

Footprint of the Buddha

A documentary on Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka

With Ananda Maitreya, elder Buddhist monk

- *Buddha statue: “There is the real dharma.” Statue as Buddhist teaching
- *Control of eyes, mouth (speech), hands (activities), feet
- *Buddhism in a nutshell: “To shun all evil, to do good, purifying the mind, this is teaching of all the Buddhas”
- *Ananda Maitreya pays respect to elder monk, hierarchy
- *“Purify the mind, then see the world as it is”

With Dr. Ratnapala, anthropologist, at Buddhist Sunday school

- *Primary aim of Buddhism: mold character, love, respect, tolerance
- *The refuge prayer: “I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, & Sangha.”
- *Former lives of Buddha are children’s stories

In Bodhgaya, India

- *Who is the Buddha? Buddha as relic in Bodhgaya
- *Ananda Maitreya: “Buddha is a man.”
- *Buddha had two bodies: physical and spiritual

With a young novice monk

- *Becoming a monk: Head shaved, contemplate hair as meditation, receives new dress, informal, astrologically significant day
- *Refuge prayer, five and ten precepts (extra five for monk: 1. no food after 12pm; 2. no dancing and singing; 3. no decoration of body; 4. no soft beds; 5. no handling gold or silver)
- *Becoming a monk does not lead to special powers, “Its just you”
- *Parents now pay respects to son as monk
- *Can become full monk at age twenty

On Suffering

- *Why not all sour faces among Buddhists
- *Unsatisfactoriness: 24 hours in a chair
- *Buddhist: problem is a human problem, no ultimate divine power
- *“Must cling to (crave) nothing, because there is nothing to cling to”

Monks and Laypeople

- *Monks beg for food, must drop pride to ask for food
- *Begging for food must be meditation
- *Laypeople provide food: “Giving is the way wisdom”
- *Merit: accumulated to secure a better rebirth
- *Rain retreat ends, laypeople come to worship at the monastery
- *Laypeople are to Monks as a town is to its football team

With and American monk

- *“Western life to complicated.” Simplicity is key

Meditation and Nirvana

- *Meditation on loving kindness, first for oneself, then for others
- *A man who does not love himself never loves others
- *Nirvana, truth (in Buddhist terms), cannot be describe by those with no experience of it
- *Whole world is mass of vibrations, nothing solid, like a dream. Nirvana is waking up

With local shamans and dadimunda shrine priests

- *Buddhism good for some aspects of life (karma, nirvana), but not for other more practical matters
- *Ananda Maitreya: “Its not my business.” But people still call themselves Buddhist

With recluse monks in forest

- *From British student to monk in forest: “misses comfortable living, study, freedom”
- *Does he want to leave?: “Unpredictable”
- *“A man can teach a great sermon without ever opening his mouth.”

Questions to ponder:

- *What can be learned from a statue?
- *What is unsatisfactoriness?
- *Why does the lay community support the monastic community?
- *Why do monks who forsake society seem to draw society toward them during festivals?
- *What is mindfulness?
- *What does Ananda Maitreya mean when he calls the mind a “process of vibrations” in flux?
- *How can a man “preach a great sermon without ever opening his mouth”?