

# Great Sayings of Anagarika Dharmapala

Collected by

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With a Life Sketch by

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## *Publisher's Note*

This booklet is published as a tribute to the birth centenary of the late Venerable Anagārika Dharmapāla (17<sup>th</sup> September 1964). The sayings reproduced here have been collected by Bhikshu Sangharakshita from the Vols. XVI, XIX, XXI, XXIII, XXV and XXVII of The Mahā Bodhi journal which the Anagārika had edited for 40 years. They were first published separately in 1957 by The Mahā Bodhi Society of India, Calcutta, to which we are obliged for permission to reprint them.

It is hoped that these precious sayings of the great Buddhist leader will be an inspiration to many readers.

A life sketch of the Anagārika, written by Buddhadhāsa P. Kirthisinghe, of New York, has been added to this publication.

Buddhist Publication Society

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# Anagarika Dharmapala

VENERABLE Anagārika Dharmapāla shines in the history of Ceylon—new Lanka—for his nobleness, serenity and selfless devotion to the service given to his beloved country, to India, and the rest of humanity. Like Emperor Asoka, his life was guided by a spirit of humanitarianism. While Asoka spread the word of the Buddha throughout India, Ceylon and by his missionaries throughout the world known to him in the third century B.C. In our age, Anagārika Dharmapāla did an equally notable service to humanity by reviving Buddhism and Buddhist culture in India, Ceylon and other lands of decadent Buddhist Asia and carrying the Message of Buddhism to the West.

The rise and fall of great civilizations are, perhaps, a pattern in history. The Indo-Ceylon Buddhist period, from third century, B.C., to 12<sup>th</sup> century after Christ, is recorded as the golden period in their history. After that these great civilizations began to decay, and when the Portuguese, Dutch and British arrived in Asia from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, these civilizations were decadent.

These foreign rulers destroyed the traditional culture of the land and Christian missionaries increased like mushrooms in these lands of Asia. Christian schools were opened by every Christian denomination. The Buddhist children were forced to go to these schools and Buddhists were compelled to go to Christian churches, even for the registration of marriages. In addition, economic pressure was used for the conversion of Buddhists to Christianity. It was a sad period when people were [afraid to](#) declare themselves Buddhists and when Buddhist culture had degenerated to the lowest ebb.

It was in the midst of this national calamity in Ceylon that a son was born to a wealthy Sinhalese family in Colombo. This boy was destined to lead his people to regain their national pride in their religion and culture. He was born on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1864, and died on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1933. He was named David Hewavitharne, but later in life bore the name of Anagārika Dharmapāla.

David Hewavitharne was brought up in the traditional Sinhalese culture, which is based on a Buddhist way of life. His piously religious parents instilled in him the traditional piety which had been the heritage of his people for over 2000 years. Together with his parents, he took refuge daily in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, and adopted the traditional five precepts of good daily conduct taken by the laymen. He was destined by karmic merits to become a saintly man and a selfless servant of the Buddha. In spite of the temptations of modern life he lived a pure and simple life, shunning all evil.

As a custom among the Buddhists, the first lesson in Sinhalese is usually given by a Buddhist monk. It is not surprising, therefore, that that first lesson given to Dharmapāla was by the renowned scholar, Venerable Hikkaduwa Sri Sumaṅgala Mahā Nāyaka Thera, of the famous Vidyodaya Pirivena, now the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon. After studying in a few, minor Christian schools, Dharmapāla attended the missionary Anglican (C.M.S.) School, Kotte, about six miles from Colombo. There he was forced to go to church at 7:30 a.m., and to receive Bible instruction daily. Later, Dharmapāla attended St. Thomas' College, near Colombo, where the elite received their schooling. St. Thomas's had a high standard of English education and discipline. If anything kept him within the Buddhist fold, it was the Buddhist virtues of tolerance and respect for other religions, together with the deep influence of his parents. Today, largely due to the influence of the work of Colonel Olcott and Venerable Dharmapāla, all Buddhist children receive instruction in Sinhalese and Buddhism whichever school they attend.

An important event in the Buddhist revival movement was the arrival of Colonel Olcott and—Madame Blavatsky in Colombo, in May, 1880.

They were the founders of the Theosophical movement in New York City. They had previously corresponded with the Venerable Migettuwatte Gunananda, the famous monk-orator who triumphed over his Christian adversaries in public debates held in Panadura, in 1873. The sublime teachings of the Buddha triumphed over Christian dogmatism. It was the study of these debates that influenced the two co-founders of Theosophy in their decision to go to Ceylon.

When the great American Colonel and Madame Blavatsky arrived in Galle, South Ceylon, on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1880, they publicly took the three refuges and the five Buddhist precepts in the familiar Pali from a Buddhist monk, profoundly influencing the young Dharmapāla, who was present with his parents on this

occasion. It was an historic event—the first time in the history of Ceylon Buddhism that two Western people had come to Ceylon and had openly adopted Buddhism. The conversion of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott to Buddhism marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Ceylon Buddhism.

In 1883 a Catholic mob attacked a Buddhist procession opposite a Catholic church at Kotahena, north of Colombo. This infuriated Hewavitharne's father, and he refused to allow his son to attend any Christian school again.

Young Dharmapāla had to leave St. Thomas' College, and during the first few months he regularly visited the Colombo Public Library, studying European classics. In 1884, young Dharmapāla, at the age of eighteen, joined the Theosophical Society in Ceylon, together with two other Bhikkhus. They were initiated personally by Madame Blavatsky and the noble Colonel, and became lifelong members.

The young Dharmapāla spent some time studying with Madame Blavatsky at the headquarters of the Theosophical Movement in India. Although he was interested in the study of occult phenomena, Madame Blavatsky encouraged him to study Pali and master the Tripiṭaka. On his return to Ceylon, Dharmapāla, who was then twenty years of age, believed with the rest of Buddhist intellectuals that the interests of Buddhism and the Theosophical Society were identical. Now Dharmapāla asked his father's permission to take Brahmachariya (celibate) vows and dedicate his life to the service of the Dharma. This request was hesitatingly granted by his father. Thereafter, Dharmapāla lived and worked at the Theosophical Headquarters in Ceylon.

In 1886 Colonel Olcott and the Rev. C. M. Leadbeater came back to Colombo from Adyar, to collect funds for the Ceylon Buddhist educational movement. They intended to tour the whole Island, but they needed an interpreter since they could not speak Sinhalese. Dharmapāla, who was then a clerk in the Ceylon Education Department, readily gave up his post and promptly offered his services to them. His father was dismayed, but his mother readily blessed him.

The three toured Ceylon's villages by bullock cart for several months, and by 1887 had become familiar figures in the national revival movement of Ceylon. The young Dharmapāla spoke as vigorously as the noble Colonel Olcott on social, economic and religious problems of the day.

From 1885 to 1889 Dharmapāla devoted his whole time to the Buddhist revival movement, thereby obtaining for himself the training needed to become the greatest Buddhist missionary of our time. During this period Dharmapāla and Colonel Olcott established the "Sandarasa" a weekly magazine in Sinhalese, and in December, 1888, they issued the first edition of "The Buddha" in English, under the editorship of the Rev. Leadbeater. The latter magazine has become the organ of the Colombo Young Men's Buddhist Association and has a long history of 75 years service to Buddhism.

Colonel Olcott and Venerable Dharmapāla left for Japan in 1889. They had with them a letter of good wishes in Sanskrit from the Buddhists of Ceylon to the people of Buddhist Japan. Japan was one of the few free nations of enslaved Asia, and their visit played a vital role in the Buddhist revival of all Asia.

In January 1891 Venerable Dharmapāla, together with a Japanese Buddhist monk, Kozen Gunaratna, decided to visit Buddhist holy places in India. At Buddha Gaya, Dharmapāla found the place shamefully neglected and the Buddha Gaya temple in the hands of a hostile and mercenary Mahānt. His life-long effort to free this holy place failed, though later it was handed over by the Government of India, to a committee of Hindus and Buddhists for its management, as an act of goodwill to Buddhist Asia. This change was entirely due to the heroic efforts of Venerable Dharmapāla, aided by the cry of millions of Buddhists throughout the world.

The Mahā Bodhi Society, which Venerable Dharmapāla had established at Colombo in 1891, was shifted to Calcutta in 1892. There it remains today as a magnificent monument, not only to his memory but also to the great benefactress of the society, Mrs. Foster, of Hawaii. At Calcutta he started the Mahā Bodhi Journal. This has been published continuously for the last 71 years, and today it is one of the leading journals of Buddhism. From the beginning to this day its motto is the Buddha's great exhortation to his first sixty disciples:

“Go ye, O Bhikkhus, and wander forth for the gain of the many, the welfare of the many, in compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of Devas and men Proclaim O Bhikkhus, the doctrine glorious, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure.”

During the World Columbian Exposition of 1893, the World Parliament of Religions was held in the Columbus Hall of the city of Chicago. It was one of the most important events of the late nineteenth century. On this common platform, together with other leaders of great religions, Venerable Dharmapāla addressed a capacity audience three times, with saintly diligence, on the sublime teachings of the Buddha. He did not possess the magnetic oratory of Vivekananda—the exponent of Hinduism—who also addressed these gatherings. Nevertheless, what was said by the saintly Dharmapāla was forceful and lucid, and it caught the ear and the interest of the vast throng of the American public. His paper, “The World’s Debt to the Buddha,” had a deep influence on his audience at this Parliament of Religions. In this connection, Bhikkhu Sangharakshita states: “So striking was the impression made by the young preacher from Ceylon that when his colleague, Vivekananda, was compared to noble but passionate Othello, Dharmapāla was compared with no less a person than Jesus Christ.”

Dharmapāla visited England several times. On his first visit in 1893 he met Sir Edwin Arnold, with whom he called on the Secretary of State for India, Lord Kimberley, regarding the Buddha Gaya temple: On this visit he tried to establish a branch of the Mahā Bodhi Society in—London, but failed. Today, however, there stands the London Buddhist Vihara at Chiswick, a monument to his earlier effects. It is under the management of the Mahā Bodhi Society.

For the first time in the history of modern India, Vesak was celebrated at Calcutta, on May 26, 1896, by Venerable Dharmapāla. This celebration was presided over by the Hon. Narendra Nath Sen. It was believed to be the first organised celebration of Vesak, since the decay of Buddhasāsana in India round the twelfth century A.D. He also had the satisfaction of holding the first Vesak celebration in New York City, in 1897, on his second visit to the United States of America, at the invitation of Dr. Paul Carus.

His father, who had given enormous financial help to spread the word of the Buddha, died in 1904. On hearing the news, Mrs. Foster of Hawaii,—a great philanthropist and generous benefactor of the Buddhist revival movement wrote to him to ask him to regard her as his foster-mother. She gave him vast sums of money, without which he could not have carried on his missionary work so intensively, either in India or Ceylon.

In 1913 Venerable Dharmapāla left Ceylon for Honolulu, to thank Mrs. Foster personally for the magnificent and generous help given to the Mahā Bodhi Society. It was with her financial support that the headquarter building now occupied by the Society at Calcutta was purchased. Before Dharmapāla left Hawaii Mrs. Foster gave him Rs. 60,000. With this money he founded than Ayurvedic Hospital in Colombo and named it the Foster Robinson Hospital, in memory of the great benefactress. With still further help from Mrs. Foster, the Sri Dharmarajika Chaitiya Vihara was built in Calcutta. In 1920 Lord Ronaldshay, the British Governor-General of India, presented a sacred body relic of the Buddha, which was found in the Madras district, for enshrinement in the Vihara.

Dharmapāla’s crowning achievement was the erection of the Mulagandhakuti Vihara at Saraṇath—where the Buddha preached his first sermon—and the enshrinement in it of the Buddha’s relics which he had received from the British Governor of Bengal.

From 1917 Devapriya Valisinha had become Venerable Dharmapāla’s chief disciple, who received his personal training from his master (guru). He is a devoted hard-working Sinhalese university graduate, and today he carries heavy responsibility of running the manifold activities of the Mahā Bodhi Society’s headquarters at Calcutta, assisted by Venerable Bhikkhu Jinaratana, and many notable Bengali Buddhists. Mention must also be made of Venerable Bhikkhu Sangharatana, an active worker of the society and a disciple of Venerable Dharmapāla, who, has been in charge of the Saraṇath Vihara since 1930.

In January, 1933, Venerable Dharmapāla took the higher ordination of *upasampada*, in spite of recurring ill-health, and received the full name of Bhikkhu Sri Devamitta Dhammapala. He could, however, not live the life of a Bhikkhu for long. His health deteriorated rapidly and in April of the same year he passed away. His was a life selflessly lived in the service of humanity.

# Great Sayings of Anagarika Dharmapala

Without effort progressive development is impossible. Buddha built his religion on the foundations of energetic effort and vigilant activity.

1. Buddhism is a religion of strenuous endeavour. Its mission is to enlighten each human being to cleanse himself from psychical impurities of covetousness, anger, pride, stubbornness, conceit, malice, envy, etc.
2. The uncontaminated mind is radiant. The contaminations are later accretions.
3. The development of consciousness, strengthening the memory, avoiding recollections of associations tinged with sensual desires, resolute effort to generate thoughts of kindness, and renunciation are necessary to realise Nirvana.
4. Anger makes man a demon; fear is caused by ignorance, and ignorance is the cause of all physical and mental suffering.
5. The glory of the Buddha depends not on his own royal birth, but on the supreme wisdom that he obtained by self conquest and his infinite love.
6. Avoid the path of injustice. To please friends or relations, one should never do an unjust act. Never do anything in anger and malice, and show no fear and do no cowardly act, and avoid doing things foolishly.
7. Activity in doing good is the law of progress. Delay and neglect produce suffering and misery.
8. Nothing should be done without thought: Sitting, standing, walking, lying down, every movement of each limb should be associated with consciousness.
9. One should never dogmatise, but always analyse.
10. Inasmuch as all good deeds proceed from the elements of renunciation one should always strive to avoid sensuous pleasures, that are correlated with sin and lust.
11. Exert yourself to realise the unconditioned, infinite, eternal happiness of Nirvana, in full consciousness in this life, on this earth.
12. Freedom is wisdom's highest gift, depending on perfect Brahmachariya,
13. The past is infinite. It has no known beginning. With an infinite past, with the future before you, which you make for good or for evil, with the present under your control, your destiny is in your hands.
14. The Buddha is the embodiment of the Dhamma. The elements that go to make up the personality of the Buddha are identical with the principles that he enunciated. By thought, words and deeds the Buddha does not differentiate from absolute Truth.
15. Renunciation of sense pleasure may cause a temporary painfulness, but it has its reward in the realisation of the infinite bliss of Nirvana.
16. Nirvana simply means freedom from ignorance, freedom from anger, freedom from lustful desires. It is a consummation worth striving for. Renunciation therefore from all sense pleasure and from all evil is Nirvana.
17. Pessimism has no place in the dynamic doctrine of the Lord Buddha. The wise man is a potential god. His powers are infinite, but they must be brought into existence by effort. The way to become a god is to practise the Noble Eightfold Path.
18. It was given the lion-hearted Prince of the Sakyas to proclaim the religion of Truth (Dharma) breaking the barriers of caste, creed, race, and territory. Territorialism was vanquished by the sunlight of Truth. An imperial religion was for the first time proclaimed by the Buddha as king of righteousness, whose territory extended to the uttermost limits of the Earth.

19. A progressive evolution with a definite ideal, its realisation here and now, making life cheerful, energetic, serene, worth living for the sake of doing good for the welfare of others, this the Tathāgata proclaimed.
20. The innocent bliss is born of perfect purity without attachment to the things of the world, where no question of the "*ahaṃkāra* and *mamaṅkāra*" ("I-making" and "My-making.") arises in the mind, free from covetousness, free from ill will, hatred, anger, and free from foolish superstitions born of fear and delusions.
21. Here is the religion of consciousness, of perfect recollection, of presence of mind, of fearlessness, of freedom, of activity, of loving compassion and of immortality.
22. A co-operative commonwealth working for the welfare of the many and for the happiness of the many is the kind of institution that civilised humanity needs.
23. The doctrine that Buddha taught was an analytical ethico-psychology based on the principles of evolution and causality.
24. There is no permanency but change. From the most minute atom to the highest heaven everything is becoming. It comes into being, stays for a time and passes away, like the volume of water in the flowing stream.
25. It is here that all philanthropic projects are accomplished, it is here that meritorious work is done. It is here human kindness and self sacrifice are appreciated. It is here that man can transcend the gods and save suffering humanity.
26. Morality is the most solid foundation that is needed to build up a lasting society. The Lord Buddha again and again emphasised that the Aryan religion shall only last so long as the disciples would strictly follow the path of purifying morality. When morality disappears society degenerates.
27. The sensual-minded people fond of sense pleasures yearn to be born in the regions of the gods, but the follower of wisdom looks with loathsome disgust on the pleasures of the senses, whether human or divine.
28. Effort is what the Buddha wished that people should make. Effort is all in all. Effort is the basis of karma. Even the effort to think is karma.
29. No truth can come out of the man who is not absolutely free to express his highest convictions. Absolute freedom is a needed factor when we are in search of Truth.
30. Neither the existence of an eternal hell nor of an eternal heaven is acknowledged in Buddhism. Each individual being has to suffer according to the evil karma he has done, it may be for a *kalpa*, but at the end, cessation of suffering is the law.
31. Buddhism is a kind of spiritual athleticism. It teaches you the way to develop your spiritual muscles and to strengthen your spiritual tendons. If another does your work where is the glory of your effort?
32. The passionate sensualist could never comprehend what Nirvana is. Where there is anger there is no Nirvana. Where there is no anger there is Nirvana. Where there is covetousness there is no Nirvana. Where there is no covetousness there is Nirvana. Where there is ignorance, there is no Nirvana. Where there is no ignorance, no ego desires of "this is mine, this is I," there is Nirvana. Absence of evil, development of good, and purification of the heart are what constitutes Nirvana.
33. The desire to destroy all evil desires should be ever active in the mind. When all ego desires are abandoned Nirvana reveals itself to the mind.
34. Absolute peace amidst the clanging of a million bells is only possible when the Nirvana consciousness unfolds itself.
35. Instead of making an effort to cleanse the heart from sin, ignorant man seeks to gain happiness by outward purification.
36. The Blessed One was the embodiment of strenuousness. He adopted as the motto of his religion the two words *appamada* and *virīya* (non-delay and diligent activity).

37. If only the Bhikkhus would stir themselves and follow the Holy Master, Buddhism would not be then called a religion of pessimism.
38. The foundations of the Aryan Doctrine were laid not on asceticism, neither on sense perceptions. It is the doctrine founded on joyous cheerfulness, radiant mentality, strenuousness, aesthetic calm, analytical investigation of truth, contentment and supreme wisdom.
39. Power and pride degenerate man into a demon. The way to Truth is one, the way to power is another. All civilizations that were founded on mere materialism have ceased to exist.
40. This doctrine of "mine" and "thine" is the chief source of all human suffering, enhanced by covetous desire, egoistic pride, and the lack of insight to recognise Truth in the right way,
41. Without *dhyana* there is no way to acquire the wisdom of Nirvana, and without the acquisition of *prajña* there is no realising the *dhyana*.
42. As long as the people of ancient India remained true to the wisdom teachings of the Blessed One there was happiness in the land.
43. The *atta* doctrine is injurious to the progressive development of the individual. It makes man arrogant and develops his conceit. Biologically, psychologically, super psychically, socio logically and morally it is destructive to progress and expansion.
44. It is in lonely retreats that spiritual visions always come to the ascetically inclined. Investigate into the history of each religious founder regarding his early religious experiences, and the fact will be revealed that he was a mystic, given to fasting, away from the crowd, and desiring for spiritual unfolding.
45. The Buddha laid great emphasis on the moral progress of the individual. The householder without morality is like a ship without a rudder. When a man is morally conscious of his own progress, he is able to transcend the knowledge of gods.
46. Mere morality is insufficient to realise the wisdom of Nirvana. Nirvana is all wisdom, and only by the strenuousness of earnest effort in the Middle Path can the Brahmachari obtain the realisation of Nirvana.
47. When the Brāhmaṇa shall change his haughty spirit and look on the other people with compassion and work for the elevation of the masses, then will India again take the supreme place much she, in ancient times, occupied.
48. We are selfish, and our luxurious lives are the cause of our forgetfulness of our duty to our fellow man.
49. One individual, like the Buddha, gives happiness to countless millions of human beings, and they in their turn give others happiness.
50. The blood of innocent animals slaughtered by man through false religious convictions if measured would make an ocean.
51. The real understanding of Buddhism is an attainment that has to be obtained by gradual spiritual progress; it cannot be obtained by mere reason, nor can it be destroyed by criticism; not because it is a matter of faith but because to those who have tasted its flavour, there is no other flavour that can replace it.
52. Parents, teachers, spiritual and secular, should be examples of the highest virtue so that they will be able to influence the future generations.
53. The more the teachers show the spirit of self-sacrifice, associated with the spirit of compassion, like the mother that takes every care of herself for the love of her unborn child still in the womb, the better it will be for the development of the future generations.
54. If the householder does not see in the spiritual teacher virtue, why should he pay him homage? He must be an example of self abnegation, cultivating the higher life, to receive the homage of the householder.

55. The religion of the Buddha was intended for all castes. He made no distinction between the Brahman and the Sudra. To all he gave the ambrosia of the eternal Dhamma.
56. There is no world-teacher that loved India more than the Lord Buddha. Millions of times He renounced the eternal peace and bliss of Nirvana for the love of humanity.
57. The exclusive teachings of the Brahmins can never help cosmopolitan India. If there is any religion that can bring about the consummation of the cherished desires of Indian patriots, it is Buddhism.
58. The essential principle that the Lord Buddha emphasised is ceaseless activity—activity in destroying evil, activity in generating good thoughts, good words, good deeds—thereby achieving the peace and happiness of Nirvana.
59. A very good act done with an unselfish motive and without the association of the ego consciousness is helpful to realise the Nirvana ideal.
60. To save the world from ignorance by means of wisdom and love was the object of the Buddha
61. The earth, season after season, gives fruits; the sky gives rain, the cow gives milk, and the beggar who visits the door of the householder gets his dole. Charity is the law of life.
62. Those who wish to get at Truth should not be contented with the myths and theories of the mystics and ascetics. They should be daring, courageous and full of intense earnestness.

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