used to go to Banabhante's hut often. Later, Mr. Manabendra Narayan Larma became Banabhante's sincere worshipper. Mr. Niladhwaj Chakma, the headmaster of Dighinala High School

and the District's primary education officer, also went to Banabhante. Another school teacher, Mr. Priyadarshi Khisa, joined them too. Their objectives were the same-to hear Venerable Banabhante's heavenly doctrines. The teachings that they learned from Banabhante were used for the development of society and for the removal of misconceptions from the society through their teachings in the school.

CHAPTER FIVE

Leaving Boalkhali

Banabhante is the one who spread the real *Buddha Dhamma* teachings among the people in the hill tracts of Bangladesh. People started understanding the merits of doing welfare in life and realized the gist of the *Buddha Dhamma*. People were very much attracted by listening to the aims of Buddhism from Banabhante. In the meantime, a householder staying at Durchari in the Kachalong area invited Banabhante to stay there. Venerable Banabhante accepted the invitation to spread the *Dhamma* to more remote areas. He stayed at the Durchari Temple for only a few days. It was 1970 when Venerable Banabhante left the Boalkhali and Mainee areas. His hut became a remote place. However, some of his devoted worshippers used to go to his hut to see the Buddha's portrait and feel Banabhante's memories in their hearts. His worshippers missed him extremely at Boalkahli. When they used to enter his hut, they always smelled a beautiful scent inside the hut. They never had experienced that smell before! The worshippers talked about it among themselves: "Oh! What a sweet smell!" This strange phenomenon went to many peoples' ears who later visited the hut to test the smell. People had no idea where the smell was coming from. They tried to find a source inside the hut but did not see anything there. They talked to themselves, "Venerable Banabhante was really a greatest being. This smell thing is happening because of his spiritual magical power." It is mentionable here that there was not any concept of perfume in remote, rural, hilly areas like Boalkhali in 1970. People did not know anything about today's commodities like perfume, body spray, or air freshener. So, it was not possible that the smell was coming from any of these

artificial sources. Besides, the smell of perfume is not permanent; its smell does not exist for a long time. Spreading perfume in a village hut would not last long, while the heavenly smell at Bhante's hut existed there for a long, long time. These incidences were beyond the point of any explanation. It was not possible to disclose the reality of these incidences. It might be happening because of the power of Banabhante's merits of doing good, obeying *Sīlas,* culturing Samadhi, holding the wisdom, and holding the future name and fame in his life.

Venerable Banabhante went to many places of the Hill Tracts to awaken people about the sense of *Dhamma.* Later, he went to Langadu, and finally to the Rajbana Vihar at Rangamati. During his stay at the Rajbana Vihar, Banabhante's name and fame spread too many countries of the world. It can be said about the smelling incident that it was the symbol of Devas to let people know about Banabhante's future name and fame. When the Buddha was alive, many meritorious and spiritual powers holding Devas used to stay with the Buddha all the time. They took care of the Buddha, and Buddha seeded and grew the seed of *Saddharma* in a human-eating monster, *Ālbaka yakkha. Ālbaka yakkha* was trained and achieved so much wisdom that he was there to protect the Buddha all the time. Similarly, it is not surprising that there are many devas surrounding the Banabhante to help him out.

In the Search of Adventures

Miracles can happen in the world in several ways. For example: (1) an Arahant can display his supernatural power through meditation; (2) a meditator of the five spiritual powers can even show his special capacities through mediations; (3) any deva can also show magical qualities through meditations; (4) any reverent, honest, intelligent, and smart person can present miracles by thinking through his wisdom and saying "let this happen,"; and (5) any expert with magical powers can

also show supernatural behaviours by applying his mantras. Today, many people do not believe in magic. However, Buddha did not deny these kinds of powers. People sometimes go to Brahmans or Baidya (village physicians) to get rid of any suffering, obstacle, disturbance, or accident. Here is an example. A man used to take his bath every day beside a deep well. A deva resided in a tree next to the well. One day the deva showed some evil-doing symbols to that man after which he became sick. The man went to a Baidya. The Baidya uttered some mantras and said to the man that "there is a deva living close to the well where you take your bath. You are affected by the deva and so fell into illness. Now you have to slaughter a chicken and a duck for that deva. You also need to give a bottle of alcohol, some rice, and an egg for that deva. Otherwise the deva will not leave you and you will not be cured." The man recovered from his sickness by sending the required materials to the deva through that Baidya. However, the Baidyas at the rural villages are not honest. They deceive the rural people by being attracted by materialistic world and profits.Though the culture of mantras and Baidya are about to be abolished, there are still some Baidyas who are really experts in applying their parapsyochological faculties. However, getting help from these kinds of Baidyas is an action of wrong views. So, it was pronounced by the Buddha that "there is no shelter better than the *Buddha, Dhamma,* or *Sangha.* These three are the shelters under which deprivation from all kinds of sufferings is possible. There is no other way one can attain the *Nibbāna* without the shelters of the *Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.*"

It is said in the *Supubbanha Sutta-*

Yam Dunnimittang Abamangalancha, Yo Chamanapo Sakunassa Saddo, Papaggaho Dussupinang Akantang Buddhanuvabena Binasamentu.
... Dhammanuvabena Binasamentu ... Sanghnuvabena Binasamentu

which means that any kind of evil symbols, suffering, undesirable sounds, sins, and bad dreams can be destroyed by

the influence of the *Buddha, Dhamma,* and *Sangha.* In summary, it has been suggested that one remember the names of the *Triratna* (Three Gems). If somebody recalls the name of the *Buddha, Dhamma,* and *Sangha,* then any kind of fear, danger, and bad dreams will be removed. Here is an example during the time of Buddha. The Buddha was staying at the Jetabana Vihar, where the Vihar was donated by *Anathapindika Shastri.* At that time, the prince of the moon was attacked by the *Rahu Asurendra.* The moon prince remembered the name of the Buddha and said to himself, "Oh, my lord Buddha. Let me salute you. You got rid of any kind of physiological suffering by the influence of the eight-fold noble path. You are freed from all kinds of suffering. Today I am in great danger. Oh, my Lord, please be my safeguard." The Buddha then told the *Rahu*, "Oh, my dear *Rahu*, the prince of the moon recalled the name of the *Arahant Sammayk Sambuddha.* Please be merciful to the Buddha and thus set the prince free by showing your compassion." Then the *Rahu* set the prince free instantly and went back to the *Ashura king, Bepacchitti. Rahu* stood besides *Bepacchitti*, and *Bepacchitti* addressed him, saying, "Oh *Rahu*, why did you set the prince of the moon free so quickly? Why have you come here like a coward?" *Rahu* replied to the king of *Ashura*, "I heard the speech from the Buddha. If I would not leave the prince of the moon after listening to the Buddha, my head would be divided into seven segments. Even if I would be born in the future, I would never be happy." This incident tells how much influence the Buddha had! It had also been found for Venerable Banabhante that people escaped from many dangers by speaking the name of the Venerable Banabhante. For example, once some robbers caught two men and were beating them using pieces of wood or tree roots. One of the men was uttering Banabhante's name continuously. Later it was found that that person was not hurt too much in his body. His body was just like that of a healthy person. On the other hand, his friend was hurt so much that his face was hardly recognizable

Later the man who remembered Banabhante became a monk at the Rajbana Vihar. Here is another incident. Once upon a time, some terrorists kidnapped a man in order to kill him in a pre-determined place. The kidnapped person, finding no other way, started giving friendship and loving-kindness to the terrorists. Later, it was seen that the terrorists did not misbehave with him at all; rather, they set him free. These are facts, not any mythical stories.

Wise men say that the best *Mantra* in the world is the Buddha's nine qualities. Those nine qualities are: *Arahant, Sammasambuddha, Vijjacharana-sampanno, Sugata, Lokavidu, Anutharo Purisadhamma Sarathi, Sattha Devamanussanam, Buddho, and Bhagava.* These mean the Buddha, who is (1) accomplished, (2) enlightened, (3) endowed with knowledge and conduct or practice, (4) well-gone or well-spoken, (5) the knower of worlds, (6) the guide unsurpassed of men to be tamed, (7) the teacher of gods and men, (8) enlightened, and (9) blessed. These nine qualities are so strong that reciting these qualities destroys all kinds of fear, scares, dangers, conspiracies, and disturbances, and allows one to never even face them at all. Reciting those nine qualities is one way to worship the Buddha as well as doing the *Buddhanusmriti Bhavana*. Among the nine, the best quality is the Arahant. The word is a worshipping word to all human beings, devas, and Brahmas. If someone has any problem with doing *Buddhanusmriti Bhavana* by remembering all those nine qualities of the Buddha, then uttering only the word Arahant to do the *Bhavana* is the best. This tells the significance of the word Arahant. If people speak the word Arahant, devas protect him or her from any kind of danger. If anyone understands the word Arahang and holds it in his or her mind, then they must be happy in life.

Meeting with Mother

It has been mentioned before that Venerable Banabhante's mother, younger brothers, sisters, and sisters' husbands had

been living at Bangaltali since 1960 after the flood of the Karnafuli River. When Venerable Banabhante was staying at Durchari, he came to know about his mother's illness. He was extremely anxious to see his mother for a moment. He thought, "I should see my mother during her illness. She will be happy to see me. Besides, it is my responsibility to make her listen to some religious doctrines for the welfare and happiness of her next generation." *Sāriputta* Bhante went to his own birth place, Nalak village, to remove all kinds of false views of his own mother and seven mothers of seven Arahants. He gave the doctrine, saying the nine qualities of the Buddha, "*Itipiso Bhagava Araham, Sammasambuddho, Vijjacharana sampanno, Sugato, Lokavidu, Anuttharo purisadamma sarathi, sattha Devamanussanam, Buddha, Bhagavati.*" Listening to the doctrines, *Sāriputta's* mother entered into the cognitive process of the path of stream-entry *(Sotapatti)* instantly. She told her son, "Upatissya, why didn't you give me these doctrines before?" When Banabhante reached the Bangaltali village, he found that his mother was tremendously sick and close to death. Banabhante, through his wise eyes, found that his mother's life span was not going to be ended then. He realized that his mother was away from death, but her destination was not definite. If he would tell her about religious actions, his mother would be able to go to a good place after death. On the other hand, mother Birapudi was very much delighted to see her son Rathindra. She asked him, "Rathindra, how are you? I thought I would never see you again." Banabhante said, "I am doing fine. How are you doing?"

His mother said, "I am quite well after seeing you. I think I will survive at this time. But when you left home, I asked you to come to see me before my death. I think you remembered that. Rathindra, please do not forget about it. Please show up to me before my death. My soul will then rest in peace." Banabhante gave his doctrines to his mother with the greatest respect. At the time of leaving, Banabhante told his mother to

keep faith, reverence, and worship of the Three Gems of the *Buddha, Dhamma,* and *Sangha.* He also advised her to be always in a full sense of meditation. He then left Bangaltali to go to Durchari.

Invitation by the People of Same Ancestors

On his way to Durchari, the people of Banabhante's same ancestral community requested and invited Banabhante to stay one night in a local temple at Rupkarii in order that they might hear about the Buddha's teachings. Banabhante agreed to stay in that temple for a night. When the news of his stay at Rupkari temple spread in the village, people started coming to the temple to see him. One man holding not much respect for Banabhante was joking about him and making many controversial comments. He said, "Banabhante must be hermaphrodite. Otherwise why didn't he marry and become a householder like us?" Other people warned him not to comment like this, but he did not pay much attention to them.

On the following day of Banabhante's stay in the Rupkari temple, local people arranged a religious program out of respect for Banabhante. Venerable Banabhante came to the program on time and sat on a stage made for him. The wicked person, when he looked at Banabhante, started smiling and said to the people surrounding him, "Brothers, can you see how Banabhante is sitting on the stage? Brother, I am ashamed to look at him! He is naked, and he could at least sit properly!" The person sitting next to him scolded him and said to him, "Are you crazy? Bhante has already sat properly on the stage. Please do not utter your bad words here. It is your habit to speak this way all the time. Please stop talking your stupid words and listen to Bhante's doctrines. This at least may do some good for you." But that talkative person again looked at Banabhante and was smiling to himself. It was possible that uttering bad words about Banabhante made the person see the

odd appearance of Banabhante while other people did not see it.

Arrival at Tintila of Langadu

After spending a few days at the Durchari Buddhist Temple, Banabhante wanted to move to a better place for meditation and stimulating religious senses among householders. Venerable Indachara Bhikkhu, the principal monk of the Khedarmara Buddhist temple of Baghachari informed Banabhante about a suitable place at Langadu for meditation and invited him there. When Venerable Banabhante showed his interest in going to Langadu, Venerable Indachara Bhante talked about it with the people in the society. So, the following people decided to invite Banabhante to the Tintila Buddhist Temple by arranging the robe donation festival of *Kathina Civara Dana,* which was attended by: the *Raj Guru*, Venerable Agrabangsha Mahathera; Venerable Bodhipal Mahathera; the headman and chairman of Tintila, Mr. Anil Bihari Chakma; Mr. Gangadhan Chakma (he is mostly known as *Kengthaga*); Mr. Pratul Bikash Chakma (Nirodh); Mr. Satyabrata Chakma; Mr. Nishichandra Chakma; Mr. Sachinath Chakma; and Mr. Birasen Chakma; etc. It was 1970. The committee people went to Durchari to invite Banabhante by giving him bouquets of flowers. The householders requested Bhante to accept their invitation. Banabhante asked the people, "Dear laypeople, would you be able to build the temple in a month?" The laypeople answered firmly that they must finish building the temple in a month. Venerable Bhante told them to start the foundation work quickly. He accepted their invitation. In 1970, before the Kathina fectival, Banabhante went to Langadu for the first time.

Langadu is one of the biggest Thana of Rangamati district. It is full of natural beauties. The river Kachalong flows through the middle of Langadu. There is also a place named Tintila in the city, where the Tintila Buddhist Temple was located.

Banabhante was invited to come to this Buddhist temple. At that time, the temple was located at the current fertilizer company, the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (B.A.D.C.). It is mentionable here that when Banabhante was at Langadu, it was not a Thana at all, rather it was a deep forest. On the Kathina festival day, Venerable Banabhante indicated the deep forest and said, "For monks and Shramans, these deep forests are the most suitable. If a temple is located close to a locality, it creates obstructions to meditation." At that time, Mr. Gangadhan Chakma, Mr. Bikash Chakma, Venerable Bodhipal Mahathera, etc. were present there. They realized that if a Vihar (temple) could be built there, it would be favourable to Banabhante. So after the Kathina festival, Venerable Agrabangsha Mahathera and Venerable Bodhipal Mahathera, as well as many other respectable persons, selected the area for the Tintila Bana Vihar on the same day.

Venerable Banabhante stayed at the Khedarmara Buddhist temple until the work of the Tintila Bana Vihar had been finished. It should be mentioned here that the principal monk of the Khedarmara Buddhist Temple has remained honourable among the people to take initiatives to bring Venerable Banabhante to the Tintila Bana Vihar. The Tintila Bana Vihar was built in a month, and Banabhante was brought to this temple with great joy.

Predicting the Future of the Tintila Buddhist Temple

After constructing the Tintila Bana Vihar by the end of 1970, the following people went to Venerable Banabhante to get his permission and advice in order to rebuild the old Tintila Buddhist Temple: Mr. Anil Bihari Chakma, Mr. Gangadhan Chakma and his eldest son Mr. Subal Chandra Chakma, Mr. Sachinath Chakma, Mr. Nishichandra Chakma, Mr. Pratul Bikash Chakma, Mr. Bijoy Kumar Chakma, etc. They asked Venerable Banabhante for his kind permission, advice, and

blessings to reconstruct the old Buddhist temple. Banabhante asked them, "How much money do you need to spend for this?" They said, "Bhante, it would need five thousand taka without any labor cost." Venerable Banabhante said, "This is a lot of money. Where the current Tintila Buddhist Temple is situated, one day a lot of soldiers will walk by the road in front of the temple. The soldiers will enter the temple with shoes and their arms and thus make the temple an unholy place. The road that is in the middle of Tintila para (or community)-a lot of people will walk along that road one day." Everyone was surprised to hear his predictions. The people then decided to spend the money for Tintila Bana Vihar rather than for the Buddhist temple.

Banabhante's predictions about the Tintila Buddhist Temple became true in 1971. The tyrannical rulers of West Pakistan did all kinds of oppression, riots, rapes, and murders at many places in East Pakistan. During the war of May or June, the Pakistani soldiers entered the Tintila Buddhist Temple with shoes and arms and made the holy places unholy. At that time, every Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian, and people of all races, religions, and communities went to Venerable Banabhante's place to get some good advice. He used to say to them, "All of you be truthful. Leave all kinds of false views. Do all good works. Leave any kind of harmful work. Try to increase the volume of your good works. Do not try to do any harm to anybody. If you can hold to the truth and be involved in good works, you cannot fall easily. In addition, you will also be saved from all kinds of dangers, fear, disease, famine, disturbances, and violence. Truth cannot be stopped. It cannot be disguised. One day the truth will be won. So, please get hold of the truth." In addition to this, Venerable Banabhante used to say often during the liberation war, "The way the Pakistani army has been torturing, suppressing, robbing, raping, and killing people; it is not very far away for them to fall. General people, being senseless, bring their own miseries to themselves by doing many misdeeds, thinking of justice as

injustice, injustice as justice, truth as falsehood, and falsehood as truth."

Here, another incident is mentionable. Banabhante's devoted worshipper, Dr. Arabinda Barua, used to go to Tintila to meet Banabhante very often. It often happened that he stayed with another main worshipper, headman Mr. Anil Bihari Chakma, for several days in order to hear Bhante's religious advice and have close contact with him. In March 1971, war spread everywhere in East Pakistan in response to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's call. Mr. Arabinda was staying at Tintila at that time. One day Banabhante said, "Grieves, grieves, and grieves, bloods and bloods will remain for nine months." The sentences from a great person are always true. It was found later that the Pakistani army was forced to surrender to the freedom fighters. Bangladesh became independent at last after sacrificing thirty million freedom fighters and many mothers' and sisters' respectability. But it was of surprise that during the independence war nobody was injured in the Langadu area. It was possible to happen so because of Banabhante's stay at Langadu and the influence of his good qualities and mercies to all living beings. However, during the time of war, Venerable Banabhante left the Tintila area and went to the Bhaibonchara for a safe meditation place. He stayed at a temple there for four months, September to December 1971, upon the request of the people at Bhaibonchara. When Bangladesh became independent on December 16, he came back to the Tintila Bana Vihar.

Observation of the Results of Immense Respect and Devotion

One day after Bangladesh became independent, Mr. Gangadhan Chakma and Mr. Pratul Chakma were returning from Banabhante's temple around 4 p.m. after donating some drinks to Bhante. On their way back, they met a Thana Cooperative officer, Mr. Shamsul Haque, and a Thana Fishari

officer, Mr. Sukumar Barua. They came to know that they were going to Banabhante's temple for a special reason. With their requests, especially that of Mr. Shamsul Hoque, they went to the temple. Venerable Bhante asked them, "What happened for you to come back?"

Then Mr. Pratul indicated Mr. Shamsul and said, "Bhante, we are back due to his request. We have come here for a special reason." Banabhante asked Mr. Shamsul for his reason for coming to Bhante's temple. Shamsul Haque, with his mind full of respects for Bhante, told him about his wife's incurable disease. He continued, "I have tried a lot of doctors but still there is no improvement of my wife's disease. Venerable Bhante, I have tremendous reverence, respect, and belief. It is my strong belief that my wife's disease can only be cured by your blessings. Bhante, please bless me and my wife."

Banabhante said to him, "I am not a doctor, Ayurvedic practitioner, or any other kind of a physician. If I would be such, I would write down a prescription for you." Then he gave much good advice to Mr. Shamsul. Bhante also mentioned to him, "Sometimes it is possible to be cured from complex diseases by donating something to great, honest people with money earned in an honest way." On their way back from the temple, Shamsul Hoque was so nervous and asked Mr. Pratul, "What should I do now? Venerable Banabhante did not say anything to me." Mr. Pratul said to him, "Haven't you understood anything about it?" Mr. Shamsul then said, "No, he did not tell me anything!" Mr. Pratul then asked Mr. Gangadhan, "Have you understood anything about it?" He also answered, "No." Then Mr. Pratul Bikash said again, "Among the four of us, I might understand the hints of Venerable Banabhante's advice. Great men do not talk directly. They give indications of peoples successes, depressions, dangers, welfares, harms, happiness, and sorrows. Human beings sometimes cannot understand the symbolic meanings of their words." Mr. Pratul Bikash said to Mr.

Shamsul Haque, "Venerable Banabhante said that donating to the greatest persons by earning in an honest way can sometimes be helpful to cure diseases. You must have agreed that Venerable Banabhante is the greatest person. He cannot say that donating to me will be helpful to cure your wife's disease. So, I would say that please donate something to Venerable Banabhante with your honestly earned money and having the greatest belief and respects for him. Hope that your wife will be cured soon." Mr. Shamsul Haque bought some food using fifteen taka of his monthly salary and donated it to Venerable Banabhante through Mr. Gangadhan Chakma. Within one week of his donation, Mr. Shamsul's wife became well again from the disease. Many people came to know about this incident, and thus their respects, reverence, and beliefs were increased about Banabhante.

Invitation of Banabhante's Mother and His Religious Teacher into a Festival of Temple Donation

After the independence of Bangladesh, a temple was built at Tintila for Venerable Banabhante. Finishing all the necessary rituals, people asked for Venerable Banabhante's permission to donate the temple to him and his disciples. Venerable Banabhante told him to bring his pious and virtuous mother, Mrs. Birapudi Chakma, and his first adviser at the Chittagong temple, Principal Venerable Dipankar Sreegyan, and make sure of their presence during the temple donation festival. His mother and advisor of his monk life were brought to Tintila before the temple donation festival. Venerable Dipankar Sreegyan Mahathera, upon his first look at his disciple, Venerable Banabhante, after a long time, had no doubt that his disciple must have attained the religious knowledge and a vision of freedom from remorse. The codes of ethics are necessary for restraint, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice in the world for the sake of total unbinding without clinging. Venerable Banabhante's disciplines according to the Vinya-the

rules of a Buddhist monks life-were tolerance, broad mindedness, and conscious memories, and these indicated that he was becoming an Arahant. Venerable Dipankar Bhante with full rejoicing said, "Sadhu, sadhu, what an appreciable physical, verbal, and mental control this is! This is truly exceptional! My disciple really has attained the supernatural knowledge." Being surprised, he said, "I have never dreamt that my disciple would attain the supernatural knowledge! Today, after looking at him, I realized that he had attained this greatest knowledge and that he will be the greatest person to rescue people from miseries." Now Venerable Dipankar Bhante desired to donate a monk robe to Banabhante, and so he gave a robe to him and blessed him saying, "May you attain more and more knowledge!" Venerable Banabhante suddenly said, "What should I give to my advisor?" One of his worshipers, Mr. Gangadhan Chakma proposed to donate one kind of warm cloth, the *Borgi* cloth sewed by the Chakma community. Everyone agreed with his proposal, and so Mr. Gangadhan managed to find a pair of new *Borgi* cloths for Venerable Banabhante's advisor. Venerable Banabhante donated that pair of cloths to his advisor with full reverence. This responsibility between an advisor and disciple attracted many people in the program of temple donation.

Attaining the Arahantship

Many people believed that Venerable Banabhante attained the Arahantship when he was at Langadu. Some say that it took about twelve years to attain *Nibbāna* when he was at Dhanpata. However, he was at Dhanpata for eleven years, not for twelve years. Some believe that he became the Arahant before the temple donation festival. It has been assumed that after attaining the Arahantship Banabhante wanted to bring his mother and advisor to show his gratitude to them. Since Venerable Banabhante did not express or disclose any time where and when he attained the Arahantship, the question has

remained controversial. Here, a few conversations with Banabhante and some logics have been presented to predict his Arahantship. Venerable Banabhante had always been alert to women when he was at Dhanpata. Even when he was at Dighinala and Tintila, no women without having a man accompanying them could enter his hut. Women used to vow down to him and listen to his doctrines from the outside of his hut. He neither saw any woman, nor was any woman allowed to look at him. Venerable Bhante used to say very often that "women absorb men's knowledge. It is not possible to attain *Nibbāna* being in contact with women." But when Banabhante came to the Rajbana Vihar, he did not prohibit women from coming in front of him like the time before. In this context, some asked him, "Bhante why don't you use a curtain anymore in front of a woman? When you were at Dighinala and Tintila, you prohibited women's entrance into your hut, but don't you forbid them anymore? Before you did not even look at any woman, but now you do watch them." Banabhante replied, "See, I was on a slippery and dangerous place. I had fears of falling down at every moment. But now I am in a safer place. For example, it is dangerous to drive a car on tortuous and patchy roads with ditches. A vehicle can fall down at any time. There is a fear of falling down all the time. Now, I have passed those dangerous paths and am on safer and danger-free roads. So, now I do not have any fear of falling down. At present, I do not see any difference between men and women. Now I see them as four great elements (*cattāro mahābhūtāni*) made of Earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*), Water (or liquid) element (*āpo-dhātu*), Fire element (*tejo-dhātu*), Air (or wind) element (*vāyo-dhātu*)." Another time, when Venerable Banabhante was staying at the Rajbana Vihar, he said, "I can understand now that there is no faith even if someone becomes Sotapatti, Sakridagami, or Anagami. It is only possible by being an Arahant." It can be predicted, therefore, that Banabhante became an Arahant when he was staying at the Rajbana Vihar.

The Kathina Robe Donation Festival as Invented by Vishakha

About 2,500 years ago, when Buddha was alive, Mahã Upãsikã Vishakha, also known as Migara's mother, donated the Kathina robes to Buddha and his disciples for the first time. The Buddha was dwelling at Jetavana Mahã Vihãra near Sãvatthi City, the capital of the Kosala kingdom ruled by King Pasenadi after about four or five years of attaining enlightenment. A group of thirty monks who had been ordained by the Buddha himself came from Sãket City east of Sãvathi just after the three-month Rains Retreat Observance to visit the Buddha. The Buddha greeted them, asked them about their retreat and journey, and noticed their wet and torn robes. Visakha was also there visiting and listening to the Buddha expounds the *Dhamma*. When she saw the monks in tattered and worn robes, she asked permission of the Buddha to offer new robes to the monks, and the Buddha granted her request. Since then, the Buddha granted the monks the opportunity to search for robes in various places and even to accept robes offered by donors during the period of one month from the middle of the Eleventh Lunar Month to the middle of the Twelfth Lunar Month. This period is called Kathina.

As there were no sewing machines or textile factories in those days, so the preparation of robes for monks required a lot of effort and coordination. It could not be done in a single day. The Buddha realized this problem and allowed his lay disciples to prepare and make robes for any monks who needed them. The process required searching for appropriate cloth, washing it, cutting it, sewing the pieces together into robes, coloring the robes, and drying them. After that, the robes were distributed to the monks who needed them with the consent of the *Sangha*, the community of the Monks.

It was mentioned in the Nagita Apadana that the Kathina Dana (offering) is the highest meritorious deed among the acts of

wholesome deeds in the realm of the sensual world (*Kamavacara Kusalakamma*). As an advantage and result of merits accumulated by the offering of a Kathina robe, the Venerable Nagitha Thera declared that he had enjoyed heavenly pleasures for more than 100 times, was born as a sakra or the king of heaven, and was born more than 1,000 times as universal king (Cakkavati Raja in Pali and Cakravarti in Sanskrit). According to him, he has not suffered in Hell or other unfortunate planes since he attained Arahantship (the highest spiritual achievement of perfection after the eradication of greed, hatred, and delusion) after the great wholesome and meritorious deed.

Ven. Nagita Thera further explained the advantage and results of merits accumulated by the offering of a Kathina robe by answering the question asked by the Buddha about how he came to be the luckiest one, with a lot of merits among the monks and all the human beings. Here, I prefer to give only the meaning of three stanzas answered by Ven. Nagita to the Buddha in Pali, quoted from the "*Kathinanisansa Katha*" (the story about the result of Kathina) of the Nagita Apadana. Ven. Nagita pointed out: "I have never experienced the lower realms in the period of thirty aeons with the advantage and result of offering the Kathina robe to the Noble Community of Monks. Each and every place of my birth, along with all the worldly luxurious material gained, I became a very noble superior person with the result and merits of offering Kathina robe to the Noble Community of Monks." He further pointed out that "I have never known any lower realms, but only being born to the human and heavenly world with the results and merits of offering the Kathina robe to the Noble Community of Monks."

Venerable Banabhante described the merits and advantages of carrying out the Kathina Dana to the laypeople and inspired them to initiate the robe-making process in the same way as carried out by Mahã Upãsikã Vishaka. The first Kathina Dana was held on November 5 and 6, 1973 at Tintila of Langadu.

Two national parliament members, Mr. Manabendra Narayan Larma and Mrs. Sudipta Dewan, played big roles by attending the Dana festival. In addition, thousands of laypeople and the *Sangha* from different places of the country attended the festival. It is mentionable that there is no other Buddhist country in the current world that arranges this kind of Dana festival. It is needless to say that Venerable Banabhante's appearance only made to do this greatest punna works for the people in the chakma society as well as the miscellaneous laypeople. It had been said that only the Buddha, *Agrasāvaka,* and *Mahasāvaka* can enjoy the merits of Kathina robe donation completely. Other human beings attained the Arahant before enjoying the full merits of it.

The Evil Influence of the Māra

In 1973, the evil power of the Māra arose during the festival of Kathina robe donation. It was drizzling and windy on the day before the festival. Moreover, a storm was blowing on the festival day. In spite of that, through the Venerable Banabhante's inspiration and the laypeople's deep respect, the Kathina festival was done within twenty-four hours. After the festival, a disease of dysentery was spread like epidemic at Tintila. Many boys of ages between three and eight died from this disease. Later, it was prayed to Venerable Banabhante for a blessing not to spread this disease in other areas. Venerable Banabhante told his disciples to recite the Protective Discourse (Paritrana sutta-as like Mangal Sutta, Ratana Sutta, Karaniya Sutta, Atanatiya Sutta etc.) to remove all kinds of diseases, fear, obstacles, and disturbances.

As soon as Venerable Banabhante's disciples recited the sutta three times surrounding the affected areas, all diseases and fear were removed from the Tintila areas. Everyone was surprised and astonished to observe Banabhante's divine qualities. In this context, the incident of Ratana sutta is mentionable. It was the time of the Tathagata, when the city of Vesali was afflicted

by a famine, causing death, especially among the poor people. Due to the presence of decaying corpses, the evil spirits began to haunt the city; this was followed by a pestilence. Plagued by these three fears of famine, non-human beings, and pestilence, the citizens sought the help of the Buddha who was then living at Rajagaha.

Followed by a large number of monks, including the Venerable Ananda, his attendant disciple, the Buddha came to the city of Vesali. With the arrival of the Master, there were torrential rains, which swept away the putrefying corpses. The atmosphere became purified, and the city was clean.

Thereupon, the Buddha delivered this Jewel Discourse (Ratana sutta) to the Venerable Ananda, and gave him instructions as to how he should tour the city with the Licchavi citizens reciting the discourse as a mark of protection to the people of Vesali. The Venerable Ananda followed the instructions and sprinkled the sanctified water from the Buddha's own alms bowl. As a consequence, the evil spirits were exorcised, and the pestilence subsided. Thereafter, the Venerable Ananda returned with the citizens of Vesali to the Public Hall where the Buddha and his disciples had assembled awaiting his arrival.

Agreeing to Stay in Rangamati

In 1973, Venerable Banabhante's worshipper Mr. Lagna Kumar Chakma went to Tintila to build a meditation hut for Bhante. He stayed there for a long time, being attracted to the Banabhante, and thus he was fortunate to live in close contact with Venerable Bhante. From that time, he was known as "Banabhante's engineer" to the local people at Tintila. He came to know that the Banabhante wished to move to a better place for spreading the *Dhamma* talks. Mr. Lagna Kumar Chakma informed one of his relatives, Mr. Samar Bijoy Chakma, about it in order to let the Queen, Mrs. Arati Roy knows. The following people played pioneering roles in inviting and bringing Banabhante to Rangamati: Mr. Lagna

Kumar Chakma, Mr. Samar Bijoy Chakma, and Mr. Kumud Bikash Chakma. Later, Mr. Monudhan Chakma and Mr. Suniti Bikash Chakma of the Bandukvanga area joined this group and decided to try their best. They all met with the Queen, Mrs. Arati Roy, and Prince Sumit Roy (Mr. Jony) to draw their attentions to inviting Venerable Banabhante to the King's Palace. The royal family agreed to invite the Buddha and donated lands to build a temple for Banabhante's stay. They spontaneously took initiatives to invite Banabhante to Rangamati. The Buddhist community of Rangamati and its surrounding areas came forward to help in response to this royal invitation of the Buddha.

Finally, when Venerable Banabhante agreed to go to Rangamati, Venerable Agrabangsha Mahathera organized the Kathina robe-cloth-offering festival on November 27 and 28, 1974 in the way it was done by a lady disciple of the Buddha, Visakha Mahã Upãsikã. The robes were sewed, colored, and dried within twenty-four hours and were distributed to the monks with the consent of the *Sangha*, the community of the monks. Venerable Banabhante came to Rangamati for the first time on November 25. At that time, he did not reside at the royal temple at nights, because he was practicing the *Dhutanga Sīla.* So, on that occasion, a temple, a *Chankraman* (roaming around) house, a dining room, a meditation hut, a doctrinal house, and a kitchen were built temporarily for Venerable Banabhante and his disciples. In that Kathina robe-offering festival, thousands of people listened to Banabhante's meditation-origined knowledge, and thus they realized his presence at Rangamati to announce and spread the Buddha's teachings. Everyone realized that if a meditative person like Banabhante would stay at Rangamati, it would bring welfare and happiness for many people and thus increase the brightness of the Buddha's reign. Also, Rangamati was well connected to all areas and districts. If Venerable Banabhante stayed at Langadu, many people would be inspired to listen to his doctrines. So, at the end of the Kathina festival, the

Chakma royal mother and king, along with other royal family members, invited Banabhante to stay at Rangamati permanently. Banabhante said, "Let's see how much respect you have for me." The King Debasish Roy and the Royal Mother, Arati Roy, spontaneously donated almost fifteen acres of land at the west side of a hill next to the royal palace. Venerable Banabhante blessed everyone, accepted the request, and agreed to stay a Rangamati.

At a later time, Banabhante said, "Do you know the reason of my stay at Rangamati? Rangamati is the border between Chakmas and Baruas. It is not possible for everyone to go to Tintila. Rangamati is the best place to communicate. This temple place was donated spontaneously by the royal family. So I realized that the right place for me and my disciples to stay was at Rangamati."

Death of Many Laypeople by a Launch Sinking Accident

The evil powers of *Māra* were seen in the Kathina Offering Occasion in 1974. It was drizzling and heavily storming before the day of the festival. So it was troublesome to arrange the robe-offering festival. Observing such stormy weather, Venerable Banabhante said, "Sometimes the *Māra* Prince creates various obstacles to stop holy works. So everyone should work carefully." But alas! It was found on that day that a launch carrying many laypeople from Kaṭtai to Rangamati to attend the festival sank after being caught in a natural storm disaster. As a result, some laypeople criticized the committee members for arranging the program in that hostile weather. They said, "Banabhante is the greatest human being. He could at least stop this accident." Hearing this comment, Banabhante ordered invited the *Māra* conqueror, the Arahant Upagupata Mahathera, with full of respects.

Banabhante said, "*Māra* does not allow me to do any novel work. Only Venerable Upagupta Bhante can stop the *Māra*. He stays under the ocean in the realm of Naga by practicing eight

meditative attainments *(samapatti)*. You should not only worship him for the Kathina festival but also to do any novel work." Venerable Banabhante said in detail, "Remember that a temple, like a stage, should be built in a river, fountain, pond, or any closed water before inviting the Upagupta Mahathera. Then, many items like flower garlands, water pitchers, candles, scents, food-giving plates, etc. should be placed on that temporary stage so that there would not be any trouble worshipping the Upagupta Bhante. The inviters should then take the *Attha-sīla* on the day of inviting the Venerable Bhante until the day Bhante would be invited. In addition, Upagupta, Bhante should be worshipped by offering food, drinks, and flowers by 11 a.m. in the morning and vowing him with lights and scents in the evening."

After that, it has been a custom to invite and worship the Arahant Upagupta Mahathera at Rajbana Vihar during the festival of Kathina robe offering. Currently, Upagupta Mahathera is invited at every area of Bangladesh during the Kathina festival. After starting the worship of the Upagupta Bhante, there was neither natural disaster nor any accident in any religious festival.

Spreading of Banabhante's Name and Fame

When Venerable Banabhante moved to Tintila in 1970, he devoted most of his time to practicing meditation; he was also inspired to spread the right religious views among men for their happiness, welfare, and prosperity. That place not only was beautiful, scenic, and perfect for Banabhante's meditation, but the laypeople also became satisfied and pure-minded at the first sight of Banabhante. His body glow was attractive, heavenly, and bright, and his mind was also generous, extraordinary, and meditative. It was not possible to explain his depth of knowledge for general people. Many people benefited at Venerable Banabhante's sight, or they found a way of right livelihood by practicing the right religion as

advised by Venerable Banabhante. Many false rituals and false works of the Chakma community-for example, their local festivals like *Thanamana pooja, Gung Pooja, Mother Lakhshmi Pooja, Shiva Pooja, Boor-Para Pooja,* etc.-were decreased tremendously. People started practicing correct Buddhism. Venerable Banabhante used to say to the laypeople very often, "The country and nation where the greatest people are born, that country and nation becomes blessed to be happy and resourceful. If you follow the five precepts (*Pañca-sīla*) properly, you will see that your luck will be changed soon."

Venerable Banabhante's speech was really true and determined. When he stayed at Tintila, there were no drug business, toxic materials, or slaughtering of animals at Tintila para according to his advice. People were always alert and active to practice and obey the *Pañca-sīla* always. It was found that peoples' economic conditions were improved by following Banabhante's advice. Thus, by the influence of Banabhante's *Sīla, Puñña, Paññā,* and other heavenly qualities, the place of Tintial in Langadu became a holy land. Many people from Rangamati, Khagrachari, Bandarban, Chittagong, and many other far places visited Tintila to see Banabhante and listen to his religious doctrines. Those who listened to Banabhante's name and fame started saying oaths in his name, and their prayers were becoming fruitful. Thus, peoples' reverence towards Banabhante was increasing deeply day by day. Many people of different customs and rituals, including the Hindus, Muslims, Chakmas, Marmas, and Baruas, gathered at Tintila to have a sight of Banabhante and listen to his extraordinary speech. Two examples are mentioned below.

The first example happened in either 1973 or 1974. Venerable Banabhante was staying at Tintila. At that time, Jeebendra Chakma of the Kandebachara area of Hazaribaag Mauza had been suffering from a peptic ulcer for a long time. He had been treated by Dr. Sudhendu Chakma at Rangamati for about six to seven months without any improvement of this disease. Mr.

Jeebendra became very frustrated with the traditional medical treatments. Later, he was thinking that he could get a prescription from Banabhante. Keeping this in mind, he then went to Tintila with Mr. Shikhidhwaj Chakma.

They went in front of Venerable Bhante, vowed to him, and explained the reason of their visit. Jeebendra told Venerable Bhante that he was suffering from a gastric disease and so requested a prescription from Bhante. Banabhante said, "I am not a doctor. So, how can I write a prescription for your disease?" But Jeebendra refused to give up. He had a strong belief in Venerable Bhante. He believed that only Banabhante could treat his disease. After his continuous requests, Venerable Banabhante ordered him to write down a medicine's name.

Venerable Banabhante asked Jeebendra, "Which treatments were you taking in the past days?"

Jeebendra replied, "Bhante, I was taking treatments from Dr. Sudhendu Chakma."

"Well, I am saying to you a medicine's name that you will buy from Dr. Bhagadatta Khisa's shop." Shikhidhwaj Chakma took a pen to write down the name of the medicine, but when he was trying to write the name of the medicine, he found that there was no ink in the pen. No word could be written with that pen.

He told to Banabhante, "Bhante, there is no ink in the pen, so I cannot write anything."

Banabhante said, "Really! You could not write anything!"

Shikhidhaj Chakma replied, "No, Bhante, I could not write anything."

Then Banabhante put a hand on the ink-pot and said to him, "try again."

He said, "Bhante, I can't."

When Banabhante told him once again, surprisingly he could just write down the name of the medicine. After that not a single letter could be written with that pen; no ink was coming out. After getting the name of the medicine, Jeebendra Chakma said that he had been taking that medicine for the last six or seven years, but it did not work for him. Banabhante replied, "Buy this medicine from Dr. Bhagadatta Khisa's shop and take it regularly. You will be cured soon." Later, it was known that Mr. Jeebendra was cured completely after two months of taking the medicine according to Venerable Banabhante's prescription. It was very surprising that it was the same disease and medicine, but Dr. Sudhendu's prescription could not cure Jeebendra's disease, while he was completely freed from the disease after taking the same medicine according to Venerable Bhante's instructions and prescriptions.

The second incident of Banabhante's miracle power was about obtaining a child for a childless family who lived at Langadu. There was a man named Jakir Hossain at Langadu. He did not have a child though he had two wives. He married the second time to get a child. But it did not help. He heard Venerable Banabhante's name and was attracted to him very much. He used to go to Banabhante's temple in order to get a child. He liked Banabhante's sinless and peaceful face, his excellent delivery of freedom from suffering, logical doctrines, and divine doctrinal speech. He developed a pure reverence, worship, and belief in Venerable Banabhante. He started giving food and drinks to him by keeping his great faith in *kamma* and the Four Noble Truths. Doing so, he was blessed by Venerable Bhante, and he obtained a child after a long time.

In the Muslim society when it was declared that Jakir Hossain was donating food and drinks to Banabhante, some Muslims teased him and put him in fear of being thrown out of the society. Jakir Hossain reported this to Venerable Banabhante, and Banabhante told him, "Those who are illiterate and stupid, only those people scold you and want to throw out you from

the society. You just hold on to the truth, capture the light of knowledge, and you will certainly attain happiness." It was true that one day Jakir Hossain became very happy in his life. Truth can never be hidden, truth wins all the time. Thus Banabhante said to everyone that he or she who accepts truth leaves wrong views, attains knowledge, and moves away from ignorance must attain the extreme happiness-*Nibbāna.*

Some Mysterious Incidences around Banabhante

(One)

In the old days, there was a bamboo bridge to cross a river to go to the Tintila Temple where Banabhante stayed. Later, the bridge was replaced with a wooden bridge. At present, there is a brick-built bridge at that place. In the previous days, little boys and girls used to go to the temple to donate some drinks to Venerable Banabhante. On their way back, they crossed the bridge, went to the river, and took their bath there. One day, when going to the river for a bath, they found that a man's big buttocks were floating and drowning quickly in water. To see this event, the little girls and boys got out of the water and ran to their own houses. After that time, the little boys and girls never took a bath in the river water.

Venerable Banabhante always tells his disciples that you should come to the temple with pious minds. You should not come to a temple wearing uncivil dress. Always follow the temple's rules, such as not entering with shoes on your feet, not wearing any cap, covering women's heads, not smoking, not creating any noise, and not embracing a member of the opposite sex, etc. If possible, clean a temple. This will bring not only blessings for you but the temple maintaining devas will be pleased with your acts. If you do not follow these rules, the devas become very disappointed." From the incident in the river, it had been told that a deva might frighten the small girls and boys to keep the temple's environment calm and quiet.

(Two)

Venerable Banabhante not only told his disciples to keep the temple calm and quiet, but he also prohibited them from catching any fish in the lake next to the temple. He said, "Buddhism believes in reincarnation. Everyone needs to take place in all thirty-one different forms of lives. All beings consist of minds and matters. All living beings do their own good work or sinful work by attaining the minds and matters. After each death, according to the work a mind and matter are transformed into another form. Human beings, according to their *Kamma*, can be a king, a rich man, a poor man, a deva, or they can be born in Hell or as a lower-class animal like a cow, goat, duck, hen, tortoise, etc. So, why do we have so much difference, enviousness, killing, or fighting among all these living beings? Everyone not only loves his or her own life, he or she should be kind and friendly to other living beings. If you kill animals, you will go to the Hell. You will suffer many births after births." At that time, flocks of fishes and big tortoises were found to float in the lake next to the Tintila Forest Temple. Though Venerable Banabhante ordered people not to catch any of them, some greedy people threw out their nets silently. However, surprisingly no fish or tortoises were caught in their nets. There is no doubt that such an amazing thing was possible because of Venerable Banabhante's loving-kindness or *Maitri Bhavana* practice.

(Three)

The third incident was about a high school teacher, Mr. Subilal Chakma of Langadu High School. He was curious to know if Venerable Banabhante slept at night or stayed awake the whole night. To test this, one night he started going to Venerable Banabhante's hut along with some of his students. They crossed a bamboo bridge and were about to enter the temple. When they stepped inside the temple, high-speed winds were blowing, thunder storms and lightening were in the sky, such

that heavy rains were going to fall soon. Seeing such bad weather, Mr. Subilal and others decided to go back to home. They crossed the bamboo bridge again and came to other side of the bridge. However, he was surprised to see then that the sky was clear and there was no gust or thunderstorm. So, he decided to try once again and crossed the bamboo bridge again with his students. Everyone then heard an ugly and monstrous sound. After observing all these things and hearing these sounds, they were not courageous at all to approach towards Venerable Banabhante's hut on that day. After that happened, Mr. Subilal did not go to Bhante's temple for two days. He then went to his hut on the third morning. Venerable Banabhante said to him, "Many people come at night to check if Banabhante sleeps at night. Banabhante can sleep at night, or may not need to sleep. He can also either eats food or does not need to eat anything. If you do not give any food to Banabhante, Devas provide food for Banabhante." He also said, "In the world, those who are ignorant, foolish, and who know truths as falsehoods and falsehoods as truths do not know anything about good and bad, do not have any knowledge about life and death; they always eat and sleep." Hearing these things, Mr. Subilal grew a deep respect and belief towards Banabhante.

(Four)

It was heard from the layperson Gangadhan Chakma and others that if anybody used to come to the temple with any evil motive they used to see a huge tiger sitting on its arms in front of the temple. Sometimes people did not see Venerable Banabhante even though he was sitting on a chair at one side of his hut. One evening, Mr. Pratul Bikash Chakma went to Banabhante's hut to give some drinks to Banabhante. After donating the drinks, he saluted to Bhante, and when he raised his head from vowing to Bhante he saw attractive rays of light illuminating behind Banabhante's head. It was just like we

usually see in the background of Gautama Buddha's picture. All these miracles influenced people's minds deeply. The more of these incidents that were happening, the more belief was growing in their minds that Banabhante was really the greatest man in the world.

Monastic Ordination

Many lay followers used to come to Banabhante when he was staying at Dhanpata and Mainee. Banabhante tried the best to stimulate the sense of true *Dhamma* among these laypeople by describing the *Anicca*, *Dukkha*, *Anatta*-impermanence, suffering, and egolessness. Venerable Banabhante has been teaching the practice of *Dhamma* of indiscriminate benevolence for everyone's peace since he was in Tintila. Many people became gentle, polite, disciplined, and well-behaved by being aware of their own faults and deficiencies and conscious of being bound up with suffering. In addition, people benefitted from moral and mental satisfactions by sweeping away delusions. The name of Banabhante was spreading day after day, and it was the only name uttered everywhere.

Banabhante used to say very often, "This life is like a stage drama. Actors act in the characters of a king or minister or an officer overnight. In the morning, everyone discovers himself or herself as a simple, general man or woman. Like the drama on a stage, we all are born as kings, minsters, rich, poor, Devas, or Brahmas. Even we are falling into the distressful four Apayas. How much distress do you want to suffer? Is it the time to try to get rid of all kind of suffering?" Hearing the Noble Truths of true *Dhamma* from Venerable Banabhante, many people showed their interest in attaining the life of Pabbajjā. Banabhante started to provide monastic ordination called *Pabbajjā* to those people who were interested in monk life. Namely, Arjyapal Shraman, Bacchapal Shraman, Sanghapal Shraman, Devapal Shraman, Nandapal Shraman

(currently Nandapal Mahathera, who is a principal monk of Dighinala Bana Vihar), Uttarpal Shraman, Gyanjyoti Shraman (currently he is known as Sumanalankar Mahathera of the Kamalchari Parbattya Buddhist Mission at Khagrachari), Jinananda Shraman and many other Shramans were admitted the monkhood by Venerable Banabhante. Among them, it was Arjyapal Shraman who was the first indoctrinated by Venerable Banabhante. Venerable Indachara Bhikkhu introduced Arjyapal Shraman to Venerable Banabhante. Although they entered the Buddhist monastic ordination, many of them the left yellow robes by being seized by craving and desires for ordinary life. In this regard, Venerable Nandapal Mahathera wrote in a book named *For the Future Life of a Monk*, "When I took an ascetic monk life at the Tintila Temple of Langadu, there were only five disciples of Banabhante: Ven. Arjyapal Shraman, Ven. Bacchapal Shraman, Ven. Sanghapal Shraman, Ven. Nandapal Shraman, and Ven. Jinananda Shraman. Banabhante gave his religious doctrines to us every morning and evening." Venerable Banabhante, along with his five disciples, was aiming to spread the *Dhamma* to others in the future. For spreading, practicing good behaviours, and awaking minds, it was necessary to have complimentary minds of both monks and laypeople. The way, it is not possible to feel the inspirations of the Buddha's teachings without monks; it is also not possible to spread the Dhamma teachings without appropriately concentrated minds of the followers. There needs to be a Department of Spreading the Dhamma that appoints monks in the various divisions to teach and train the populace at large and establish the syllabi such as the Dhamma courses to instruct them. The Buddha, for example, was once staying in a forest with a following of 500 monks. As twilight fell, he rested, inclining on his right side, while the monks all did walking or sitting meditation. No one was talking. Everything was perfectly still. Just then, a group of wandering ascetics came into the forest and, seeing this, were completely won over. They felt so inspired by the virtues of the *Buddha*,

Dhamma, and *Sangha* that they were willing to become disciples. Later, they were of great help in spreading the religion. This shows that good and proper practice is an extremely important force in spreading the Dhamma. Spreading the Dhamma can give rise to many sorts of benefits: welfare in this life, welfare in lives to come, and acquaintance with the ultimate welfare-the *Nibbāna.* These are the aims of spreading the Dhamma by means of written and spoken words, which is one aspect of the good that Buddhism has to offer. Venerable Banabhante aimed to spread the Sadhamma by teaching the values of proper manners, thoughts, and principles of right actions.

Venerable Banabhante told his disciples, "Why have you become a monk? What is the meaning of attaining *Pabbajjā*? Listen, the aim of achieving Pabbajjā is to get rid of all kinds of worldly suffering. The goal of gaining the *Pabbajjā* is to realize the suffering and stress and go beyond them to keep apart from all of the mundane things. The previous suffering and stress should be completely forgotten, the current *dukkhas* should be liberated, and the future *dukkhas* should be removed by practicing the virtuous actions of Vipassana. Vipassana leads to the stairs of being freed from all kinds of clinging." Banabhante told his disciples how he alone practiced the Vipassana in dense forests without getting any appropriate directions. So, he inspired his disciples to practice the Vipassna meditation under his guidance.

Some of Banabhante's Disciples Went to Burma

It is said that reaching the *Nibbāna* needs three elements: (1) an honest Guru (spiritual teacher), (2) hard work, and (3) *pāramī*. Lacking any of these three elements cannot give the *Magga.* Though an honest director like Banabhante was present there, lack of knowledge in some of his disciples could not help them to attain the Dhamma knowledge. The *Raj Guru* Agrabangsha Mahathera did not like Banabhante's progressive

steps. He told some his disciples, "you are young. This is a perfect time for you to learn the *Ti-pitaka.* How can you meditate without learning the *Ti-pitaka*? Can you attain the *Magga* by meditating in the boundaries of a temple?" He also said to them, "In Burma, the monks are taught the *Ti-pitaka* first. They are given good food as well. There are suitable places for meditation and other facilities. If you would like to learn the *Ti-pitaka* in Burma, I can arrange the VISAs and paperwork for you." Agrabangsha Bhante thus made a point to take out those disciples from Banabhante's teachings. The monks became Agrabangsha bhikkhu's disciples, and they were sent to Burma by the Bhikkhu.

Meanwhile, a layman, Mr. Pratul Bikash Chakma's eldest daughter, had died from a snake bite on April 14, 1976. It was the day of Bengali New Year, and the Baishakhi Purnima. Pratul Bikash came to Banabhante to listen to the Dhamma and remove his mourning. He vowed to the Bhante and said, "Bhante, my eldest daughter was died from a snake bite. I cannot accept her early death. I feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, and so I have come here to listen to your advice." Banabhante said to him, "Everyone in this world, including monks, Brahmans, Devas, Māras, and Brahmas, are subject to life and death. Only attaining the *Nibbāna* can stop suffering. Try to produce the sense of *Nibbāna.* Your daughter has died. My disciples also left me. You know that my principal disciples Arjyapal Shraman, Bacchapal Shraman, Sanghapal Shraman, and Nandapal Shraman went to Burma, leaving my teachings. I dreamt to ignite the sense of Sadhamma in the future with their help. Hearing such from Venerable Banabhante, Mr. Pratul forgot the grief of losing his daughter. It was of no doubt that the leasing of those disciples was only a matter of their previous *kammas*.

CHAPETR SIX

Arrival of Banabhante at the Rajbana Vihar and Formation of a Committee

Venerable Banabhante came to the Rajbana Vihar of Rangamati on the full moon day of the full moon day of Baishakh in 1976 and stayed there permanently. When Banabhante agreed to stay at Rangamati in 1974, many laymen and women came forward to build a temple for his and his disciples' stay. A temporary committee was formed in 1974 to maintain the construction work of the temple where Dr. Himangshu Bimal Dewan was elected the president and Mr. Tusthamoni Chakma was elected the general secretary of the committee. This committee was active from 1974 until June 1975. On June 8, 1975, a new Rajbana Vihar Committee was formed, nominating Dr. Himangshu Bimal Dewan the chairman and Mr. Bankim Krishna Dewan the general secretary of the committee. This committee was conducted until May 22, 1976. On June 8, 1975, the Chakma Queen Arati Roy was made the Chief Adviser of an advising committee and Dr. Himangshu Bimal Dewan was further re-elected the chairman and Mr. Bankim Krishna Dewan the general secretary, along with other respectable people. The committee worked from May 23, 1976 until December 31, 1981. Meanwhile, the importance, spread, and activities of the Rajbana Vihar were increased so that it required the approval of some rules in order to maintain the holiness of the temple. For this, the Chakma King Debashish Roy introduced some rules in July 1981. Later, on December 27, 1981, King Debashish Roy was selected the chief organizer and Queen Arati Roy was selected the organizer of the committee. In addition, a third full-temple maintenance committee was

formed for the period of January 1, 1981 to April 26, 1984. Before today, the committee was re-formed several times. Venerable Banabhante changed the name of the temple maintenance committee to **Rajbana Vihar Upasak-Upasika Parishad** in 1999, and this name has remained unchanged.

Though Banabhante came to the Rajbana Vihar permanently in 1976, he spent his first Vassa life in 1976 in the Rajbana Vihar, In addition, Ven. Nandapal Bhikkhu, Ven. Atul Sen Bhikkhu, Ven. Aniruddha Shraman, Ven. Banasree Shraman, and Ven. Anandapal Shraman stayed in this temple during the Vassa. After that, Banabhante spent twenty-three Vassas, from 1977 until 1999, in the Rajbana Vihara temple. He went to the Dharmapur Arjyaban Bihar at Khagrachri in 1999 to spend one Vassa there in response to many laypeople's requests.

The Rajbana Vihar had been established to the current stage after many years of successive developments since 1974. All development works had been conducted by utilizing the donations of laypeople. In parallel, many government organizations and military authorities donated for the development of the Rajbana Vihar. In addition, the contributions and enormous efforts of the members of the Rajbana Vihar Upasak-Upasika Parishad were memorable. The main donators for the temple's developments are Dr. Himangshu Bimal Dewan, Engineer Ashok Barua, Mr. Naba Kumar Tanchangya, Mr. Hlathoai Pru Carbury, Mrs. Lucky Chakma, and many other Barua communities. The following important constructions have been built up in the Rajbana Vihar:

- The universal prayer room in 1987
- Banabhante's dining room in 1988
- Banabhante's meditation hut in 1993
- Banabhante's Chankramon room in 1994
- A Buddhist Temple with a Thai Buddhist statue in 1996
- A temple with Banabhante's bronze stautè in 1996

- A two-storied dining halls in 1997
- A statue of Upagupta Mahathera in 1999
- A Guest room in 1999-2000
- The Rajban Bihar Hospital in 2000
- A Heaven building of seven stories in 2002
- A doctrinal room in 2003
- A three-storied bhikkhu living place in 2004
- A modern residential building for Banabhante in 2008, and
- A brick-built Bhikkhu Sima hall in 2008

Since the establishment of the Rajbana Vihar in 1976, people at Rangamati have had chances to acquire the punna by devoting to Venerable Banabhante and listening to his *Sadhamma*. Visitors come from many far places to see Banabhante and listen to his doctrines.

Ven. Banabhante's *Vassa* Life

Vassa No.	Time	Name of the Vihar	Place
1-10	1961-1970	Dighinala Bana Vihar	Dighinala, Khagrachari
11-15	1971-1975	Tintila Bana Vihar	Langadu, Rangamati
16-38	1976-1998	Rajbana Vihar	Rangamati
39	1999	Arjya Bana Vihar	Dharmapur, Khagrachari
40-51	2000-2011	Rajbana Vihar	Rangamati

The Rajbana Vihar-The Place of Happiness

If we look at the past, the existence of human beings in the Chittagong Hill Tracts was formally being demolished. Venerable Banabhante brought the Buddhist people of these areas from that endangered point to a safe place through a tough journey. Not only that, Banabhante is also known as a

great meditator of the Buddhist society, even in many foreign countries.

Human beings have been creating much misconduct by the attractions of the five aggregates (*pañca-kkhandha*): form aggregate (*rūpa-kkhandha*), feeling aggregate (*vedanā-kkhandha*), perception aggregate (*saññ a-kkhandha*), mental formation aggregate (*sankkhāra-kkhandha*), and consciousness aggregate (*viññāna-kkhandha*). People are now helpless under the stress of the five clinging aggregates. Quarrels, debates, ferocious activities, and war are spread in families, societies, countries, and the whole world. It is needless to say how men and women were hurt producing false love in their minds in order to get happiness. People want happiness. It is now known to everyone that Rajbana Vihar is the only home of real happiness. The greatest man whose heart is full of happiness is the heart of Rajbana Vihar. It is beyond the imagination for the Rajbana Vihar to exist without having Banabhante.

People come here not only to remove any distress or fear, but they also find the truth of *Nibbāna*. People from every religion, nation, and race who have heard about the wisest *Arahant* Banabhante have come here to receive his blessings. In past days, many people used to come to the Bon Bihar to test his knowledge, his magical power, or to act against him. Among them, some became polite by listening to his religious doctrines, some turned into bad fates, while others died. Venerable Banabhante says, "Those who acted against me, I never cursed to them. Truly I have been attaining the truth for a long time and leaving behind any false act. So, those who were against me, they have suffered by the influence of my truthful behaviours. Many times, the devas also became disappointed and did something bad to them." Every morning, people gather at Rajbana Vihar to donate some food to Venerable Banabhante, who eats his breakfast and starts meeting visitors in his residential house. Thus, Rajbana Vihar's busy day begins. People from Rangamati,

Khagrachari, Dhaka, Chittagong, as well as many social and political leaders and government and non-government officers also come here. In the past, many prime ministers, ministers, government officers, many royal people from India, Srilanka, Thailand, and Burma, etc. meet Banabhante at this temple. In addition, many monks and laymen and women often come to this temple.

Banabhante for the Happiness of Human Beings

Venerable Banabhante was especially inspired to spread, improve, and enrich the Dhamma since 1976. At the invitation of the people, he went to many cities and the villages of Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Chittagong town. After listening to the significance of the Buddha Dhamma, the people started avoiding false views and wrong perceptions. People were happy in their lives by following Banabhante's advice and orders. Thus, his name and fame spread everywhere, and many others used to come to the Rajbana Vihar every day. So, the contributions of Venerable Banabhante and the Rajbana Vihar for spreading the *Dhamma* and its continuation are extraordinary and unforgettable. The Rajbana Vihar is the best place to learn the religious behaviours as well as to create bridges among all human beings with the touches of love, intimacy, relations, and communications.

The following is one of Venerable Banabhante's doctrines given on October 16, 1995 at the Subalong Jurachari branch of the temple: "If one survives with knowledge and truth, he or she will always be happy, while ignorance and false views bring all sufferings. At present, people do not have any truth, so they are doing any mean work like an ignorant. So people are having unbearable and limitless suffering. Those who are wise cannot do any mean work. At present, the Chakma nation is passing the inclement days. If it runs long, the Chakma nation will be destroyed. The Chakma cannot do any punna or good works. What can they do? They can drink, become a

drunk, or gamble when they get some money. And what else can they do? They can unveil deeds, then run away and hide. Many Chakmas tell me, 'Bhante, you say that the nation which gives birth of the greatest man, that nation cannot be destroyed. Rather they become happy and rich. So, why would we be damaged?' I also agree with these words, but you are not listening to or obeying me. For example, a patient with a gastric ulcer is groaning with pain. A foreign doctor gives the patient a prescription, saying that 'if you take this medicine in this amount, you will be cured completely.' But if the patient leaves the medicines without trusting the doctor, would that patient ever be cured? No, he will not be. If a patient does not take a medicine, what can a doctor do at that time? Similarly, if you do not believe the Banabhante's words, the *Kamma*, the effects of *Kamma* reincarnations, the Four Noble Truths, the *Paticcasamuppāda* principles, the Eight-fold Path, the *Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha*; and also if you do not practice the religious principles, then what can Banabhante do for you?

"Let me tell you an incident. During the World War II, a news story came out in Thailand that a huge group of soldiers of the enemies were approaching to attack Thailand. As a result, people in Thailand were afraid. People were screaming everywhere, 'we all are going to be destroyed soon; we will be killed soon. We do not have any way to survive.' Observing this situation, a woman named Chondraboti started meditation, saying that 'If I survive, I will not let this nation be destroyed.' Then she called all the Thai people and said, 'Do not be afraid. If you listen to me then no matter how powerful our enemies are, they cannot do any harm to us.' The frightened Thais believed her words and started obeying all good religious behaviours. Finally, with the help of *Arahant* Chondraboti's power, the Thais survived the destructions.

"All of you also listen to me. Remember, pious persons are protected by religions. You all speak up with me 'from today onwards, we will follow religious rules. We will follow the

Sīlas, be wise and pious by keeping our minds free from all delusions.' Also, from today announce it everywhere that Banabhante said to us, 'the Chakma nation should reach to the highest peak of progress and so they should follow five rules: (1) Those who talk about friendliness and forgiveness, the Chakma people should listen to their religious advice. (2) The Buddha's principles should be followed and believed deeply. (3) Desire should be thrown away. (4) The *Nibbāna* should be attained. (5) Hard work and inspirations are required for all successes in life."

This doctrine clarifies a few statements:

- Always do the punna or good works. Those who follow the *Dhamma* can never be defeated

- Give up all bad habits. Only God or Banabhante cannot rescue anybody; man himself is his own releaser. Who can do others' homework?

- A deep intention is required to destroy all attachments or to face *Nibbāna.*

Everyone Should Check His or Her Own Mind

Once Venerable Banabhante was saying to his disciples, "If you would like to attain *Nibbāna*, you have to give up the interactions with women. You have to become free from all evil deeds. If you enjoy the sensual pleasures with women, you can never attain the *Nibbāna.* You have to give up all bad habits. Check your own mind and test if you are free from sensual pleasures. If you see that you are not still free from the sensual pleasures, then you know that your mind is immersed in grieves. It is not possible to paint this kind of mind with the colour of *Nibbāna.* In addition, a mind should be free from all social rituals and blind beliefs. If a mind is bound to many social rituals, it also cannot find the path to *Nibbāna.* A mind should avoid all sensual pleasures and social rituals such as

doing jobs or obtaining institutional degrees, etc." Venerable Banabhante then asked his disciples, "What should you leave to attain *Nibbāna*?" The *Sangha* replied, "The sensual pleasures and desires to work." People who are aware of doing well to others, they grow their inner eyes to judge their affairs. They enter into the realm of Stream-winners-the *Nibbāna*. The Stream-winners decrease the numbers of their re-births through their good deeds and virtues. They are reborn as human beings only seven times after their deaths. They are never born in lower classes like animals or demons. Therefore, we should try to build up our own virtues, thoughts, and inner qualities of generosity, moral virtue, and meditation to cease the reincarnation process. When the mind is free from conducting any kind of evil work, it is free from all materialistic demands. This is how a mind can cut down the number of rebirths.

Venerable Banabhante told to his disciples, "Bhikkhus, let's utter with me that we will be devoid from sensual desires that lead to a painful life. We will discover the *Nibbāna* that leads to a peaceful, noble life. We will search for the knowledge of the Noble Eight-Fold Path. Dear disciples, you will not look at women with sensual desires. You will not think about marriage and making a family by being an ordinary couple. Otherwise, you will not be able to meditate and produce knowledge. Your principal duties are doing meditation and searching for knowledge. You will then attain *Nibbāna* through meditation and knowledge. Please remember that botn meditation and wisdom bring happiness. How will you practice meditation? Please do not look at any woman with sensual pleasures. Never think about marriage or being an ordinary person. If you think these unwholesome thoughts, you cannot concentrate your mind on meditation. If you always stay with wisdom and knowledge, you will feel the happiness of *Nibbāna*. On the other hand, if you let ignorance rise in your mind, your meditative mind will be interrupted. You will then fall into a distressful life. A monk's life without meditation and knowledge is regretful. I have heard many Bhikkhus saying,

'A monk's life is very difficult.' Someone said to me, 'I am suffering.' Do you know why they were suffering? Because they were not in meditative or wise moods. Those who do not do meditation and have no knowledge of their duties, they must suffer. Simply by being a monk and wearing yellow robes or shaving hairs from heads cannot make a monk happy. Only a meditative and wise monk can find happiness! Let's say that again: 'the monk who does not have meditation or knowledge, he will not find happiness.' The current monks do not have meditative minds or knowledge, and so they are suffering. Do you know how to attain the happiness of meditation? If you do not look at women with momentary happiness and gratification. If you do not think about marrying a pretty woman. As soon as you think so, your meditation will be interrupted. If you want to attain the *Nibbāna*, you have to ignite the sense of knowledge and stay with knowledge. If you stay with material pleasures, you are producing the sense of illusions and unhappiness. Can you expect to reach *Nibbāna* with this kind of illusive minds? Never! I am showing you the path to *Nibbāna*, but I cannot make you give up your natures. You will test yourselves, asking whether you have any attractions to women and think to marry someone. If you see that your mind is free from any attraction, then you will know that you can attain *Nibbāna*." Then Banabhante asked his disciples, "would you look at any woman?" The *sangha* replied, "No, Bhante." He then asked, "would you think to marry like an ordinary person?" The *Sangha* replied, "No, Bhante. Please bless us that we will not do these unacceptable behaviours."

Then Banabhante told the *Sangha* the following story, "A monk told to me that he would not marry in this life, because he was poor in this life. If he would marry a lady from a poor family, he would suffer a lot. So he decided not to marry in this life. He said that he would be a monk in this life to follow the *Sīla*, which would help him to become a king in his next life. He would be the richest person in his country. He would

then marry a princess in his next life to enjoy the materialistic happiness. So, it was seen that he would not be a monk in this life, if he would be a rich person or king. He did not become a monk to attain *Nibbāna* even! He became a monk to be a king or rich person and marry a princess or rich lady in his next life." The disciples burst into laughter hearing this story. Banabhante then asked a monk sitting next to him, "Have you become a monk for the same reason?" The monk replied, "No, Bhante." Banabhante said, "Okay, if you tell the laypeople that we will not marry in this life but we will marry a princess or rich woman in next life, and that is why we have become monks, then what would the laypeople think of us? The laypeople would think that these monks have worn yellow robes with such a mean objective!" The *Sangha* replied, "Bhante, we have not become monks for fulfilling such a mean purpose!" Banabhante then said to the disciples, "You should not stay with an unholy objective like that monk. Then you cannot return from clinging. You will then be subject to pain and defilements. You cannot gain *Nibbāna*. Always stay with the mindfulness of *Nibbāna*. If you want to go to this world, you have to give up the clinging and miseries of nature both in this life and your next lives. Then you will be able to reach the state of non-return of *Nibbāna*. Never move your *Nibbāna*-aiming mind to different directions of the heaven, Brahman birth, or human beings birth. If you target your mind to the one holy goal of *Nibbāna*, you can then concentrate your mind. What is that concentration about? It is to keep your focus on one subject. It is not doing many things at the same time. The practice of mindfulness will enable you to seek *Nibbāna*, which is free from birth, old age, sickness, death, pain, and any kind of misery in this nature."

Nibbāna Cannot Be Attained by Attachments

Once Venerable Banabhante told some laymen and women, "Please listen to the religious doctrines with full attention. If

you listen to religious doctrines with full attentions, you can remember these. Otherwise, you cannot recall them. If you can guide your life according to these doctrines, it fulfils the significance of listening to them. The Buddhist religion is the religion of giving up, not attaching more. It is found that during the time of the Buddha, almost all monks were kings, princes, or rich people. They all left their kingdoms and wealth, became monks and went for *Nibbāna*. Many of you may ask me, 'Bhante, what did you leave for becoming a monk?' I say that I did not have any kingdom or wealth to give up for becoming a monk. However, I discarded my life and organs after being a monk! When I stayed at the Dhanpata forest, I promised that I would never attach to any material things; I would never think about enjoying life like an ordinary person. Also, I thought about the *Tathāgata Buddha, Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākassapa, Mahākappina* etc,—kings and rich personalities who ordained their lives with forest lives after leaving their kingdoms and wealth. I was inspired myself thinking of them, and so I was ready to give up my own life and organs. Many monks told me at that time, 'if we give up our lives and organs, we will die; so we cannot act like you.' Here many of you may also tell me the same. Then, what *Dhamma* teachings I should teach you? The Buddha used to tell in every doctrine that 'there is no peace in enjoying materials; rather it is the most peaceful by giving up!' So you should also tell me, 'We will not enjoy; we will only give up. Giving up is the best and brings all happiness.

"What we see in this world are subjects of impermanence. So, enjoying the impermanent objects will only lead to mental and bodily aggregates. A constantly grasping person can never see peace. As soon as one thing is attained, his or her mind is always burnt by dissatisfaction of not getting another ten objects. There is no satisfaction through getting. What is predicted as happiness is in reality a symbol for distress. The Enlightened One explains to King Vimbisar that, 'A real happiness cannot be attained by grasping. Rather it brings

Dukkha, the unsatisfactoriness. It pushes a life towards intolerable *Dukkha*. A grasping person gets a lot of wealth but becomes a miser and poor.'

"Buddhism is the religion of giving up. This religion teaches us to give up all material objects, wealth, life, and even the organs of a body. All of these defilements look empty to general people. However, it does not mean emptiness-rather, it expresses the best expressions. One who can give up pleasant, painful, and ignorant feelings is free of unwholesome tendencies and has the right outlook. He or she secures his or her future existence by being free from all sorts of cravings. The Buddha's teachings are now acceptable throughout the world. Many high officials such as secretaries, ministers, and prime ministers of our country and foreign countries come to Banabhante to hear the religious teachings. They listen to the Buddha's wisest and giving perceptions and leave merrily after getting blessings from me. Rangamati is more comfortable for communications than Khagrachari, Baghaichari, and even Jurachari. Rangamati is located at the center of all these places. Also, the people and environment here are known to me, so I feel more comfortable staying at Rangamati than other places.

"The most common question people ask is: what is the real happiness? How can it be attained according to the *Buddha Dhamma*? The actions of giving up, restrictions and detachments are happiness that can be termed as *Nibbāna* in a word. To the Noble Ones, the cessation of the existing body is considered as happiness. Those who can overcome the attachments of existence can realize the state of happiness. *Nibbāna* can be realized by giving up ignorance, lust, desire, ten kinds of suffering, five aggregates, etc. It is the main philosophy and real happiness of the *Buddha Dhamma*. Again, Buddha said, 'a wise person does not urge wealth, children, countries for himself or others. He or she does not expect his or her own prosperity and thus he or she is a happy person.' There is no happiness in absorbing worldly happiness. Wealth

and respect cannot satisfy human beings. There is no real happiness in gaining wealth or love. There is also no merit in gaining worldly happiness."

Venerable Banabhante also says, "It is a wise act to make friendship with a wise person rather than an ignorant one. Avoiding ignorance brings happiness. It is safer to stay with an enemy than to stay with an ignorant person, for the ignorant person can only do harmful acts. They always do harm to themselves and others. They are ignorant of their responsibilities, full of lust, pride, mercilessness, irreligiousness, jealousy, revenge-taking, are inspired by doing evil works, and are determined to do evil works. Ignorant people can do or say anything. They are more dangerous than snakes. Even though ignorant people do not do any harm to you, the sighting of them is also harmful. Therefore, ignorant people should always be avoided. On the other hand, the sighting of wise people and Ariyas is happiness. Wise persons are the right guides and honest advisors. They always bring happiness to a society."

Venerable Bhante then asked the lay people, "Are you staying with happiness in your married life surrounded by husbands and wives, sons and daughters? I can see that you are staying in sorrow. There are endless stresses and unhappiness. Husbands do not like to listen to their wives, wives also do not like to hear from husbands, sons do not like to be obedient to their fathers, and daughters do not hear their mothers. Wives do not understand husbands' grieves, husbands do not understand their wives, neither sons nor fathers understand each other, and it is the same for daughters and mothers. Thus, there are indescribable grieves, mental agonies, ego problems, quarrels, etc. in a family. Moreover mental irritations about sons and daughters, problems with relatives, quarrels with neighbors, conflicts and fights for lands, wealth, jobs, and business are not giving you any peace in your minds. Your lives are like boats on a surging ocean. They can sink at any

time by a big accident. So, see how sorrowful, unhappy, agonizing, and risky the moments in a life are! Even then you do not like to free yourselves from all these attachments! You do not try to walk on the path of *Nibbāna*! You are immersed in the sea of suffering without having any sense. Do you know the reason for your silence? Ignorance! Your minds are so full of ignorance that it is impossible for you to open the wise eyes to observe these sufferings as grieves.

"As soon as you open the wise eyes that penetrate the ignorance, you will gain the *Magga*. Then you also do not need to wait for any certain time because when the true *Dhamma* is followed, its results can be obtained instantly. There are many examples from the time of the Buddha. For example, a Bhikkhu became an Arahant as soon as he was ordained with the *Upasampadā*. In another instance, the elder sister of King Prosenjeet went to the Buddha walking with her walking stick. The Buddha advised her, 'Oh, lady, please take some rest.' Hearing this, King Prosenjeet's elder sister became an Arahant. On the other hand, a housemaid of ten kids' mother became an Arahant too, just right after her monk's ordination. Do you know how they obtained the Arahantship so easily? They were able to remove their ignorance quickly and generate knowledge. So they attained the *Magga* without waiting for a long period of time.

"Life is full of distresses; there is nothing that is real happiness. Though ignorant people think making a family is a source of happiness and so imagines to gain something, when they enter into the real life there is no real happiness. Everything is burnt into ashes of suffering and pain. So, you made a great mistake by becoming a family person. And so you are falling into various grieves insults, and dangers. You are chasing your minds downwards at every moment."

Finally Venerable Banabhante said, "If you do unwholesome works, you will not prosper. Evil doers always fall downwards. On the other hand, if you do good works, you will prosper day

after day. There is no fear of falling down after obtaining knowledge. If anybody asks you what Banabhante's advice is, then please say that Banabhante's advice is to not do any unwholesome work that can lead to Hell. We should not do any work that can harm this life or the next life. Stay with knowledge, not with ignorance. Do you know what can lead you to Hell? Those who do not follow the five percepts go to Hell. So please follow the *Pañca-sīla* and do wholesome works. Obtain knowledge to increase your wisdom rather destroying your lives. Stay with an alert, conscious mind. Do not place any ignorance in your mind. Nurture wisdom. Do *Dāna* (donate) to remove any obstructs. Please be attentive to remove lust by *Dāna,* envy by following *Sīla,* and ignorance by *Bhāvanā.* Then my doctrines will be successful, and you will be able to realize *Nibbāna* properly. You will attain *Nibbāna.*"

Criticism

The Most Venerable Banabhante is well-known as a perfect human being who attained the three levels of knowledge: retrocognition (knowledge of a past event), clairvoyance (knowledge of an event before it occurs), and destruction of defilements. He understands intuitively, speaks thoughtfully, and explains deeply, because he is an Arahant. Thus, it is important to have deep knowledge and wisdom to understand, know, and realize Banabhante's *Dhamma* talk. Otherwise, Banabhante's *Dhamma* teachings can create various confusions and misunderstandings. In the past, many people did not come to the Bana Vihar because of misconceptions. In addition, many people used to say that though Venerable Banabhante destroyed all feelings, he could not get rid of anger. This was said because Venerable Banabhante refused to go to many invitations, if some conditions were not fulfilled properly that were promised before. Usually, it was a rule to write down the date, time, location, and the numbers of

vehicles to take the *Bhikkhu Sangha* to an invitation. If there was any mismatch between the written documents and actual events, then Banabhante refused to go to the invitation. So, many people misinterpreted that Banabhante did not have control of the emotion of anger. However, referring to his refusal act, Banabhante says, "there is no impurity in my meditation. I have realized the right knowledge after enduring tremendous miseries in my forest life. I do not allow any impurity between any work and speech. Why are there no matches between your work and speech? If there is no matching between a work and speech, it belongs to the reign of a *Māra*. So I should not go to your impure *Dhamma*." This strict discipline followed by Banabhante was misinterpreted as his anger, when it was nothing but a discipline. Banabhante also says, "When I scold somebody, and if he or she does not come to me next time, being scared or having misunderstood me, it will be a mistake. Sometimes *Māra* creates obstacles to prevent people from doing wholesome deeds. So, I rebuke the *Māra* to go away but not the persons themselves. Many people misunderstand, thinking that it was my anger, when actually it was not." He added, "Do you know how my anger could be compared? It is like a doctor conducting an operation to remove malfunctioning in a body. It is like a teacher giving punishments to students. It is like an iron-caster beating a piece of iron. Also, if you would not follow your work and speech, it would become your habit to break the rule. Thus, sometimes I need to be strict about not allowing you to break this rule."

People's Expectation from Banabhante

We, the normal human beings, are blessed by the power of the Buddha's great good will and thoughts. The power of their good will, sighting of the Buddhas, and talking to them removes all distress and sufferings from our minds and brings peace and happiness. Similarly, the most venerable Banabhante is a surprise to all nations, sub-nations, and groups

of religions, and so there is no difference among nations, religions, women, and men to venerable Banabhante. He often says, "All living things in the world including human beings are subject to **Mind and Form** (*Nāma-Rūpa*). If you consider these *Nāma* and *Rūpa* as human beings, living things, men, women, me, and mine, you will be subject to clinging. What you usually consider as human beings-men, women, Chakma, Marma, Barua, Bangalee, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christians, etc.-are all subject to illusion. Can anyone guarantee to be a Chakma, or Bangalee, after the death as a Chakma or Bangalee? So, the concepts of nation, religion, color, etc. are wrong views." Venerable Banabhante tells, "In this world, human beings urge for wealth, jewelry, name, fame, health, family, etc., while these urges are the lowest urges and requests. These requests cannot bring real happiness-rather they create more suffering, or they cannot simply satisfy the prayers. So, urging for *Nibbāna* is the best urge. *Nibbāna* can make us free from all sufferings." Despite Banabhante's doctrine about *Nibbāna*, clear-sightedness, and apprehension of truth for many years, laypeople always plead for personal dispensations, health, wealth, job, lottery, son-daughter, success, beautiful bride, rich groom, and favors for relief from suffering, etc. Some people get their pens touched by Banabhante praying that, "Dear Bhante, my son's handwriting is bad. Please bless that his handwriting would be beautiful!" We always do the mistake of elevating Banabhante as a god and worship him with requests for favors and special dispensatons, which truly cannot alter a situation much. Banabhante is the Buddha who shows us the eightfold path, advice us to seek the insights and enlightenment that can come through meditations. Instead of achieving our inner sights, we pray to him beyond our accomplishments.

Venerable Banabhante sometimes talks about these prayers, "Your prayers are your personal preferences that represent worldly attachments. These are like going to Comilla City in Bangladesh. Praying for *Nibbāna* is like going to the capital

city, Dhaka. As you go to Dhaka, you must pass Comilla City, the same way, when you will talk for *Nibbāna*, you will attain all those worldly urges. So, don't you need to pray for *Nibbāna*? If your minds do not go for *Nibbāna*, you will never find it and as a result you will only be grieved all time." No matter what Banabhnate tell to the laypeople, most of them only pray for redemption, security, and favors of Banabhante to alleviate from problems. Two examples are given below:

- There was a merchant named Ahmed Reza who used to come often to the Bana Vihar and Banabhante. He used to sew cloths in a shop to the east side of the Rangamati College. He lived in a house behind that college. He was about 32 years old and had been suffering from hysteria disease. He underwent many treatments and spent a lot of money for it. One day he decided to go to Banabhante and obtain his blessings for ailments. He started to go to the Bana Vihar very often and prayed to Banabhante for curing his disease. One day Banabhante told him, "Go." Hearing this word from Venerable Bhante, Reza's whole body was shivered. After that incident, Reza was completely cured and never again was sick. He continued coming to the Bana Vihar regularly after he was cured. One day a taxi-driver told Ahmen Reza not to go to the Bana Vihar any more. Reza replied to the taxi-driver, "I am not doing any harm to anybody. Then why should not I go to the Bana Vihar?" Then it was seen that the taxi-driver fell into a road-accident on the following day. On the basis of this incidence Ahmed Reza said that everyone should respect Banabhante with concentrations [Reference: Banabhanter Deshana (volume 3) by DR. Aravinda Barua].

- One day a muslim huzur taxi driver saw DR. Aravinda Barua and asked him, "Do you want to go to the Bana Vihar?" As though the taxi driver's passengers were not enough, he did not have any objection going to the Bana Vihar. Rather, he was very interested to go to the Bana Vihar. He explained that his son was saved by the blessings of Banabhante. He said that his

home is in the area of Khattoli by the side of a river. His children also play with other children in the same area while they are bathing in the river. One day, his son was sunk in the water while playing in the river. Other children were screaming and so neighbors rushed to save his son. His wife went to a neighbor's house at that moment. She heard from her neighbor that her son was drowned into water. She ran to the bank of the river, and simultaneously recalled Banabhante saying, "Banabhante, please bless my son. If he would be alive, I will lit up thousands of candles in your temple." She reached to the river side and found that many people were looking for her son's body. She was crying and looking for her son. Suddenly she found her son about eight gauges (24 feet) away from the bank inside shallow water with a lot of foams coming out of his mouth. After they took him out of water and moved his body for a few minutes, her son regained his senses. Following this incident, the taxi driver's wife used to come to the Bana Vihar almost everyday covering her whole body with traditional Muslim cloth such as burka. She listened to Banabhante's doctrines standing there all the time. Though other women requested her to sit down, she always liked to listen to Banabhante's *dhamma* talk standing in the temple [Reference: Banabhanter Deshana (volume 3) by Dr. Aravinda Barua].

Many people who come to the Rajbana Vihar have different objectives, goals, characters, and ideologies. Some of them come here to find mental satisfaction after being suppressed by many errors, clinging, sorrow, pain, fear, disturbance, foes, and collisions in life. Some come here to ascertain the seat of a celestial being by fulfilling the donation sincerely. Some come here to urge the happiness of *Nibbāna* by engaging themselves in *Sīla* and purity of minds. Some come here year after year to become famous. Some pray to get rid of any kind of eye problems and diseases until attaining the *Nibbāna*. Some come here to hear the *Saddhamma* in order to find the freedom of life. Some come to increase the four wealths of age, color,

happiness, and energy by showing their reverences to the wisest man in the world. Some come to earn some money by serving the *Sangha*. Some collect residual foods that are served to the *Sangha*. Some come to investigate the development of the temple. Some people come just to travel to the place and take some pictures of this holy place. Some come here to find out any impurities in all the good things. The surprising thing is that some people steal donation boxes from the Bihar complex [Reference: A Close Look at the Most Venerable Banabhante and Rajbana Vihar by Dr. Sharanangkar Bhikkhu].

In reality, the source of all grief derives from desiring the wrong things. Human beings desire something without justifying and considering if it is right or wrong, and true or false. These cravings prompt them to become selfish, unsatisfied, and to conduct volitional acts. Those who get more, want more-this path of craving and ignorance forces human beings to be burnt in the flame of sufferings. This is comparable to insects flying towards fire and downfall after being attracted by the fire. Human beings are like those insects falling into fire, and thus fall into one new bond after another. These unconscious actions endorse more suffering, and make the path of liberation harder. However, it is not impossible to end suffering and stress resulting from one's own past and present actions. Those, who conquer the states of tranquility of existence have fulfilled the spiritual path of overcoming defilements of minds and are determined to realize the peace of enlightenment or *Nibbāna*.

In this context, Venerable Banabhante says, "The negative impulses in human beings-for example, jealousy, envy, aggression, miserliness, etc.-destroy their characters and relationships with others. These people can paralyze the productivity of a society, profession, commercial sector, and government. These evil doers always go to hell. So their spiritual sense of *Dhamma* can never be awakened, and *Nibbāna* remains unreachable to them."

Stress and suffering originate from ignorance (*Avijja*). People suffer from not knowing the Four Noble Truths. This is not simply lacking of information of knowledge of four noble truths; rather it indicates the lack of skill in handling activities, thoughts, and consciousness. The skill of perfecting each activity can be gained by comprehending an activity where there is no more passion, aversion, or delusion toward doing it. Thus, one can develop the path to release from any kind of craving in life, its forsaking, abandonment, liberation, and detachment from it. When craving is eliminated, the unconditioned state of *Nibbāna* can be experienced. Venerable Banabhante says, "When a mind is always directed towards *Nibbāna*, it can reach to the *Nibbāna* one day." On the other hand, when a mind cannot be liberated from craving, it will search for greed, aversion, and delusion. Buddha discovers the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment and *Nibbāna.*

It should be remembered that the nation that does not pay respect to the greatest and wisest person, can never give birth to wise and knowledgeable people. So, everyone should honor and worship of the wisest persons. Until today, Venerable Banabhante has not even thought of harming anybody and given any advice to be involved in doing sinful work. He has always been a symbol of forgiveness, patience, compassion, and friendliness. Throughout his life, he has been spreading the *Dhamma* of how good deeds can be performed, happiness can be attained, suffering can be reduced, and above all the most peaceful *Nibbāna* can be attained. In the twenty-first century, we face today a sharp distinction between science and religion, and sometimes some of us are desperate to uproot the ethics of religion for the sake of science. However, we often forget that science claims invincible knowledge based on the empirical investigation of the natural world, while religion can do little more than call for faith in supernatural creeds and obedience to codes of ethics that require restraint, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice. While both may share certain conceptions about the

nature of reality, science is essentially a project designed to provide us with objective, factual knowledge, with information pertaining to the public domain, while Buddhism is a spiritual path intended to promote inner transformation and the realization of the highest good, called enlightenment, liberation, or *Nibbāna*. In Buddhism, the quest for knowledge is important not as an end in itself, but because the main cause of our bondage and suffering is ignorance-not understanding things as they really are-and thus the antidote needed to heal ourselves is knowledge or insight.

Because Buddhism takes personal experience as its starting point, without aiming to use experience as a springboard to an impersonal, objective type of knowledge, it includes within its domain the entire spectrum of qualities disclosed by personal experience. This means that Buddhism gives prime consideration to values. But even more, values for Buddhism are not merely projections of subjective judgments which we fashion according to our personal whims, social needs, or cultural conditioning; to the contrary, they are written into the texture of reality just as firmly as the laws of motion and thermodynamics. Hence, values can be evaluated: rated in terms of truth and falsity, ranked as valid and invalid, and part of our task in giving meaning to our lives is to unearth the true scheme of values. To determine the true gradation of values, we must turn our attention inward and use subjective criteria of investigation; but what we find, far from being private or arbitrary, is an integral part of the objective order, permeated by the same lawfulness as that which governs the movement of the planets and the stars.

In addition to the collision between science and *dhamma*, there are cultural problems that restrict another barrier to spreading *Sadhamma*. Venerbale Banabhante says, "If a king is not from your own nation, it is difficult to train the *Sangha* or disciples and protect the wheel of *Dhamma*." So if a country is not a suitable land for Buddhism, it is hard to make realization of the

pristine teachings of the Buddha about awakening. However, it is not impossible to revive the practice of Buddhism at all levels of society. Today, the younger generations who have gained institutional educations have tendencies to evince an inquisitive attitude towards *Dhamma* practice. They care little to know about its true value. Therefore, there should be an attempt not only from the side of *Buddhist Sangha* or monks, but also from the side of laypeople, parents, and relatives to make young people understand the importance of *Dhamma* for restraint, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice. Parents should teach their children the rudiments of Buddhist practice such as chanting, observance of the five and eight precepts, and devotion of spare time to reading of *Dhamma* books and meditation. We should culture the observance of the five percepts strictly: reduction of greed and hatred, and development of good characters such as kindness compassion, honesty, truthfulness, etc. Thus, we will be able to refine our mind, speech, and body through the practice of *Saddhamma*.

The abovementioned wholesome conduct will not come automatically to our minds; rather we have to be active, energetic, and diligent about our rights and duties. The balanced way of observing objects with a compassionate view will certainly help individuals to realize the perspective of the whole life. Transformation of each individual person with right thoughts will lead to overall social development and provide the ability to differentiate the good from the bad, the right from the wrong, and thus the true from the false.

Days and Nights of Banabhnate

These days, Banabhante spends most of his time sitting on a chair by because of aging. However, every morning from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. Venerable Banabhante gives *Dhamma* talks to the Bhikkhus and Sramanas at the Rajbana Vihar. This time changes during the winter and summer seasons. Sometimes the length of his speech also depends on his physical condition.

Now, he is not able to deliver the *Dhamma* teachings as frequently as he did before. Earlier, when he was young and physically strong, he travelled various places of Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Chittagong upon the requests from laypeople in order to spread the teachings of compassion, loving-kindness, and friendliness. However, recently he spends most of the time sitting in a chair. Thus, his aging has prevented us, the laypeople, from hearing more *Dhamma* teachings. This also reminds us that when our body is subject to decay over time, should not we practice the *Dhamma* of right, skillful, and meritorious conduct right away?

Later in the morning, Venerable Banabhante cleans his teeth and face. He does not use toothpaste or toothbrush to clean teeth. He cleans teeth with his finger using some toothpowder. He then cleans his face in a big pot. Usually he uses two pitchers of water at this time: one pitcher for gargling, and another pitcher for washing his face. Sometimes he needs more than two pitchers of water. His disciples take care of him during this time.

Then he takes some drinking water or juices between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. in his residential building. Visitors, including laypeople, can meet with Venerable Banabhante between 7:00a.m. and 8:00 a.m. He then stays alone in his room. After that, laypeople can meet him again between 10:00a.m. to 10:25 a.m., and donate generously. Venerable Banabhante starts his bath at 10:30 a.m. Many bhikkhus and Shramans gather at that time to help Him taking his bath and thus obtaining blessings from Him. Banabhante at first gargles and then pours a mug of water on his head. Then the bhikkhus and Shramans help him to finish his bath. It is believed that the water Venerable Banabhante uses for his bath is also a source of his blessings. Therefore, many people, especially laywomen, collect bathing water for Banabhante, or some people pour out bottled water thinking, "Venerable Banabhante will use this water for bathing and thus may I be blessed!" Many people wet their

faces, heads, and bodies with Bhante's bathed water to get rid of diseases, obstructions, and interruptions. Many people also collect his bathing water.

Venerable Banabhante shaves his head once every two weeks. His principal attendant Venerable Anandamitra Thera shaves his head. Venerable Banabhante shaves his beard and mustache every two to three days. A monk or Shraman helps on these things. In addition, his disciples also take care of his toenails and hand nails when needed. After taking his bath, Banabhante takes his meals between 10:45 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. For this his disciples take him to a dining room from his second storied residence hall. Banabhante speaks out his advice on his way to the dining hall. He eats only 4-5 lumps of food from his bowl for the whole day. After lunch he sometimes delivers doctrinal teachings if he sees laypeople's requests. Later when he leaves the dining hall, he spends time silently at his residence hall again until 4:00 p.m. He does not meet with anyone during this time. He again meets visitors from 5:00 to 5:30 p.m. after being vowed by his disciples between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m. After the whole day, Banabhante spends the whole night by himself. Bhikkhus and Shramans take care and nurse him accordingly. Their duties are to help him to go to bathroom, fan him using hand-fans, and some other daily routine works. Banabhante does not sleep at night. Usually a monk like Shraman always stands beside him for any help. The whole nursing system is maintained by venerable Anandamitra Thera.

At present, Banabhante goes to the *Dhamma* Hall only on special occasions and every Firday at 9:00 a.m. Sometimes He also comes to the Hall if He sees a religious couple. However it happens rarely these days.

In earlier days, Banabhante always avoided accepting any invitation or attending an occasion on Wednesday. He even did not like to arrange any monk ordinations on Wednesday. His disciples were also told to travel to other places on

Wednesday. Outside bhikkhus or Shramans also did not come to the Rajbana Vihar on Wednesday. However, these days the rules for Wednesday are not being followed any more.

About the Two Scarce Rocks at the Rajbana Vihar

Sometime in 1984, Venerable Banabhante asked Mr. Upendra Lal Chakma of Mitingachari village of Jurachari Thana, "There are two round rocks with two special marks of lotus seats on the rocks that you may find beside the Mitingachari fountain. Please bring those two rocks here." It is mentionable here that Mr. Upendra Lal Chakma is the father of venerable Gyanapriya Thera of the Rajbana Vihar. After getting Banabhante's order, Mr. Upendra Lal started finding these two rocks and arranged to bring these two rocks to the Rajbana Vihar with the help of the people from Lulangchari Mauza and Kusumchari Mauza areas. By that time, people were surprised and curious to know why Banabhante ordered them to bring two rocks to the Rajbana Vihar! When they asked Banabhante, he replied, "Many years ago wise men like forest monks meditated sitting on these rocks." It was of great surprise that Banabhante had never been at Jurachari area though he talked about these two rocks collected from Jurachari. Later, the rocks were dedicated, and the names of Banabhante, his father, Mr. Harumohan Chakma, and Mr. Upendralal Chakma were engraved on the rocks. A memorable column of 6 feet by 6 feet was built at the place of Jurachari where the rocks were found. [Reference: Venerable Gyanapriya Thera]

CONCLUSION

A cardinal point in the teachings of Buddhism is to do good work, which is called *kusala kamma* in pali. The doctrine of *kamma* corresponds to our deeds and their fruits. The efficacy in producing a result of a kammic action, either good or bad, depends on the potential of *kamma*, counteractive *kamma*, or destructive *kamma*. The occurrence of the result can be experienced in the near future in the same life cycle, or it can be delayed if the conjunction of outer circumstances required for its ripening is not complete; and that delay may again give a chance for counteractive or destructive *kamma* to operate.

Hence, the Buddha said: "If one says that in whatever way a person performs a kammic action, in that very same way he will experience the result-in that case, there will be no (possibility for a) religious life and no opportunity would appear for the complete ending of suffering. But if one says that a person who performs a kammic action (with a result) that is variably experience-able, will reap its results accordingly-in that case, there will be (a possibility for) a religious life and an opportunity for making a complete end of suffering."

In this context, a conversation between the Buddha and the commander-in-chief of the soldiers of the Licchavi kingdom named Singha is described below.

Singha asked Buddha, "Dear Blessed One, I have heard that Shraman Gautama gives advice on kammaic and akammic action and thus collects his disciples. I am wondering if this statement is true."

"Singha, the reason I was told akammic was because I tell people to refrain from illicit sex, lies, harsh speech, divisive speech, idle chatter, ill will, anger, and overall all of these wrong views. Therefore I was told akkamic."- Buddha replied.

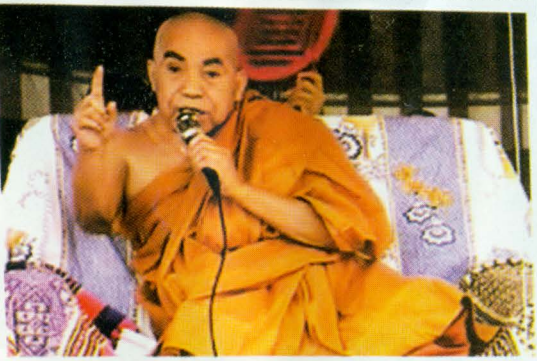
"On the other hand, Dear Singha, I say to be aware of good will, compassion, appreciation, equanimity-abundant,

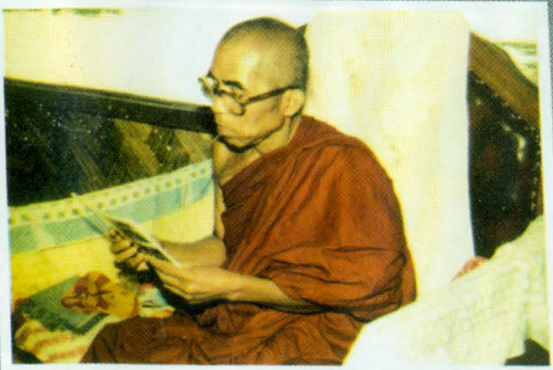
expansive, and immeasurable-without hostility and ill will. These are what I describe as constructive *kamma*, and thus I am said kammic."

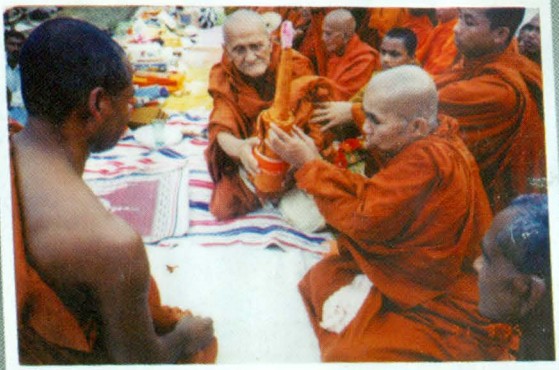
Thus, *kamma* is the womb from which we spring *(kamma-yoni)*, the true creator of the world and of ourselves as the experiencers of the world. And through our kammic actions in deed, word, and thought, we unceasingly engage in building and rebuilding this world and worlds beyond. Even our good actions, as long as they are still under the influence of craving, conceit, and ignorance, contribute to the creation and preservation of this world of suffering. The most venerable Banabhante says, "If you strictly follow the five precepts (*pañcasila*) for three years continuously, I can guarantee that you will be rich. Followers of precepts must succeed in life and attain happiness. Those who guarantee not to break any rule of *pañcasila* must be awarded the *Sakadāgāmi Magga* (they return to the human realm just once and then attain the Nirvana) in the future. The *Magga* obtainer is the best among human beings."

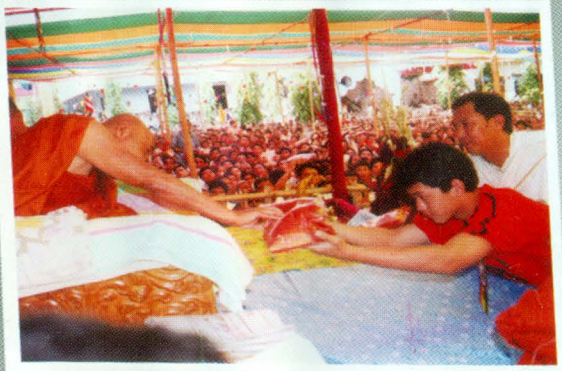
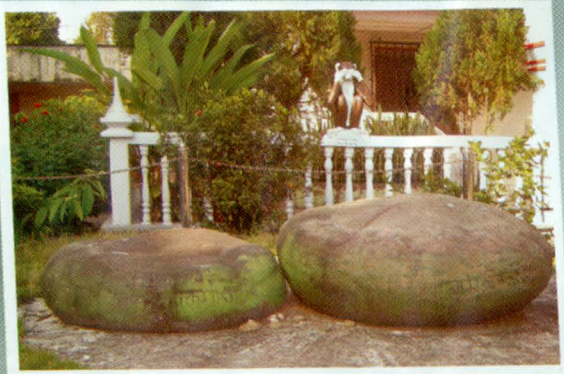
A wise person avoids any unwholesome deeds and uproots greed, hatred, and delusion. Through the elimination of greed, hatred and delusion, the consequences of *kamma* come to an end. Inability to remove these aggregates of body and mind will cause suffering perpetually. It is hopeful that through understanding the true nature of *kamma*, a person can be motivated to ensure a prevalence of good *kamma* in one's life. And as it deepens by seeing the human condition still more clearly, this same understanding will become the spur for breaking the chains of kammic bondage. It will impel one to strive diligently along the path, and to dedicate all of one's actions and their fruits to the greatest end of action-the final liberation of oneself and all sentient beings.

Photo Album of Most Ven. Banabhante & Rajbana Vihar





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