

## THE GEM RETURNS TO INDIA *by S.N. Goenka*

Following the nationalization of trade and industry in Burma, many Indian residents there were left with no means of livelihood, and therefore had to return to their native land. On leaving Burma they were forbidden to take any valuables with them. Nevertheless, to avoid the loss of their entire life savings, many departing Indians would try to smuggle out valuables, particularly in the form of gems—rubies or other stones for which Burma is famous. In order to suppress such smuggling, Burmese customs inspectors were naturally more vigilant with departing Indians.

As I was preparing to embark for India at Rangoon Airport, I passed through the emigration check and came to the customs counter. The official there was very friendly, and jokingly asked whether I was carrying any valuables with me. “Yes,” I replied, “I am carrying a gem.” The official became nervous. Though friendly to me, he was an honest man who would not neglect his duty. Therefore he searched all

my belongings carefully without finding what he was looking for. I watched him with amusement. Finally I happily explained to the worried man, “My friend, the gem that I am taking from here will be used to pay back a debt of Burma to India. It originally came from India, and is sorely needed there today. By my taking it from here, Burma will not become any poorer. I am taking the jewel of the Dhamma.” The official laughed and said “Please go ahead—take this gem with you! I am very happy that you will use it to repay this debt.”

And this is what I did, bringing Dhamma back to India in fulfillment of the wishes of my teacher. According to the news I had from my friends in Burma, the official always felt very happy whenever he heard about the success of my work here.

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