

BUDDHIST ACTIVITIES IN SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

by Bhikkhu Amritananda



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I

The People's China as I Saw It

It seems to me that the present world is quite small. People can travel nowadays from one place to another within a very short time. The modern facilities of transportation have given wonderful services to mankind. Even to travel around the world does not take more than a few days. While I was in Japan last year a Japanese girl travelled around the world in 73 hours!

I was very eager to visit China to see with my own eyes the true conditions in China and of its people, who are not "red" at all, but as yellow as our own people. I have often heard people speaking about them with fear. I have also heard people talk about them in a very unfriendly manner. When I was in Europe and America, specially in the latter, I often heard people talking about Red China and the Red Chinese in a distorted manner. I have also heard it said that the Chinese are revolutionists and trouble-makers. The more I heard about Red China, the more my desire of visiting China grew up in my mind. I also heard that those who had visited Red China were not allowed to visit the United States. Therefore, I naturally thought of paying a visit first to the United States. But again it was not very easy for me

to visit the United States, as my means did not permit me to do so. However, thanks to my friends in Europe, and particularly to the Asia Foundation in California. They kindly made arrangements and helped me to fulfil my desire of visiting the United States, where I have met many Americans who also love peace and friendship so much and who received me quite warmly and friendly.

It was in 1955 that I for the first time met some Chinese Buddhists from Red China. That was at Patna when I was going to Buddhagaya to attend a meeting. It was a meeting of the International Advisory Board of the Buddhagaya Temple.

The Buddhists I fortunately met were none else than Mr. Chao Pu-chu, the Vice-President of the Buddhist Association of China and also well-known Buddhist poet, and his companions, who were also going to attend the meeting. We were together in the train from Patna to Gaya, and we had talks regarding the Buddhist people and Buddhism in general in China. Since then at least I got an acquaintance with China. But to tell you the truth, until 1956 the Buddhist friends from People's China were not met by many Buddhists of other countries. It was in November 1956 when the Dharmodaya Sabha, the Buddhist organization of Nepal, which has made contact with foreign Buddhists, organized the 4th Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal; a delegation from China was present in this conference. Not only was there a delegation from China, but also one from the Soviet Union. Thus the Buddhist friends of socialist countries, for the first time in the modern history of

Buddhism, met and exchanged ideas among the Buddhists of different countries in the world.

This meeting, in the first place, eradicated the doubt whether there was any freedom of religion and faith in socialist countries. The Chinese delegation showed their keen enthusiasm in the Conference in order to promote understanding and friendship among all Buddhists of different countries. As the President of the Dharmodaya Sabha of Nepal, I am quite sure that all the representatives at the Conference were very much delighted to meet the delegates from great China and the Soviet Union.

In 1957 an invitation was extended to the Dharmodaya Sabha of Nepal by the Buddhist Association of China, to bring a delegation to China. I was invited to lead the delegation. At that time I was in London. As I have mentioned above, my intention was to visit the United States first, I postponed the invitation for the time being. However keen was my intention to visit the United States, I saw no opportunity and made up my mind to return to India from London. When Mr. Christmas Humphreys, the President of the Buddhist Society of London, who had invited me to deliver lectures on Buddhism in his Society, heard of my intention, he sincerely encouraged me to return to India via the United States. He not only encouraged me to do so, but also helped me in all possible ways. So, by the best wishes of all my Buddhist friends in London and Asia Foundation in America, and by my own right effort I did visit the United States in 1958. I had a nice trip there and the people were very friendly to me. I made so many friends there. I also delivered several lectures

on Buddhism during my pleasant trip to the States. During this time the invitation from China was renewed. But due to my absence it was again postponed.

At the end of 1958 I came back to Kathmandu via Japan, Hongkong, the Philippines, Thailand and Burma. In Bangkok I attended the 5th Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, as a Vice-President of the organization and as a representative of Nepal as well.

For the third time the pending invitation of the Buddhist Association of China came to the Dharmodaya Sabha in June 1959, and in July I had the honour to lead a Buddhist delegation from Nepal to China. Altogether there were six members, including the Ven. Aniruddha Thera, the Vice-President, Mr. Asaram Sakya, the Secretary, Messrs. Satyamohan Joshi and D. B. Singh, executive members of the Sabha, and Miss A. Vimla Devi Sakya, a member of the Sabha. Miss Vimla was especially invited to join the writer with the delegation.

The delegation was warmly received by many Buddhist monks and the Vice-Presidents of the Buddhist Association of China, Mr. Chao Pu-chu and Mr. Chou Shou-chia, and other members of the Association, at the airport in Peking on the 24th July, 1959. The delegation visited several cities and centres of historical and industrial interests, such as Shenyang, Anshan, Fushun and Changchun in the Northeast, Nanking, Shanghai, Soochow and Hangchow in East China. I am quite sure every member of the delegation was very much impressed by the hospitality of the Chinese Buddhist friends, and also I believe that every one of us was pleased to notice that there were many activities in Buddhist temples. I can tell you of my feelings and understand-

ings about New China and its people, etc. After a month all the members of our delegation left for Nepal, except my daughter and myself. We two spent about three months more in China on the invitation of the Buddhist Association of China.

First of all, let me tell you that naturally enough different people have different taste and different ways of looking into things. Therefore, it is but natural that something liked by one person may not be liked by another person, something convincing to one person may not be convincing enough to another person. In order to understand anything — in a similar manner as understood by others — one must consider, look, realize and try to feel in the same way as others do. Otherwise things may be seen in different lights and views. For example, four persons wearing spectacles of different colours may look at a piece of white paper, and they may say it is blue or green or yellow as they viewed it through their coloured glasses. Thus they may pick a quarrel for the very same thing which they had conceived in different ways, because of their different means of looking at the same object. To point out truth, there must be some person who has no spectacles and looks at things as they are with his own natural eyes. Then he may ask them to take off their coloured spectacles and see, with their own eyes, without any external aid and finally they will find the truth that it is but a pure white paper, not coloured at all, over which they were quarrelling. So it is clear that the real thing is quite a simple one, but due to the different external obstacles, one may have misunderstandings. And if you try to remove the external obstacle, then you can also come

to an understanding with each other. So in this way — without any external obstacle and partiality — things can be realized in a simple way and truly.

I mean to say we must try to look at things as they are and also should try to look at things from the point of view of the concerned people, keeping in mind their experience, circumstances and situation that they have faced in the past and are still facing at present.

People from non-socialist countries visit New China as guests or simply as tourists. From the very beginning they may try to look for things that they are used to and judge them in their own, habitual manner, or only from their own point of view to which they are accustomed and get, sometimes, nothing but disappointment. Then they immediately begin to say that they do not get things similar to their country. They might say, for instance, there are no adequate means of transportation that they are used to have in their country, etc., etc. They also might say, without thorough knowledge of the system of such country, that the general people seem not so free as in their country. Because the people of China do not come to them and chat with them, etc., as they are used to do in their country without any particular aim and object, they think that their people are freer than the people of China. But they might have never thought that the people of New China at present are utmost busy with keeping their mind absorbed in their own business. They also might be disappointed to note that their host-people never invite them to their home like in their country. But they might not have any idea that in China such custom is not prevalent. Above all, the language difficulty gives

the visitors a sense of isolation. However, the people in general wish to talk to their guests but the language stands as a barrier to them. I remember in Europe and America people very seldom invite the guests to their home. They take them to a good hotel or restaurant instead. A visitor finds it very hard to find friends especially in London. Britishers are so reserved in their nature. So one must not be disappointed but should try to learn the custom and manners of any country.

It is a pity that people do not try to gain something new which they do not have in their country and thereby enrich their knowledge, so as to know that with the socialist system of living also mankind could live peacefully and happily on this earth! It is also a pity that people could not think of the condition in China before liberation. They could not think of what China had been before, what kind of traffic they had before, what kind of food the people ate before, what kind of clothes were worn by the ordinary people, what kind of economic system they had, what kind of city was there before, and what kind of social system was there before the liberation! If they could have compared the present with the past, that is just years back, I am quite sure that they would have, by all means, appreciated New China without any discrimination — whichever country they might belong to, whatever thoughts, school or system they were used to. They would certainly have admired and esteemed the People's China's struggle, labour and progress made within these ten years. To build up such a vast country like the New China in ten years' time is something positively appreciable.

People's China has produced everything that she needed for everyday life. Maybe the quality is not yet up to the international standard, and they are not sufficient for their consumption. But what a simple and wise man will consider and approve is not the quantity or quality of the things that they produced, but the ability, talent and efficiency for the production of these things. Within such a short time they have at least produced what they needed. Standard and quality can be improved as time passes. They have produced not only commodities, but also much electricity, though yet insufficient, big trucks, cars, tractors, machines, etc. Besides, they have become self-sufficient to protect their country. They have put up so many heavy industries as well as small ones. In every village, town and city they have kindergartens, schools, colleges and universities accordingly.

After the revolution one does not find in the whole of China any loafer and beggar, any unemployment, any people sleeping on the foot-path, any thief or robber, any person who does not have his living house or quarters, any street-girl who might pull you and rob your money out of your pocket. Is it not good not to have any such things in any country? Do you think that such evil things can be done away with by force or order only? I do not think so. But by education, by creating an understanding and, at the same time, by providing proper ways and means of living only they can be done away with.

During the second century before Christ there was an emperor in India who was a very cruel ruler. He was called Chandalashoka, according to the Pali literature. He tried to conquer all the states of India by the cruel

method of arms and forces. But he failed. Later on his mind was completely changed by a Buddhist monk, and he gave up his former policy and became a pious man and kind to everybody. He distributed land, wealth, etc., among the people. For the first time in history, he established hospitals for mankind and animals. Soon he embraced the teaching of the Buddha; he became very dear to everybody. He was then called by the people Dharmashoka (the good ruler) instead of Chand-alashoka (the cruel ruler). During this period of his rule, it is recorded in history that there was not a single street-girl in his country nor a thief. One could go around the country holding a diamond in one's hand. Nobody would think of stealing it. So once your mind is enlightened and convinced, your conception and your whole nature will change. Therefore, the Buddha said, "Mind is the first important thing to keep to the right path." Mind leads every other actions of body. In China, for instance, the whole outlook of the people has been changed. Through education and understanding one can maintain discipline, but not by force. I have heard people speaking, outside China, without much truth, that in China everything is done by force. This is a sheer lie and nonsense.

People in China, I feel, are quite conscious of their bounden duty and also they now know very well what is good and what is bad for their country. Nobody can get things done at the modern time except by creating understanding. One cannot get things done by force even in a family, what to speak of about a great mass. The will of the mass, at present, is very powerful. If the mass wishes, it can do what force cannot. People

are so awakened politically and socially in China that they will not leave any stone unturned to do better their country. As, for instance, if they were informed by the government that a shortage of food, vegetable and so forth is predicated, the people will spare as much as they can from their own consumption, thinking that when every person does likewise the problem of food shortage will be solved easily. However, in similar circumstances in non-socialist countries, in the first place, the merchants, I am afraid, will buy as much food as they can and keep it in stock so that they can charge double or treble prices, when the food shortage actually comes about. And at such a time, if the government can not manage affairs in a proper way, then there would be great distress in the country. But by no means the wealthy people who can store food or buy at any price would suffer. Only the poor people, the middle class people, workers and labourers, who form the overwhelming majority of the people, will suffer.

The Chinese people are so educated that they understand their country. They know what is the economic condition in their country at present and up to what standard they have to reach. They also know quite well in what they are still lagging behind and how many years it will take to fulfil them. So in this way every citizen of China knows that he is duty-bound to give his utmost labour in order to build his country so that it can be self-sufficient. They are educated in such a way that not a single person wastes his time, money and food. The spirit of voluntary work in any field is highly appreciated. If the people come to know that in such and such a place a team of volunteers is required, then they,

old and young alike, will go forward to help in that field. Even high officials take part in the work without any hesitation.

China is a great country. It has a population of six hundred and fifty million people, more than 90% of whom are peasants. They had been invaded and oppressed by different foreign rulers. From time to time there had been revolutions against the rulers. But none of these revolutions were so successful as the one of 1949 in which millions and millions of oppressed workers and peasants and other middle class people, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, partook and secured the sovereign power in the country. Now there is no ruler who squeezes the poor peasants and other poor classes of the country. The people govern their own country now, so as to make their motherland prosperous. The People's Government tries its utmost, in the first place, to take care of the needs of the vast number of people, and act according to their decision and will. It pays great attention to the betterment of peasants' health, education, culture, economy, etc. They are indeed extremely busy at present in their construction works in order that they may make their country self-sufficient. Practically they are progressing rapidly in all fields. They are fighting nature and changing the country.

The monthly magazine *China Reconstructs* wrote in an article entitled "China in Transition":

"China is one of the oldest, most richly endowed and most populous countries on earth. Its people have created it with their labour, and given rise to a great culture. But in the past, the land did not belong to them. After many centuries of feudal rule, China entered the modern

period, poverty-stricken and backward. During the past hundred years, in addition, it was ravaged by imperialist invaders.

“The stubborn people rose again and again. Their answer to the Opium War of 1840 was the great Taiping peasant revolution of 1851-64. It was suppressed. Their answer to subsequent foreign seizures of national territory was the Boxer Rising of 1900. This too was suppressed. In 1911, the yoke of the age-old monarchy was broken and a republic proclaimed. But experience showed that social revolution, not merely a change in forms of government, was needed to save China. This began in earnest when the working class, with the formation of the Communist Party in 1921, began to lead the fight of the peasants and all other oppressed sections of the people. After almost thirty years of epic struggle against the massed forces of reaction, national and social liberation was won in 1949.

“The people themselves came to power. All trammels on progress were broken. The vast task of developing all the potentialities of the land, so long retarded, was begun.”

The following words were spoken by Chairman Mao Tse-tung at the opening session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, which on October 1, 1949, proclaimed the People's Republic of China and hoisted, for the first time, its crimson five-starred national flag.

“For over a hundred years our forerunners fought persistently against internal and foreign oppressions. Today the Chinese people have stood up. Our revolution has received the sympathy and acclaim of the peoples

of the whole world. We have friends throughout the world.”

There are as many as fifty-one national minorities in China, as follows:

(1) Mongol, (2) Hui, (3) Tibetan, (4) Uighur, (5) Miao, (6) Yi, (7) Chuang, (8) Puyi, (9) Korean, (10) Tung, (11) Kazakh, (12) Tai, (13) Yao, (14) Li, (15) Manchus, (16) Pai, (17) Kawa, (18) Hani, (19) Tunghsiang, (20) Kirghiz, (21) Tu, (22) Lisu, (23) Nung, (24) Nahsi, (25) Lahu, (26) Shui, (27) Chingpo, (28) Chiang, (29) Kaoshan, (30) Tatar, (31) Sala, (32) Russian, (33) Haipo, (34) Tachik, (35) Uzbek, (36) Paoan, (37) Yuku, (38) Olunchun, (39) Tawar, (40) Owenk, (41) Tulung, (42) Molao, (43) Maonan, (44) Kelao, (45) Tuchia, (46) Yu, (47) Achang, (48) Pulang, (49) Heche, (50) Penglung, and (51) Ching.

The major nationality is the Han, 93.94% or 547 million and the rest 6.06% (35 million) are other minor nationalities. There are 51.82% men and 48.18% women. (These figures are according to “China in Transition” published in 1957.)

You will find as many as nineteen languages in China besides the main language of the Han nationality. These different languages are spoken by 35 million people who belong to different national minorities of China. These languages belong to four of the world’s big linguistic families. They are the Sino-Tibetan, the Austro-Asiatic, the Ural-Altaic and the Indo-European.

Those in the Sino-Tibetan family, to which the Han (the major nationality) language also belongs, fall into three groups: the Chuang-Tai, Miao-Yao and Tibeto-Burman. The peoples that speak them live chiefly in the southwestern provinces and Tibet.

Only languages in the second family — the Austro-Asiatic — fall into the Mon-Khmer group. They are spoken in the region between the Nu and the Lantsang Rivers, which are the upper courses of the Salween and the Mekong respectively, in Yunnan Province.

Languages of the third — the Ural-Altaic family — are divided into the Turk, the Mongolian and the Tungusic groups. The people who speak them in China are scattered over a territory stretching from Sinkiang in the northwest to Heilungkiang in the northeast. The Korean language, spoken by Korean minority in China's northeast, has been tentatively classified as belonging to this family.

The only language belonging to the fourth, i.e., the Indo-European family, is Tadjik, a language of the Iranic branch spoken on the southwestern frontier of Sinkiang.

Among the people of the non-Chinese speaking national minorities, over 74 percent speak languages of the Sino-Tibetan family, and 21 percent those of the Ural-Altaic. Korean is spoken by 3.8 percent, and the other Austro-Asiatic languages, by 1 percent. About 0.1 percent of the non-Chinese speaking peoples speak languages in the Indo-European family, Tadjik and Russian, also used by some Chinese citizens. ("China in Transition", p. 190.)

As there are many national minorities in China, so it is natural to have various cultures, traditions, customs and religions too. As far as I understand there are four religions in China, namely, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Islamism. The majority of people profess Buddhism.

The culture, language, tradition and belief of every national minority, have been not only protected by the People's Government headed by the Communist Party, but also encouraged to improve and develop in scientific ways. It seems to me that China is a great country like a huge tree with many branches of arts and cultures and with many beautiful flowers combined into one single string of unbreakable unity.

As there are a great number of Buddhists in China, one finds everywhere Buddhist art and culture, paintings and sculptures. Throughout the whole country, one finds many Buddhist monasteries and temples. The oldest temple in China is the White Horse Monastery at Loyang. This was the first Buddhist temple built in China when Buddhism was introduced into China in the second century A.D. I had the pleasure of visiting this temple. There were about 33 monks in this temple. All of them expressed their happiness. Comparatively, from the very beginning the Chinese monks' life is so simple. They carry their monastic ritual and daily routine in normal way.

The first Buddhist temple we saw in China was at Kunming in Yunnan Province. The temple is on a hill about fifteen kilometres from the city. It is a very old monastery, probably built in the 12th century A.D. When we arrived at Kunming, the first place we visited in China, it looked like our city of Kathmandu. The climate was very fine. It was not so hot there as in Peking in July. We spent one night there. When we saw that the electric lamps in the street were not bright enough, we asked our Chinese friends why it was so. We were informed that the construction of an iron and steel plant

is under way, so the citizens decided to give more electric power to the construction project. They also told us that when the project is completed it would provide more work to the people. So they did not care having dim light for the time being. Wherever we cast our eyes, we saw some sort of construction project going on. The city looked quite neat and clean. The new roads in the city are quite broad and there are flower plants in the middle of the road.

On the 24th July, 1959, we left Kunming for Peking and arrived there in the afternoon the same day. The Peking airport is quite far from the city. We did not see the city from the aeroplane. The new grand hall of the airport is very beautiful with its big dark-red pillars. The airport building looked very new. It was very pleasant to meet again, after several years, Mr. Chao Pu-chu, Vice-President of the Buddhist Association of China, at the airport, and he was accompanied by other members of the Association and about a hundred monks dressed in their yellow robes. There was a placard written in Nepali, "Welcome Nepalese Buddhist Delegation to China!" After receiving flowers from the hosts, we drove to the Hsin-chiao Hotel in Peking near the ancient city wall. It is a nice hotel, with about five hundred rooms. Most of the foreign visitors stay in this hotel.

Next morning all of us went to see the Kuang-chi Monastery (the Monastery of Wide Emancipation), where the headquarters of the Buddhist Association of China are located. There are more than fifty monks residing at present. It is an old historical monastery built in the 12th century. It had been repaired several times in the

past, and about twenty years ago it was destroyed by a fire and was rebuilt later. It has been extensively repaired and repainted after the liberation. The monastery in traditional Chinese style is quite large. It has three big courtyards. Soon after you enter the main gate of the monastery, you see a big open square. In some temples, this open space is occupied by two wooden flag masts, and two towers, one for a big bell and another for a drum. Right in the middle you will find a hall where there are four guardians, fearful figures they are. From this, you enter the second courtyard where you find flowers planted here and there. Again you will see a hall where there are images of Buddhas in the centre and of Arhats along the walls at the two sides of the hall. In some monasteries they have a special hall for the images of the five hundred Arhats. The Buddha images in the middle of the main shrine hall are those of Sakyamuni, Vairochana and Amitabha, all in sitting posture with different Mudras. In addition to them, there are images of Avalokitesvara in female form, of Manjusiri and Samatabhadra Bodhisattvas. The images of Mahakasyapa and Ananda, the most prominent disciples of Lord Buddha, stand at the two sides of the image of the Buddha. The images of the five hundred Arhats with their names are quite interesting. Some of them have long arms and others have long beards and moustaches. All these images are golden in colour. Besides, there are also many other statues illustrating the Jataka stories. At the back of the altar in the front hall, there is always an image of a deity called We-to in Chinese, who is a protector of the Dharma. In one of the halls of the monastery there are about 100,000 volumes of Buddhist

scriptures. In most Chinese monasteries, as soon as you enter the front hall, you will see a huge image of a smiling Bodhisattva. He is called in Chinese Mi-le-fo or Maitreya Bodhisattva, the future Buddha. The monastery is surrounded by walls and houses where the monks live. They perform religious services twice a day, by reciting Sutras and Dharani in the morning and in the evening in the main shrine hall. Besides, they have regular religious classes.

The Chinese Buddhist monks, as in any other country, live on charity. Some monasteries may have their own property. In China monastic properties belong to the monks, and they are free from tax. In case of need, the government gives grant to support the monks and temples. The Buddhist monks now in China are no more like beggars as before liberation. They are more educated now. There are no more monks who become monks just for the sake of food. Buddhist monks in Chinese temples live quite a simple life, as is usual in any other Buddhist country. They study their religious history, art, culture and philosophy. At present the monks also study foreign languages, economics, geography and even science with great interest.

We were deeply moved to see the casket of the Buddha's Tooth-relic, which was brought to China from India in the 5th century A.D. by a Chinese monk. We paid our homage to the holy relic, which is well kept in a golden casket inlaid with many precious stones. This relic was originally preserved in a pagoda in the western suburbs of Peking. The old pagoda was destroyed by the imperialist forces of eight countries, in 1900, and now a new pagoda for this relic has been constructed

near the foundation of the old one. The inauguration ceremony of this new pagoda will be held soon. The Buddhist Association of China has spent about 700,000 yuan, which they got from the government, for the construction of this new pagoda. It is quite clear that if the policy of the Communist government is to destroy religious faith, then why should it help the Buddhist Association of China? Before the liberation the then government did nothing of this sort. Instead of helping religious temples, the government then occupied them for military purposes, such as barracks, etc., and even destroyed them wantonly. Now I do not believe the propaganda which we used to hear outside China that there is no freedom of religion and there are no religious activities in China. But at the same time I do not like people making use of the freedom of religion to mislead the general public. For instance, religious people sometimes tell the mass that they must pray to the supreme God in order to gain happiness and good health, etc. Without going on the right path, nobody can get happiness. This kind of religious propagation keeps the mass in the darkness and it is not the duty of any religionist especially of Buddhists to do so. The duty of religionists should be to wipe out blind faith from among the people and to enlighten them.

It is worth mentioning here that in the pagoda of thirteen storeys for the above-mentioned Tooth-relic, they have enshrined sixteen pieces of relics — ten in the uppermost part and six on other six storeys of the pagoda. Mr. Chao Pu-chu told me the history of these relics. It was in 1957 when Prime Minister of People's China Mr. Chou En-lai visited Kathmandu. H.M. the King Mahen-

dra presented him some relics, numbering fifty in all, as a token of friendship between our two countries. Returning to China, the Chinese Prime Minister handed over these relics to the Buddhist Association of China, in order to preserve this valuable gift from the King of Nepal. So out of these fifty pieces, sixteen were enshrined in this new pagoda. The miracle is that there has been an increment in the number of the relics. The remaining thirty-four grains of relics have now become forty-five by themselves. The Buddhists of the world will not be surprised to hear this news, because it often happens that the relics sometimes increase or decrease according to circumstances. The Buddhists believe that the relics may increase, if they are kept at the right place in a right manner, and they may also disappear, if they are not kept at the right place in a right manner. The increment of these relics is good news to every Buddhist in the world, especially to the Chinese and Nepalese Buddhists.

After having seen this historical monastery, we had an opportunity to meet the Rev. Shirob-Jaltso, the President of the Association and some officials from the religious department of the government. On behalf of the Nepalese Buddhists, we presented a set of Tripitaka to the President of the Buddhist Association of China.

We were given a formal lunch in the same monastery. Welcoming our delegation from Nepal the Rev. Shirob-Jaltso expressed his joy of seeing us in their capital. In the course of his address he also emphasized that Nepal and China have historical relations because of the Buddha's teachings. "Buddha was born in Nepal about 2,500 years ago," he said, and "China has received monks and artists from Nepal in the past". Thanking for their hos-

pitality, as leader of the delegation, I expressed my hearty gratitude to them. In my reply I mentioned that the names of the Buddhabhadra and White Pagoda in Peking, which were built by a Nepalese artist called Arniko in the 13th century, are quite well-known to Nepalese, and it is a living evidence of the friendship between Nepal and great China. "The Nepalese people as a whole," I continued, "wish to renew and strengthen their friendship which has been existing for a long time." I also conveyed the best greetings of the Nepalese people to the Buddhist people of China.

The Buddhist Association of China has established a Buddhist academy in the Fa-yuan Monastery in Peking. In this Buddhist academy there are about 150 monks studying the theories and history of Buddhism. It has a big library containing different editions of the Chinese Tripitaka and many other new books on Buddhism and other subjects. I had the pleasure to give lectures to the monk-students of this academy. They seemed to me very keen to know about the Buddhist and Buddhism in other countries. Some of the monks also study Pali and English. Generally they study Buddhism in Chinese. In this academy they have a fine collection of Buddhist objects of great historical and artistic value.

In Peking there is another Buddhist institute called the San Shih Buddhist Institute, of which Mr. Chao Puchu is the Chairman. The aims and object of this institute are to carry on research works on the history and literature of Buddhism.

A monthly magazine on Buddhism in the Chinese language is published by the Buddhist Association of China. It is also carrying on the task of compiling a

Buddhist encyclopaedia, which, I understand, is being compiled at the request of the Ceylonese Buddhists as part of the encyclopaedia that will be published in Ceylon.

On that very afternoon we went to see one of the largest monasteries in Peking. It is a Lama temple, called Yung Ho Kung (Temple of Harmony and Peace). It is on the northeast corner of the inner city and runs right up to the wall on that side. Originally it was a residence of Emperor Yung-cheng before his accession to throne in 1723. The above name was given in 1725 and it was converted into a Lama temple in 1744. This temple belongs to Mongolian monks who live there. There are also Tibetan monks. There are about sixty monks. It is bigger than the one we visited in the morning. It has five courtyards. The architecture of monasteries is almost similar throughout whole of China, with the exception of some minor differences. In this temple there is a 52½ feet high standing sandalwood image of Maitreya Bodhisattva. The temple has been repaired recently and the cost was borne by the government. It must have cost several hundred thousand yuan. The monk-in-charge told us that there were troops staying in the temple during the Kuomintang time, and they did not take any care of the temple. In the first courtyard there is a big slab-stone fixed to the earth and protected under a roof, on which there are some historical inscriptions in four languages. In front of it there is a big and high incense burner of bronze.

There are not only monasteries for monks in Peking, but there is also a famous nunnery, called Tung-chiao-sze (Temple of General Teaching). It lies just inside

Tung-chih-men (The East Straight Gate). The original building dates back to the 16th century, but the buildings as they stand now were put up in 1942, and in 1953 the People's Government allotted funds for the building of a new side-hall. In this nunnery there are about 60 nuns. Their shrine-room is very beautiful and well decorated. Around the shrine-room at the wall there are fixed benches, where the nuns meditate and recite sutras most of their time. There are not only old nuns, but also there are some young sisters, who may be twenty-three or twenty-five years old, and some of them even younger. Their way of living is the same as that of the monks. There are not many courtyards in the temple, but it is a big square place, with houses all around. At the centre is the shrine hall. There are many peach trees around the shrine hall.

Women from all walks of life can become nuns. The Buddhist tradition does not compel a monk or nun to remain in monastic life for ever as the Catholic tradition does. One is quite free to remain a monk or nun or to return to lay life. Monkhood is a life of independence. One learns in this life a new conception of life and gains wider experience. One also tries to achieve a higher mental progress and power. It is not a life of slavery that once you become a monk or nun, you must remain as such for ever against your will or desire. Buddhism is not a religion of blind faith. It is a doctrine, a way of life, a science of human beings and system of philosophy. In Buddhism there is freedom of thought and expression. It is not like some other religions in which sometimes you are not so free to express your own feelings and thoughts, but you must keep your mouth

closed and block your brain and must believe in what you are ordered to believe and do, otherwise you are threatened that you surely will go down to hell. Of course, Buddhist monks and nuns have certain rules and regulations that they have to observe as long as they are in monastic life. The nuns of the above-mentioned nunnery were much pleased to meet monks from the Buddha's birth-land. They were also very pleased to hear a few words from me and to meet the other members of the delegation.

In the city and outside the city wall of Peking there are several pagodas and temples, such as the Hsi-huang-sze (West Yellow Temple), the Wu-ta-sze (Five Pagoda Temple), the Pi-yun-sze (Temple of Azure Clouds), etc. I had the pleasure to visit the Temple of the Reclining Buddha and the Temple of Azure Clouds. The former temple lies on a hill just over three miles northwest of Jade Spring Hill. It was built on the site where a temple of the Tang Dynasty stood in the seventh century. In the 14th century the temple site was enlarged and the houses rebuilt. This place is very good for change. There are many trees in the monastery. There is a park with a pond and many hills and small artificial caves. Birds flew among the trees. The air was sweet with their songs. Some monks lived in the temple. In the main shrine-room there is a reclining image of a sublime and peaceful Buddha, twenty feet long. It is made of bronze, two hundred and fifty tons of it. It is a replica of the image enshrined at Kushinara temple in Northern India where the Buddha passed away 2,500 years ago.

About a mile southwest of this temple is the temple of Azure Clouds on the east slope of Fragrance Hill. There

are many famous hills around, such as the Fragrance Hill, the Jade Spring Hill and the Longevity Hill. Originally this monastery was built in the 14th century, and it was enlarged during the Ming Dynasty in the early 16th century. In the 18th century the Manchu Emperor Chien-lung built a stupa behind it. The temple buildings, courtyards and steps run straight up the hill. Near the top of the hill is Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Memorial Hall, where his body rested for four years before it was removed to the mausoleum at Nanking. The glass coffin presented by the Soviet Union is placed by the side of his bust statue in the Hall. On the left of this hall is a spring surrounded by ancient trees, and on the right is the Hall of Five Hundred Arhats. The statues of the five hundred Arhats are well kept. What impressed me deeply were the names written on wooden tablets placed before the images. Of these five hundred Arhats the first one is Kondannya, the eldest monk disciple of the Buddha. I could not remember what was the name of the last one. I wonder how the Chinese tradition of five hundred Arhats has been preserved so well! It is very essential to have the complete names of these Arhats for comparative studies. In this monastery at present there are a few monks. It is kept as a Buddhist museum. Many people visit there. When you walk up the steps, you see streams on both sides. The water is sweet. Behind Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Memorial Hall, there is a pagoda built by Emperor Chien-lung in the 18th century. Under the pagoda some of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's personal clothing is buried in memory of him. This pagoda was built after the Indian style with many fine stone carvings of Buddha and Bodhisattva images. At the centre on the upper floor is the

main pagoda which is bigger than the ones at the corners. Besides, there are two other smaller ones in the front, also with some fine carvings of Taras, etc. The carving of the Buddha at the front surface of the main pagoda is particularly beautiful. I was surprised to see many sacred words written in our Newari characters. The whole pagoda was built of white marbles. Of course this was built for memorial purposes.

But behind the zoo in Peking there is a temple called Wu-ta-sze (Five Pagoda Temple), because of its five stupas built on the roof of the temple. It is certainly built after the fashion of the Buddhagaya temple in India, where the Lord Buddha achieved enlightenment. On this temple there are arches carved with the images of the Buddha, just like those on Buddhagaya temple. The central one is higher than the other four at the corners. On this temple there are thirteen circles, as in the stupas in Nepal, signifying the thirteen stages of super-beings' spheres. In the hall under the pagodas there is an image of Buddha. There is no monk at present in this temple. The pagodas are built of bricks. Here also one finds many scriptures in Ranjand characters of Nepal. In this place one can see many small and big pagodas built over the tombs of some Chinese Buddhist monks in ancient times.

Another temple worth mentioning is the West Yellow Temple (Hsi-huang-sze) situated at the outskirts of Peking. It is a Tibetan temple, and it is being repaired at present. There is only one main hall, in which some images of Buddha and Bodhisattva and some Tantric figures can be seen. Behind this hall there is a white

pagoda, built in memory of the late Sixth Panchen Lama of Tibet.

In the heart of Peking one will find the White Pagoda constructed by the Nepalese artist Arniko in the 13th century. Around the pagoda are shops and houses. There are some Mongolian Lamas in this temple. There are many Tantric images besides the image of the Buddha in the pagoda.

The above-mentioned temples and pagodas which I have seen date back to the 13th century and were modelled on Nepalese and Indian architectures.

On the way to the Great Wall, one passes across the ruined foundation of temple, where Nepalese arts and sculptures are also to be seen.

At Yunkang near Tatung in Shansi Province there are twenty-one caves, in which there are many statues of the Buddha, big and small. In some of the caves there are also frescoes. In a temple in Tatung city, some fine and famous ancient statues of Taras can be seen. I have the pleasure of visiting another cave also called Lungman cave.

Before I write about my tour of other cities, I would like to mention of our meeting with Marshal Chen Yi, the Vice-Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China.

It was in the evening of 20th August, 1959, after having returned to Peking from our tour in different places in China, that all the members of our delegation were invited to the State Council to meet the Vice-Prime Minister at his official residence. At the main gate stood two guards in blue pants and white coats. Marshal Chen Yi received us with his friendly smile. The first thing I

noticed about him was his broad eyes and big round head like those of our people. His manners were quite simple and friendly, and put us at ease at once. We felt at home there with the simple decoration with Chinese wooden screens, water colour paintings and some big vases of flowers. Soon after we sat down in the red cushions green tea was served to us in accordance with Chinese custom. For over an hour we talked in a very friendly atmosphere, frankly and open-heartedly. In the course of our talk he stresses that the policy of People's China is not expansionism but to live in peace and harmony with all nations. He says further that his country is still backward, and it is also very big and the Chinese have to work very hard to make it self-sufficient, and their bounden duty is to liberate the whole country. He expressed his grief at the injustice made by the United Nations in not admitting People's China's representative to it. I must agree with him on his remarks about the United Nations. As it is a world organization, there must be a representative from the People's Republic of China, one of the great nations of the world, without further discrimination.

Before our departure we presented some gifts from Nepal to the Vice-Prime Minister. He was very much pleased to receive them, and he put the Nepalese cap on his head, which was not big enough for his head.

I remember one more incident which, I believe, the reader will be interested to know about. That was my meeting with His Holiness the Panchen Lama in his residence in Peking. When I heard that he had come to Peking from Lhasa, I was very eager to meet him. So I got an appointment with him on the 30th September,



Rev. Amritananda (*third from right*) with Chen Yi
(*first from left*). Vice-Premier of China

欢迎尼泊尔佛教代表团
नेपाली बौद्ध-प्रतिनिधि मंडलको स्वागत छ



With some leading members of the Buddhist Association of China at the Kuang-chi Monastery (Monastery of Wide Emancipation) in Peking

With Rev. Shirob-Jaltso (*first
from left*), President of the
Buddhist Association of China

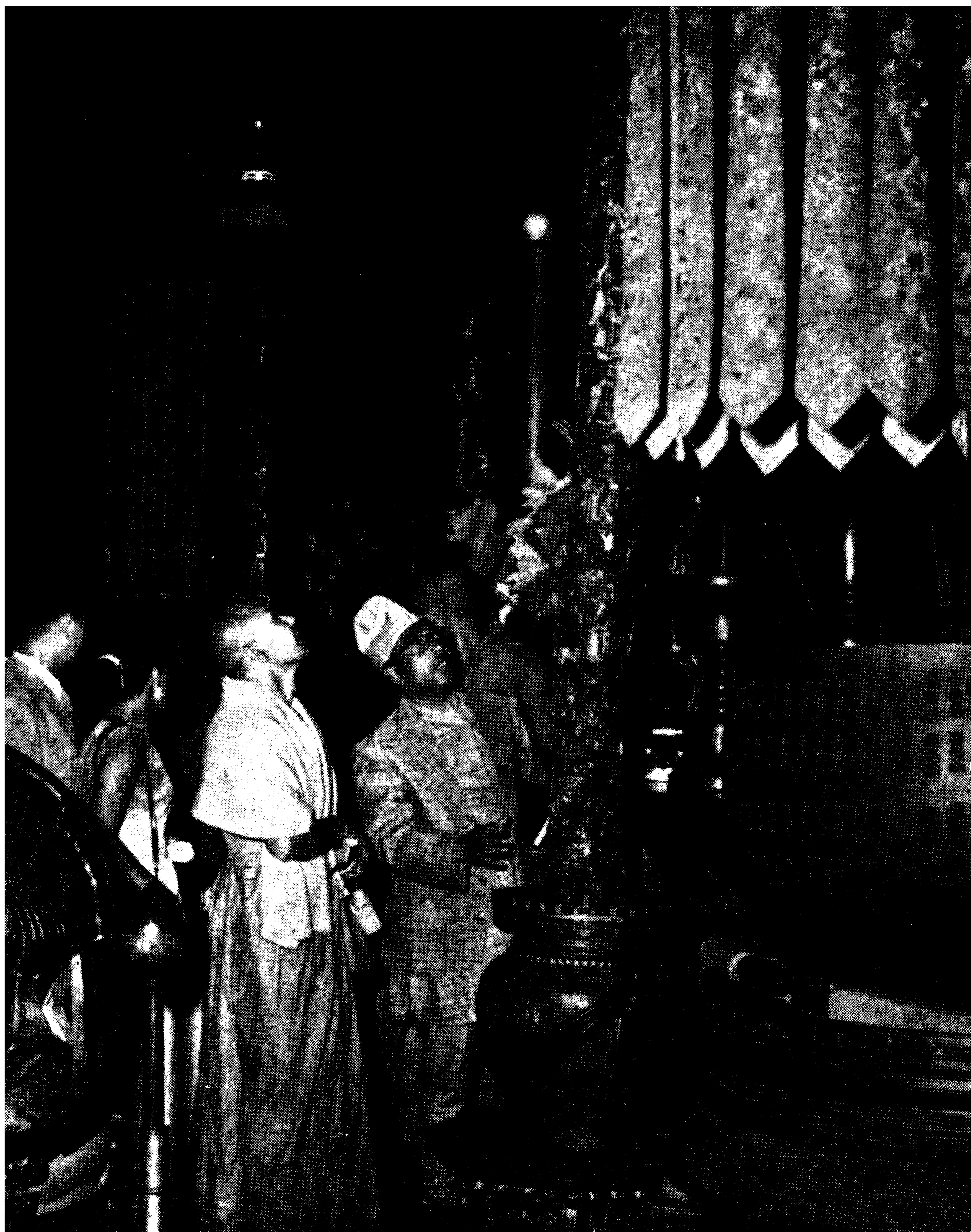




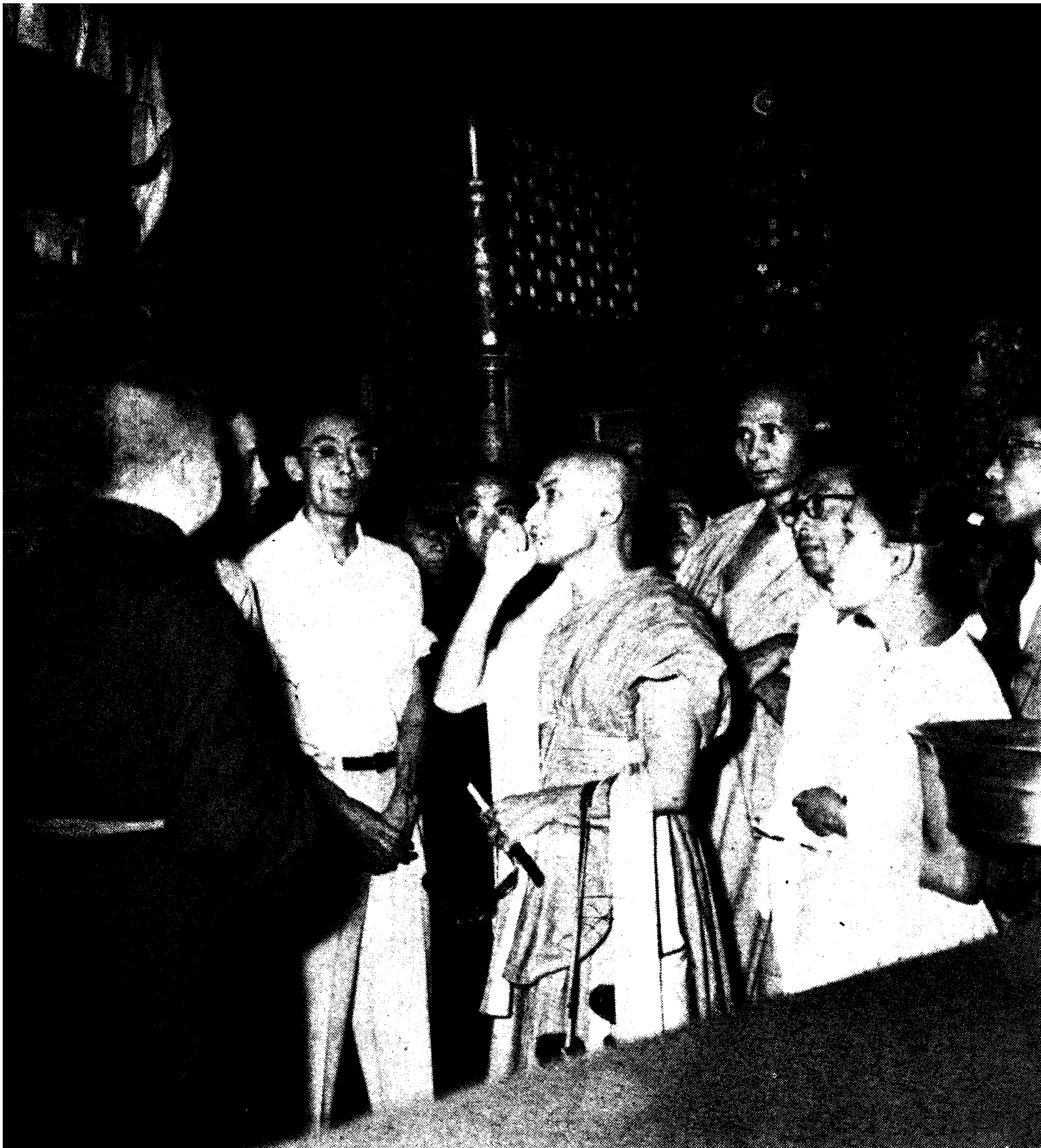
Presenting a set of Tripitaka
to the Association

With Chao Pu-chu (*first from left*), Vice-President of the Association, in the big hall of the Kuang-chi Monastery





Visiting the Kuang-chi
Monastery



Visiting the Yung Ho Kung
(Temple of Harmony and Peace)



An image of Buddha
in the Pi-yun-sze
(Temple of Azure
Clouds), Peking



Looking at rubbings
of Buddhist scriptures
in the Association

1959, at 3 p.m. I and my daughter went to his residence. After waiting a while in a drawing-room on the ground floor we were ushered to another drawing-room on the first floor. As we were led into this room, His Holiness the Panchen Lama came to the door of the room to receive us with his smiling face and very shy eyes.

We sat down in a long sofa at his right, and to his left were two interpreters. Mr. Chao Pu-chu was also with us at the time of interview. In the first place I conveyed to him the greetings of Nepalese people. Accepting the greetings he thanked me and asked me to convey his good wishes to the Nepalese people too. I remarked to him that he had grown up so tall since I met him last in 1956 in New Delhi. He nodded his head and said "Thank you." In the course of our 20 minutes' talk I told him something about the Buddhists in North Vietnam, from where I had just returned to Peking. Then I asked him about the conditions of Buddhism in Tibet and told him that people outside China say that the Chinese Communists had destroyed many temples and monasteries in Lhasa, etc. He asked me how could any outsider know the conditions in Tibet better than himself. He further told me that in Tibet many undesirable things are done in the name of religion and that they must be reformed and purified. Many things have to be developed in Tibet so as to make it progressive. Many old monasteries have been repaired and Tibet is quite all right. There is peace in Lhasa. The religious people in Tibet are perfectly free to follow their religious tradition. The present condition of Tibetan Buddhist tradition must, however, be reformed according to the Buddha's teachings, he pointed out. He would have talked on longer but he

had to go somewhere, so we took leave of him. He has grown up quite stout, and he looked more serious than when I met him last in India. His Holiness the Panchen Lama is at present the Acting Chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, as well as a Vice-Chairman of the National People's Congress.

On the 8th October, 1959, I was invited by the Ven. Shirob-Jaltso to have a Tibetan lunch with him at his residence. Mr. Chao Pu-chu also accompanied me. Before our lunch, he talked on various religious and historical subjects. The Rev. Shirob-Jaltso is a great learned monk from the Chinghai Province of China. He studied Buddhism in Tibet for more than thirty-three years. He knows Sanskrit, and of course, the Tibetan language, which is his mother tongue, as he is from the Tibetan nationality. He is now 77 years old. I liked his talks very much. He is, just like ourselves, a monk who is used to analyse things in a proper way according to the Buddha's teachings. We had an argument and finally arrived at mutual agreement. That day I enjoyed very much the Tibetan tea mixed with salt and milk, which we are used to drink in Nepal too. At the end of our discussion, I suddenly remembered one question to ask him. It was to know the meaning of Dalai Lama. He immediately said that "Dalai" is a Mongolian word, meaning a great ocean, and the word "Lama" means Guru or teacher. Then I asked him as to when and how the tradition of the Dalai Lama originated in Tibet. In reply, he referred to the history from the very beginning. It was during the time of the Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan (13th century A.D.) who ruled over China and extended his sovereignty

even over Tibet, that he met the learned Tibetan monk Vagspa, who invented the Mongolian alphabet. The emperor was very grateful to him and in appreciation the emperor gave him the title of the Prince of Tibet and the Preceptor of the Emperor. The emperor also permitted him to take charge of the administration in Tibet. This was the time when the Mongolian people embraced Buddhism. Since then the tradition existed that the head of Tibet should always be a monk.

During this period of the Mongolian emperors, Buddhism in Tibet got much support from them and became powerful. But again for some centuries Buddhism saw many ups and downs in Tibet. In the 14th century A.D., the great reformer Tson-kha-pa was born in Chinghai Province in China, and he established the Ge-lug-pa sect, which stressed on celibate monastic life. He founded the Ganden Monastery near Lhasa in 1408 A.D., for the reformation of Buddhism in Tibet. He had two great disciples, and the present Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama are traditionally believed to be the incarnations of them. The third incarnation of the elder disciple, called Bsod-nams-rhya-mtso, was conferred on the title of Dalai Lama by the Mongolian ruler. Then the tradition of giving this title to the incarnate monk, who also became the head of Tibet, was carried on. Among these incarnate monks, the Fifth Dalai Lama was the most famous for his ability and knowledge. When the father of the first emperor of the Ching Dynasty officially conferred that title on the Fifth Dalai Lama, he also presented a golden seal to the Dalai Lama to be used for his administration in Tibet, and it is still used now. "It is notable," said the Ven. Shirob-Jaltso, "that after the decease of the Eighth Dalai Lama,

a dispute arose as to who should succeed to the seat of the Dalai Lama. To settle this dispute, Emperor Chien-lung gave a golden vase in 1793 to the Tibetan people to draw lots in order to make a decision in choosing a candidate for Dalai Lama's seat. This golden vase is always kept in front of the Buddha's image in the Jokhan Monastery in Lhasa." He also mentioned that the present Dalai Lama was born in Chinghai Province in China.

I thanked him for his very informative explanation, after which we started our Tibetan lunch, consisting of boiled lamb, rice, noodles, etc.

I would also like to refer to the opinions of some Indian historians regarding the above discussion I had with the Ven. Shirob-Jaltso. So I quote here the following lines from 2,500 years of Buddhism, a book edited by Prof. P.V. Bapat and published by the Government of India in 1956.

" . . . One of the distinguished Sa-skya hierarchs, called Hphags-pa, became the spiritual teacher of Prince Kublai of Mongolia, who, on coming to the throne as the first Mongol emperor of China, conferred the sovereignty of central Tibet upon the High Priest of Sa-skya (1270 A.D.). This was the beginning of a new era of theocratic rule in Tibet. The Sa-skya-pa produced many eminent Tibetan scholars, among whom the famous Bu-ston (1290-1346 A.D.) ranks high. He was not only a renowned commentator of fundamental Buddhist treatises and an authoritative historian, but also the first collector of all the existing Tibetan translations of Buddhist works. He arranged them systematically into two comprehensive groups, called the Kah-hgyur (the word of the Buddha)

in 100 volumes, and the Bstan-hgyur (the treatises) in 225 volumes. These have come down to us as the Tibetan Buddhist Canon . . . with the rise of the great reformer, Tson-kha-pa, born in the province of Amdo (in China) in 1358 A.D., and modern age of Tibetan Buddhism may be said to have begun. With striking powers of organization and comprehensive intelligence, he set himself the task of removing all deviations and superstitious beliefs and establishing a strong order of Buddhist monks, based on sound learning, discipline and celibacy, which came to be recognized as the Dge-lugs-pa (the School of the Virtuous, popularly described as the Yellow Hata). In 1408 he founded, not far from Lhasa, the Ganden Monastery, where he worked for some years and died in 1419 A.D. The other two great monasteries, Depung and Sera, near Lhasa, and Tashi-lhumpo, in the Tsang Province, share between them the highest religious power and prestige. They were all founded by his disciples within the next fifty years. These centres of learning continued the work of religious propagation in Mongolia and Siberia so ably and enthusiastically that after the power of the pioneering Sa-skyas had dwindled through internal feuds and rivalries, the Dge-lugs-pas came to be favoured by the powerful Mongol chieftains as spiritual leaders and later as temporal rulers of Tibet. When he met their third hierarch, Bsod-nams-rhy-mtso (1541-1587 A.D.), the ruler of Thumed Mongolia, Altan Khan, became convinced that both of them were respectively the teacher Hphags-pa and his disciple, the great Emperor Kublai Khan, in their former birth and immediately recognized the former as the veritable Tale (i.e., Dalai, Tib. rhy-mtso) meaning "the Ocean". Thenceforth, all the hierarchs came to be

recognized as Dalai Lama. The most distinguished of them was the Great Fifth Dalai Lama (1615-1680 A.D.), upon whom the sovereignty of the whole country was conferred by the Mongolian chief, Gusri Khan, who finally wiped out all opposition from Tsan and the other provinces of Tibet. After the preceding periods of about seventy years, during which the High Priests of Sa-skyapa reigned as kings over a small part of the country, the recognition of the full and divine sovereignty of the Dalai Lama over the whole of Tibet must be considered as a turning point in Tibetan history." (pp. 80-82).

Besides sightseeing in Peking, the delegation visited various industrial, historical and cultural cities in China.

In the first place, we went to Shenyang by plane on the 27th July, 1959. It is one of the great industrial centres in the northeast of China. There we saw a machine making plant, an electric wire and cable plant, and an ancient tomb of the Ching Dynasty. From there we went to Anshan by train, then we visited the biggest iron and steel plant in China. We also saw the sanatorium and living quarters of the workers. We were very much satisfied with their condition. The workers have schools, clubs, cinemas, literary groups, shopping centres, etc. From Anshan we returned to Shenyang again. On the next day we drove about 70 kilometres to Fushun. On our way we visited the local Buddhist Association located in an old historical monastery. At Fushun we saw a big open coal mine, and a home for old people, where there are retired coal mine workers living very happily. In the afternoon we were to go back to Shenyang, but when we had gone half-way we were informed by some village people that the road had been cut off by a heavy

flood some distance ahead. Thus we went back to Fushun and returned to Shenyang the next morning. On the 30th of July, we left for Changchun by train at night. At Changchun we saw six-wheel trucks and cars factory. It is a new big plant. We also visited a monastery called Prajya Vihara (Wisdom Temple) and a nunnery called Kshitigarbha Temple (or Ti-tsang Temple in Chinese). On the 2nd of August, we left for Nanking by train. But the train being delayed, we had to stay one day at Tientsin in order to change train. This unexpected opportunity gave us more delight, because we could see one more city and meet more Chinese Buddhist friends. Tientsin is a commercial city and a port. Before liberation many foreigners lived here. There we saw one wool factory, and we had a very interesting talk with the manager, who had been in the factory even before liberation. Now the factory runs on the principle of joint ownership. He was one of the big capitalists in China. We asked him how he felt now. Was he unhappy after the liberation, and so on? He said in fluent English that, for the first few years, of course, he could not help thinking in his own American ways, as he had his education in America, and some of his sons also had their education in America. But, he said that now he had come to understand that his previous conceptions were not very good for his country. He became rich by exploitation which was not just at all. Besides, he stressed they were not safe then. Their life in the old day was rather in a danger. But now they are quite safe and much more happier than before, both mentally and physically. When we asked him about his capital, he answered that it was still in the factory and he got its interest from the government.

He said that before the liberation he could not expand the factory with his own capital, but now it had been enlarged more than five times. The quality of the production is also better than before. For sometimes, he very frankly admits that it was not so easy for him to understand the social theory of industry, but now he has fully understood the advantages of socialism and has no more trouble in his mind. He lives now a free and simple life. As manager, he gets sufficient salary, he said at the end of our talk. It was a very inspiring discussion with him. He is quite tall and speaks English with American accents.

In Tientsin we saw one more temple called "Karuna Temple" (Temple of Mercy). In this temple we had a pleasure to meet some of the members of the local Buddhist Association. My daughter was extremely happy to receive some special presents from the local Buddhist friends, as it was her birthday that day. In the afternoon of 3rd August, we left for Nanking by train.

The whole afternoon and the night we spent in the train and in the afternoon of 4th August we arrived at Nanking, after having crossed the Yangtze River in a nice boat. There were many monks and some members of the local Buddhist Association and government officials waiting at the wharf to receive us. During our stay in Nanking, we paid a visit to a temple called Pi-lu-sze (Vairocana Monastery) and the famous Ching-ling Buddhist Text Publishing House. In this publishing house there are many thousands of wooden printing blocks of old days. They publish all the Chinese Tripitaka and commentaries. They also print Buddha figures from wooden blocks. We had the pleasure to meet the director

of the Publishing House, and we came to know that with the help of the present government, the Publishing House is in much better condition than before liberation. They have extensively repaired the buildings and other property which were destroyed during the war with Japan. The block carving is very skilfully done.

About 30 kilometres from Nanking, we visited a people's commune. It is quite a big one. It has its own small-scale glass factory, rice-mill, repair shop, etc. The commune has clinic, nursery, school, library, reading-room and dining-hall. From a talk we had with the director of the commune I understood that the commune is an organization, of which many peasant families become members and work together for their agricultural production. This is a quite new system of working in China and it is not yet known in other countries. In this way all the peasant families in the commune work as one big family in their cultivation, and they can produce more food and live a better life.

Near the commune there is a big monastery about fourteen hundred years old. It is called the Sheh-shan Monastery. There are a few monks living in it. They follow the tradition of Chan (meditation). It is really a very good place for meditation.

In the afternoon of 7th August, we left Nanking for Soochow, the "heaven on earth" as they say in China, where we saw a silk factory, a sandalwood fan factory, an institute for embroidery and handicraft products. We also visited the Ling-yen Monastery on the Ling-yen Hill at the outskirts of Soochow. It is a very big temple. Lots of people from far and near visit it. The temple is on the top of the pine-covered hill. They have beau-

tiful gardens and ponds in the compound of the monastery. They also have a valuable museum in the monastery, containing many interesting Buddhist images and other things. The monks belong to the Ching-tu (pure land) school. When we arrived there, there were about a hundred monks reciting the name of Amitabha in a big hall. We sat down in the hall and joined them in repeating the name of Amitabha for a while. It was so calm and quiet. The life of the monks there was so peaceful. They recite the name of Amitabha for several hours a day to purify their mind. They ring a small bell and a wooden fish to keep their recitation in a rhythmic tone. On the benches around the walls in the hall there are simple and quite soft seats made of bamboo. They also hold a bamboo, half split, about one foot long, to keep their hands cool.

Inside the city of Soochow, we also saw the beautiful Hsi-yuan Monastery. It has a big pond with many colourful fish that swim to the surface when you clap your hands. In this monastery there is a hall of five hundred Arhats. I like Soochow very much. I felt as if I was in one of our cities in Nepal.

Wherever you go in China you will find some construction going on. In some places you will find the whole face of the city changed within the last ten years, and in other places you will find completely new cities. We have heard Chinese people say that even they are surprised to see things changing so rapidly. I noticed many children in the streets of Soochow. The children in every village, town and city in China look very healthy and strong. The Chinese people are not only increasing

their production in agriculture and in other fields but also the number of children, the future masters of their great country.

From Soochow we went to Shanghai, the world famous commercial city of China.

We arrived in Shanghai on the 9th August. There we saw many new industries, we visited a people's commune, as well as the old and new living quarters of workers. It is one of the busiest cities in China. People who visited this city before liberation, had found many things and many types of people. They are found no more today. One of our Nepalese monks the Rev. Dharmaloka, who visited China about 20 years before, described in his book *A Tour to Great China*, that when he was in Shanghai he stayed in a hotel and he was continually troubled by girls who knocked at his door and he dared not open the door of his room though somebody knocked at it very loud. Once the girls succeeded in entering his room, they would not like to leave it. But now there is no single sign of such evil in Shanghai. We saw several temples in Shanghai. One of them was Ching-an Temple, which belongs to the Tantric school of Buddhism. The other one was the Jade Buddha Temple which housed a big beautiful image of the Buddha, made in Burma, of white marble stone.

Here in this temple I gave a preaching to a big audience on the 11th August. I also visited a Buddhist bookshop, where I found Buddhist objects, such as books on Buddhism, pictures, rosaries, images, etc., etc. We were also very much pleased to visit the Lay Buddhist Association of Shanghai. There we saw many hundred people of all walks of life, young and old, reciting Amita-

sutra. We were indeed so surprised to find such activity among the Buddhists there.

We left Shanghai on the 12th August for Hangchow. When we arrived at Hangchow we were met at the station by some old monks, one of whom was the president of the local Buddhist Association. There were some nuns and other young monks too. Hangchow is one of the most beautiful spots in China. Both Soochow and Hangchow are known as "heaven on earth" in China. The city is made beautiful by the West Lake and the surrounding hills. All the members of the Nepalese delegation were fascinated by the beautiful sight of Hangchow, especially Mr. Joshi, one of the outstanding connoisseurs of culture and arts in Nepal who wrote several poems on it, and Mr. Skya, an active member of the Nepalese Congress Party also composed poems in appreciation of the beauty of Hangchow, as well as in praise of Chairman Mao Tse-tung. Hangchow, too, has undergone a change to the present beauty. When we were returning to our hotel the driver turned from the main road and took a short-cut route. He remembered that until a few months ago there was a thoroughfare. When he made an enquiry, he was told that some new buildings were being built and there was no road in that part now.

The Ling-ying Monastery of Hangchow is well-known in China. The abbot of the monastery, Ven. Ta-pei, told us the legend that the peak, called Fei-lai-feng in front of the monastery, came from Gridhakut mountain in India, where according to Mahayana tradition, most of the Tantric and Mahayana Buddhism was taught by the Buddha. The main hall of this temple was repaired re-

cently with the help of the government. It was in a dilapidated condition before liberation, but the government then took no notice of this historical temple.

Another famous temple at Hangchow is the Ching-tse Monastery, also known as the Magic Well Temple, because it has a well connected with a legend. It is said that when this temple was constructed by a monk several centuries ago, he transported all the timbers along a river and brought out of this well. There is still one piece of timber unused at the bottom of the well! This temple is also under repair at present. There are monks living on both of these temples.

Hangchow is well-known for its silk products, lacquer works and other handicraft articles.

On the 15th August, we left this beautiful city of Hangchow and returned to Shanghai by train. We stayed in Shanghai for a few days. While we were in Shanghai we got news from Peking that we were invited to visit North Vietnam by the Vietnam Unified Buddhist Association. Because of this invitation we cancelled our programme to visit Wuhan and returned to Peking from Shanghai directly, on the 20th August. Arriving in Peking, however, four of the members of the delegation found that the validity of their passport was not long enough to permit them to visit Vietnam. So they had to go back to Nepal: therefore only my daughter and myself visited Vietnam.

Before we left Peking for Vietnam, Mr. Chao Pu-chu invited me and my daughter to return to China and stay for three months more, if we wished. We were pleased to have this kind invitation and thanked him for the same.

So, on the 24th August, the Buddhist Association of China gave an official farewell party to our delegation and in the morning of the following day I and my daughter left for North Vietnam by plane, and the four other members of the delegation started for Canton by train on their way back to Nepal via Hongkong, with deep impression and happy memories of Great China.

II

My Visit to North Vietnam

On the 25th August, 1959, in the morning my daughter and I bade good-bye to Messrs. Chao Pu-chu, and Chou Shou-chia of the Buddhist Association of China, and Mr. Yu Hsiang of the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council, at the Peking airport. In China most of the planes are two engined so the pilots are very cautious about the weather. Without a definite weather report, the plane does not take off. Our plane stopped at Wuhan for refuelling. It was about 10:30 a.m. and we had our lunch at the airport. We were supposed to fly away an hour later. We sat and drank hot Chinese tea one cup after another, as it was good to drink tea instead of water. At every airport hot tea is available gratis. Then just before the scheduled time for departure, a girl-guide came and informed us that the plane would be delayed until 12 noon.

It was quite hot. We did not know that Wuhan was such a hot spot. We paced about in the hall and sat under the fan.

When we saw the girl returning, we thought that she had come to inform us about the departure. So we took our hand-bags and stood, ready to go, but, to our disappointment, she told us that the plane would not fly on that

day at all, so we must spend the night at Wuhan. I was worried, because we had nowhere to stay during the night. We knew nobody there. However, to our relief, the girl said that the air company would take us to a hotel where we could spend the night. Then suddenly I thought that I should telephone the local Buddhist Association. But how to do it was a problem for us. I attempted at an explanation of what I wanted to do and she said that it could be done from the hotel.

So we had to stay at the city of Wuhan. We consoled ourselves and tried to cheer up. We left the airport by a bus with all the other passengers. The city was quite far from the airport. It grew hotter and hotter as we approached the town. The road was dusty. We thought that it was somewhat like in India. Things seemed so dry and lifeless. Only as we passed over the newly-built bridge across the Yangtze River, fresh, cool air blew. Soon after we had crossed the bridge we saw a new town which, we later learnt, belonged to the iron and steel factory, the biggest in China. In the town, we found that the roads were good and there were many tall buildings. Finally we reached the hotel. A crowd of curious people, especially boys and girls, gazed at us wherever we went in China. Our dress must have looked strange to them. I was in my saffron monk's robe and my daughter was in an Indian Sari. To avoid the crowd we entered the hotel soon. Some boys and girls followed us even to the hotel but they were waved back by the gatekeeper.

We handed our passports to the receptionist, and he noted down the information he needed from them. Then I asked him to make a telephone call to the local Bud-



Rev. Amritananda and his daughter Miss Vimla Sakya,
with the President Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi, at the banquet
on the eve of the North Vietnam's National Day



With some of the Buddhists
of Hanoi in North Vietnam



One-pillar Temple, Hanoi



Miss Vimla Sakya with some
of the Vietnamese girls

dhist Association, but he could not understand me, as he did not know English well. Unfortunately, I did not have anything written in Chinese to make him understand me. I took out of my hand-bag an envelope on which my name was written in Chinese, and tried to explain to him that we were from Nepal and were the guests of the Buddhist Association of China in Peking, etc., etc. But I still could not make him fully understand me. We were asked to go up to our rooms first, and as the sun shone in the room, we felt as if we were entering a furnace! I was very eager to meet some of the local Buddhist people. Then I remembered I had a letter written in Chinese. It was a letter of invitation sent to us by the Buddhist Association of China. I took it and went down, hoping that it would help the hotel receptionist to understand me. Now I saw a young Chinese girl, who looked very smart in her skirt, carrying some bags. I thought she must be a Chinese from overseas and I asked her if she knew English. She said, "Yes." My joy knew no bounds. She told me that she had been in New Delhi for several years, broadcasting in Chinese for the All India Radio. She was going to Canton on her way back to India after having spent her holidays in her motherland.

I told her all about us, and asked her if she could telephone the Buddhist Association of Wuhan on my behalf. She told the manager of the hotel, and he contacted the local Buddhist people. I was informed that they would come to see us after some time. I was very happy that I could meet them at last.

Then I thanked the girl and went back into my room and took a bath. The cool water was also hot enough

for us. We were very thirsty too, so we asked for some cool drink. A boy brought us two bottles of orange squash, with a bill. Now again we were in a difficult position, as we did not have any change. My daughter, however, searched for some money in her hand-bag and found some Chinese money with which we paid the bill. We were a bit surprised that we had to pay for our drink and food. As air travellers we thought we were not supposed to pay any hotel expense for an overnight stop we had not desired.

At about 5 p.m., a reverend monk and a representative of the religious affairs department of the local government arrived at the hotel accompanied by an interpreter. They were very much pleased to meet us, and so were we. They told us that we need not worry about anything. They said that they had expected to receive our delegation, but the programme of our tour was changed afterwards. Immediately we were taken out for a drive on the bridge over the Yangtze River which used to give a lot of trouble to the Chinese people by flooding. From there, we went to see a monastery. As it was getting dark, we could not see much of the city and other places of interest. In the evening we were entertained by the local Buddhists. It was quite late when we came back to the hotel, yet it was so hot that I had no words to describe the intensity and unpleasantness of this heat. There was no sleeping, it was just impossible. We felt just like fish out of water. At 2 a.m., finally in exasperation I brought some water over the bed, took off all the sheets and covers on the bed and tried to sleep on the floor, which too was hot. Then I stepped out at the verandah and spread a bed-sheet and placed a drenched

towel over the sheet. But after a few minutes it was warm again. By and by it became morning and as we were supposed to leave the hotel at 5:30, we took bath and had our breakfast, and left for the airport. Well, after crossing the bridge we came to the airport and left the hot Wuhan for Hanoi, much relieved.

When we related this experience to some people, they told the following story:

“Once upon a time a man from Wuhan went to hell after his death, because of his sins. In order to punish him the king of hell threw him into a big cauldron filled with boiling oil. Instead of being fried to death, the man swam about with great pleasure in the oil. The king of hell was surprised at this and asked the man how he could enjoy himself in the boiling oil. The man said, ‘I am from Wuhan. The climate there is hotter, much hotter than this boiling oil!’ ”

At about 10:30 a.m. on the 26th August, we arrived at the airport of Hanoi. It was raining. However there were many Buddhists to receive us. The Rev. Thich Tri Do, President of the Vietnam Unified Buddhist Association, stood with some other people in raincoats, when we stepped down from the plane. After receiving some flowers in welcome we went to a waiting room and sat down for a while. The Rev. Thich Tri Do was very happy to see me in his motherland. He had been in Kathmandu in November 1956 during the 4th Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists which was organized by the Dharmodaya Sabha of Nepal.

Soon we drove to a hotel in the city, which is quite far from the airport. Before we entered the city, we came across a long bridge over a big river. The soil of Hanoi

looked quite red and fully cultivated. All along the road we saw men and women carrying vegetables and other things in twin bamboo trays hanging from poles across their shoulders. Both men and women rode on bicycles. The women wore a shirt-like gown reaching down to their knees, with long tight sleeves, and long trousers of black colour. The old ladies had wrapped their long hair with a black or white cloth, and the young girls had knotted their hair and let it fall down. The hair of Vietnamese ladies are quite long, since they do not cut them. They put a scarf across their shoulders. They are very fond of jewellery. With their smiling faces they are quite attractive. The Vietnamese girls are shy. At present both boys and girls study together in schools and the university. They take part in all activities.

Next morning, on the 27th August, we had the pleasure to visit the Quan Ti Monastery (Monastery of Compassion), where the headquarters of the Vietnam Unified Buddhist Association are located. There we met the President of the Association and many members, and noticed many monks. We also saw there a fine collection of Buddhist images and manuscripts. In my reply to the President of the Association I thanked him and conveyed the greetings of Nepalese Buddhists and presented some gifts too on behalf of Nepalese people.

In Vietnam the majority of the people are Buddhists. They came to accept Buddhism at the end of the 2nd century A.D. Their Buddhist tradition was just like that in China. They follow the Pure Land School. They recited the Ksitigarbha and the Surangama-sutras. They used to write their religious scriptures in Chinese characters, but at present they use the Roman characters. The Vietnam

Buddhists have been following the Mahayana school from the very beginning. But other schools also have flourished. The monks in Vietnam follow the tradition of monastic life and live as celibates. They have some Tantric form of Buddhism too. In the Buddhist history of India, Vietnam was known as Campa in the past. There is now a great revival of Buddhism in the whole of Vietnam.

It is a great pity that at present there are two Vietnams. I had also visited Saigon in 1953. Everywhere on this earth nowadays countries are divided into two parts, especially in Southeast Asia and the Far East. Why do they do so and why cannot they unite their own country into a big single force of unity? It is good for their own country. People of any country must have their own choice without any interference from any other nation. Let the people of a country decide their own destiny! What is the good of fighting with each other? Who will live on this earth forever? Everybody has to die one day. Nobody takes along with him anything except his good or bad deeds. Let there be peace and harmony in every country! Let there be no war in any country! Let there be peace and harmony in every country! Let there be no war in any country! Let the big countries not thrust their hands into other country's business! Let all nations mind their own business and help each other if they can, without taking any undue advantage of them!

In the afternoon we went to see the famous One Pillar Temple, which was built upon one pillar in a pond. It is quite an old temple. President Rajendra Prasad of India had brought a sapling of the Bodhi tree from

Buddhagaya in India and planted it in this temple when he visited Hanoi. It had grown up very well. While we were in Hanoi, we visited the Museum, hospitals, schools, industrial centres and monasteries.

On the 29th we went to Haiphong, an industrial city, by car. There was a big harbour, a cement factory, and a plastic toy factory. The local Buddhists took us around the city. We visited a girls' school, where we found many girls from South Vietnam. The people who came from South Vietnam told us terrible stories of what they had faced there. There were several monasteries in Haiphong, and some nunneries also.

When we returned to Hanoi we got an opportunity to meet the Prime Minister of the Mongolian People's Republic in a tea party given in his honour by the Government of the Vietnam Democratic Republic. There we met the Prime Minister of Vietnam, too.

On the 31st, we went to see the historical Tay Phuong Pagoda, about 50 kilometres from Hanoi, on the top of a mountain. When we reached the foot of the mountain, we met some local Buddhists. They led us to the temple in a procession with the beating of drums and blowing of trumpets. They were much pleased to hear that we were from Nepal, the birthplace of Lord Buddha. They were very devout.

Besides monasteries for monks, there were also some nunneries in Hanoi, in one of which we visited, there were about thirty nuns. They live a peaceful life, reciting sutras and working and studying Buddhism and its history, etc.

On the 1st September, 1959, we received an invitation from the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of

Vietnam to a party on the eve of their National Day. At the party we met President Ho Chi Minh and had a very pleasant time talking with him. He was very friendly and informal. He personally came and handed me several bananas and glasses of cool drink. He was very simple in his manner and fatherly to everybody. We liked him very much. I felt that everybody who met him liked him very much.

On the 2nd September, in the morning at about 6, we went to the National Square where the parades and procession were to take place. Hundreds and thousands of people were gathered there. Soon after President Ho Chi Minh, with his Prime Minister and other officials, appeared on the balcony, he was cheered by the people. Then exactly at 7 a.m. the guns in salutation roared and the national anthem was played. The Commander-in-Chief drove around in a car and took salute. After a brief speech by the Commander-in-Chief, the parade began. It was the first time I had been to see a parade. After the parade, many private organizations and citizens came in a big procession with their many shows. It was really a very impressive procession. It must have been about five miles long. There were crowds of people everywhere from all parts of North Vietnam. There were special bus and train services during those days.

We felt indeed very much honoured for receiving a big bouquet of chrysanthemum flowers, as a present from President Ho Chi Minh along with his visiting card. It was very kind of him to send this gift to us.

On the 3rd September, we visited the temple of the Hanoi Buddhist Association and met many Buddhist scholars and monks. In the afternoon we visited two

hospitals. We were glad to find in these hospitals all modern medical equipment presented by the Soviet Union. The health of the Vietnamese people is very rapidly improving. In one of these hospitals we met a girl from South Vietnam. She told us a very touching story. We were quite moved to hear it. She said that she was harassed many times by the authority of South Vietnam. We saw many wounds on her body. We learnt that her stomach was still bleeding. She said that she was tortured very severely, and was unconscious for several days until she found herself at the border river of North Vietnam and finally in that hospital. She explained in a few words how she was tortured. She said that she was tied up with a rope, and sometimes hung by her hair, and sometimes soap-water was pumped into her mouth by force and people crushed her swollen stomach, etc. Oh! it was very horrible even to hear it! The girl must be about fifteen years of age only. All of the members of her family were tortured in different camps. She said she did not know what had happened to her mother and brothers!

We saw the Hanoi University and some industries also before we left Hanoi.

The people of Vietnam are quite gentle. They are progressing day by day. They are much devoted towards their religion — Buddhism. Their food we liked very much as we are quite used to it. Their staple food is rice with vegetable and meat; however, Buddhist monks and nuns are vegetarians. Some villagers take dog's meat also. Most of the people are peasants. They speak their own language and French fluently, and some speak Chinese, but a few people knew English also. Their

handwork is very good, especially cane works. They make so many beautiful things with buffalo horns. Their silver works are very delicate. But we found them quite expensive.

On the 4th September, 1959, at noon we left Hanoi by train carrying with us their deep friendship and good wishes to our people. We shall always remember their kindness and hospitality and we shall also remember them as peace-loving people.

It is very interesting to meet people in a journey and talk with them. While we were in the train at the station and looking through the window, waving our hands to the friends who have come to the station to see us off, there was a big crowd of people of different countries. We noticed there were many Indonesian people, and to our pleasure we also saw an Indian Sikh soldier. When he noticed us we spoke to him in Hindi. He was pleased to hear us speaking in his mother tongue. He also asked about our nationality, etc. But when he heard that we were returning to China after visiting Vietnam, he was somewhat surprised and said, "But there is no religion in China!" And he asked, "Are there any Buddhists?" "Certainly," I said, "there are many Buddhists in China. China has a long history of Buddhism. We have been in China and are now returning there." I was sorry for the wrong information people had gathered about China. I told him that there are many Buddhists in China who preserve their faith and at present the Chinese Buddhists are reviving their Buddhist tradition. "I have heard that there is no freedom of religion in China," he said in a hesitating manner.

Then I told him that such rumours have no ground. "I myself have seen religious activities in China and people going to the temples to worship or pay homage to the Buddha." I was able to convince him finally. I further told him that I had given sermons to Buddhist audience in China. After hearing my answers, he remarked that the Communists did not believe in any religion. "Yes, that is true," I said, "but I must draw your attention to the fact that the Communists do not force or compel other people not to believe in religion or not to follow their religious traditions. The Communist policy of China, I believe, is quite free from such compulsions. The People's Government under the leadership of the Communist Party has not only preserved the religious traditions of the various nationalities of China, but it has also helped the people to keep their religious faith according to their wish. At present in this world there are many people who do not believe in God or any religion, especially those who study science. Then what should they be called? Should they also be called Communists?" Then he said, "Yes, what you have said is true." Before he went away, I told him, "In China there is no compulsion that people must not believe in religion. The members of the Communist Party believe in Communism, the Buddhists believe in Buddhism, the Muslims in Islamism, the Christians in Christianity, and the Taoists in Taoism." Then he folded his hands and said "Namaste!" and left, thanking me for my information about China. He was quite pleased to meet and have a talk with us. We came to know that he was a high official in the International Commission in Hanoi.

The train started moving slowly, and many among the crowd waved their hands and handkerchiefs to us until we could see them no more on the platform.

On the same evening we reached the border of Vietnam, and with the help of our interpreter, who was a nice young boy, we went through the passport and other official procedures in the train itself. After that he bade good-bye to us and went to catch another train for his return journey to Hanoi. Thus from the Vietnam border station onwards we were without an interpreter. At midnight we arrived at the station on the Chinese border which was quite big. All the passengers got out of the train and stepped into a big waiting-room, where they had to go through the customs and passport office. We had no trouble at all. We were asked what we had in our suitcases, and we told them what we had. And that was all. At about 3 a.m., we got into another train and fell asleep before it started. In every bogie of the train there was a service man or a girl. The service there was quite good and rooms were kept neat and clean. At any time passengers get hot water and Chinese tea.

For two full days we were in the train without any change. As we did not know Chinese and the attendants in the restaurant car did not know much of English, we had some difficulty in getting the food we wanted. We had been given coupons in Hanoi for our food in the train. The service men were quite eager to please their guests in the train, but sometimes they failed because of their inadequate knowledge of English. Sometimes we found that the restaurant car was not very clean. Many times it happened that when we asked for lemonade,

they brought us omelette! There was one service man who seemed a very active and jolly fellow. He frequently came to us and asked what we liked to have. But before we explained to him fully, he would say, "Yes, yes, yes," and went to the kitchen and brought us something else! And when we said that that was not the thing we wanted, then he would say in Chinese, "Meyou" (meaning has not got). Sometimes he gave us a menu, but when we asked him to bring us such and such food, he would say, "Meyou!" Finally we had to eat whatever he brought us, whether we liked it or not. Fortunately we had brought along a basket of fruits from Vietnam, so we ate the fruits when we could not get the proper food, or I should say, when we were not accustomed to the food. Really, it was a very good and interesting experience to us.

On the 7th September, 1959, in the afternoon, we arrived at the Peking railway station and met again our old smiling friends, Messrs. Chao Pu-chu, Chou Shou-chia, Yu Hsiang, Cheng Kuang-tsung, as well as some other members of the Buddhist Association of China.

III

Five Days in Mongolia

On the 25th of October, 1959, we flew in a CCCP plane from Peking to Mongolia. My knowledge of world geography is limited; so as we looked below at the wide expanse of the very dry land with patches of bushes and low rocks, it was Vimla, my daughter, who identified it as the Gobi desert. From the plane it seemed to me that Gobi did not look like the sandy wastes of Central Asia. Then suddenly it occurred to me that the people of Mongolia in ancient times crossed this desert and spread to Central Asia, India, China, Persia, Afghanistan and even tried to open the gates of Europe; there must still be survivors of these early pioneers in those countries.

After flying for about two hours across the desert, we were told that we were reaching Ulan Bator, the capital of the Mongolian People's Republic. When the plane turned around to land, we saw ice on the bank of a small river, which was a very pleasant sight for us. We then saw the nice capital city of Mongolia and also noticed some new industrial buildings. The city was situated at one end of the desert. The houses were white and looked new.

With a few jerks the plane touched the land. At the airport were several Lamas, wearing glittering yellow and red silk robes, yellow caps, which looked like stupas, and huge boots. They were quite tall and stout and looked strong. They looked very much like Tibetan monks. When the Deputy Head Lama of the Ganden Degcchiling Monastery — the headquarters of Mongolian Buddhists — came forward with some other monks, and talked with us with the help of an interpreter, I saw vapour coming out from their mouths, as if they were smoking. It was so cold! I felt as if we had known each other long since. But as a matter of fact we have never met before. What made me feel like that? It must be their monastic life and because we belong to one Buddhist brotherhood.

Tibetan Lamas often came on pilgrimage to Nepal, as Nepal is the birthplace of Lord Buddha. Buddhism was introduced to Tibet from Nepal in the 7th century A.D., after the marriage of the Tibetan ruler, Sron-btsan-Sgam-po (born in 617 A.D.), with Princess Bhrikuti Devi, a daughter of King Amsuvarman of Nepal. Since then Buddhism had become the religion of Tibet. In the 13th century A.D., Buddhism came to Mongolia from Tibet, when the famous Kublai Khan of Mongolia ruled over China, after he had come into contact with one of the distinguished Sa-skyas hierarchs, called Hphags-pa, who became his spiritual teacher. Hphags-pa belonged to the Sa-skyas-pa school, which derived the name “grey earth” from the colour of the soil where its first monastery was built in 1071 on the site of the present Sa-skyas in Tibet. The Sa-skyas-pa was even more closely related to the old Rnin-ma-pa school than the Bkah-rgyud-pa, and the

monks of this sect were not celibates either. So they sought a synthesis between the old and new Tantrism on the basis of Nagarjuna's Madyamika philosophy. Since then the Mongolian people have been following the Tantric Buddhist tradition of Tibet.

After completing the usual routine with the custom office, we were driven to the city, which was about 16 kilometres from the airport, and then to a hotel in front of the central square, where the Mongolian government held parades.

In the afternoon of the day of our arrival in Ulan Bator, we had the great honour of meeting the Head Lama of the Mongolian Buddhists, the Rev. Erdenipel, an elderly monk of over eighty years. He is the President of the Buddhist Association of Mongolia, the Head Lama of the Degcchiling Monastery, and also, if I am not wrong, a president of the Peace Committee of Mongolia. In the first place, they offered me a big cup of milk and garlanded me with a long silk scarf according to Mongolian tradition. They offer, at first, a big cup of mare's milk to any honourable guest. Without offering a cup of milk no talk is begun. All the hundred monks of the temple including the Rev. Erdenipel, were quite eager to know something about Nepal, its people, religion, etc. After having presented some gifts, on behalf of the Nepalese Buddhists, to the Head Lama of the monastery, I explained to him the historical relation between Mongolia and Nepal — the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha, whose teaching the Mongolians have been following since Buddhism came to their country. From the point of religion and culture, Nepal and Mongolia have had historical ties. Buddhist history shows that wherever

Buddhism penetrated, the art, culture and civilization of those nations were improved. I also expressed the genuine wishes of the Nepalese people that they were quite eager to renew their old friendship with the Mongolian people. Welcoming me, the Reverend Grand Head Lama expressed that his happiness and joy were very great and that he was very much pleased to meet me in their country, a son from Nepal where the Buddha was born more than 2,500 years before. It was, indeed, he said, that the joy was not only his, but it was also to all the Buddhists of Mongolia. On that day the time was short; so they fixed another time to meet me and hear a talk about Nepal and Buddhism around the world. I did according to their wish.

It was in his big, beautiful, round tent, which served as the monastery, that my first interview with the Head Lama took place. There was an altar on the opposite side of the entrance with several small images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In front of these there was a small table on which there were seven silver cups filled with water, some candles, a Vajra and hand-bell, and a jar with sacred water in it. On both sides of the altar there were seats raised about a foot high from the ground. In front of the seats there were tables on which they put big plates of sweet cakes for the guests. The guests were seated on the left of the altar and the hosts on the right. The floor was covered with red and blue carpets. At the centre there was a big pole fixed to the ground, to which the ends of the sticks were fixed, and the other ends of the sticks were fixed to the wall. The wall was covered with red screen. The sticks were red in colour. There were paintings with golden colour in red and blue



An interview with Y. Tsedenbal,
Chairman of the Council of
Ministers, the Mongolian
People's Republic





At the reception given in honour of Rev. Amritananda at the Monastery in Ulan Bator by the Head Priest and the President of the Buddhist Association of Mongolia



Thanking for the high title of
honour conferred on him by the
Buddhists of Mongolia for his
great service in spreading peace

In the National Library of Mongolia





Blessing the audience

background, which is usually found in every temple in Mongolia.

The following day, 26th October, we visited the National Library of Mongolia. It can boast of several million books in Mongolian and other languages, and mostly in Russian, English, Chinese and Tibetan on various subjects. The library is not yet completely modernized. Most of the book-shelves are made of wood but they seemed strong, neat and clean. My joy was very great when I saw some books in our Newari and Ranjana characters. There I saw a copy of "Astasahasrika-pragyaparamita", in Newari characters, written many hundred years ago. I was extremely happy too to find the Kangyur Tangyur, engraved on silver plates. In the first page of the book were beautiful carvings of Buddha and Bodhisattva figures, and inlaid with some precious stones. What a tremendous devotion the old Mongolian people must have had for that! How much time they must have devoted in writing such works? Besides these, there were some other books written in gold in Tibetan characters. They also had several editions of the Chinese Tripitaka.

During our five days in Ulan Bator we saw many places of interest. We saw the Historical Museum, monasteries, University where there are 5,000 students, schools, kindergarten schools, hospitals, children's palace, some factories and a big coal mine, and attended to cultural activities. One of the factories we visited was a tannery where shoes, coats, hand-bags and other things were made. We also visited a wool factory, iron and steel factory, milk-product factory and a confectionery. On our way to a coal mine, about 60 kilometres from Ulan

Bator, we visited a glass factory, too. While we were returning to Ulan Bator from the coal mine, we visited some of the new residential quarters of the workers. And we also took the opportunity to see some of the old-type round tents of the workers. We entered into several tents. To our surprise they were quite neat and clean inside. No sooner had we got into one of them than the householder offered us milk and hot tea. There were three beds in the tent, for father, mother and daughter. They had electricity in the tent and there was a radio upon a table. Some photographs were arranged in frames and kept on the table, and some were hanging upon the wall of the tent. At the centre there was an oven, which kept the room warm. After chatting with them we learnt that they were new to this place, having come recently to this place from some village. We noticed that the girl, who may be about fifteen years old, was a little shy; but she looked quite active in her work. We learnt that she went to school and her parents worked in the coal mine.

We also visited a sanatorium, where one is treated with mineral water. There were several hospitals in Ulan Bator.

Most of the shops in the street were not to be recognized from outside. Due to the cold climate, the front sides of most of the shops were kept closed. However, there were a few shops with window decorations, and could be recognized from outside. The prices were fixed everywhere — no need of bargaining, therefore, there was no cheating also. Of course, the method of operation of the shops was somewhat different from that of our

country. The shop-keepers were not so very keen in displaying all their things.

On the 29th October we had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Y. Tsedenbal, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Mongolian People's Republic. In other countries he would be called a Prime Minister. We had a very frank and free talk for over 90 minutes. This was the second time of our meeting. The first was in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. I like his personality. He had sharp eyes and very friendly manners. He told us that he was much pleased to meet us, the first people from Nepal to visit Mongolia, in his office. He remarked that our visit had opened the door of friendship between Nepal and Mongolia. I, on my part, explained to him that the relationship and friendship between the two countries had been established with the coming of Buddhism to Mongolia. He expressed his simple wish of renewing the old friendship between our two countries by means of exchanging cultural and religious visits. He requested me to convey the best wishes from himself and his countrymen to the Nepalese people.

On the 30th October, the last day of our stay in Mongolia, early in the morning we were taken to the Ganden Degcchiling Monastery, the biggest monastery in Ulan Bator. I had an unforgettable time there. At the end of every month the Buddhists of Mongolia hold a big ceremony in this monastery. So, there was a big crowd in the temple compound. People from far and near came to take part in the ceremony. No sooner was the door of my car opened than the mass rushed towards me. I never expected to see such a big crowd there. The monks and the police could do nothing with the

crowd, as it closed upon me as I tried to get into the monastery. Everybody was waiting there with great regard and devotion to meet me. Most of the people, as I was told, had heard of my visit to Mongolia on the radio and in newspapers. Although I was shielded by the monks, I was really squeezed in by the crowd. My robe was not on my body when I reached the door of the monastery. As I progressed through the crowd, the people lowered their heads to me and I touched their heads in blessings, in accordance with their custom. Some of them extended their hands as well for me to touch them, while the others offered me scarfs and money. I thought if I had gone alone, without those monks to shield me, then certainly I would have been really squeezed out of my life by the crowd. Thanks to those good monks!

I was taken into the shrine-room where many monks were already engaged in their ceremony. Soon after I got into the shrine-room, they closed the main door, on account of the crowd. I was requested to participate in the ceremony. As a guest and brother in the Dhamma, I complied with their kind request. I was given a raised seat, about three or four feet high from the floor. Then the Rev. Erdenipel, the Grand Lama of the Ganden Degchiling Monastery and President of the Buddhist Central Council of the Mongolian People's Republic, conferred on me the honorary title of "Gegen" (Holy One). Handing over to me his address of welcome, beautifully written in Mongolian characters in gold, he covered me with a golden coloured robe of a Grand Lama. In my reply I conveyed to them the greetings of Nepalese people and I also thanked the Grand Lama and

the others for their high appreciation of me. They performed the ceremony wishing my health, after which they opened the door and let in the people gathered outside, one by one, in order to have my blessings. As the crowd was very big, it took me more than four hours to bless them. Some of the people offered me their personal belongings, such as coral necklaces, etc., while others offered money, which I, in my turn, donated to the Red Cross Society and the monastery. By the time I came out of the shrine-room I could scarcely move around my neck and the right arm. You can imagine how exhausted I must have been. The shrine-room was quite cold, but with so many people in there it was warm.

I do not think that the people who came to see me saw much of me. They came but had to give way to the next person within a few seconds. But I had a very good opportunity to meet the common people and observe their faces, their expressions and their emotions. Some old ladies, who may be over seventy or so, shed tears on their wrinkling cheeks when they saw me, and bowed their heads. It seemed to me that they wanted to have a good look at me and also liked to talk to me, but in no time they were pulled away so that other people too got a chance to come in front of me. Not only did I see old men and women in that crowd but also I noticed many young boys and girls among them. Every one of them was very eager to look at my face. Some of them looked yearningly back at me as they went out, and said something which I did not understand.

In the meanwhile the monks went on performing their ceremony; they blew their long trumpets, beat the drums, rang hand-bells, recited some sutras, and went

through “Mudras” with the Vajra (thunderbolt). Indeed it was an impressive ceremony! As I sat on my high seat, my thoughts travelled from the present times back to the times of the Buddha. I do not believe that our Sakyamuni Buddha ever performed such ceremonies, nor told us to do so. Modern people seeing such ceremonies would, no doubt, get unhealthy impressions regarding the Doctrine of the Buddha, and they therefore say that Buddhism is nothing but ceremony. However, I would say that they are gravely mistaken. The profound Doctrine of the Buddha can certainly be scientifically explained. Then suddenly I turned my mind from this subject and tried to spread my Metta to all the people who came to see me. I nearly felt something like weeping when I saw some of the very old people in their blessed innocence. I wished them health, prosperity and happiness. I repeated “Sukhihotu!” a numberless times.

Well, there was not enough time for me to mix with these innocent devotees. I had to attend to some other programmes as well. So I left the monastery. I remember how I was escorted by the monks of the monastery to the car through the crowd. No sooner had I sat in the car than the driver drove it at such a speed that I was very much frightened that somebody might be hurt by the car. But the driver was very skilful and nobody was hurt. Outside the monastery compound where there was nobody, the car was stopped and I awaited for my daughter and our interpreter Mr. Lotchin. They came running from the monastery to the car.

About a hundred monks live, according to their ranks, in more than one dozen houses in this monastery. They had a library. The monastery owned some property and

it is also supported by the general public. Every monk got a share out of the income of the monastery every month. Other sources of income were offerings and donations from the public. The balance of the money is kept for common use and the administration of the monastery. If the income was not sufficient for their maintenance, the government helped them. The monastery is free from any kind of tax. The monks are quite free in their religious activities. The monastery does not belong to the state.

In Mongolia all the people are Buddhists. There is no doctrine or religion or tradition other than Buddhism. The whole population of Mongolia is one million.

According to the Grand Lama of the Ganden Degcchiling Monastery, there are about ten thousand monks belonging to different sects in Mongolia. The love and friendship of the monks we met was profound. There were very few monk scholars who know Sanskrit. However, they know Tibetan quite well. Tibetan and Chinese are taught in their University. They want to take part in international activities of the Buddhist world. Besides their monastic duty, they take some part in educational programmes and in activities for the promotion of peace. Some of them are very good painters. They also organize people, giving them new ideas of their country and encourage people to construct their country rapidly. They are not only respected by the common people, but are also duly respected by the government officials. They have representatives in the government.

The Mongolian people are friendly, hospitable and kind. Their dress is similar to that of the Tibetans.

The women of Mongolia dress in a long skirt-like garment, covering their arms with long sleeves, tied around their waist with a long belt. They wear long boots, which are called "Vutul", a sort of knee-high, heel-less soft leather boots. Sometimes women wear boots with high heels. They also wear precious ornaments, such as earrings, bracelets and rings of gold and silver, often inlaid with precious stones and pearls. The men's dress is, in a way, the same as that of the women, but they wear a cap of fur and of other material. They use snuff every now and then. Their staple food consists mostly of the meat of the sheep, beef and mutton. They have as many as eighty varieties of dishes made of milk. They drink very strong tea with plenty of milk. They have plenty of milk, but not different vegetables. They are very fond of sweet food and milk-products.

We were served with Mongolian food. We tried our best to enjoy it, but sometimes we failed because we were not accustomed to the taste. It seemed they were made almost all of meat. They serve you one dish after another. They serve their honourable guests with a big plate of boiled lamb. Of course, it is rather difficult for the guest to finish all the lamb.

They can speak Chinese, Russian. A very few of them can speak English too. Among the religious communities, there are people who can speak, read and write the Tibetan language.

In the city one can see the ancient round tents of the nomads, side by side with many modern-style buildings. We were very interested to have a look inside the round tents. From outside it looks quite small, but inside, you

find it big enough for three or four beds, and quite neat and clean. Besides the ordinary type, there are some very big tents, such as those in the Ganden Degcchiling Monastery which are quite well furnished. It is quite warm and cosy inside these tents. But they do not have their toilet room inside it.

The people of Mongolia are rapidly progressing in the educational, economic and industrial developments. Construction is going on apace in the city. They are constructing new metalled roads all around. The means of transportation are buses, cars, bicycles, and horses. I was very much impressed to note that the Mongolian people, who for a long time were known as nomadic race throughout the world, have become so advanced at present in their scientific work and industrialization. I can say that they are progressing rapidly in all-round fields. They are no more a nomadic race.

What made a deep impression on me are their religious tradition and ceremonies after the Rnin-ma-pa school of Tantric Buddhism founded by Padmasambhava in Tibet. As the monks of Mongolia follow the Vinaya and practise celibacy, I think, therefore, that the tradition in Mongolia is not only of the Rnin-ma-pa school but also they have combined it with the Bkag-gdams-pa or Dge-lugs-pa who had taken a synthetic view of the teachings of both the Hinayana (Sthavirvadian) and Mahayana; enforced celibacy upon the monks and discouraged magic practices.

On the morning of 31st of October, 1959, we left Ulan Bator for the Soviet Union by a CCCP plane, deeply impressed with the kindly Mongolian people.

IV

Unforgettable Time in Ulan Ude

Many readers may ask, "Where on earth Ulan Ude is?" Well, I am afraid, I may not be able to explain it clearly. But I shall try my best.

First of all, let me tell you, in short, how I visited this place. There is a great socialist country, which is the first of its kind in the world. That is, I mean, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Let us say in short the Soviet Union. Every one of us, who has heard about this country, knows that after the great October Socialist Revolution in 1917, the Russian people have established the newest system of government in their country under the leadership of Lenin. Since then they were known as great revolutionists. They must have done it for the betterment of their own country and people, according to their new inspiration or the inspiration which has been cherished by them from generation to generation till 1917 when they succeeded in carrying out their long cherished goal. Every country has its own revolution in its history. In every human being there is a spirit of revolution, but this spirit differs in different persons according to their own circumstances, etc. And the spirit of a person may also become the spirit of a nation or of the masses. What I mean by

revolution is the change of the system of government, and so forth. From the viewpoint of a change of an old system into a new one — whether social, cultural, religious, political or in the field of thoughts — even the Buddha can be called a revolutionist. Because he certainly changed many systems of the society in Nepal and India about 2,500 years ago. He changed the caste, religious and social systems. We know from his life story how much he had to fight with the old people who could not appreciate his new system of thoughts, etc. The Buddha's new system of thoughts must have affected both the political and the social systems of his time.

Mahatma Gandhi in India can also be called a revolutionist, because he was the man who brought freedom to the Indian people. Both Buddha and Gandhi used their mental powers and subtle wisdom as their weapons, and were totally against the use of destructive weapons.

During the great October Revolution in 1917, however, many arms and weapons were used. Then, this must be the cause of fear to nations other than the Russian people. But this is not correct. Because in every country people in their revolution have used arms and weapons. Then the Russians also might have fear from other countries, because the latter had also used arms and weapons in their revolutions. But when these nations use their arms and weapons against other countries, then certainly they are no more revolutionists, but they must be called invaders, aggressors and war-mongers. Then the conclusion is that the present world is full of arms and weapons, and therefore no nation is free from fear. All these are not signs of happiness or peace for a country or a nation. So if you really do

not wish to see the signs of unhappiness and suspicion, but like to see the sign of peace and happiness, then you must give up the idea of using arms and weapons and throw them all into the ocean. Then and only then, every one of us can guarantee peace and happiness. Let there be no kind of destruction on this earth.

Let us now turn back to our subject. I have been asked by many of my friends to write something about my visit to Ulan Ude. It is in the Soviet Union. If you take up a map of the Soviet Union and try to find out in Eastern Siberia just to the right of lake Baikal and above the Mongolian People's Republic, you will see the location of Ulan Ude, the capital of Buryat Mongolian Autonomous Republic. The people of this region are one of the many minor nationalities of the U.S.S.R. The area of this republic is 3,514 square kilometres and its population is 671,000. 275,000 people live in towns and 396,000 people in villages. That is 41% of the whole population live in towns and 59% in villages. It is a very cold country and there are large tracts of desert area. You may be curious why I paid visit to such a remote place. Well, then I have to refer to some of my ideas about it.

See, dear reader, I was very much eager to see if there was any religious activity in the Soviet Union. According to the rumours or news that we used to hear, it seemed that there was no religious freedom in the Soviet Union. But now I have found that this is completely untrue. Now I do not understand the underlying motive of people when they use the words, "There is no freedom of religion". But when I write there is "freedom of religion", I mean that there is no suppression in any

way of religious activities. Religion is a matter of an individual's concern. As I have seen many people, both old and young, praying to Christ, the All-Mighty God and Allah in churches, mosques, synagogues and baptist missions in the Soviet Union, I would say that there is freedom of religion. They also burn candles and incense. They print religious books. They study their religion and have their classes in the churches. The income of the churches is free from tax. They receive donations from the general public. They have charity-boxes in the churches. People offer money. They are many members of the churches who regularly contribute money to them. People invite the priests to pray at their home when somebody is sick.

It is not true that all the people of the Soviet Union are members of the Communist Party, nor are they compelled to be members of the Party. Most of the people of the Soviet Union are not members of the Communist Party. Of course, it is not unnatural if the members of the Communist Party do not believe in a supreme God and do not pray to him blindly for happy life. At present there are many people, who, without being a member of the Communist Party, do not believe in the so-called supreme of All-Mighty God. In the teachings of Lord Buddha, who was born in Nepal about 2,500 years ago, practically speaking, there is no room for such blind praying to the so-called All-Mighty God. He did not believe in such things. He believed in cause and effect; man's own actions; experience; and in analyzation and realization by the self. I remember one incident of my tour in America. In Blumington University I met a biologist. While he was explaining to me his

science and other things, I asked him whether he believed in the church or the so-called All-Mighty God. He very frankly said that he did not believe in the church, nor in the All-Mighty God, but that he was compelled to follow the tradition of the church, otherwise he would not get proper respect in society. Besides, he was obliged to pay some money regularly to the church, so that a right place will be given for his coffin after his death!

As a Buddhist I was always happy in the Soviet Union, but not so much satisfied with what I saw till I came to Ulan Ude. I was very eager to see if there were any activities among the Buddhist people too. There are quite a few Buddhists in the Soviet Union — mostly the Buryat Mongolians who live in Siberia — there are also some Kalmiki people who follow Buddhism. They live in Kalmiki Autonomous Region, 273 kilometres south of Stalingrad. Its capital is Elista. A small number of Buddhists are to be found in Latvia and Estonia also.

Before I went to Ulan Ude, I toured Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad, Sukhumi and Sochi. The latter two are situated on the coasts of the Black Sea. In all the cities we visited, I saw some religious activity. On the 24th November, 1959, after my daughter had left Moscow for New Delhi, I left for Ulan Ude. Up to Irkutsk I flew by jet plane from Moscow with our host friends, and then from there we flew in a small plane. It took only one hour to fly from Irkutsk to Ulan Ude. From Moscow to Irkutsk it is about six hours' journey by jet plane with two stops en route. We were scheduled to reach Ulan Ude on the 24th, but due to unsuitable weather we had to stop that night at Sverdlovsk airport.

I had a very pleasant time there with my hosts. Among them was a representative of the Council of Religion of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., Mr. Smirnov Nikolai Ivanovitch, who was not very tall like other Russians. He was even shorter than I. He was quite a sensible man, and I liked his ways and manners. Whenever I talked with him, he made me jolly and gay. We had a very interesting talk at the Sverdlovsk airport. He was quite eager to know about Buddhism. I tried to explain to him in brief Buddhism and Buddha's personality from a rationalistic point of view. I believe he understood and accepted some of the salient points of Buddhism, such as that it is not like other religions in which there is plenty of room for blind faith in a supreme God, prayers, etc. He was, I believe, convinced that the Buddha's teachings are quite reasonable for human beings and most practicable for everyday life. I told him that, if he were of the opinion that religion meant belief in God and prayers, then Buddhism is not a religion at all. The Buddha, I told him, never compelled people to believe in him without any personal examination or experience of what he had said, whereas in other religions one does not find such things. I also told him that if the Communists study Buddhism, they would certainly get much help from it for their development work and world peace. We were not trying to convert to each others' belief but we were discussing with great mutual understanding in order to know something about the ideas of different people from different points of view.

When we arrived at the airport of Ulan Ude on the 25th November it was 7 p.m. There were several monks and lay people, including the Bandido Hambo Lama Lubsan

Nima Darmov, the Chairman of the Central Religious Buddhist Board of the U.S.S.R. They welcomed me by presenting a religious scarf soon after I came out of the plane. It had become quite dark, and it was very cold. In a short speech, Sharabov Bandido Hambo Lama mentioned his visit to Kathmandu and Lumbini in Nepal, the birthplace of Tathagata Gautama Buddha, during the 4th Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in 1956. He expressed his profound happiness to see me in his motherland. In reply, I thanked him and his countrymen for their kind arrangements and conveyed to them the greetings and the good wishes of the people of Nepal, the land of the Buddha. It was getting colder and even in the huge leather overcoat I began to shiver. Then we drove to the city. Soon after we crossed a bridge across a wide river, we were in the city. It took about 30 minutes from the airport. In the night it seemed to me that the city is somewhat long in shape. I saw the city-lights from the river which was frozen solid. Everywhere I saw nothing but white snow and ice. I was taken straight to a hotel in the main street somewhere near the famous Opera House of Ulan Ude.

I was pleasantly surprised to see the Buryat Mongolian people so much devoted to Buddhism, which they have been following since they embraced it in about the 13th century A.D. They obtained Buddhism from Tibet. Therefore the Buddhist tradition is just as in Tibet — the Mahayana school of Buddhism. They have the Rnin-ma-pa and Dge-lugs-pa schools of Tantric Buddhism. They dress exactly like Tibetan Lamas. The Buddhist population in Buryat Mongolia is about ten thousand. There are a few hundred monks. Those who belong to



Ceremony of welcome in the
monastery of Ulan Ude, Siberia



Delivering a speech in the
Ivalgin Monastery in Ulan Ude



Delivering a speech in the Academy of Sciences in Ulan Ude





With a group of youngsters in the Pioneers Palace in Ulan Ude

Being welcomed with a cup of horse's milk in Ulan Ude



the Dge-lugs-pa school live in monasteries and follow Vinaya rules, do not drink alcohol, do not smoke, and do not eat fish or chicken. They are celibates. They wear three robes, but due to the severe cold, they wear many extra robes, like overcoats. They put on their religious caps which look like crowns.

According to our programme, on the 26th November, after breakfast, we went to call on the Sharabov Bandido Hambo Lama at Hambiysky Sume, Ivolga village, about 50 kilometres from Ulan Ude. He lived there in a monastery called Ivalgin Datsan (Ivalgin Monastery). This is the headquarters of the Central Religious Buddhist Board of the U.S.S.R. The weather was fine, but it was extremely cold. We drove across the same river, over which we had reached a small village consisting of about a hundred houses. Then we took an unmetalled track, which led to the Ivalgin Monastery. Before I reached the village, I saw old-type one-storey houses on the main road. Now and then, trucks and cars passed. On the one side of the road were snow-covered hills and on the other side uncultivated plains. Soon I noticed the temple, which looked not very old. There were several buildings within the monastery compound but no house of lay people.

At a far distance behind the monastery stood a mountain and at its foot I could discern dwelling places. In front of the monastery stretched a vast plain, dotted with hillocks. As we approached the monastery gate, I saw many people standing on both sides, so I got out of the car and walked. The men and women came to get blessings. A group of monks met me with their ceremonial umbrella, incense carrier, trumpets, etc., and I

was taken to the gate before the crowd succeeded in surrounding me. People pushed each other to come nearer to me, but the monks requested them not to do so. At the main gate of the monastery the Rev. Sharabov Bandido Hambo Lama, the Head of the Buddhists, and the Rev. Did Hambolama Padma Dorzhi Zhambalov, the Deputy Chairman of the Central Religious Buddhist Board of the U.S.S.R., received me, with a hot cup of milk and a long scarf, according to their custom. I took two or three spoonfuls of the milk and then I was led to a small drawing room where I had a talk with the Head Lama. Before I went to the room I addressed a big gathering in the compound of the monastery. I told the people that they are the relatives of Nepalese Buddhists, because the Buddha was born in Nepal about 2,500 years ago, and his doctrine had been followed by them since they got it from Tibet; that it is from Nepal that Buddhism went to Tibet in the 7th century A.D., thus a historical relationship exists between the Nepalese and the Buryat Mongolian people. I also told them that the Buddha was great teacher of humanity, as He taught us to live in peace and harmony with all nations, and taught us to practise mercy and loving kindness. The audience was so pleased that some of the old people shed tears after having heard what I had said. I told them that though Nepal and Buryat Mongolia of the Soviet Union are far apart, their common aims and objects are the same and that the Nepalese people too like to live in peace, harmony and make friendship with all nations throughout the world.

From the drawing room, the Head Lama led me to a shrine-room and asked me to sit in a raised seat flanked

by more seats for monks, where they performed their daily services. There was the Buddha's image in the middle of the room and some other figures. I learnt that this temple had been newly repaired. Soon after I sat, the Head and other Lamas came in front of the table before me, and held round a metal plate in their hands, in which was some wheat, rice and some precious stones. Then they put a silver ring at the centre of the big plate and filled it with mixed wheat and rice. Inside this ring two more smaller rings, also filled with mixed wheat and rice, were placed. On top of these they put a small stupa-like pinnacle, which as a whole looked like a three-storeyed pagoda. It is called Ratna Mandala in Nepal. Reciting a sutra, they handed it over to me. Then after that all the monks, including the Head Lama, worshipped me with their heads bowed too, as people in our country do "Dandavat". While they bowed down, they placed their folded hands on their forehead, and then at their chest, then bent down flat on the floor, touching it with their heads. Then the monks came nearer to me for blessings, which I was to give by touching their heads with a sacred book according to their custom.

After this short ceremony, they took me to another building, where they had prepared a high seat for me. The big crowd waiting outside were allowed to come into this room, in a line, so as to get blessings from me. It took several hours for me to bless all the people. While I was in the seat touching their heads with a sacred book, I had good opportunity to look at the expressions on their faces. Everybody's face was so bright and full of love and devotion towards me. The people looked

quite healthy and strong. Some of the men and women were very old and could not walk without help. These people believed that besides medical treatment they would also be cured of their diseases, short-sightedness, deafness, etc., by spiritual power. By their expressions and gestures I could understand that they were asking me to cure them of their ailments. I told them to get some good medicine from a physician so that they would be all right. After this ceremony I asked the local government representatives if they had any hospital or the like. I was told that they had a clinic in the locality. Everybody offered me money. In addition some of them offered me silk scarfs, bunches of coral and other things that they had at the moment. One lady offered me her golden ring and silver chains. Besides my touching their heads, some would even ask me to touch a piece of thread, a little bit of sweet cake, a bottle of water and their rosaries, etc. They must have had a very deep faith that such touch would protect them and cure them of their diseases. I felt pity upon them and tried my best to spread my loving kindness towards them "Sukhi hotu Dukkhamocantu".

The Mongolian's and Buryat Mongolian's face is quite broad. Their cheekbones are quite high and broad. Their eyes are small but beautiful, and their noses are, in general, not so high as the Aryan people's. Their heads are also big and their hair is black in colour. The girls do not cut their hair. I did not see them wearing earrings or any other kind of ornaments. They looked quite friendly and charming. All of them wear fur or woollen coats, boots, woollen scarfs and very thick gloves. They wear clothes one upon another to

keep themselves warm enough. The ladies dress in a long skirt-like frock and tie their waist with a long and broad belt.

I noticed that there were still many people in the compound of the monastery, waiting to see me off. So, after lunch we left the place. After lunch I had the honour of presenting on behalf of Nepalese people to the Head Lama some presents including a small golden image of Buddha, which I had possessed for the last fifteen years, as a token of my profound respect to him. When I handed the Buddha image to him, he was so moved that he could not help bursting into tears. I liked him very much. He looked very fatherly to me. I learnt that he had been a monk since he was seven years old, and now he is over seventy-five.

I also had the pleasure to present some gifts to the Rev. Did Hambo Lama, who travelled with us throughout our tour in the Soviet Union and took great care of us. Although we had very deep feeling for each other, we could not talk to each other as we wished to do, owing to language difficulty. Mr. Baldan Japov who was also with us during the tour, was acting as a secretary to the Rev. Did Hambo Lama. Mr. Japov is a man of silence. He does not speak very much, but he arranges whatever we wished to see or visit. I found him many times, whenever he was free from us, busy talking on the telephone on a long distant call. So, many times he had to cancel programmes and arrange all over again. His memory is good. I found that he never forgot anything that we have told him. But all our talks had to be interpreted and feelings conveyed through an interpreter. He wrote down every talk and speech that I made. When

he did not have his notebook with him, I, sometimes, noticed him take a napkin paper from the dining table and note on it. Every time I talked with some important person, he never failed to note down my words. I would like to mention here of a gentleman who became a friend of mine during my tour in the Soviet Union. He is Mr. Nik Ermoshkin, a Russian from Moscow. He says he is a Buddhist. He does not drink alcohol, nor does he smoke. He carried his small tape-recorder all along my tour in Ulan Ude and recorded my talks and speeches. He also recorded some of my talks and speeches in Moscow. Whenever he wanted to ask me something, he would smile a little bit, pulling his lower lip aside, and says, "Would you kindly tell me about . . .?" And then he would say resting his right hand on his chest, "I like you very much." "You speak very good English but my English is not good, you are very good speaker, all people like your speech very much." Again he would smile and say, "Good-bye."

Before I left the monastery, I went around the monastery to see some of its buildings. I saw the library, the shrine-room, etc. I also went to the Sharabov Bandido Hambo Lama's room. He lived in a small room on the ground floor. It must be very cold for him there. He has his own altar in his room. There are several small images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. In front of the altar there are seven silver cups filled with water, and a small jar containing sacred water. He reads Tibetan books on Buddhism. He told me that he liked reading very much. Though this place is in a remote corner, they have electricity there, but no heating system in the monastery. They just have a fire burning in the room.

It was quite dark when I left this place, at about 7 p.m. There was still a crowd of people, but not so big as in the morning, waiting to see me off. People crowded around the car and I had to open the window to extend my hand towards their heads. Many people offered me money. The car moved slowly. Out of the crowd I saw a girl extending her hand to me. I touched her head and she gave me something in my hand. It was not money, not a string of coral nor a ring, but it was her own nice wrist watch, which she took off her wrist. Many people shook hands with me. We said good-bye to each other under the twinkling stars in a dark clear sky. After we passed the wooden gate of the monastery the car ran at full speed. I left the temple in darkness but I could see the lights in the hearts of the people who poured on me their deep love and friendliness, giving me a very deep impression.

After about an hour's drive we came to a teachers' training college in the heart of the city. A concert performed by the college students in honour of a Mongolian athletic team from the Mongolian People's Republic was going on, and I got the opportunity to attend this programme. There were 460 students in this college, only 15% of these were boys. The age of the students varied from 18 to 25. They learn the Buryati and Russian languages.

The next morning I visited the Telman Collective Farm about 80 kilometres from Ulan-Ude. As we drove along we passed through a big coal mine and saw a herd of sheep grazing. The collective farm was established some years ago. It started with only a dozen families, but now has over a hundred families. They have poultry,

cattle and many thousand hectares of land. They have a school and a clinic with six beds. In this school children are taught in Buryati language. They have their textbooks in their own language. Every 'minor nationality in the Soviet Union has its own language, and the people use both their local and Russian languages.

Nearby is a city, where a hospital is situated. I had the pleasure to visit several farm houses. When entering the house, I was offered a big cup of milk, which tasted good and warm. Some of the families consisted of five members, others six or seven. They possessed washing machines and furniture. Some families possessed three rooms, and others four or five. Besides, they had other houses for the summer season and cattle-houses, too. They also had gardens, electricity, radio and telephone. I was very much pleased to find some altars with the image of Buddha in some of the houses. Some of the farmers said that they had been there for three years, and others for five or six years. They expressed their great satisfaction there. I was told by the director of the farm that a new family which likes to join the farm has to apply first, and if the committee accepts its application then it is given 0.6 hectare of land to build its house, 15,000 roubles on credit, one cow, five sheep and one pig. A farmer can keep up to three cows, ten sheep and one pig. The fifteen thousand roubles which the farmer and his family got from the government, will be paid back to the government half by the farmer himself and the other half by the collective farm. The farmer will pay by instalments within ten years. However, in the first two years he need not pay. All the money the farmer earns from his private

enterprise belongs to himself, and the house and the land which he has got from the collective farm also belong to him. Apart from this, he also gets his share of production from the collective farm according to his labour. The collective farm takes 35% out of the whole production. .

In the afternoon, we drove further and reached a city, which is called Gusina. There I saw a big newly rebuilt temple called Gusina Ogors Datsa, which was built originally in the 17th century A.D., but was later destroyed. Now with the help of one and half million roubles from the government, it has been rebuilt. The work inside it is not yet completed. The main hall is quite large. Images of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are going to be enshrined therein.

In the Buryat Mongolian Autonomous Republic there are no other nationalities except a few Russians and of course, the Buryat Mongolians. The Buryat Mongolians are all Buddhists by faith.

There was a large gathering waiting for me at this temple. The crowd was uncontrollable. I was nearly squeezed by the crowd. After I had given a short speech to them, I was requested to give them blessings. As I have said the temple is newly rebuilt and there is nobody at present living in it, so I sat in a chair in the outer hall where the people came and offered me money, coral, etc. I was shivering with cold, and it was getting darker also. So at some friend's suggestions, I left the place, and proceeded to the car. But however the driver tried, he could not drive the car through the crowd that surrounded it. Somebody gave me a plate of wheat to scatter among the people for them to take home as some-

thing sacred and precious. So when the car was completely surrounded we had to stop and let the people receive my blessings through the window of the car. In this way I was also protected from the severe cold. It gave me a very deep impression that wherever I went in Ulan Ude I found many devoted Buddhists waiting to be blessed. Even when I went in and out of the hotel I found many people waiting at the gate to have an opportunity to offer me something and to get my blessings. If the Buryat Mongolian people were by any way suppressed or interfered by the ruling party, then certainly they could not have shown their sentimental and emotional feelings so freely! They have very deep faith in Buddhism, just like the people of our country. That is why I told you before that as a Buddhist I was not fully satisfied until I came to Ulan Ude. Because in the other parts of the Soviet Union, where I have visited, I did not meet any people of the Buddhist community. The Buddhist culture of the Buryat Mongolian people has not been wiped out, but it is growing up and is developing. The government of the Soviet Union has not only protected the ancient arts, cultures, and traditions of the national minorities in their country, but it has also paid great attention to the improvements and maintenance of their traditions, etc. It is good for a country to have different types of arts, cultures and people of different faiths. It beautifies the country and the country is enriched in many ways. It is a very wrong policy of any government to try to wipe out or suppress the culture, art, cult and language of minor nationalities. When a country has unity among its nationalities and citizens regardless of their castes, creeds, races, and when

it has a common aim of developing their economy, education, public health, then a country does not take much time to progress.

On the 28th November, I visited one of the big locomotive plants in the Soviet Union. It has about sixteen thousand workers. I saw their living quarters. After 25 years of work they get pension. Their wages rise from 400 roubles at the beginning up to 1,500 roubles. Their living quarters which very much looked like a town, has all new buildings. Here there are the hospital, cultural house, play-ground, library, schools, clubs, cinema-hall, shopping centre, etc. The director of the factory told me that they were building new types of engines and carriages. In a short speech I pointed out to the workers, who were assembled in a lecture hall, the location of Nepal and gave a brief description of the country. They were overjoyed to hear me and asked me to convey their greetings to the workers of Nepal, while a worker thanked me for my talk. They also asked many questions.

I have also seen many other factories during my tour in the Soviet Union. I also saw many educational centres, in Moscow, Leningrad and in Stalingrad.

From the factory I was taken to a hospital, where I met many lady doctors. The chief lady doctor told me that there were 400 beds at present in the hospital. There were 60 doctors, of whom 15% were males. I saw many new things there. I did not count the number of buildings of the hospital. Some new ones are still being built.

On the 29th November I visited the Department of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Buryat Mongolian Autonomous Republic in Ulan Ude. I met

the director of the department and many other specialists in different subjects. The director presented me with some new books, including a big dictionary of Tibetan and Russian languages. He requested me to deliver a talk to the scholars assembled in the hall, which I accepted with great pleasure. There were about one hundred scholars and specialists in different subjects. I gave them a talk on Buddhism, from a scientific point of view, and a brief history of Buddhism. In the course of my talk I drew their attention to the fact that in the Buddha's teachings there is no place for blind faith, such as belief in a supreme God and prayers for happiness, prosperity and for peace; that peace comes from one's own good action and realization; that Buddha's teachings are very practicable in everyday life. I told them He taught not only how to live peacefully on this earth but how to develop human mentality, too. In His teachings one can find not only the science of cause and effect, but also the science of human nature and sublime peace. In the history of Buddhism there has been no bloodshed. Wherever Buddhism went in the past people became cultured and civilized. I told them that if they studied Buddhism in a scientific way, I was sure they would gain a great deal of knowledge which would be of great help for the development of their nation and country. After my talk many questions were asked. One of the scholars asked me whether the Buddhists would appreciate and support the proposal of complete disarmament put by Nikita Khrushchov in the United Nations. I told them that the proposal of Nikita Khrushchov would certainly be supported by Buddhists, and if the Buddha lived at present, He would surely appreciate Mr.

Khrushchov for his proposal of disarmament. At the same time Mr. Khrushchov would also have sought the Buddha's advice and become one of the most prominent disciples of the Buddha, in order to maintain world peace. The audience was so friendly and we had a very frank discussion.

I had similar pleasure in delivering talks in the Departments of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences in both Moscow and Leningrad. I may write in another article about my experience and what I have seen in other places in the Soviet Union. I left the territory of the Soviet Union on the 1st December, 1959, after having spent one month there, carrying with me the warm friendship — as I used to carry from other countries also — of the Soviet people to my own country.

With the help of our interpreter, Mr. Yuri Yakov Levitch, a scholar of the Tamil language of India, I managed to express myself to them. He was a good interpreter and he had some knowledge of the oriental people. My gratitude is due to him for his precise interpretation and translation during my tour in Ulan Ude.

