

“*Sabba Dānaṃ Dhamma Dānaṃ Jināti*”
(Gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts)

VESAK SIRISARA

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What Buddhists Believe

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Buddhists believe in the latent, creative possibilities of man as is revealed by the unique life of the Buddha Gotama, the founder of the moral and philosophical system popularly known as Buddhism. The fact that Buddhahood, or that supreme state of perfection and enlightenment, is latent in all, serves as a great incentive to self-sacrificing and compassionate individuals intent on serving others and perfecting themselves.

Man is a powerful machine which, unlike ordinary mechanical devices, is very simple in its beginning and extremely complex in its consummation. In this complex machinery of man the most important factor is the invisible mind, whatever its source may be.

It is mind that elevates man to a superhuman pedestal or degrades him to a sub-human level. Like electricity, mind is both a constructive and a destructive powerful force. It is the bitterest foe and the greatest friend of man. Buddhists believe that this powerful mind is the creator and the destroyer of man and is the architect of one's fate. It is this powerful mind which creates heaven and hell on earth. In this invisible mind are found the worm, the brute, the man, the superman and the god. In fact, man is a world by himself.

Reason does not prompt Buddhists to believe in an arbitrary Creator who controls the destinies of man, and who rewards and punishes him for doing or failing to do his will on earth. Buddhists are not convinced of the omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience of an Almighty God above man whom he should fear, obey and love.

The Buddha's advice to His followers is to fear none and instil fear in no one. This is a Buddhist principle that should be cultivated in this war-mongering world where the most precious thing—life—is sacrificed at the altar of brute force and where armaments are creating fear, suspicion and hatred.

Buddhists are expected to develop that sweet virtue of loving kindness towards all, irrespective of caste, creed, colour or sex. How happy it would be if all could live as citizens of one world without any feeling of separateness. One world founded on love and reason, blending the scientific knowledge of the West with the wisdom of the East, should be desired by all high-principled men and women.

Buddhists have no faith in petitional or intercessory prayers, but they believe in the importance of self-exertion and in the efficacy of meditation that tends to self-conquest, self-control, self-purification and enlightenment. "Meditation is not a silent reverie, but an energetic striving." It serves as a tonic both to the heart and the mind.

Buddhists do not believe in rewards and punishments given by a superior Being, but they believe that man reaps what he has sown, and what he sows he reaps somewhere, sometime. The pain or happiness man experiences is the inevitable result of his own doings. This leads him to believe in the doctrine of *Kamma*, the Buddhist law of moral causation and individual responsi-

bility. Kamma, which some interpret as "action-influence", is a law in itself which operates in its own field without the intervention of an external, independent ruling agency. It is neither fatalism nor predestination that is imposed on us by some mysterious unknown power, to which we must helplessly submit ourselves.

This law of Kamma explains the problem of suffering, the mystery of fate and predestination of some religions, the problem of infant prodigies, and above all, the inequality of mankind. This belief in Kamma gives them consolation, hope, self-reliance and moral courage. It validates their effort, kindles their enthusiasm, and makes them ever kind, tolerant, and considerate for they understand that no worldling is entirely good or entirely bad.

Kamma or action caused by ignorance and craving, the Buddha says, conditions rebirth. Past actions condition the present birth; and present actions, in combination with past actions, condition the future. The present is the offspring of the past, and becomes, in turn, the parent of the future. In one sense we are what we were; we will be what we are. In another sense we are not what we were; we will not be what we are. For instance, a criminal today may be a saint tomorrow.

Buddhists do not believe that the present is the only life between two eternities of misery and happiness, nor do they believe that this present life flux is completely annihilated after death. Buddhists believe that "man is but one of an indefinite number of states of being and that this earthly life is but one episode among many others". It must be admitted that this doctrine can neither be proved nor disproved experimentally, but it is accepted as an evidentially verifiable fact.

This doctrine of Kamma and Rebirth accounts for the arising of geniuses and infant prodigies, dissimilarities amongst children of the same family, special abilities of men due to their prenatal tendencies, instinctive likes and dislikes at first sight, untimely deaths, the arising of great religious teachers like the Buddhas who possess incomparable physical, mental and intellectual characteristics, etc.

If we postulate a past, present, and a future life, then we are at once faced with the alleged mysterious problem: "What is the ultimate origin of life?"

One school, in attempting to solve the problem, posits a first cause whether as a cosmic force or as an Almighty Being. Another school denies a first cause, for, in common experience, the cause ever becomes the effect and the effect becomes the cause.

In a circle of cause and effect a first cause is inconceivable. According to the former, life has had a beginning : while, according to the latter, it is beginningless.

Modern science, confining itself to sense-data, tackles the problem and tells us that we are the direct products of the sperm and ovum cells provided by our parents. But science does not give a satisfactory explanation with regard to the development of the mind which is infinitely more important than the machinery of man's material body. Scientists, while asserting "*omne vivum ex vivo*", all life from life, maintain that mind and life evolved from the lifeless.

Some religious systems assert that soul (an averred essence of man) springs from a God, parents only providing the gross garments for the soul. From the scientific standpoint, we are absolutely parent-born : as much, life precedes life. With regard to the origin of the first protoplasm of life or "colloid", (whichever we please to call it), scientists plead ignorance.

According to Buddhism we are born from the matrix of action (*Kammayoni*). Parents merely provide us with a material layer ; as such, being precedes being. At the moment of conception, it is *Kamma*, or past action, that conditions the initial consciousness which vitalizes the foetus. It is this invisible *Kammic* energy, generated from the past birth, that produces mental phenomena and the phenomenon of life in an already extent physical phenomenon to complete the trio that constitutes man.

With regard to the ultimate origin of life the Buddha positively declares : "Without cognizable end is this 'recurrent wandering' (*samsara*). A first beginning of beings who, obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving, wander and fare on, is not to be perceived."

This life-stream flows *ad infinitum*, as long as it is fed by the muddy waters of ignorance and craving. When these two are completely cut off, then only does the life-stream cease to flow ; rebirth ends, as in the case of Buddhas and Arahants. An ultimate beginning of this life-stream cannot be determined, as a stage cannot be perceived when this life force was not fraught with ignorance and craving. The Buddha has here referred merely to the beginning of the life-stream of living beings. It is left to scientists to speculate on the origin and the evolution of the universe.

The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth should be differentiated from the transmigration and reincarnation of other religions, as Buddhism denies the existence of a permanent soul or an un-

changing entity that transmigrates from one life to another. To justify the existence of endless felicity in an eternal heaven and unending torment in an eternal hell, an immortal soul is necessary.

Buddhism resolves the living being into mind and matter which are in a state of constant flux, not remaining for two consecutive moments the same. The whole process of these psycho-physical phenomena which constantly arise and perish is at times termed—in conventional terms—the self, or *Atta*, by the Buddha ; but it is a process and not an identity that is thus termed.

Buddhism does not totally deny the existence of a personality in an empirical sense. It denies, in an ultimate sense, an identical being or a permanent entity, but it does not deny a continuity in process. This uninterrupted dynamic life flux or continuity of psycho-physical phenomena conditioned by Karma—having no perceivable source in the beginningless past nor an end to its continuation in the future except by the Noble Eightfold Path—is the Buddhist substitute for the permanent ego or eternal soul in other religious systems.

Buddhists believe in this Noble Eightfold Path which consists of Right Understanding, Right Thoughts, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration, as the unique Middle Way to get rid of the ills of life, to which all are subject in the course of “wanderings in life”.

This Middle Way is neither a metaphysical path nor a ritualistic path ; neither dogmatism nor scepticism ; neither self-indulgence nor self-mortification ; neither eternalism nor nihilism ; neither pessimism nor optimism and neither absolutely this worldly nor other worldly. It is a path of Enlightenment, a means of Deliverance from suffering.

Buddhism makes no attempt to rationalise suffering, but accepts it as a fact and tries to seek the cause to eradicate it.

With perfect confidence, Buddhists follow this unique way of life practised and taught by the Buddha, to reach their ultimate goal, Nibbana, which can be attained in this very life itself.

From an ethical standpoint Nibbana is total destruction of attachment, illwill, and ignorance. Psychologically it is the complete elimination of the so-called “I” or egoism. Metaphysically it is the cessation of Becoming, or the annihilation of suffering.

BUDDHISM IN THE MODERN WORLD

by

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The world today is full of paradoxes. Great advances have been made in scientific achievement : earth satellites have been launched into orbit, the increased rapidity of trans-continental flights has enabled countries far apart to be brought close together, many dreadful diseases hitherto regarded as inevitably fatal have been brought under control and the longevity of human beings increased ; some lands which had been in tutelage have won freedom, the world's wealth has been multiplied by the discovery of hidden resources, the courage and intrepidity of men and women revealed in even greater measure than before in numerous fields of adventure, and the need for co-operation among individuals and nations increasingly recognised.

But, side by side with this, is another picture : a very gloomy one. Mankind today lives in fear of the future. Ours has been described as a dying civilization, materially prosperous but spiritually sick, an age of cheapness and publicity, of degrading intellectual standards. The entire orientation of our social system is towards material repletion, with its overcharge of empty stimuli and its frequent miscarriage of technique. The heroes of contemporary culture are the young and the successful, not the old and the wise. They are not those marked by exceptional moral discipline or insights into the meaning of life. Most men spend their lives eating, drinking, talking, travelling, like highly efficient cattle, their range of consciousness walled-in, their sense of personal responsibility submerged by the instincts of the herd. Large numbers of human beings are like cogs in a wheel, their work soul-destroying drudgery, their life full of boredom and irritable wretchedness, their leisure merely a negative concept with nothing creative about it. Most of them are content to be just languid, debilitated conformists, mere numbers and labels. They get their views of life through high-pressure advertising, sex-sodden, crime-ridden newspapers and periodicals and debased films. All kinds of forces are at work trying to mould the individual to his environment rather than the reverse, to make him more and more as " furniture " of the environment. Great emphasis is laid on the equality of human beings but in stressing equality what often results is mediocrity, or even worse. There is a very strong pervasive tendency to be the same as

everyone else. We are faced with the extinction of our individuality through increasing the trivialization of our lives and the loss of relationship with anything beyond ourselves. Personality is losing against Power.

The world is racked by a fundamental restlessness, with its precipitate life of tumult, its fever for speed and its craving for the shortening of all intervals of space and time. The "common man" is held up as if he were the very pattern of humanity; the spiritual man is very much at a discount. The contemplative ideal is dismissed as equivalent to laziness, the cherished goal being visible activity in material and social fields. Thought and intellectual activity are dispersed in the whirlpool of multiple detail and action and subjected to the low impulses of sentimentality. Many men are filled with a sense of impending calamity and oppressed by the futility of any effort to avoid a fate which they see coming but cannot explain. Their anxieties are charmed away by the narcotics of speed and mechanized amusements. Man's brain has created things which his will may not be able to control.

On the surface, the situation seems pretty hopeless. And yet, the unconquerable spirit of man, of many men at least, is not looking back, but is looking forward, reaching out to the stars, both literally and metaphorically. Progressively-spirited men and women are increasingly disposed to translate ideas and ideals into terms of conduct and programmes of action.

In modern society there are two needs, both equally important: to be one with others, and to be oneself, the attainment of individuality in circumstances which have made collective action imperative. It is a difficult task, but not an impossible one, needing creativeness and courage. It can be realised when men are convinced that the material well-being of society is not the summit of human achievement but only the foundation for its florescence. A reconciliation has to be accomplished, a symphony established between the dynamic energies of modern life and civilizing ideals. Earthly economy must be brought into accord with the spiritual reality which is at the heart of things. A way of life must be found which brings into co-operative unity the scientific spirit and the democratic faith which is intent upon increasing the satisfactoriness and dignity of daily existence for all men.

But for this to be possible, there is one essential pre-requisite. We must have peace in the world. As things are, that is very far from being the case. The world is divided into blocs and the peoples of the world live in perpetual fear and tension. The leaders of great nations now indulge in a new game called "brinkmanship". People are taught by lying propaganda to hate and

fear people of other countries. The inhabitants of one bloc are told that the rulers and people of other blocs are determined to destroy them. The race is on for more and powerful weapons of destruction and imagination reels at the havoc that these weapons can create.

We must face as squarely and as realistically as we can the fact that it is not the will of an omnipotent god or the curse of a no-less powerful devil but earthly conditions that are responsible for human ills and that these ills can only be remedied through changes in these conditions.

Men can no longer be fobbed off with the promise of a supernatural recompense after death for actual earthly defeat. It is precisely the conquest of external conditions that has determined mankind's difference from all other forms of life. We have to accept the fact that hereafter mankind will live in a world unimaginably different from the one we have known. A change of heart is the first essential to a changed order. We shall ourselves have to produce the leaders of the brave new world. They do not come down from heaven in answer to prayer. Throughout history the men and women who have towered over their contemporaries through their struggle and achievements have been those with extraordinary levels of religious belief and practice. This gave them the necessary strength and enabled them to project themselves beyond their innate imitations. They had an inner compass of certainty beyond all logic and reason. To produce such leaders the generality of mankind must learn to grow larger, to see further and deeper, think with more skill, concentration and originality. Man must have faith not in some god but in man himself. We must recognize the external goodness of human nature. Somehow or other, in spite of all the oscillations of good and evil we find around us, it is the good that has ultimately prevailed. And the good, concretely, is man's growing awareness of his essential oneness. Every man has within himself the seeds of perfection. Human life is an associative life, of co-existence and co-operation, of tolerance and understanding, a life of action and interaction. Everything that is done by beings affects all beings. All that is has been caused by beings, each one being affected according to its share in the cause. What the past has been we are experiencing now, what the future will be we are making now. The future will depend on the choice and direction of our thoughts and actions now.

It is the recognition of these basic facts that makes Buddhism unique among religions and eminently fitted to the modern age. It is primarily and essentially, though not completely, concerned with this world and with this life, not with some other world, with some other, happier life to be lived only after death. Buddhism is a way of life, a path of progressive development to

be trodden with insight and moral energy. There is no dogmatic theology of any sort and there is nothing comparable to beliefs found in some other systems that man is born sinful and cannot obtain salvation unless he experiences a new birth. There are however instructions laid down for the cultivation of certain virtues which characterize a good man in his personal life, in all his morally significant relationships, with other people, other living creatures and with the ultimate reality of the universe. Guidance is given regarding the ideal which he should aim to attain and the qualities which he should develop within himself in order to become a dependable source of well-being both to himself and to others, such as truthfulness and integrity, love, compassion and courage, serenity and confidence. Nature is not represented as something red in tooth and claw, which man must conquer. On the contrary, the effort should be for integration with the cosmic process through right action and right contemplation. In the face of the infinite wonders of Nature, man needs to be humble but he need not despair since he has the power to understand the world and co-operate with it and cease to be a mere mechanism within it. The mind has tremendous power to shape man's destiny. The teaching regarding *karma* assures the individual that he has a succession of lives, a succession of spiritual opportunities, and that there is no need for redemption or condemnation at the end of this only single life.

Buddhism is a system based rigorously on knowledge, free from the elements of both faith and intellectualism, not tied to local or organised traditions. Buddhism might well claim to be the one great world-religion founded on a coherent, systematic and logical analysis of the problem of life. The four Noble Truths, which form the basis of Buddhism, say that existence involves conflict and consequent unhappiness, that the causes of this conflict and unhappiness can be investigated and discovered, the chief among them being selfish craving. The causes, having been thus known, can be eliminated by our own effort, unaided by any outside power, and the way to do this is the Noble Eightfold Path. In the modern age, it is correct to say that knowledge is dependent on speculation and discovery. For this, facts not obviously related have to be put together and events have to be interpreted. In Buddhism truth is not regarded as something put together or an interpretation of facts. The truth is there for all to see: what is needed is to prepare oneself to see the truth. He who cannot strenuously train himself cannot see the Truth. Once the Truth is seen, it can be tested, if necessary, in the logic of life.

Right Action Needed

Contrary to the belief that seems to be held in some quarters, Buddhism is not a world-denying religion. It has no place for flight from the world, for inaction, quietism or mortification.

As far as the layman is concerned, Buddhism shows great consideration for his material interests. Thus, in one of the oldest and most respected sections of the Pali canon we find the following very practical advice to the ambitious and acquisitive business-man. The verses are attributed to the Buddha Himself :

*The wise and moral man
 shines like a fire on a hilltop,
 making money like the bee
 which does not hurt the flower ;
 Such a man makes his pile
 and an anthill, gradually.
 The man grown wealthy thus
 can help his family
 and firmly bind his friends
 to himself. He should divide
 his money in four parts ;
 on one part he should live,
 with two, expand his trade,
 and the fourth he should save
 against a rainy day.*

What it teaches is not cessation from action but *right* action, where one acts freely, deliberately, with full realisation of the implications of such action. It teaches that selfish attachment leads to unhappiness. The alternative to attachment, however, is not the insensibility of indifference but the detachment and the compassion which comes with knowledge, reconciliation and inner control. Man is not born free, he only really becomes man when having conceived the idea of freedom, he strives to realise it within himself. Freedom is an inner condition. Co-operative life is possible only for those who are capable of concentration and integrity, who have the courage to be lonely in their minds. If man is to be great, he must develop in himself a sense of purpose beyond the immediate demands of daily life. It is small wonder therefore that the teachings of the Buddha have proved attractive to thinking men and women everywhere in the modern world. This seems to have even caused concern to some leaders of other religions, especially in the West, who find their churches being gradually deserted. But they need have no fear at all.

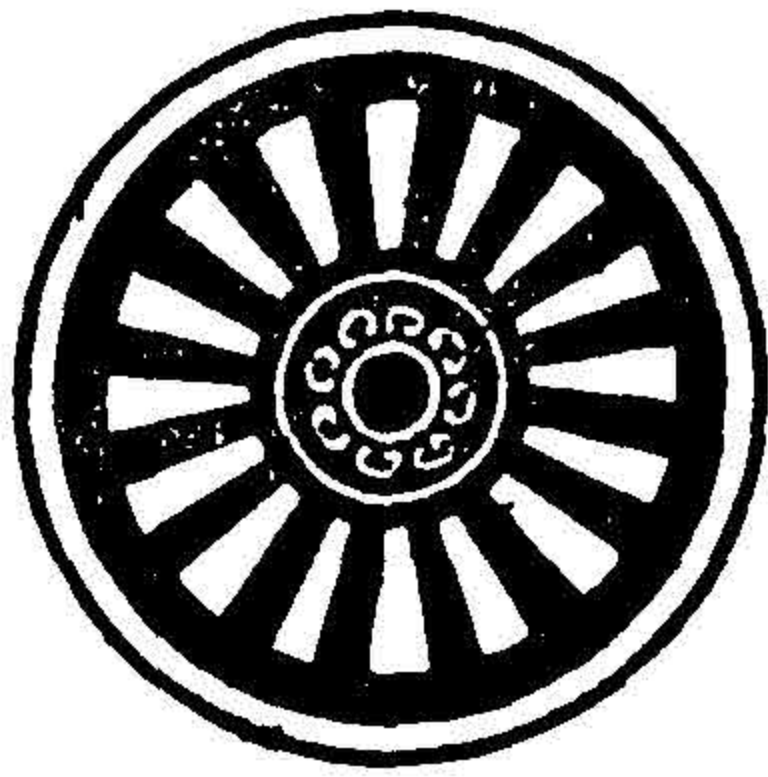
Buddhism has never competed for converts in the marketplace, and never will so compete. Throughout its long history of twenty five centuries it has never fought wars of expansion. Its patrons never tried by force or guile or administrative discrimination to force Buddhism upon anyone. Tolerance and non-aggression have been its most salient features and it is this very

fact that has made it the way of life of nearly a quarter of the human race. There are unmistakable signs that it is entering into a new period of resurgence both in the East and the West, in India, China and Japan, in America. In many countries of Western and Eastern Europe and more recently in the U.S.S.R. where arrangements are being made to establish a centre of Buddhist Studies and Research in the capital of the Soviet Union.

LIGHT OF ASIA

*Oh, Light of Asia, lighten our dark West
 With Wisdom garnered from Thy Holy Quest.
 Show us the Path which leads to Sorrow's Cure,
 The Sorrows that all living things endure,
 Thy gentle Teaching in our minds instil,
 That none can prosper who treat others ill.
 But he who cherishes good-will to all
 Earth's living creatures, whether great or small,
 Through their content his sufferings shall cease,
 And he shall walk the path of perfect peace.*

G. LYSTER



The Four Noble Truths

By

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Once the Venerable Sariputta, the chief disciple of the Buddha, addressing the Bhikkhus spoke thus:—"Just as all living beings, who go on feet, find passage-way in the elephant's foot-print, which is pre-eminent in size ; even so, friends, all good and salutary states of mind may be confined within Four Noble Truths, namely, Suffering, its Cause, its Cessation, and the Path". This shows that whatever teaching was imparted by the Master is comprehended in the four noble truths ; and there is no moral virtue taught by any philosopher which is not seen in the doctrine of the Buddha. There is no single word of the Master which is not comprised in the four noble truths. That is to say, whatever teaching He has taught is included either in the first, in the second, in the third, or in the fourth truth.

These four truths are called in Pali Ariyasaccani (Standard Truths), because they were first thought out and realized by the Noble Chief of the Aryans, Gautama the Buddha. It may be asked : Why are there four truths precisely, and no more or no less ? And the answer to this question would be : Because neither is there a truth to add, nor can any one of these four be rejected. The Buddha realised that the world is suffering. That is the First Truth. He kept on searching and searching and discovered that selfish desire was the cause of suffering. That is the Second Truth. Next He realized that there was a state free from suffering. That is the Third Truth. He also realized there was a path, which led to that state. That is the Fourth Truth. Thus they are exactly four in number.

In order to excite or alarm the people, who were attached to the world, He said that the world was suffering. To show that suffering was not due to the doings of a god, and that it did not come without a cause, He next expounded what its cause was. Thirdly, to the people, who thus knew suffering and its cause, He proclaimed that Nibbana was free from suffering. Lastly, just as a skilled physician, understanding his patient's disease and its cause, prescribes wholesome medicine, so the Buddha has shown people the path that leads to Nibbana.

1

The Master in His first sermon expressed Himself thus :—
 “ This, O Bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering. Birth is suffering ; decay is suffering ; disease is suffering ; death itself is suffering ; the union with the undesired people is suffering ; the separation from the beloved is suffering ; the unattainment of desired objects is suffering ; in brief, the very existence of the Five Aggregates is suffering. O Bhikkhus, this is the first noble truth of suffering ”.

How is birth itself suffering ? In the Buddhist scriptures, it has been beautifully explained how an infant feels pain when it lives in the womb of the mother, and how it is painful to be born. Again, some people bring pain and suffering to themselves by committing suicide, refusing to take food through anger, indulging in bodily mortification thinking that it is the way to salvation, and so on. The ground for all these is birth. If there is no birth, there is no suffering whatever.

Next how is decay itself suffering ? The explanation of the word *Jara* i.e., decay runs thus :—“ When in any creature of any class decay and decadence set in, with broken teeth, grey hair, and wrinkles ; when the term of life is drawing to a close, and the faculties and organs of sense are weakening, that is *Jara* or decay ”. If any feeling of pain arises in the mind through the passing of youth, it is due to decay. A youth hardly thinks of the unpleasant life of an old man.

Nothing is more obvious than the fact that disease causes suffering.

Then how is death itself suffering ? When a man lies on his death bed, thinking of all his nearest and dearest, from whom he has to part, he suffers mentally. On the other hand, as we sometimes see, to die being not easy, the victim suffers very much not only in mind but in body as well. More especially to a man, who has not practised reflection on death, its approach is very painful.

The union or contact with undesired people also causes mental as well as bodily pains. In the first place, when a man sees his enemy, he feels pain mentally. Again when he tries to overcome him, he feels pain bodily also.

The parting from the beloved is the most painful trial man has to undergo. Those people who have beloved children, parents, brothers, sisters, and dear friends know how very painful it is if they happen to part from them, even temporarily.

How is the unattainment of one's desired object, suffering? It is evident that every man is in want of this or that. Just as a beggar craves for his daily bread, even so a king craves for larger and yet larger kingdom. There is no difference between a king and a beggar in respect of suffering, when each has failed to attain his desired object. Every man is in want of something: it may be wealth, or fame, or what not, and he suffers in failing to attain it.

The fivefold elements of life bring suffering, because they are impermanent; and if anything is impermanent, it is painful. The very existence of those five aggregates, namely, body, sensation, perception, mentalities, and consciousness, is suffering not only in this world but in any conceivable world.

Thus the Buddha's formula of the noble truth of suffering shows that the world is nothing but a mass of suffering. One might ask why Buddhism dwells always upon the gloomy side of life, when there are hundreds of possibilities of finding pleasures in life. It is true, man may sometimes have an abatement of suffering through attaining his desired objects. But the so-called pleasures of life when compared with its unpleasantnesses, the scale of pleasure is very low. Sometimes, the pleasure gained during five or six years' time through one object, is less than the suffering experienced in one minute through the loss of the same object. For instance, think of a young mother with a lovely child. Now, there is the happy mother; and there is the child smiling at her. Thus, she has lived several years, and alas, the child suddenly meets with a terrible accident and dies. The total amount of pleasure she has enjoyed during those long years is nothing when compared with the pain she undergoes at that dreadful moment. Thus it is clear that man's life has an excess of pain over so-called pleasure.

2

What is the cause of suffering? The Buddha's formula of the cause of suffering runs thus: "This O Bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cause of suffering. It is the craving, which leads to

rebirth, connected with pleasure and desire, finding here and there its happiness. This is the Noble Truth of the cause of suffering ”.

Out of craving, impelled by desire, kings contend with kings, nobles with nobles, Brahmins with Brahmins, householders with householders, mother with son, son with mother, father with son, son with father ; in their quarrels they fall on one another with bands and cudjels, with weapons and knives, and so come to death or deadly hurt.

Moved by desire, men break promises, commit robbery and theft, turn into brigands or highwaymen. When arrested, these men are punished by the authorities in various ways ; sometimes their heads are cut off etc.

On account of desire, men go astray in deed, word and thought ; and thus, after their death they pass to a state of suffering.

In such words, after the manner of expression in vogue in His day and country, the great Master instructed mankind. With slight alteration or adoption of language, the teaching is as applicable to Sri Lanka and to the modern times as when it was first uttered some twenty-five centuries ago in India.

“ Beset with desire, the mass of men run this and that way like hunted hares. Bound and fettered by desire, they come to suffering for a long time ”, says the Buddha.

3

Then what is the cessation of suffering ? The Buddha’s formula for it runs thus : “ This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, the abolition of this thirst by the destruction of desire, the turning away from desire altogether, complete freedom from it, and unsubmitiveness. This is the noble truth of cessation of suffering.

This truth declares that as suffering is produced by selfish desire, suffering can only be destroyed by the destruction of that selfish desire. The Master says :

Yathapi mule anupaddave dalhe
Chinnopi rukkho punareva ruhati,
Evampi tanhanusaye anuhate
Nibbattati dukkhamidam punappunam.

“As a banyan tree that has been cut down sprouts forth again, if its roots remain uninjured and strong, even so, the propensity to desire not being destroyed this suffering comes up again and again.”

“But whosoever overcomes this desire, this wretched craving, his sorrows fall from him as does the water-drop from the lotus-leaf.”

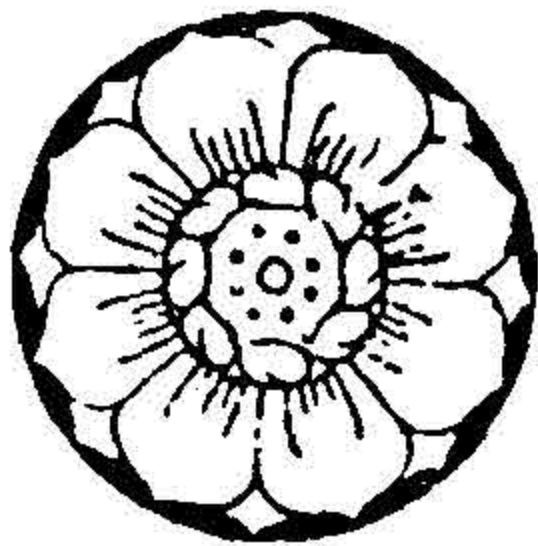
Though the occasion presents itself for an explanation of Nibbana, yet this, being an all-important subject, will be discussed independently.

4

Now, what is the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering? The Buddha's formula runs thus: “This O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering; it is the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right View, Right Aim, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Exertion, Right Recollection, and Right Concentration. This is the noble truth of the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering”.

The Master having renounced the pleasure of the senses and the practice of self-mortification, embraced this Middle Course, which leads to the extermination of evil tendencies and to the realization of the four noble truths. It is the Way which dispels the darkness of ignorance, crystallizes the eye of Wisdom and leads to the attainment of Nibbana.

After all what is Nibbana? The Buddha has never described Nibbana in a positive form. The some of His Negative way of definition of Nibbana would be thus: Where name and form totally and completely disappear, where none of the four elements exist, where demarcation in colours or by standards is impossible, where there is neither enjoyable happiness nor a person to enjoy it, where ignorance and craving have no place, where suffering completely disappears, **THAT IS NIBBANA.**



THE BUDDHA DHAMMA

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AND

BY

THE LAYMAN

S. F. DE SILVA, ESQR.



(Director of Education, Ceylon.)

In the Buddha's own life-time, we have records of ordinary men of the world going to him and telling him that the higher life was not possible for them and whether the Buddha had no message or teaching for laymen. This point of view is very important because today there is a general tendency to ignore the laymen's code of life and to emphasize rather the higher life which is really meant for the few. All men seek happiness in this life and in the life hereafter, this is but natural, and it is perhaps here that the genius of Asoka lies. As a man of the world he realized that certain aspects of the Buddha's teaching were really not practicable where ordinary men and women were concerned. He realized that what is basic and fundamental was the securing by each one of happiness in this life and towards this end he, as the head of a great state, directed his efforts and time. In all his edicts, we find constant reference to the ways and means of securing happiness in this life. In one celebrated edict he tells us that he himself has striven hard so that he might make his people happy in this world and he expresses the hope that they may be happy in the hereafter. The sum substance of the content of the various edicts consist in a call to effort "Appamado" and a call to people, no matter what their rank in life be, whether they were private citizens or public servants to do their duty. Those in office and in places of authority, including himself, are reminded that they should exercise the utmost patience and goodwill towards those below and that just as parents care for the welfare of their children so he and those in authority should try to consider the people within the State and even living on its borders as "their own children". The result of Asoka's great effort to induce people to so conduct themselves that they may achieve happiness in this life resulted in the good life being practised by large numbers of ordinary men and women. It is this good life in this world with its happiness here and happiness hereafter that perhaps appealed to all classes of men and women not only in India and Ceylon but in all parts of the world where the Buddha Dhamma travelled. It seems most appropriate that at a time like this in our country, the emphasis should be placed on living a good life. All discussions of the higher life do not lead to their practice for it is beyond the powers of the ordinary, while the good life for the layman which

is practicable here and now tends to be ignored. The nett result is that there is a good deal of learned talk and discussion but very little practice. We are inclined to forget the Buddha's own words "Happiness will be his who will *practise* the seeking."

One interesting educational influence on the layman is no doubt the example of the Buddha's own life. He put into practice what he preached. This is why he figures so much not only in the literature but in the Art of all Buddhist lands. He has been to all Buddhists a wonderful example of one who practised goodwill to all and one who was of service to all. It should be noted that on attaining Buddhahood, the Buddha had doubts whether he should preach so difficult a Dhamma to the ordinary rank and file of the world, but we are told in the ancient records that he was so filled with compassion for those who, but for his teaching would be lost, that he decided to face all manner of disappointments and go forth and teach those who wished to be taught. He himself said "There are some whose eyes are not completely covered with dust, they will perceive the truth." This is how his 45 years of service to mankind began. The first person he met was an ascetic who on hearing him shook his head and walked away. His erstwhile companions were not at all too ready to listen to him but as the Buddha himself said to them "Have I before spoken to you so earnestly as this?", the five began to realize that there was a force and urgency in the Buddha's words that made them attentive and ultimately reach the goal. In course of time when he had sixty arahats he gave to them a great message of goodwill and service to all. They were asked to go forth and preach the doctrine to all men out of compassion for them and goodwill for the world. He set a shining example of this when in 45 years he met all manner of people of all ranks of life and taught them and brought them to that supreme happiness he had achieved. Even in his last moments he was willing to serve and he passed away asking all to work out their salvation with diligence: Buddhists all the world over I believe respect and revere the Buddha just for this, that he was such a good friend and helper of mankind. Laymen can appreciate this aspect of the Buddha's life for it may not be possible for them to understand fully his very deep teachings.

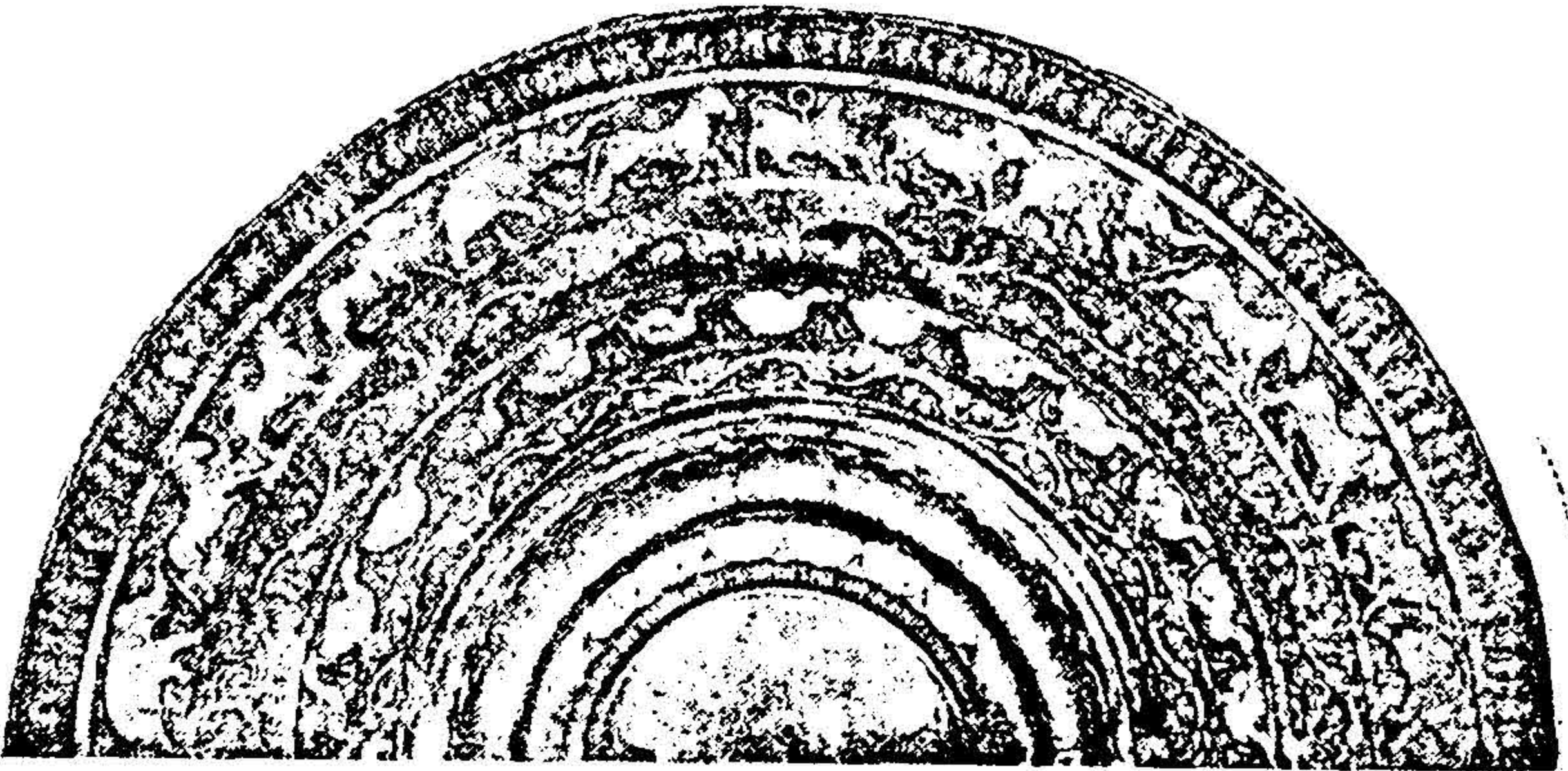
The Buddha has a very definite message to laymen. He has pointed out that the fundamental thing that we should bear in mind is the principle of moral growth. On one occasion he said "I praise growth, not standing still or lying down." The first elementary stage of this growth consists in practising the *pancha sila*. This practice is essential because the ground must be cleared for something new to be built, what is evil must be removed before what is good can grow. This is perhaps why the *pancha sila* is put in a negative form. Removing these five things leads to personal growth as a better moral being and at the

same time grows to be a better social being. Of the many gifts we can give our fellow men one of the most valuable is the *Abayadhana*, the gift of no fear. A person who practises the *pancha sila* is one who is not a source of fear to his fellow men ; in so far he is a blessing to his society. We are also asked to practise *metta*—goodwill to all. There are many reasons for this. We live among others whom we hate and who perhaps hate us. If we hate others we do not grow in moral stature. Far from growing in moral stature we are likely to be mentally unhealthy and one who is mentally unhealthy is bound to show himself in evil acts. *Metta*, therefore, is a means of attaining mental health by practising towards all others thoughts of goodwill. This restores one to peace and calm and equanimity, at the same time he who practises goodwill towards those who hate him is one who will some day or other nullify and render harmless the evil others intend to do him. It is a very strange psychological truth that the only way of disarming those who wish one evil is to wish and to will them what is good. Just as light dispels darkness, the forces of good-will vanquish the forces of ill-will.

In the *Singalovada Sutta* which Buddhaghosa described as the 'Vinaya for the householder', the Buddha points out that each one of us occupies a situation in society, whether it be that of parents, children, teachers, employees, etc. Each individual's position in this society consists of two things, the performance of one's duty towards others and the practice of goodwill towards others. So important are these two social functions that the Buddha tells us that a life of service and a life of goodwill keeps the whole world going just as the lynchpin keeps the wheels of the cart in position and helps the cart to move along. The Buddha also realised that for laymen economic sufficiency was absolutely essential. He was not one to praise poverty for he himself has declared that poverty is the root of most of the evils of this world. In the *Vyajjapajja Sutta*, he urges all laymen to practise four efforts. The first effort is to earn an honest living, the second is to carefully safeguard and protect one's lawful earnings, the third effort is to establish a balanced livelihood and to see that one's expenditure does not exceed one's income. These are very homely teachings and they went right into the hearts of the laymen. It is not, therefore, surprising that in Buddhist lands long ago, at least when the Buddha's message was a living thing, Buddhist laymen practised their trades earnestly and acquired wealth. It is a well known fact that the merchants of India were for the most part Buddhists. This is true at least of those laymen who put up the wonderful structures at Sanchi and Amaravati and other places. There was, therefore, in the code of the Buddha, the highest praise for the honest layman who earns wealth, preserves his wealth and lawfully uses it. In these ways one realises that the Buddha insisted, on the one hand where laymen were concerned, the need to be econo-

mically self-dependent, and at the same time he insisted on the importance of safeguarding one's moral being. If a layman does this, he no doubt secures happiness in this world. He will be a man of independent means and therefore one of self-respect. If a good man, he would be loved and trusted by his fellow men. He lives his days in a life of goodwill and service and departs from this world a very happy man.

It is, therefore, most important in times like the present, that this active energetic layman's life which the Buddha preached should be given more consideration, more study and more practice. There is among Buddhists a tendency to belittle this world and think in terms of renunciation, etc. Such Buddhists forget the Buddha's teaching that progress in the path is gradual. There is no sudden jump forward and first things must come first. To the vast majority of laymen, in the Buddha's teaching the first thing that should come is the layman's saddhamma, the good life.





The Weaver's Daughter

By

VEN. PIYADASSI THERO
(*Vajiraramaya, Ceylon.*)

Once the Buddha visited the city of Alavi, and the pious citizens offered Him dana (food). After His meal, the Teacher exhorted them in these words :

‘Cultivate meditation on death, saying to yourselves, ‘uncertain is my life, certain, indeed, is my death ; I shall surely die ; impermanent indeed is my life’.

They who have not practised meditation on death, become terror-stricken when death comes to them, and they die in pain and fear even as a man who trembles and fears on suddenly seeing a snake. But they who have cultivated meditation on death, will have no more fear at the hour of death than a man who, seeing a snake, tosseth it away with his stick without fear.

After this short sermon, the Blessed One left Alavi for Jetavana. The people, though they heard the Dhamma, being worldly minded, remained heedless of what they had heard. The impressive words of the Buddha, however, went deep into the heart of a sixteen-year old girl, the only daughter of a weaver. The words of the Master made an indelible impression in her heart and they were ever green in her memory. She thought to herself.

Marvellous, indeed, are the words of the Master and it behoves me to cultivate *Mindfulness on Death* (*Maranānussati*). So saying she determined to cultivate Mindfulness on Death, and this she did successfully for three long years.

Now we are told that it was the custom of the All-compassionate Buddha to survey the world daily in the fruition of His compassion (*Mahā Karuṇā Samāpatti*). One day as He looked over the world of beings with His divine eye, He perceived

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the weaver's daughter. Considering within Himself, the Lord became aware of the fact that the girl had cultivated Mindfulness on Death for three years, and was ripe enough to understand the Dhamma and realize Nibbana.

So the Blessed One, with five hundred disciples, left Jetavana and arrived at Aggalāva Monastery in Alavi. The people forthwith invited the Master to a dana. The pious girl, when she heard that the Buddha had come to Alavi, felt very happy and, in her joy, thought to herself: The Master, hath come hither. My Teacher, the Mighty Buddha Gotama shines like the full-moon. After the lapse of three years I am to see my Teacher whose body is of golden hue. I shall again behold the golden-hued body of the Buddha and His Sublime Dhamma.

Her father, however, while leaving home for the workshop, said to his daughter :

“ Dear daughter, a garment for a customer is on the loom, and a span of it is yet incomplete. I will finish it to-day ; so quickly replenish the shuttle and bring it to me.

Then thought the daughter :

“ It was my earnest desire to listen to the Buddha, and now my dear father hath thus said. But what shall I do now ? Shall I listen to the Buddha, or fill the shuttle and take it to my sire ? ” To this poor girl this matter was almost a dilemma. And while she was thus pondering she thought to herself that it was wise to carry the shuttle to her father first lest she should be rebuked for disobeying. So she started filling the shuttle.

Meanwhile the people had fed the Blessed One with delicious food and were thirsting to hear the Dhamma. But the Buddha uttered not a word.

I journeyed thirty leagues and came hither for the sake of this poor weaving girl. Even to-day, at this moment, she gets no chance to be present here. When an opportunity presents itself I shall proclaim the Dhamma, thought the All-merciful One. And He was silent. Now when the Supreme Buddha is silent, none in the three worlds dare utter a word.

The weaver's daughter filled the shuttle, put it in her basket and carried it to her father. On the way to the workshop she saw the gathering of people and took her stand at the extreme corner and kept on gazing at the *Sammā-sam-Buddha*, the Perfectly Enlightened One, so radiant with pure lovingkindness (Metta).

The Buddha, lifting His head, looked at her. Then she knew at once that the Teacher wished her to go to His very presence. Accordingly she put aside the basket and approached the Buddha and, penetrating the six coloured rays that the Buddha emanated, saluted Him with all respect and stood silently until she was spoken to.

The Commentary says that the Buddha gazed at her because He knew that that very day the girl would die. If she did not listen to Him, she would remain a mere worldling so that her future state would be uncertain. But by listening to Him she would attain sanctity. As she was to have no escape from death that day, the Merciful One wanted to ensure that her future state would be happy.

Then ensued the following dialogue :

The Buddha : 'Whence comest thou ?'

The Weaver's Daughter : I know not, O Master.

B. 'Whither goest thou ?'

W. 'I know not, O Master'

B. 'Thou knowest not ?'

W. 'I know O Master'

B. 'Thou knowest ?'

W. 'I know not O Master.'

Thus the Buddha asked her four questions, and she gave seemingly impolite and inappropriate answers. The assembly, who lacked the eye of wisdom, were offended; for they knew not the import of the words uttered by the girl. They lost their tranquillity and started rebuking the innocent girl. Then the Blessed One intervened and silenced them and, to make the answers clear to the inadvertent assembly, the Buddha asked the girl four more questions.

"O child, when I asked thee, 'whence comest thou?' why didst thou say, 'I know not Master'?" Lord, said the girl, "you knew well that I came from home; but you meant, 'whence didst thou come to take birth here?' This I know not."

Then the Lord asked yet another question : “ Child, when I asked thee ‘ Whither goest thou ? ’ why didst thou say, ‘ I know not Master ’ ? ”

“ Lord, You knew well that I was going to the weaver’s shop with my basket in my hand ; but the Lord meant, ‘ when thou goest hence, where wilt thou be re-born ? ’ This I know not. Then the Buddha asked a third question : “ When I asked thee, ‘ Knowest thou not ? ’ why didst thou say, ‘ I know ’ ? ”

“ Lord, I know well that I shall surely die and, therefore, did I say, ‘ I know ’ ”.

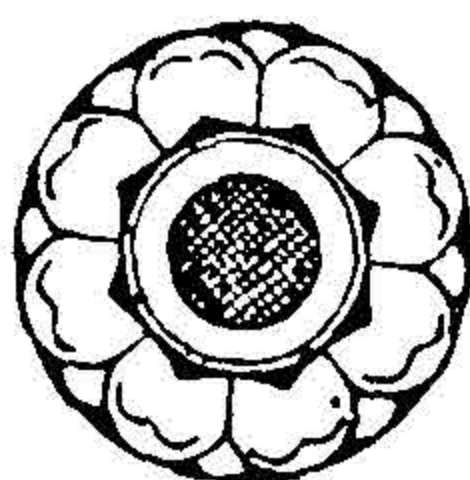
And then the Buddha asked the fourth and the final question : “ When I asked thee, ‘ knowest thou ? ’ why didst thou say, ‘ I know not ’ ? ”

“ Lord, I know well that I shall some day die, but, when I shall die, whether in the night or during the day time, I know not, and, therefore, did I say, ‘ I know not ’ ”.

Now the Teacher praised her and congratulated her, saying unto her, Child ! thou hast answered aright the four questions I asked thee.” Thereupon the Buddha addressed the assembly in these words :

“ You failed to understand the words she spoke ; you were merely affronted. They who lack the eye of ‘ understanding ’, they, indeed, are blind. They who possess the eye of ‘ understanding ’ are, indeed, the possessors of eyes. In this connection the Buddha made the following utterance, “ *Blind is the world ; few are there who distinctly see. Like unto a bird that escapes from a net, only a few go unto heaven. (Few are they that escape the net of MARA (Death) and attain NIBBANA, the Deathless).*

In the end the girl attained Sainthood and went to her father with the shuttle basket. There she died an accidental death being stuck by the loom on the breast, and was re-born in the Tusita heaven. Her dear father, almost mad with grief, approached the Buddha, the Highest Consoler, and begged Him to still his pain. Thereupon the Compassionate One spoke to him very tenderly and assuaged his pain. He then gained *Saddha*, confidence in the Three Refuges, the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, entered the Holy Order, and attained Arahantship, the acme of purity, by solving the riddle of life.



DEVADATTA

By

MISS I. B. HORNER

(*Secretary, Pali Text Society, London.*)

Though for the forty-five years that he was promulgating his Teaching the Lord Gotama the Buddha was surrounded by a number of leading disciples, usually reckoned as eighty, whose loyalty and deep regard were beyond question, he was also beset for many of those years by the jealousy and hatred of his cousin Devadatta, as in a similar way he had been injured and betrayed by his cruelty and treachery in many a previous birth. These births when they were faring along together are related in the Jataka Stories and summed up in the Milindapanha. Devadatta was gifted and intelligent, but he was not loyal. On the contrary, his ambition and jealousy drove him to great lengths, and the numerous schemes he evolved for dislodging the Buddha from the leadership of the Order of monks so that he himself might take his place did not stop even at attempts to murder the Buddha or to cause a schism in his Order. If one of his plans failed he tried another, apparently not realising or not believing that no one can deprive a Tathagata of life. For owing to his kamma and to his actions in previous births, a Buddha's life-span will be of a definite duration that cannot be interfered with, curtailed or even prolonged by any manner of means.

Devadatta, yearning for an increase in his gains and his fame, persuaded Prince Ajatasattu by a show of the psychic power at which he was adept to make him large gifts of food. Dazzled by his success and inordinately proud, he then longed to lead the Order of monks. But at the very thought his psychic power declined. Indeed, as the Buddha told the monks, Devadatta's gains, honour and fame were not to be envied for they would only bring him to hurt and destruction. Kamma works on, both in this life and hereafter. Apparently unaware however of the dreadful results of his deeds that he was storing up for himself, Devadatta in his overwhelming desire to lead the Order determined on a somewhat complicated attempt to murder the Buddha. This failed however, because such was the majesty of the Buddha that the two, four, eight and sixteen men who were sent off for the purpose, instead of fulfilling it, listened to the Dhamma as the Lord was teaching it and became lay-followers then and there.

Devadatta did not give up. He hurled down a great stone from a mountain-top hoping it would kill the Buddha who was standing beneath. But only a fragment grazed his foot, yet, since it drew blood the Buddha called it "the first deed whose

fruit comes with no delay that Devadatta has accumulated because his mind was set on murder." He then, by a species of bribery, got the mahouts to let loose the fierce man-slaying elephant Nalagiri or Dhanapala on a road the Buddha would come by, some accounts saying that the elephant was primed with a fiery toddy beforehand to make him even more violent. But he was completely tamed by the Lord's power of metta. Though Devadatta's gains and honours decreased in consequence while the Lord's grew, he still had friends with whom he ate and others among the monks. And it was with these that he finally tried to make a schism in the Lord's Order. The newly ordained monks however whom he managed to attract to his faction, being not fully conversant with the Teaching or training, soon gave up their partisanship of Devadatta once Sariputta and Moggallana had shown them how to discriminate between the true Dhamma and a counterfeit one.

The more immediate effect of this gravely serious matter of trying to create a schism in the Order was that Devadatta, pre-deceasing the Buddha, became one of the five people recorded to have been swallowed up by the earth. The rather less immediate but more prolonged result is that Devadatta has to undergo the un pitying torments of Niraya Hell for an eon, *kappa*, with no hope of breaking free so long as the eon lasts. Yet, because Buddhism recognises that there is no human being who is wholly evil, all being a mixture of good and bad, Devadatta will get free from Niraya Hell when the eon has come to its end.

That his eventual escape will be possible is partly to be ascribed to the good deeds, mentioned briefly in the Milindapanha, that he had done in past lives and that no doubt enabled him to be ordained in this life in the Lord's Dispensation and Order of monks. And it may be ascribed partly to the Lord's compassion. He knew, so it is said, that if, as a layman, Devadatta were to do a very evil deed this would result in his spending not one, but myraids of eons uninterruptedly passing from one Niraya to another, never for one moment getting free. To forestall and prevent such a terrible happening, one that he could not and did not wish to befall even his worst enemy, he ordained Devadatta and by thus admitting him to his Order of monks he reduced the unlimited time he would have had to spend in Niraya to a limited one, to one eon instead of to myraids. Tradition has it that when the eon is over Devadatta (resuming human status) will become a paccekabuddha named Atthissara. What indeed, as Milinda the King rhetorically asked the Venerable Nagasena, is there that the Tathagata has not done for Devadatta? He was the giver of everything to him. To think of Devadatta on the lines sketched above therefore provides us with another opportunity to call to mind the boundless compassion of the Lord Buddha.

THE WAY TO HAPPINESS

By

VEN. H. SADDHATISSA, M.A.,

(Incumbent, London Buddhist Vihara.)

“ Suppose, brethren, a man in need of sound timber in quest of sound timber, going about searching for sound timber, should come upon a mighty tree, upstanding all sound timber, and pass it by ; but should cut away the outer wood and bark and take that along with him, thinking it to be sound timber.

“ Then a discerning man might say thus : ‘ This fellow surely cannot tell the difference between sound timber and outer wood and bark, branch-wood and twigs : but being in need of sound timber.....he passes it by and goes off with the outer wood and bark, thinking it to be sound timber. Now such a way of dealing with sound timber will never serve his need.’

“ Thus, brethren, the essentials of the holy life do not consist in the profits of gain, honour and good name ; not yet in the profits of knowledge and insight ; but the sure heart’s release, brethren—that, brethren, is the meaning, that is the essence, that is the goal of living the holy life ’’. (M.N., I. 194.)

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The goal of the Buddhist way of life, the Noble Path is Nibbana—a word better known in its Sanskrit form of Nirvāna. Many books have been written on what Nirvāna is and is not, for it has to be appreciated that Nirvāna is something that has to be realised, not described or explained. One must realise it of his own accord. Realisation is knowledge—knowledge is realisation.

THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

In a very practical sermon given by the Buddha at Saranath near Banares, he declared that those who wish to lead a religious life should avoid two extremes of self-indulgence and self-torture. Self-indulgence is low, self-mortification crazy—both are profitless. There is the Middle Way which leads to Insight and wisdom. Its fruit is Serenity, Knowledge, Enlightenment, Nibbāna. It is summed up in four great truths : the fact of suffering, the further fact that this suffering has its cause in the craving for personal satisfaction, the third fact that this suffering will cease when such craving is stilled, and fourthly that that result can be achieved

by treading the Middle Way, otherwise defined as the Noble Eightfold Path consisting of Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Efforts, Right Mindfulness and Right Rapture. Once deliverance is thus obtained from suffering, and the freedom appreciated, it cannot be lost by those who have once won it. The first principle of all reality is that whatever has a beginning must have an end, and suffering is no exception.

GUIDE, NOT SAVIOUR

The first sermon contains all the essentials of the Buddhist ideal. The Buddha does not proclaim himself a Saviour willing and able to take upon himself the sins of mankind. On the contrary, he declares that each man and woman must bear the burden of their own evil actions. It may seem that many features that have become associated with what is called religion are not present in the Buddhist concepts. But the Buddha claims to be guide, the teacher of the Way, and any spiritual freedom is the conquest of one's own intellect and will, rightly ruled and directed by oneself. Therefore the first requisite of his teachings is a frank recognition of the facts of life—a just estimate of their values. The first essential is a realisation that all conscious existence is enveloped in suffering.

HARMONY AND HAPPINESS

Buddhism is the adaptation of one's life to harmonise with natural laws. The importance of happiness cannot be overstressed. It can only come about when we live in harmony with the natural laws, which bring us health, success and contentment, tranquility and peace of mind. When we live in discord with these laws we experience sickness, failure, discontent, worry and unbalance. In its practical application to our daily life harmony is the fruit of understanding the law, while discord is the fruit of ignorance of it. Discord arises through greed, ill-will and delusion. Greed is the parent of selfishness and avarice; selfishness is the parent of envy and jealousy; avarice is the parent of covetousness and competitive spirit; ill-will is the parent of resentment and anger; resentment is the parent of pride and revenge; anger is the parent of malice and strife; delusion is the parent of attachment and fear; attachment is the parent of superstition and intolerance.

CHARITY : LOVE : WISDOM

The positive aspect of harmony arises through charity, love and wisdom. Charity is the parent of unselfishness and generosity; unselfishness is the parent of sympathy and altruism; generosity is the parent of magnanimity and co-operation; love

is the parent of equanimity and good-will ; good-will is the parent of compassion and self-control ; wisdom is the parent of renunciation and serenity ; renunciation is the parent of contentment and mental tranquility ; serenity is the parent of sound judgment and tolerance.



The right to be happy is accepted by nearly every nation, but the interpretation of how this happiness is acquired is conflicting. There is the popular belief that when an individual piles up all the possessions he can, he will have arrived at a state of perfect happiness. In practice, he finds that more he has the more he wants ; like the sorcerer's apprentice, they conjure up a demon which cannot be controlled.



*" The man who lives for sensual joys,
And findeth his delight therein,
When joys of sense have taken flight
Doth smart as if with arrows pierced."*

Visuddhi - Magga

WISHING ALL OUR READERS

A HAPPY VESAK

The Sri Saddharmadana Samitiya

*Walana,
Panadura,
Ceylon.*



The Buddha's Teaching is for all time and for all Peoples

BY
EGERTON C. BAPTIST, ESQR.
(Ceylon)

To a world that is torn between strife and suspicion on the one side, and when men's hearts are failing them on the other, the Message of the Buddha appears to be the only hope,—the proverbial last straw to which a shoal of drowning men now desperately cling.

For, whether we be men of the worldly type, who look forward to the material things of life, or whether we be those who merely seek a measure of celestial bliss in an after-life, or whether we be ripened by experience and slashed by suffering, standing on the threshold of *Nibbana*, the Buddha has a Message for all,—for the spiritual infant, for the spiritual adolescent and the adult.

For, while there are those whose *Paramitas* (i.e., Virtues) have attained to some stage of fruition,—*Nibbana* virtually staring them in the face, right here and now,—there are obviously many with us who still have a long way to go, who are still not ripe for plucking, and who also need a Message, and cannot be sent away empty-handed. The Buddha did not expect us all to attain *Nibbana*, right here and now, and leave the world void of beings, as it were! In a world teeming with diverse types of beings, such a state of things can, in no wise, be. If we attain *Nibbana*, we shall attain to that condition of freedom from stress and distress whence we need never emerge again, but if we do not, we merely continue our evolutionary process towards the celestial god-realms, through their various gradations, and, even as we pass through each subsequent kingdom we shall have another opportunity to listen to the next Buddha's teaching, until finally we shall be ready to avail ourselves of it. That is why a Buddha is known as a Teacher of

“ both gods and men,—a *Satta Devamanussanam* ”, and, as evolution proceeds, there will be more and more Buddhas arising in the world, just as there would be more and more entities like us striving to attain *Nibbana*, leaving fewer and fewer of those that once were human to populate the divine regions. So, there is, as I said, a Message for all.

Dittadamikanam Akusalanan
Dhammanan Samvaraya
Samparayikanam Akusalanan
Dhammanan Patigathaya

says the Buddha, which being interpreted means, that the *Dhamma* is designed to prevent the arising of unwholesome (*akusala*) conditions in this life, as well as to prevent the arising of unwholesome (*akusala*) re-actions in the future.

Such then, is the Message of the Buddha : To everyone according to His needs, petty though those needs might sometimes seem ! Yet, hope there is for all. At the Advent of the *Sakyamuni* those hopes were raised high, and realized : those hopes are being raised once again, today too !

Therefore, whatever our present state of spiritual evolution may be, there is hope for everyone : None are damned : none condemned to eternal hell-fire.

Such a mental outlook on life naturally breeds tolerance towards one's fellows,— tolerance towards even those who are not with us today. For men invariably pass through various phases of life. Even those who are violently opposed to free-thought are themselves passing through a phase of life which is like a disease they will outgrow and through which they too will eventually attain the path to Liberation. Buddhism, therefore, wisely allows its adherents to think for themselves. Those who say that such freedom is the freedom of the wild ass, are they who have obviously never known a moment's freedom themselves. That freedom, however, is oft times abused, but Buddhism stands or falls by that freedom. And that perhaps is why Buddhism attracts thinking men, for only such men are capable of conquering themselves, of unravelling the mystery of existence. Buddhism certainly has no need for mechanical robots, those for whom all the thinking is done by others. For though we as Buddhists may falteringly tread the path, we by ourselves must in the end, discover the Truth.

The *Buddha Dhamma* is like a prism of many facets. Most of us see only one or two of these facets. Obviously we do not see all of them, for, if we did, we would have won our Freedom long ago. Accordingly, we worldlings who do not see much of this many-sided Prism, must be cautious and avoid becoming dogmatic. Dogmatism has no place in Buddhism.

For instance, some people who say that the Commentaries cannot be relied upon and that the *suttas* (i.e., discourses) alone tell us all we wish to know, do so perhaps because they do not realize that the Buddha often preached for many hours, and that obviously, every word he spoke was not recorded in the *Tipitaka*. The essence of the Buddha's sermons was, in some instances, all that the monks, like Ananda, learnt by heart. At various *Sangayanas*, the matter so memorized was revised, and what was considered superfluous was omitted, in the belief that such omissions would not lead to misunderstanding or ambiguity. In this way the sermons became shortened. Naturally, there are, at this distance of time, many passages which cannot now be readily understood ; and, herein the Commentaries prove their usefulness, for they shed much light on the meaning of many an obscure aspect of the Buddha's teachings which we find so hard to grasp today. Wherever a Commentator has given his own interpretation, however, or that of his immediate Preceptor, care has been taken always to state specifically that it is his own view or that of his Preceptor. That the

Commentaries are of no real use to us today, therefore, is a mistaken notion. Notwithstanding the slight differences of opinion held by some Commentators, they are still the opinions of those who were closer to the source and must, therefore, know more of what the Buddha taught, or intended to teach than those living with us today.

“ One thing only do I teach, O Bhikkhus ”, we hear the Buddha saying, over and over again,—“ Sorrow and its extinction.” And, these words are today avidly clutched by those who seek to convey another erroneous view, namely, that the Buddha taught only the way to *Nibbana*, and nothing else ! The Buddha’s discourses are designed, no doubt, to lead up to *Nibbana*, but the attainment of *Nibbana* is a gradual process. *Anupubbene me dharvi, thoka thokan kane kane kammaro rajatasseva niddhamma mala mathano*, which, being interpreted, means that the intelligent one does not try to get rid of his impurities (*kilesas*) all at once ; he does so, drop by drop, and from moment to moment, much in the fashion that a goldsmith burnishes his gold by applying the heat little by little, and not all at once, lest he should ruin the gold.

And, again, in the *Punnavaddenne Sutta*, the Buddha says :—

*Arama ropa vana ropa ye jana sethu care ca
Papancha udha panancha ye dadanthi upus se yan
Damata sila sampanna the jana sagga gamino*

which, again, being interpreted, means that those who are virtuous, those who live according to the *Dhamma*, their minds bent on charity,—doing meritorious works by day and by night, planting for instance, fruit and other trees, which, in time, will be a source of benefit to the populace, building bridges, sinking wells for drinking and bathing, and, indeed, even those who place pots of drinking water by the roadside for the relief of the thirsty way-farer, are all destined, when they die, to re-birth in the celestial realms of the *devas*, or gods.

Though the motor ’bus has invaded many places, yet we still find in distant villages in the hinterland of Ceylon, pious *upasakas* and *upasikas*, (i.e., laymen and laywomen), leaving a pot of crystal clear water by the roadside for the weary way-farer. By so doing, they follow their ancient customs, and traditions,—and, these too are a part of the Buddha’s teaching ! We laugh at them today only because we ourselves are ignorant !

Many Buddhist texts reveal that the populace of Buddhist lands was urged to do good works,—works that will bring them profit and gain in this life itself, and in the life that is to come, but time does not allow us to quote them all here. I wish, however, to refer here to the incident where while addressing the *Licchavi* clans, the Buddha said that the *Vajjis* would not decay so long as they maintained their temples as of yore, and continued the customary acts of reverence and offerings to the tutelary *devas*. These customs and traditions are now fast dying out, only because new ideas that arise are passed off for the Buddha’s teaching !

From all this you will comprehend that while we are of service and assistance to our fellowmen we can also help ourselves for to such as those, to whom *Nibbana* still stands a-far in the distance, the heavens, indeed, do beckon.

Today, however, the emphasis is always on *Nibbana*. It would be well for us to remember that we cannot plant paddy in a jungle, that preparation has to be made. The Buddha’s teaching, therefore, reveals to us that, even as we traverse that ancient Path, from the end of which no pilgrim ever returns, we can also rest by the way-side.

I am emphasizing this point, only because I have heard it said that the Buddha had no more to teach than the immediate attainment of *Nibbana*—that, in effect, the *Tathagata* made no provision for the lesser folk,—for those who still had to be here—a little longer perhaps! Mere book-learning will not help us to understand the *Dhamma*: no, not even the listening to a few *Bana* talks. What we learn through books, through *Bana* talks, we must discuss again with monks who are learned in the *Dhamma*, who have really understood and realized, in some measure the teaching, and from what they know, have understood and realized, perhaps a little more light may be shed onto what we ourselves already know. That is the way to study the Buddha *Dhamma*. Like the virtuous *Bhikkhu*, who on his alms-rounds, visits every house, not ignoring the poorer homes, we too must not be ashamed to sit at the feet of anybody who can teach us something new,—something we did not know before! For, only by so doing, could we hope to add to our own store-houses of knowledge. We certainly do not know everything. And it is only a fool who thinks that he does. It cannot be, for, inasmuch as a Buddha requires aeons of time to realize the *Paramitas* fully, we too will need time to realize even partially that which a Buddha realized, before we can ourselves be ready for *Arahatship*. Realizing of the *Paramitas*, therefore, is not merely a Buddha's task, as some imagine: it is ours as well! If, therefore, we are indolent, we shall, as the Buddha warns, ever remain ignorant.

Some people tell us that there are no *devas*, no *Brahmas*. If we follow their opinions to their logical conclusions, we may believe that there are no living beings either! Birth as a *deva* these people say, is the result of *kamma*, and birth as a man is also the result of *kamma*: everything is *kamma*! To invoke the help of a *deva*, therefore, is foolish, for, as they argue, how can one *kamma* assist another *kamma*? But don't we go, at least to human beings who are better off than we are, for a favour now and then? Good Buddhists should surely not do such a thing too! The fact is that we are all mostly only one step removed from the beggar in the street! The foibles and frailties inherent in human nature we must, therefore, learn to condone. But what most of us do not realise is that when the Buddha arrived in the city of Visali, at the height of a pestilence, He Himself urged the deities to protect that pestilence-ridden country, for this is what the *Ratana Sutta* records in that instance:—

Listen (i.e., hearken) beings all, and show
Goodwill to men who bring
Oblations (i.e., offerings) night and day.
So shield mankind from harm.

Those of us, who talk in terms of *kamma* only, therefore, do not realize, and have not learnt to distinguish between what is called the *Samuti desanava* and the *Paramattha desanava* of the Buddha. That is, to draw the line between the conventional modes of speech the Buddha Himself always used, such as *satta*, *puggala*, *deva*, *brahma*, *manussa*, etc., and their ultimates, such as the *cittas*, *cetasikas*, *rupa*, and *Nibbana*. That is why they all go wrong. If, in this land of the Buddha, the land of pure *Theravada* Buddhism, such views are freely canvassed, where happily Buddhists can still sift the wheat from the chaff, by discussion with the many learned monks who are fortunately still in our midst, it is hard to imagine the damage that can be done, if such views are propagated abroad,—in lands where facilities are not so easily available for further study and verification.

Some people also say that most of the deities in whom Buddhists believe do not exist,—that even *Saman Deivyo* of *Siri Pada** is a myth—that there is no such being! The reason for this is that *Saman Deviyō's* name, like

* *Saman Deivyo* is the Guardian Deity of the famous *Siri Pada*, better known as Adam's Peak in Ceylon which is traditionally believed to be a place visited by the Buddha.

many others, does not appear in the Pali Canon. But, we should surely know, that all earth-bound deities like Tree-spirits, water-spirits and others (*Saman-deviyo* included), come under the general category of deities called the *Catum-maharajikas*—the four Guardian Deities. This actually is a Sect or *Nikaya*. And, if, for instance, one of us should die tomorrow and is re-born within that sect or *nikaya*, we should not surely expect to find our names in the Canon! But, as time goes on, people will notice certain peculiarities that were not observed in the area before, and so begin to believe that a certain deity has taken up residence in a certain place, or on a certain tree, and eventually the local populace gives it a name as well. And, that is how deities mostly get their names! Deities, therefore, are added to the Sect or *Nikaya* when they are born there, and are also subtracted therefrom when they die to that state. Quite obviously we cannot expect to find all the names there in the text book! For, some are still un-born, and to strike off the names of those who die there, would also be an extremely difficult process!

In propagating the Buddha Dhamma, therefore, we must be very careful. For whatever we write carries some semblance of authenticity. And we must not propagate wrong notions, nor spread a false teaching, transmitting our own pet theories and hallucinations for the actual Doctrine of the Enlightened One. If such a thing happens, it will be extremely difficult to repair the damage,—once it is done!

That the Buddha taught for the common man is clear from many teachings, but let us take as an example the *Culla kamma vibanga sutta*. Therein we are told that when the Buddha was living in Jetavana, in Savatthi, there lived a wealthy Brahman, by name Thodeiya. He was not a Buddhist,—his religion was Brahmanism. Thodeiya often met the Buddha, but never did he so much as stop to exchange a word of greeting, or to enquire to what state the Buddha's teachings led mankind. Thodeiya did something worse. For while the non-Buddhists of the time, out of reverence, addressed the Buddha as 'Bo-Gotama' (or, Rev. Sir), Thodeiya punned on the word 'Bo', and whenever he saw the Buddha, he said, 'Bho-Bho', in derision. But, like all flesh, however, Thodeiya, too, died one day. Now, Thodeiya had a son, Subha by name. Subha was a clever young man: he knew certain of the arts of the time, and was able to look at a person and say much about him,—his past, his future, and so on. And, when his father died he inherited all the old man's wealth. Sometime after the father's death, Subha brought home a puppy which was extremely pretty and affectionate. Subha fondled him much and, being greatly attached to the little animal, bathed him, wiped his body, and spreading a clean cloth, placed him on a chair. This he did every day.

Now, as it so happened one morning, Subha, the dog's master, went out on some business. And, it was then that the Buddha, on his daily alms-round (*Pindapatha*) happened to visit the very home of Subha. Seeing the Buddha, the dog came running out, intoning the sounds 'Bhook Bhook' as we would perhaps say 'bow-vow' in English! The Buddha, we are told, seeing the dog, said, "Thodeiya, formerly you used to fool me by saying 'bho-bho', and now you say 'Bhook-Bhook'. When you die here, you will be re-born in hell", so saying, the Buddha went away on his daily rounds.

The dog appeared to understand the rebuke (the story goes), felt ashamed, and thinking perhaps to himself: 'the Buddha has recognised me',—straightaway, bent his head low, as dogs are wont to do when rebuked or admonished, and ran off making one bee-line for the kitchen: he got on the ash on the hearth, and slept there.

Subha, his master, returned shortly afterwards, and noticing that the dog was missing, enquired of his servant. He was told of the Buddha's visit, and the conversation that had ensued. "But, who put the dog on the sah?" asked Subha. "No one, Sir," said his servant, "but ever since the

Buddha spoke to him, he has been lying there like that." Subha was very annoyed. He said, "this is the type of talk this Gotama indulges in wherever he goes,—'so and so is re-born here,' 'so and so is re-born there',—this is His one talk." "My father was a worshipper of Brahma, and he must surely be re-born in the Brahma-world. How dare Gotama talk of a god's life? I shall not keep quiet like other folk. I shall teach this Gotama a good lesson," saying which, Subha rushed along to the Jetavana to meet the Buddha.

Meeting the Buddha there, he enquired trembling in anger, if the story he had just heard about his father being re-born a dog were true? "Yes, I said, such a thing, and it is true," said the Buddha calmly, "but tell me, Subha, has your father ever hidden any part of his wealth from you?" "Yes," said Subha, taken aback, "he had hidden a pair of golden slippers, a gold necklace and also some gold coins, but I forgot to ask him where these were before he died. But, what of it?" "Oh, no, if that really is so, that is very good, Subha,—you just go home right now, bathe your dog well, give him enough milk rice to eat until his stomach is quite full, and then placing him on a chair, worship him, saying: "Father, those gold coins, the gold slippers and the gold necklace you hid,—where are they?" And, I assure you, the dog will reveal his secret to you."

Now, Subha, who went there to abuse the Buddha, was inwardly delighted at this new turn of events, and thought: "this certainly is a windfall,—I shall do as Gotama tells me, and if the gold is not there, I shall come back to give him a bit of my mind," and off he ran, and did just as he had been bidden.

Straightaway the dog ran to where the gold was hidden and scratched at the place. Subha dug and there found the hidden gold, the necklace and the slippers of gold too. Shortly afterwards, we are told, the dog died.

Now, Subha was a fortune-teller (or, Crystal-gazer), and this result brought him even greater shame, for, with all his knowledge of the arts, learned as he was, he just could not tell where the gold had been hidden. The Buddha had beaten him to it even here. So, arming himself with a number of questions, he went to the Buddha, to find out how these secrets are revealed. But his pride would not allow him to betray his own ignorance, and in a round-about-way, he began to enquire, why some folk are born high, some low, some pretty and so on.

The Buddha saw at once that Subha was proud, and that he was trying with supercilious airs to extract answers to questions about which he knew nothing, lest he should betray his own ignorance. And, saying to Himself, 'I must break this fellow's pride', answered him in the same lofty strain without elucidating the matter, saying: "Young man, every living being has kamma as its own, its inheritance, its cause, its kinsman, its refuge." Now, though he pretended to know much—this was beyond Subha's comprehension,—he did not understand. And, he confessed his ignorance saying, "Rev. Sir, I cannot understand this: could you please elucidate the matter,—make it plain to me?" And, then, when the Buddha saw that Subha's pride had been broken, that he was humble, He explained the matter to him in great detail, telling him 'he who kills and is cruel goes either to hell, or if re-born as man, will be shortlived; he who torments one will be afflicted with disease, how the angry one will look ugly, the envious one be without influence, the stubborn low born, the stingy one poor and the indolent without knowledge. And, how in the contrary case, man will be re-born in heaven; or being re-born as man, will be long-lived, without disease, possessed of beauty, influence, noble descent and knowledge'. (M. 135).

Greatly pleased and delighted, Subha took refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, then and there. In other words, Subha became a Buddhist.

Now, from this story you will see that Subha by listening to this Sermon did not attain *Nibbana*, nor the first stage of Buddhist Sainthood—*Sotapatti*. He merely became a good man : he gave up his false views, and he learnt to follow the Buddha's advice and instructions, so that he too might, in time, by subduing the coarser desires and passions, be re-born into states of light and splendour, of joy and godliness.

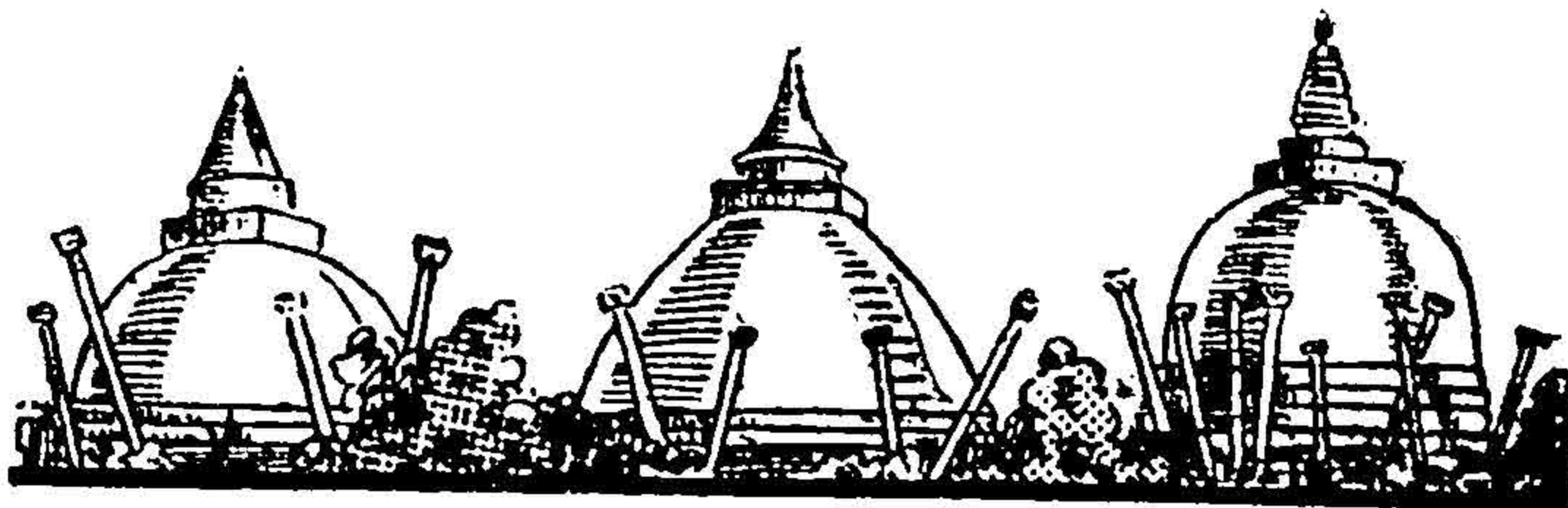
The advice given to Subha on this occasion was not for him only, but for generations that were still unborn at the time it was given. It is a Message for us all here too. For by indulging the animal passions, one perforce pays dearly for his folly, being re-born into conditions that are dismal and dreary, in poor outward circumstances, short-lived, without influence, ignorant—in conditions, indeed, that are veritable hells, where confusion and prolonged suffering prevail.

How comes it then that we are told that the Buddha taught merely the way to *Nibbana*, and nothing else ?

In the *Nidikande Sutta* too, we are told by the Buddha of the benefits we can derive in the future, even while we are still struggling for the Supreme Deliverance. The *Sigalovada Sutta* was also preached to an ordinary householder like any one of us, and is known as the Layman's Guide—the *Gihi Vinaya*. It is the moral code for all men, of all times,—whatever the age, and whatever the Era.

Thus, as I have shown herein, even while we hitch our wagons to the Star of *Nibbana*, we must also learn how to avoid the pitfalls and the snares that lie open—yawning before us, even as we are tossed about hither and thither in the great ocean of *Sansara*. And, it is in this spirit that the Buddha says :

Associate only with the wise,
Be friendly only with the wise,
When you realize what the wise teach,
You will rid yourself of Sorrow.





FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

By

VEN. SHANTI BHADRA

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Sariputta and Moggallana were two close companions and seekers of Truth. One day Moggallana noticed some kind of unusual brightness, some radiation in the face of his friend, Sariputta, and questioned him thus : Friend, your faculties are quite pure, your complexion very bright, very clear. Can it be that you have attained the deathless ?

“ Yes, friend, I have attained the deathless.”

Sariputta had overcome the forces of darkness in him and reached light, the light that showed the way to his friend and bids us even at this distant date to come to an understanding with life and to rise above petty distractions, fragmentariness, uncertainty and futility of life. From the slippery state of a Putthujjana (a worldling) he had attained the Sotapanna stage (the first stage on the path to Nibbana). It is the stage of real conversion into Buddhism ; it is at this stage that one becomes unshakable in his confidence as regards the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sanga. This sarana is not broken even after death ; once a Sotapanna, his way is certain ; he will never more become a Miccha-ditthi (a holder of wrong views) until he attains Nibbana. The Buddha says :

“ More than any earthly power,
 More than all the joys of heaven,
 More than the rule o’er the world,
 Is the entrance to the stream.”

In the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha says: “ But those disciples from whom the three fetters—Sakkaya ditthi (‘ I’ delusion), Silabbata paramasa (belief in salvation through rites and ceremonies) and Viccikiccha (doubt) have vanished, they all have entered the stream : have forever escaped the states of woe, and are assured of final enlightenment.”

As Putthujjanas we are not on firm ground ; a big question mark always confronts us ; we are in doubt and at cross-roads. Therefore it is worthwhile to know the characteristics of a Sotapanna so that our advance towards it could be made with a certain measure of certainty.

The Digha Nikaya lays down the four Angas—characteristics—of a Sotapanna as follows : First, Sappurisa-sanvasa, association with noble and virtuous friends. Second, Dhamma-savana, listening to Dhamma discourses. Third, Yoniso-manasikara, seeing things in their correct perspective and fourth, Dhammanudhammapatipada, the practice of the Dhamma and conduct shaped according to its light.

The Buddha has repeatedly stressed the value of noble friendship. One day Ananda said to the Buddha, “ the half of the holy life, Lord, it is the friendship with what is lovely, association with what is lovely intimacy with what is lovely.” Say not so Ananda, say not so, replied the Buddha. “ It is the whole, not half of the holy life.” Of a brother so blessed with fellowship with what is lovely we may expect this—that he will develop the Ariyan Eightfold Path, that he will make much of the Ariyan Eightfold Path.”

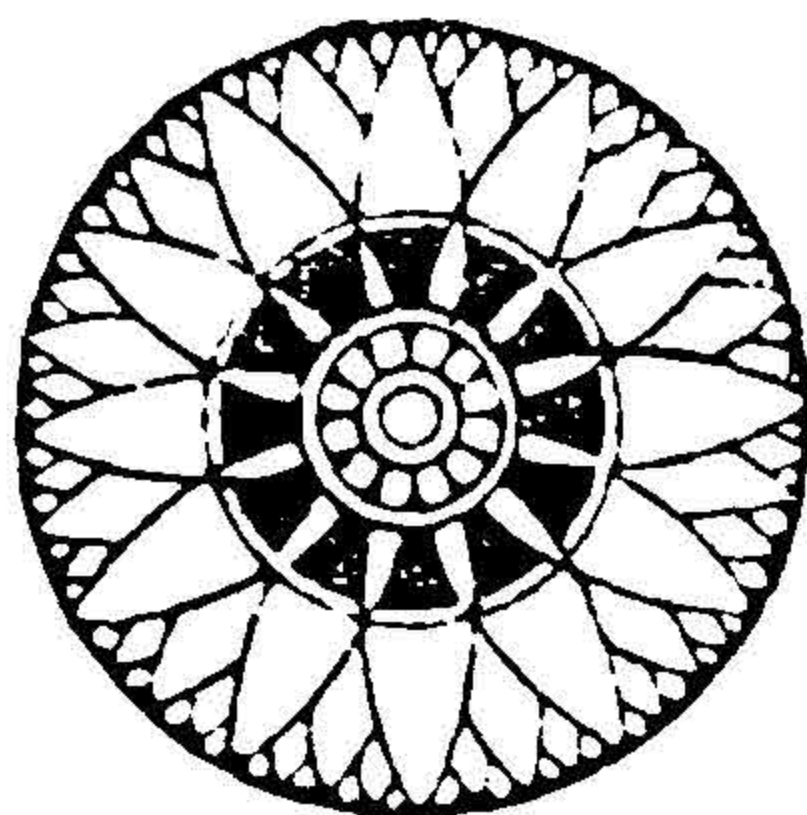
In the recorded history of the world, the friendship between Sariputta and Moggallana, the two chief disciples of the Buddha are unparalleled. Each helped the other in the upward march, both kept together, whenever it was possible, through the struggles and strains in the mighty adventure through Samsara. Though they are never more, yet a fragment of what remains of them—their relics—are together inseparable today in Sanchi, beckoning, as it were, a friendless world to unite, for noble friendship is a sure passport that will admit one into the raft that will ultimately reach the heaven of peace—Nibbana.

Dhamma-savana (Listening to the Dhamma) is necessary in our march towards perfection. It gives us an opportunity to listening to Dhamma we have not heard (Assutan sunati).

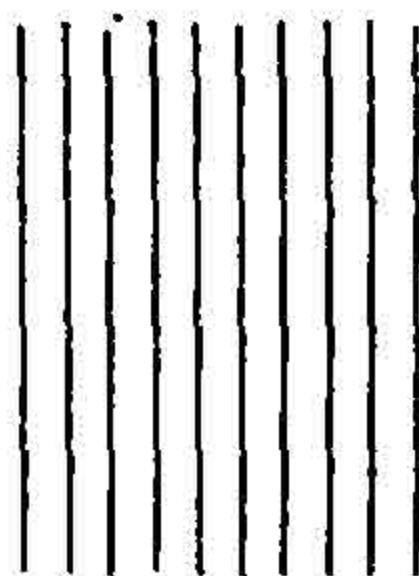
Listening makes us purify and refreshen our knowledge (Sutan pariyodapeti). What is low and erroneous in us is rectified and raised high (Ditthi ujunkaroti). Doubts that assail us and knotty points in the Dhamma that perplex us are cleared by listening to Dhamma (Kankhan Vitarati).

Yoniso-manasikara is the third characteristic of a stream-winner. It is to see the world as it truly is : it is to see it without the coloured glasses of delusion. To view the world as dhuva (permanent), subha (desirable) and sukha (pleasurable) is simply to pad our selfishness and build up a barrier against our advance in the Path to Peace and Purity.

The last is Dhammanudhammapatipada. Dhamma is a way of life—something to be practised every moment of our day to day life and not simply a way of talking, as some have mistakenly and conveniently taken it to be. “Those who live nobly, even if in their day they live obscurely, need not fear that they will have lived in vain. Something radiates from their lives, some light that shows the way to their friends, their neighbours, perhaps to long future ages. I find many men nowadays oppressed with a sense of importance with the feeling that in the vastness of modern societies there is nothing of importance that the individual can do. This is a mistake. The individual, if he is filled with love of mankind, with breadth of vision, with courage and with endurance, can do a great deal,” says Bertrand Russell. The Dhammapada says “the man who knows much of the Dhamma but does not practise it himself is like a cowherd counting others’ cattle. He is not a true follower of the Buddha. The man who knows a little of the Dhamma but lives it himself, who forsakes craving, hatred and delusion, possesses right knowledge and calmness, clings to nothing in this or any other world, he indeed is the true follower.”



The Ultimate Purpose of the Commandments



By

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(In this article 'Commandments' refer to 'Vinaya Rules')

The life of Buddhist priests is always associated with the commandments. The prestige of priests often depends upon their observance of them. In Japan commandments usually mean, for men, not to eat fish and meat, not to drink, and not to marry. During the Nara Period, 708-781, there were some priests who did not eat in the afternoon, so as to be faithful to the commandments.

Recently, contacts with Theravada Buddhist countries, such as Burma, Ceylon, Thailand and Cambodia have come to be very frequent. In 1952, the Second World Buddhist Conference was held in Japan and many Bhikkhus and followers visited Japan as delegates. The third and fourth conferences were called in Burma and Nepal respectively. Japan was represented on these occasions by many priests and laymen. The great problem discussed at these conferences was that of the commandments. I have been studying for the past half century the commandments among the Theravada Buddhists, especially Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis. Twenty-five years ago I had an opportunity of visiting Ceylon and Burma on my trip round the world and was able to acquire first-hand information of the way of living of priests in those two countries. In May, 1955, I was invited to Burma as one of the two Japanese Buddhist delegates to attend the inauguration ceremony of the 6th Buddhist Council and again in May, 1956, I participated as the representative of the Japanese Government in the Celebration of the Completion of the Council. In January, 1957, I was the head of the Buddhist party of ten people to attend the Jayanti celebration in Ceylon. Thus I have visited Burma three times, and Ceylon twice. On these occasions I always kept my eyes and ears open in order to study the precepts of priests, and consequently I think I can express my opinions on precepts with confidence.

It is often said that the priests in southern countries are greatly respected because of their strict observance of precepts, and also that Japanese priests are, on the contrary, despised, due to their failure to be faithful to the commandments. These opinions may have some validity, but the final word can be said only after a careful study of the nature of the commandments.

The commandments consist of two elements, negative and positive. In the original language the negative side was called *Vinaya*, which meant the control of the acts of the body and mouth. In other words, the emphasis was on the explicit effects of the will or intention. Then it was quite natural that *Vinaya* gradually degenerated into mere formalism.

The positive element was known as *Sila* which meant the practice of Buddhist virtue. In this article the negative side of the commandments is the main concern. For lay believers there are five commandments, while there are 227 for *bhikkhus*, and 311 for *bhikkhunis*.

When we study the stories of the origin of the numerous commandments, we come to the conclusion that, as time elapsed after the death of the Buddha, there appeared in the Sangha many members who impaired the harmony because of their immoral conduct; and that the commandments were introduced one by one in order to control them. The commandments were authorized as having been enacted by the Buddha himself. Therefore, some conduct which we regard as vicious now, was not prohibited by commandments if not committed by the members of the Sangha. If a *bhikkhu* had not been found drunk by the Buddha, the commandment against drinking would not have been established. We cannot find a commandment against smoking, although there is no knowing if tobacco existed in the days of the Buddha. I remember seeing a high priest of Cambodia smoking. Thus we should always bear in mind that the *Vinaya-pitaka* was a product of ancient India. When we consider *Vinaya* we have to take into account its background.

The formalization of the commandments is against Buddhism. According to the fundamental idea of Buddhism, the will or intention is of the first importance. When the intention is pure, the result is never a sin even if the act is bad. In the Buddhist countries in South-east Asia, it may be possible for priests to abide by the numerous commandments because they live in lands where the climate is similar to that of India. Had all the *Bhikkhus* been strict observers of the commandments, none of them could have attended the Second World Buddhists' Conference because it was held during the period of *varsika*. Early in the Meiji Era, several young Japanese priests went to Ceylon for study. One of them specialized in *Vinaya* and tried

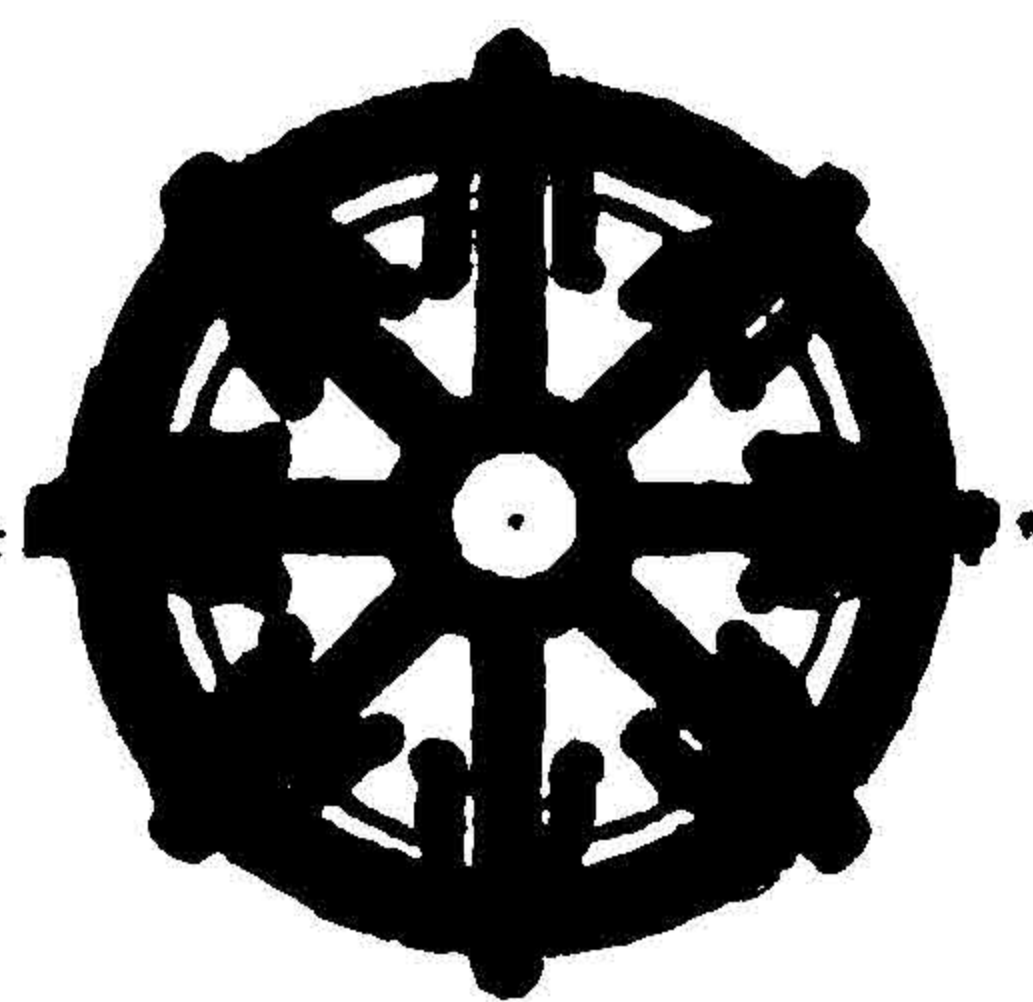
to practise the commandments. When he returned home he founded an association to propagate the commandments of Theravada Buddhism. His efforts were completely fruitless simply because the climate and social conditions of Japan made meaningless many of the commandments. The priest himself had to put on underwear and carry money with him to get aboard trains and cars, all against the commandments.

Judging from what has been said above, it can be said with a considerable degree of justice that the commandments should be interpreted and practised always in view of the time and place. Only by so doing, can their significance be enhanced. To formalize them is to destroy the reason for their existence. To those who do not like alcoholic beverage, the commandment against drinking is meaningless. Only when it is obeyed by alcoholic addicts, can it have its significance. Vinaya will be a guiding force for men when they try to get rid of their own defects by setting up their own commandments.



EIGHT ASPECTS OF LIFE

BY
BHIKKHU VINITA
(Ceylon.)



There are eight factors prevailing in the world, says the Buddha, to which everyone without exception is liable to be subject. They are gain and loss, fame and ill-fame, praise and blame, and pleasure and pain. No one can escape from their presence—not even Arahants including the Buddha.

Nevertheless, there is a difference in the case of the Arahants ; for, unlike the average man, the Arahant is not disturbed by these factors. The average man is elated by gain, fame, praise and pleasure, and is depressed by loss, ill-fame, blame and pain.

The Arahant has no greed, hate and delusion. Having eradicated them he is no more disturbed by the vicissitudes of life. But the average man is quite different. Because of his greed he craves for gain, fame, praise and pleasure ; and due to his hate he resents loss, ill-fame, blame and pain. Both these are due to delusion or ignorance.

The average man is either an optimist or a pessimist. The optimist is the child of greed, and the pessimist is the child of hate. But the wise man who is free from both greed and hate is neither an optimist nor a pessimist. He knows that the determining factor in life is not in the things that happen to him but in the way he takes them. He may have no control over external events, but he can control his inward adjustments to them. What makes other people unhappy beyond endurance is a mere trifle to him.

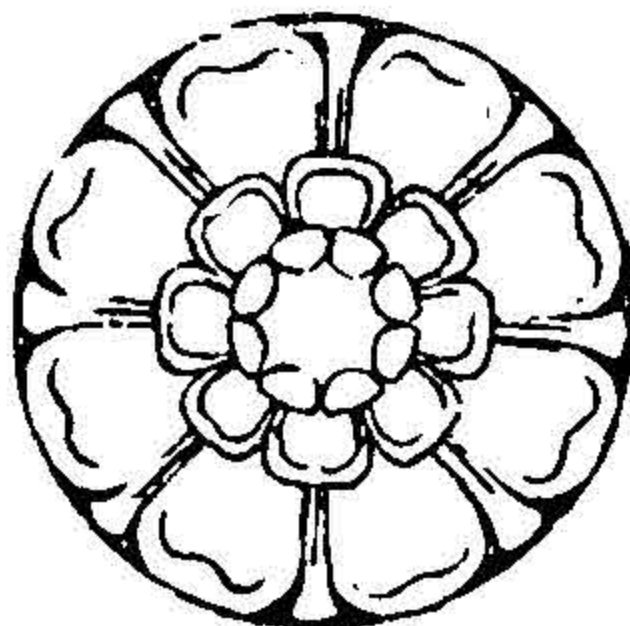
Life does provide us with many unpleasant surprises so that even the best of us cannot help being momentarily disturbed and shocked. Things do not happen as we wish them to. This being so, we must train ourselves to face any situation with fortitude. We may not be able to change them, but certainly we can change ourselves. If a thing is unalterable—then there is no alternative but to submit to it—or in other words maintain a happy resignation to the inevitable. This does not mean that we should simply bow down to all the adversities that come our

way. Not in the least. That is mere fatalism. As long as there is a chance that we can save a situation let us try. But when common sense tells us that we are up against something that is so and cannot be otherwise, then let us try not to worry about it.

There are many who keep their balance while all goes well ; but let disappointment come—business failure, illness, death in the family etc.,—they lose their balance and even go to the extent of committing suicide. We become elated or depressed because of ignorance. The wise man controls his own reactions in moments of success. This does not mean that we should be gloomy fellows who do not laugh or smile. Far from it. The true Buddhist is a cheerful person indeed. When control has been acquired in times of success it becomes possible to exercise it in times of distress as well.

‘The world rests on suffering’ says the Buddha. We have only to look round to be convinced of this truth. Which is the home that has not mourned the loss of a dear and near one? Who is the one who is free from sickness and old age? There may be a few at this moment who are free from any great trouble of both mind and body. But before long the law of impermanence will lay its cruel hands on them. Then all health will end in sickness, all strength in impotence, all beauty in ugliness, all youth in old age, and all life in death.

What then should be our attitude to this changing world? Weeping is in vain for that will make matters worse. Nor is resignation the best way. Understanding the true nature of the world we shall face them bravely. We shall remember the advice given by the Buddha to Nakulapitā. Nakulapitā in his old age visits the Buddha and the Buddha tells him, “Sick of body though I be, mind shall be healthy. Thus should you train yourself”.



A

Buddhist's Understanding of Consciousness

By

H. O. WIJEGONAWARDENA, ESQR.

(Secretary—Ceylon High Commission, Australia.)

We very often say the same thing in different words. Sometimes we attach different labels to one and the same thing depending on our understanding of it. Moreover, the same thing is capable of being labelled differently in different circumstances in which it is manifesting itself. Solidified water we label as "ice"; when it melts under heat we call it water again, when we go on heating it past its boiling point, we call the same thing "steam". Thus, just as much as different people are capable of attaching different names to the same thing according to their background or understanding, *e.g.*, aqua, l'eau, water, so is the thing itself capable of being described differently and different labels attached to its manifestations as it has been shown. It is as purposeless to try to prove that ice, water and steam are not manifestations of one and the same thing as to dispute that aqua, l'eau, water, are not one and the same thing. But, all the same, labels can be confused without a proper understanding and also they have the possibility of making us miss the wood for the trees.

The terms "consciousness" used by a Buddhist, and "energy" used by a physicist are two expressions in point. The terms connote one and the same thing.

To a Buddhist, the term "consciousness" is an all-embracing one. It is to him the motivating as well as the creative force in everything. It is something that prevades the entire Universe without any limitations of Space or Time in the way we generally take them. Thus to him, "consciousness" is in a state of eternal flux, vibration and evolution. In this eternal process, this "consciousness" goes on manifesting itself and expressing itself on the one hand, and neutralising itself on the other. The former process, in certain circumstances, finds its being in countless forms and ways—forms and ways we have discovered, shall discover, and might never discover. But this much is self-evident. There cannot be any manifestation without it nor outside it. The physicist expresses the same thing in his language

by saying that the whole Universe is throbbing with energy and that this energy manifests itself in countless forms and ways while at the same time under certain conditions it is capable of neutralising itself, when there will be no more manifestations of it.

We give different names to the manifestations of this "consciousness" or energy. The most commonly attached label is "life"; but it is not exhaustive. The term "life" is attached to what we see is obviously pulsating or throbbing with "consciousness" or energy. We see plants grow, a child developing. We see the solar system in action and say it is alive, and so on and so forth. We also know that this same "consciousness" or energy is manifesting itself in other ways. We give these manifestations such labels as "heat", "light", "sound", "electricity", "magnetism", etc. The physicist says that energy is capable of manifesting itself as a charge or a wave. He has discovered how some of it could be transmuted from one manifestation to another. Hence we have certain things we take for granted today such as the telephone, television and the radio. This very same energy is called "consciousness" by the Buddhist, and he applies its principles and properties to explaining and understanding its manifestation. His approach is rational and analytical, like that of the physicist.

As an example of the Buddhist approach, let us examine how he views the solar system in which we are.

To him, it is a huge manifestation of "consciousness" in which he himself is an expression. Each manifestation has its own vibration enabling it to express itself in the way it does, it is the same thing as saying that each manifestation has its own particular wave length. As to the physicist, so to the Buddhist, the sun is a centre of "consciousness" or energy—a colossal charge in that bit of space in which we are—itself the result of antecedent causes, evolving itself and affecting and being in turn affected in a whole chain of cause and effect. Thus, while itself evolved and evolving, it also evolves countless other manifestations of "consciousness" or energy, some of which we have discovered, some of which we have not discovered but yet may discover one day, and some probably which we shall never discover. Even if we are not Buddhists and call ourselves physicists, of at least one fact we are all agreed. All accept that this "consciousness" or energy has also manifested itself in the evolution as well as in the "being" of the planetary system we know—huge masses of matter, whirling in space—evolved and held together by nothing else but by this "consciousness" or energy, but for ever evolving evolving.....affecting others..... getting affected.....and also containing within itself the capacity as well as the capability of neutralisation.

It is exactly in that light that the solar system appears to a Buddhist. It is a case of seeing it in perspective, in proportion and in its stark Reality. The same *pattern* of "consciousness" or energy he sees wherever the latter manifests itself and this "consciousness" or energy is the *core* of such manifestation. In the medium of its manifestation, the "consciousness" or energy may be the preponderating component or it may not be. But, whether it preponderates or not, whether its presence is obvious or not, it is there and it has to be there, in the nature of things. Where this "consciousness" or energy is predominant or is the sole manifestation, the physicist says the thing is "charged" or is a "charge" (or merely energy) respectively. Where it is not predominant, or its presence not obvious, he calls it "matter", and on analysis (if it is within the range of the advances he is capable of making) *discovers* what a Buddhist already knows, namely, that all matter is held together in the way it manifests itself by a "consciousness". The physicist uses his own language to call it an energy or a charge. Both approaches are analytical. One is based on physical analysis, the other on a mental or intellectual analysis. The latter has the advantage of being able to probe those planes of manifestation which are not capable of any physical analysis. That is why the Buddhist analysis is so more complete, and why the expounder of the analysis was called the "Buddha" or the "Enlightened One".

To underline this, let us take a very relevant point. Till not so very many centuries ago the belief prevailed among some that the entire Universe revolved round the earth. This was understandable, as a child gets the same impression today from the apparent movement round the earth of all the heavenly bodies. It is therefore not surprising that such a conception prevailed even among adults at a time when their understanding of the Universe had not progressed beyond the stage of a child's today. Even today, where knowledge has not reached them, there will inevitably be people in remote corners of the earth who continue to think much the same way. But we, who have had the privilege of acquiring knowledge, know for a fact that things are quite different. Far from being the centre of the Universe, we know that the earth is a hardly recognisable speck in Space.

According to the understanding of a Buddhist, it is not only the earth and the solar system that we know that fall into their perspective, but also the manifestation called Man who dwells upon the earth. For, like everything else, he himself is a manifestation of this all-pervading and universal "consciousness" or energy, and by no means is he the centre of it, as sometimes we, in our ignorance, seem to think. He is merely an evolutionary manifestation of this universal "consciousness" or energy which goes on vibrating at countless wave lengths—if we prefer to use that expression—to manifest itself in countless ways and which

act and react on itself and on others producing in its train a whole chain of cause and effect. Thus, true to the general pattern, Man is a manifestation of "consciousness" or energy vibrating at a particular wave length. This "consciousness" or energy is capable of vibrating with very fine variations within this range to produce the human being in his countless variety. As in all else, the charge may predominate in this being, making his mind more pliable, sensitive and developed. Or alternatively, it may not do so, resulting in the mind not being his most developed component in this combination of mind (or consciousness) and matter (the *nāma/rupa* of Buddhist philosophy) we call the "human being". The countless variety of these combinations thus prevents two human beings from becoming exactly alike.

The same universal "consciousness" or energy manifests itself or—to say the same thing differently—vibrates at appropriate wave lengths to produce such expressions of "being" as birds, beasts, reptiles, fish, plants, the sand and whatever else of which we can think.

At the plane of evolution that brings man into the picture, there is no necessity to put the word CONSCIOUSNESS any more within inverted commas. Man is what he is because this "consciousness" or energy or, as we call it in him, his *MIND* is more developed and capable of further development, in comparison with other manifestations of this "consciousness" or energy on earth. At this different plane of manifestation of "consciousness" or energy we attach a different label to the fundamentally same thing, just as much as we cannot continue to call the manifestation derived from water that boils "ice", but "steam". This transmutation of "consciousness" or energy, in the manifestation called the human being, we therefore name the "mind". It is an engine room, as it were, in him charging his whole being with impulses or vibrations. It is his motive as well as the creative force and the centre of his being. It does the same thing that the sun does in the solar system or a charge (or energy) in a particle of matter. It throbs, vibrates, reacts, is reacted upon, never the same within a matter of a split second, yet evolving from what it was a split second earlier and yet for ever changing all the same. When it is no longer capable of working as it did, the matter that had formed the body also ceases to function the way it did. The body, in other words, had lost its *raison d'être* in that particular combination of mind and matter.

The charge, or the vibration of the mind or consciousness is again capable of another manifestation as it is energy. What wave length it will have as it leaves the body is dependent on the strength of the charge or the vibration. On its wave length will depend the form of its re-manifestation. This explains the

Buddhist concept that we are capable of being born again and again. That is the same thing as saying that energy is capable of manifesting itself in countless ways. We also have the capacity as human beings, provided we have the right understanding, to neutralise the energy that is within us, so that it would not have the opportunity to manifest itself again. We have spoken of this possibility earlier and the possibility in the present case falls into the same context. This achievement on our part is called the attainment of Nirvana in Buddhist philosophy.

It was because of this possibility that the Buddha attached such significance to what we call the human being. For in this manifestation of ours, more than perhaps in any other, he felt we were capable of neutralising, or striving towards its neutralisation, as this manifestation gave us the opportunity of taking control of this energy by right understanding. As this was the goal of his analysis, he worked out this point with great care and in detail and showed how it could be done. To resume the present theme—the human manifestation, though without doubt a very very infinitesimal expression of energy in the infinity of Space and Time, is therefore a phase filled with a unique opportunity. But how best it is made use of is dependent on the sum total of the requisite vibrations developed within oneself.

The effort may completely succeed in some, go a long way in others. Some may not try at all. There may be yet others who produce even in their human manifestation feeble vibrations of energy at the moment of their death to only manifest themselves lower down the ladder of cosmic evolution. For, as we have seen, there is a countless variety of vibrations, and where one wave length changes over to another is hardly perceptible. Hence it is that sometimes even in some manifestations we see we are unable to decide whether they belong to the vegetable or animal kingdom, or whether they are alive or not, etc., etc.

Nor is what we can see all there is. There are those energies of whose presence we are aware because we are conscious of their vibrations and which we can perceive through other avenues of perception than that of sight. *e.g.*, heat, sound, etc. Also this same consciousness or energy within us is capable of manifesting itself as just a vibration or charge. When it does so, we say it is manifesting itself in the world of the spirit. This is no hypothetical surmise as those who can get in touch with this medium know. Moreover, the fact that consciousness or energy can exist in such manner is obvious even in our ordinary daily lives when we turn on the radio or the television and pick up manifestations of such consciousness or energy. Within this wave length of consciousness or energy, as in all else, there are count-

less variations. Some are capable of their own neutralisation, others are not so, and so ad infinitum, in a rich variety as we find within the wave length that we call human consciousness or energy.

To complete the picture we get from the perspective of Space and Time, there is, therefore, yet another perspective—that of Potential. Each is relative to the other two, but jointly taken beget in us the impression of “being”, “existing”, “living”, etc.

The principles underlying all that has been said are the same. It is for each person, however, to put what has been said to the touchstone of his own understanding for, in the true spirit of the philosophy of Buddhism, what is accepted is accepted only because it is acceptable to each individual.

BUDDHA'S TEACHING AND THE EINSTEIN THEORY

BY

SISTER DHAMMADINNA

(American Buddhist Nun)

The great genius, late Dr. Albert Einstein, knew well the Universal Law of Karma. His famous formula proving that matter is concentrated energy, is Buddhism. (Form is emptiness and emptiness is form etc.)

He said : “ The Mind can proceed only so far upon what it knows and can prove. There comes a point when the Mind takes a leap—and comes out upon a higher plane of knowledge. But you can never prove how it got there. There comes a point in one's life where only intuition can make the leap ahead, without knowing precisely how.”

And now quoting from the Buddha's teaching : “ There comes the final leap, beyond knowledge, beyond thought the mundane Mind—to the Ultimate Reality.”

And the Buddha also gives us the method by which it can be done.

Several great thinkers, men who had not apparently received the Buddha's teaching, had nevertheless somehow glimpsed something of the Universal Law, if not, as yet, that beyond which there is nothing.

Some Thoughts on the Meditation

of

Universal Love

By

ARTHUR DE SILVA ESQR.

(Ceylon)

In contemplating on the Buddha, the first thought that strikes a Buddhist is His Supra-Normal Wisdom which enabled Him to pierce the dark veil and gain an insight into the ultimate view of all that pervades the universe which enabled him to break the otherwise endless chain of births and deaths and pass into the Eternal Peace of Nibbana. But both Buddhists and non-Buddhists normally think first of the Buddha and His teaching in terms of the boundless Love He preached and practised, and in their impact with Asiatic Buddhist countries, their first impression is the peaceful kindly expressions on the faces of the people and in their hospitality to strangers.

This is the result of their centuries old practice of meditation on Maitri (Universal Love) which they did more often than the other meditations.

Some three hundred years ago, Robert Knox the English sailor-captive who escaped from Ceylon after twenty years of captivity, though well treated, wrote about the olden day Sinhalese that they were not revengeful, that their temper is shortlived, that they seldom shed blood in a quarrel, that it is not usual for them to fight with each other and that thieving is the least of their crimes, which however is abhorrent to them.

Foreigners to Ceylon (and to other Asiatic Buddhist countries) often write about their pleasant faces and their ingrained sense of hospitality.

This form of meditation can be practised on all occasions, even when there is little leisure, when the railway train is late, till one falls asleep, when one wakes up in the middle of the night, when walking in one's garden, or seated.

Eleven beneficial results of this form of meditation are mentioned in the canonical books :

1. Sukhan supati—sleeps peacefully.
2. Sukhan patibujjati—awakes peacefully.
3. Napapakan Supinan passati—disturbing dreams do not occur.
4. Manussanan piyo hoti—pleasing to others.
5. Amanussanan piyo hoti—pleasing to evil spirits.
6. Devata Rakkati—protected by the higher spirits (Devas).
7. Massa aggiva sattanwa khamati—No untoward accidents happen from fire or weapons.
8. Thuwatan chittan samadhiyati—concentration is possible quickly.
9. Mukhawanno wippasidati—the face takes a pleasing expression.
10. Asanmulho kalan karoti—death takes place in full possession of the senses.
11. Uttarin appati vijjanto brakhmalokupago hoti—if the stage of sainthood (arahantship) is not reached during life, is born in a Brakhmaloka (highest sphere).

There is hardly a sil-campaign in Ceylon where this form of meditation is not practised. These are generally held only till dusk owing to difficulties of accommodation in the bana preaching halls, for men and women devotees. Besides, daytime is not suited for meditation owing to distracting noises. Also owing to other activities the time allotted to each meditation at the sil campaigns is very limited.

Owing to these reasons, there are shortcomings in the meditations done at sil-campaigns. The chief defect is the speed. No form of meditation is a mere incantation (mantra). In an incantation, all that is needed is accurate incantation, and the requisite number of repetitions, be it 7, 108, or 1,000. Meditation is totally different. Usually it need not be audible. Yet, the mind should throughout be concentrated on the subject matter. The greater the concentration, the greater the effect. That is why the Omniscient One declared “Mano pubban gama dhamma, Mano setta manomaya”. The mind is the first feature, the mind is the chief thing, the mind is all. He also declared that “karma” is but a mental process. (Chetananan bhikkhawe kamman wadami”).

Therefore to obtain the best results for meditation it should be done calmly, quietly and with full concentration of the mind. The time so spent is not wasted. To obtain the best results from paddy cultivation one must exert himself. If just any sort of paddy is sown on a neglected field, the yield is bound to be poor. As stated in the Dhammapada, as one sows does one reap "Yadisan wapate beegan, Thadisan harate phalan". To obtain the best yield from a neglected field, it should be irrigated, cultivated with the harrow, the surface smoothed, and selected seed paddy sown.

The formula "May I be free from worries, be rid of ailments, be happy; May those who love me be free from worries, be rid of ailments, be happy; May strangers to me be free of worries, be rid of ailments and be happy: May my enemies be free from worries, be rid of ailments, and be happy" should not merely be repeated like a parrot. It should come from the depth of the heart. Each word in the formula should be uttered concentrating on its meaning. When one says "May I be free from worries" one should think of his actual worries. Similarly about his ailments and the obstacles to his happiness. And this should be done in repeating the formula in respect of those who love him, as far as their worries, ailments and shortcomings to their happiness are known to him. As regards strangers, this is not possible, and in meditating on strangers, one must, while repeating the formula, think "They too would like to be free from worries, be rid of ailments, and be happy. May they be thus free of worries, be rid of ailments, and be happy".

Meditation of love to enemies presents a problem. That is why this meditation is placed last. Psychology teaches us why it is difficult to love an enemy. The very thought of an enemy brings to mind dormant feelings of resentment for past wrongs. Anger towards the enemy is the result. It has been found that the Saliva of an enraged person contains a poison, a small quantity of which can kill a mouse. This poison has been found even in the condensed air exhaled by an enraged person. It is a provision of nature inherited by man from the animal world where a victim meets with quick death from a bite. The old folks have realised this from experience of the race and there is a village saying that the bite of a rat which has fought with another and fallen from the roof is specially poisonous and results in leukoderma. Hunters are attacked by wild animals and poisonous reptiles pass hermits in the jungle harmlessly. It is apposite to remember that a kind word turns away wrath. A police Sergeant with notebook and pencil was awaiting a crowd of youths spread the width of the Turret Road in Colombo on an inter-collegiate cricket match day in violation of a strict rule of the road. A thoughtful youth at the forefront saved the situation by shouting out "Cheerio

uncle ! ” as he approached the Sergeant. The latter felt shy, looked down with a smile and put the note book into his pocket as the cyclists passed him in the same wild disorder.

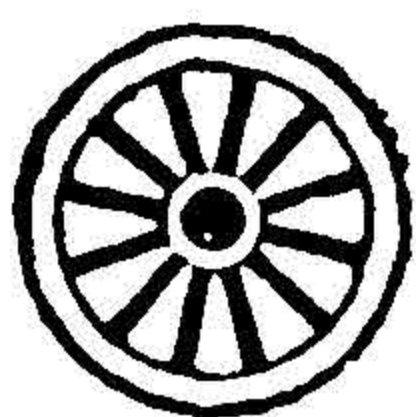
Thus, there is no room for thought of love where anger is present, so the approach should be gradual, with a change of heart. It would be difficult at first but an honest effort should be made in a real Buddhist spirit. It must at first be generally about those who bear ill-will towards us, and not about particular individuals. One must think “ they acted like children in ignorance of the law of Cause and Effect (karma) Nothing happens without cause ; I have probably given cause, may be unwittingly, may be in this life may be in some former existence. I have repaid my debt and I am now free. It is not their fault. May they be free of worries, be rid of ailments and be happy ”.

It need hardly be mentioned that the practice of maitri should not be restricted to the time of meditation but be continued throughout in every moment of wakefulness and be applied on all occasions which call for it.

May all beings be happy !



A MODERN MEDITATION MOVEMENT



By

MISS MARIE B. BYLES

(Author of "Footprints of Gautama the Buddha")

After five very worth-while weeks at a meditation centre in Mandalay, Burma, I was at the Bangkok Airport, once again among people with my own white skin. "What a worried, miserable tense people we are, and how disagreeable!" was the thought that came, and then, "No wonder one in twelve of the population of U.S.A. must expect to spend some time in a mental hospital; no wonder millions are spent on remedies for sleeplessness. And yet a psychiatrist once remarked that if only people would learn to still their thoughts, there would be no work left for such as he." The art of meditation—was that what these unhappy people needed to learn.

The meditation movement in Burma, I was told, is a post-war development. To use the word of my kind host, "During British days Buddhism was good. You looked on the yellow robe of a monk or a nun and you felt cool; you could not do bad things." But during the Japanese occupation, this form of vicarious redemption proved inadequate, and people fell into all manner of social vices. The war over, the more thoughtful of the lay people looked around upon the ruins of their fallen virtue and asked what should be done about it. The answer was obvious. They must become "cool" in themselves, that is, they must learn to still their thoughts and desires in meditation. Centres sprang up everywhere supported by lay citizens and to them come lay men and women and monks and nuns for longer or shorter periods and always on the Sabbath or the Sunday.

Naturally the instructors are usually monks, but not necessarily so, and at our centre the instructor was in fact a layman. Further, in a country where women are definitely the inferior sex, this is not so in meditation centres where the work done alone counts, and where there is nothing to prevent women from becoming instructors.

Our daily routine seemed to me particularly sensible—the middle way between austerity and luxury. At 4 a.m. the great bell at the Temple boomed forth across the rice fields and began the first meditation period which ended at 6 a.m. with the mundane sound of the kitchen gong calling us to rice-gruel and tea. We meditated again from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. when a tasty lunch

was served under a notice bidding us eat in silence and with mindfulness, remembering we took food not for pleasure but only for nourishment. After lunch we washed ourselves and our clothes and a bathroom with a door was found for the lone European who had the strange custom of "bathing naked". We returned to our furnitureless huts to meditate from noon until 5 p.m. At 6 p.m. there was an opportunity for seeing the Instructor. We meditated once more from 7 p.m. until 10 p.m. when we stretched out on bamboo mats on the floor for sleep. There was no food after 10-30 a.m. for we had taken the monk's precepts.

The object of Vipassana or Higher Insight meditation, is to find in actual experience (as distinct from intellectual knowledge) the true nature of things—*dukkha* (pain) *anicca* (impermanence) and *anatta* (selflessness). But the method for learning to still the thoughts to this end, differs from centre to centre. At ours we started by contemplating the breath coming in and out of the nostrils (*anapana*), but once the onset of visions indicated a sufficient degree of concentration had been obtained, no further notice was taken of visions, and we passed on to "*phyit-pyet*"—in-out, or creation and destruction as ceaselessly taking place in every part of the mind and body. The second stage was commenced by an initiation ceremony and four hours' meditation in the presence of the Instructor and experienced meditators. It was a helpful stimulant to start us off, but this practice is by no means universal.

Concentration of thought stirs up very powerful forces. (Incidentally these are often evidenced by severe bodily reactions in the early stages, so that the meditator has no difficulty in learning about *Dukkha* in actual experience!) These forces can be turned to evil purposes as well as to good. Hence the vital necessity for making loving kindness the basis of all meditation. At our centre we took this as a precept on the very first day, and each time we meditated we were expected to begin by suffusing all with boundless love, especially those who had injured us, and then by bowing with our faces to the ground and asking the love and forgiveness of those whom *we* had injured. Without this basis in boundless love, meditation could easily be prostituted to, for example, military purposes. To provide an extra safeguard, instructors in this method take a vow that they will teach only for the sake of loving kindness, never because of force, and never for the sake of money, prestige or power.

One aspect of meditation the Westerner especially needs to keep in mind, is the necessity for "taking refuge", but not necessarily in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. "He might take refuge in Boundless Love", the Instructor suggested, or perhaps in the Dhamma, the Law-Which-Holds-All, or the

Very-Nature-of-Things-as-they-Are, the same Law which heals the broken bone or the cut finger. The name used does not matter. What does matter is the attitude of relaxation and trust in a **Power-Not-Oneself**.

“The Dhamma has brought you here and the Dhamma will be your teacher when you leave,” they said. “Depend not upon me, let the Dhamma be your Teacher,” the Buddha said to Ananda. An instructor in human form is very helpful, but not essential. The saintliest meditator I have met, never had a teacher in the flesh. No one need go to Burma before he starts to practise meditation. The Dhamma will show the method suited to the individual temperament. All that he needs to do is to relax, depend upon a Power not himself, take boundless love, ignore the visions and ecstasies, and for the rest, ceaselessly practise, and go on ceaselessly practising even though nothing happens.



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The Buddha's Teaching as Literature

BY

MRS. ELOISE L. CLANCY

(Secretary—Washington Friends of Buddhism, U.S.A.)

To a Westerner, it is the Lord Buddha's figures of speech, by which he brought home his teaching, that add so greatly to a reader's delight. His metaphors, similes, personifications were not meant to be literary devices, but were used copiously only because he had to step down his high voltage of great concepts, so that the common people might comprehend his teaching. He used the instinctive methods of a great teacher in relating his message to their understanding and to the world in which they lived.

For example, the Tevigga Sutta is so filled with repetition, simile and metaphor that I can make no quote from it save this one example of personification :

"He thoroughly understands this universe, as though he saw it face to face".

A study of the precious Dhammapada reveals that of its 423 slokas, in at least 130, one finds one or more similes, or comparisons of one idea or object to another ; or a metaphor, in which one kind of object is used in place of another ; or a personification in which an inanimate object is given a human quality or *vice versa*. The universe is given a face ; a man is called a puppet. Because all his figures of speech are new and apt to a Westerner, they give a pleasant surprise, which helps to fix the teaching. The following examples from Dhammapada will prove my point :

"If, with impure mind, one speaks or acts, then pain follows one, even as the wheel the hoof of an ox." D. 1

"If, with a pure mind, one speaks or acts, then happiness follows one as his clinging shadow." D. 2

"The man who lives contemplating pleasure, with senses unrestrained, in food immoderate, lazy, inert—him verily Mara overthrows, as the wind a weak tree." D. 7

"The man who lives not for the pursuit of pleasure, him Mara cannot prevail against, as a stormy blast cannot prevail against a rocky mountain." D. 8

"Those who make the channels lead the water wherever it is wanted; fletchers make straight the arrow by heating; carpenters fashion the bow; wise persons entirely subjugate themselves." D 80

"The good shine from afar like the Himalayan range, while those lacking in virtue vanish unseen, as arrows shot in a dark night." D. 80

"Whoever by good deeds covers the evil done, such a one illumines his words like the moon when freed from clouds." D. 173

The Great Teacher knew well how to choose words, vivid, colourful, succinct: an old man ill, he called *'a puppet, well rigged, a heap of many sores, piled up, devoured by old age.'* D. 146-8

Often he must have felt that men's eyes were holden, as with a thick coating of clay. Then he comforted himself:

"Yet there are beings whose eyes are only a little covered with dust; they will understand the truth." A happy metaphor. Majjhima-Nikaya, 141

Again, the Lord had been teaching his followers how to distinguish the real from the unreal, the Ego from the body by the repetition of the phrase: *'This does not belong to me: this am I not: this is not my Ego.'* As a summary, the Master added one of his graphic similes:

"Just as one calls a hut (house) but the circumscribed space which comes to be by means of wood and rushes, reeds and clay, even so we call the body the circumscribed space that comes to be by means of bones and sinews, flesh and skin." Majjhima-Nikaya, 28

He spoke less often by metaphor than by simile:

"And wherever the beings spring into existence, there their deeds will ripen: and wherever their deeds ripen, there they will earn the fruits of those deeds, be it in this life, or be in the next life, or be it in any other future life."

Anguttara-Nikaya, III 33

Since it is said that comparisons are useful only in direct proportion to their emotional truth, the Wise One chose in one instance a palm, most useful, necessary and beloved of trees:

..."actions, done out of greed, anger and delusion...are abandoned, rooted out, like a palm tree torn out of the soil, destroyed, and not able to spring up again."

Anguttara-Nikaya III 33

He taught his disciples to strive to attain Nibbana :

“ For a disciple thus freed, in whose heart dwells peace, there is nothing to be added to what has been done, and nought remains for him to do. Just as a rock of one solid mass remains unshaken by the wind, even so, neither forms, nor sounds, nor odours, nor tastes, nor contacts of any kind, can cause such a one to waver. Steadfast is his mind, gained is his deliverance.”
Anguttara-Nikaya VI 55

Nowhere, perhaps, are the Lord's words and figures of speech more homely than in a small Sutta called :—

THE LAST WORD :

“ Ye brethren ! After my death you must reverence and honour the commandments. They are like finding a light in the darkness, like a poor man finding a great treasure !

“ From all planting and all sorts of wealth those who would follow pure discipline ought to run away as one would from a fire or a pit !

“ Ye brethren ! If you would live the precepts, you must repress the five senses. It is just like a cowherd who, showing a stick, stops the cows from entering another man's field which is ripe for the harvest. So, if you indulge the five senses, not only will their desires not be stopped within bounds, but like not controlling a bad horse by a bit, soon the individual must fall into an abyss. These desires should be kept like prisoners who may not wander about. As for these five senses, the mind is as their master. For this reason ye must always guard well the mind. Much more than a snake, wild beasts or a fateful robber, ought the mind to fear dissatisfaction. It is like, for example, a man who, carrying home some honey, goes bouncing along his path looking only at the honey and fails to notice a deep hole. Or again, it is like a (pet) monkey who, escaping to a tree, cannot then, except with difficulty, be controlled.

“ Ye brethren ! In receiving all food and drink you ought to accept them as medicine. Do not accept or reject what you like or dislike ; just support your bodies and avoid starvation and thirst. As the bee in gathering flowers, takes only the taste of them, but does not harm their colour or scent, so brethren, do ye.....A wise man, for example, having judged the capacity of his ox's strength, does not wear out its strength by overloading.

“ You will gain nothing in passing your whole life in vain, through sleep. You ought to think of the world as burning in a fire. You must desire to save yourself quickly. You must not oversleep. The robber (depravities) is always stalking and killing man. The depravities are a poisonous snake sleeping in your mind. They are like a black cobra sleeping in your room. It can be got rid of with the spear of keeping the precepts. Only when that dormant snake has fled can you sleep peacefully. If you sleep with the snake still present, you are a rash man.

“ The clothing of conscience, among all finery is the very best. Conscience is like an iron goad which can control man's unrighteousness. He who has no regrets will not be different from birds and beasts.

“ He who cannot endure abuse as he would drink ambrosia cannot be called an enterer of the Way or a wise man. You should realize that hateful thoughts are worse than a great fire.

“ Just as lightning and thunder cannot appear in a white filmy cloud, so hatred cannot be in the homeless ones who practise the Way without desires and confine their hatefulness.

“ Those who rejoice in company have the pains of company, just as when many birds flock from a tree in danger of collapse. Attachment to the world drowns one in suffering of mankind, just as an old elephant drowning in the mud cannot drag himself out.

“ Ye brethren ! If you strive energetically there is nothing that is hard. For example, a constant trickle of water will bore a hole in a rock. Therefore, ye must always strive energetically. If the mind of a disciple becomes.....idle and inattentive, it is just as if, while making a fire by friction you rest before it is hot ; even if you desire fire, you cannot get a blaze, unless you strive energetically.

“ If your concentration is strong and hard, even though the five desires were to enter, they cannot do any harm, just as, if you have put on armour to enter the battle, there is nought to fear.

“ If you attain concentration, the mind does not wander. Just as a house with little water carefully conserves that in its reservoir, so should the disciples also. For the sake of the water of knowledge, you should practise concentration ; do not let it leak away. Perfect knowledge is a strong ship which carries you across the sea of old age, sickness and death. Again, it is a great brilliant light in deep darkness. It is good medicine for all who are ill. It is a sharp axe which cuts the tree of evil.

“ I am like a good doctor, who recognized the illness and prescribed a medicine ; but whether it will actually be taken or not is not up to the doctor. Again, I am like a good guide who directs a man to the best path. If, on hearing that, he does not walk on it, the fault is not with the guide.”

(From the Parinirvana Sutra, No. 122 in Nanjio's catalogue of the Chinese Tripitaka, and Vol. 12, No. 389 in the Taisho edition of the Tripitaka of Japan. Translated into English by Philipp Karl Edimann. Nishi Hongwanji Temple, Kyoto, Japan.)

Thus, in this reported ‘ Last Word ’, brought from India to China, translated from Sanskrit or Pali into Chinese by Kumārajīva C. 971 B.E., then carried from China to Japan many centuries ago, and there treasured ; lost and found again, and finally reprinted in Japanese and translated into English in 1958, we have a small literary gem. Throughout all the writings I have discovered, the Lord Buddha taught by means of contrasts or of likenesses, of grains of sand as in the Diamond Sutra ; in words, terse, concise. By all these small, homely everyday objects, we learn how well the beloved Teacher knew his audience ; their cattle, their snakes, their honey and fire made by rubbing two sticks, or one stick into rotting wood. He never spoke of a palace but only of a hut, perhaps of one or two rooms, and thatched. There must have been many robbers in those far off days, since the word appears in this short Sutta six times : the robber of the five senses, of depravities ; the robber called hatefulness. ‘ *Get rid of laxity,*’ he told them, ‘ *as you would a hateful robber.....*’ *The body is a robber,*’ thus giving it a term of opprobrium. Yet there were good robbers, too, who turned, melted by the Lord’s understanding smile, and they too, entered the Way. Would that all the robbers of World Peace today might be captivated by these Buddhist writings, and so turn about and enter the Path. It might well be that these very figures of speech might captivate them, or touch their hearts.

May Vesak bring peace to all mankind !

TRENDS IN WESTERN

BUDDHISM

By

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Some knowledge of Buddhism first penetrated the Western world during the middle of the 19th Century, a period styled by many contemporaries as the "Age of Reason," owing to the marked development of scientific thought. This disposed many to welcome any new ideas with eagerness, confident that the test of "reason" was superior to the authoritarian dogmas inherited from Europe's past.

At that stage, the available sources of Buddhist knowledge were still meagre, but something of its unique features was appreciated. The current conception of "reason", however, was too negative either for the full appreciation of Buddhist thought or even for the practical needs of society, as subsequent events have shown. Reason meant little more than discarding the bonds of dogma, particularly such unverifiable concepts as the Creator or the ego-soul, and there was a tendency to acclaim Buddhism merely for its freedom from these ideas, rather than because of its positive aspects Buddhism was acclaimed "for what it was not, rather than for what it is." Some went even so far as to treat Buddhism as according with the prevailing materialist outlook—certainly a monumental error! Whether materialism is taken to mean that sense-objects are the only reality, or that their possession is the only good, Buddhism has not the least in common with it, less even than Christianity. In Buddhism, sense-objects are classed merely as passing states dependent on conditions, while attachment to these is the cause of all sorrow.

By now, however, the intellectual scene has greatly changed. The need to combat outworn dogma is not felt so urgently, as little now remains of its former influence. What we need is something to put in its place, to fill the gap left by the collapse of former standards. This time, mankind is looking for a new basis for life and thought, and Buddhism is among the solutions which are receiving attention.

Buddhist scholarship has meanwhile made good progress and its fruits seem much in demand, whether as translations from standard texts, studies for their contents, or serious evalua-

tions of their ethical and philosophical work. Moreover, in many important centres of Western civilization, even here in distant Australia, associations have been formed with the aim of encouraging the actual practice of Buddhist principles. Thus we now have better means for applying the real treasures of the Buddhist tradition.

At the same time, however, too much stress is still put on the negative approach, particularly the denial of the soul-concept, with the result that the impression is still sometimes received that Buddhism is little more than wholesale denial. How erroneous—when we recall how spiritedly the Master challenged the nihilistic theories of his day, such as Purana Kassapa's denial of ethics and Ajita's doctrine of annihilation at death! He did not announce His Illumination by denials, but with the triumphant words, "Open are the doors to the Deathless!"

This must be the keynote of our Buddhism, as it has been the inspiration of centuries of glorious attainment in the East. When we do deny misconceptions, we must deny only in order to affirm, namely, that beyond the world of physical and mental states (*nama-rupa*) there is that supreme state called the Deathless, the only refuge and the only abiding reality: inaccessible to physical means, inaccessible also to the forms of thought, but open to all freed from bondage to passing states. Named also the unconditioned, it is described by the Master in these terms:

*"Deliverance, the real, beyond the sphere
Of reason, lasting, unborn, unproduced."* (Itivuttaka 37.)

It is this affirmation of the Beyond that is the basis of all we Buddhists do here in the field of practice. It is the real source of our inspiration.

Much could be said about the problems of Buddhist practice under present conditions, but a few points must suffice here. According to the Pali texts, two main paths may be followed, either that of the disciple, who aims at deliverance in this life (as Arahant), or that of the Bodhisat who, like Sumedha in the days of the Buddha Dipankara, aspires to attain Buddhahood in a future birth when he can restore the Teaching in an age of darkness. During the earliest phase of Buddhist history, in the presence of the Master and soon thereafter, it was natural to stress the attainment of immediate release from rebirth, but it was equally natural in later ages, when the flux or worldly conditions made the application of the Teaching in its original form even more difficult, to evoke also the courageous initiative of the Bodhisat, whose aim is rather to accumulate merit and wisdom for the sake of future ages. This need seems to be greater today than ever.

Its acceptance is necessary too from another viewpoint, because the thought of Mahayana Buddhism is also becoming well known to Western students and it is essential, for the sake of harmony between Buddhists everywhere, to appreciate the Bodhisat spirit which animates much of the Mahayana, without necessarily giving equal value to all aspects of its dynamic development.

However much the externals of practice may vary with time and place, it seems appropriate, as Sangharakshita has pointed out, to regard them all as expressions of the Five Spiritual Faculties, namely, Faith, Effort, Mindfulness, Meditation and Wisdom. Some, anxious to avoid any apparent resemblance to the Christian conception of faith, would make little of this aspect of Buddhism, but without this underlying conviction of the Deathless beyond the world of appearances, we cannot progress. Besides, even the first initiative awakening of faith is also the first stirring of wisdom. Wisdom balances faith, as effort balances the calm of meditation, all being harmonized by the fifth factor, Mindfulness, in the Middle Way.

Thus we realise more deeply than ever the significance of the Master's final injunctions, to rely on ourselves and on the truth and to strive for deliverance with diligence.



IN THE QUEST OF THE BUDDHA

BY

G. N. DAS, ESQR.

(India)

The celebrated Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien, or "The Illustrious Master of the Law," was the youngest of the four sons of his father. After all his brothers had died at an early age, his father sent him to a Buddhist monastery. When he was 10 years old his father died and, subsequently, his mother followed suit. So Fa-hsien continued to live in the monastery.

One day he and his friends were cutting grain when they were threatened by robbers. But he quietly put them to flight by saying, "If you must have the grain, take what you please. But, Sirs, it was your former neglect of charity which brought you to your present state of destitution; and now, again, you wish to rob others. I am afraid that in the coming ages you will have still greater poverty and distress; I am sorry for you beforehand."

Such traits of calm courage and moral fervour were in evidence throughout his life, and, shortly after being ordained as a Buddhist monk, he decided to visit India to collect complete copies of the books of the Buddhist Canon, which were not available in China, and to see the country of the birth of the Buddha.

Historic Pilgrimage

In A. D. 399 Fa-hsien with several companions started on his pilgrimage from Ch'angan (Hsi-an fu) in North China and travelled westwards across the Gobi desert. They passed through Shan-shan (south of Lop-Nor), Kara-shahr, Khotan, Yarkand, Skardu and the region near Dardus on the west bank of the Indus. The monks here belonged to the Hinayana (Small Vehicle) school of Buddhism except in Khotan where they were mostly of the Mahayana sect (Great Vehicle).

They crossed the river by a rope bridge and reached the area near Swat and Attock, where the people dressed and spoke the language of the "Middle Kingdom" (North India). Buddhism flourished here and the monks were all of the Hinayana school.

They then visited the kingdoms of Gandhara and Taksasila (Taxila), where there were several Buddhist stupas. From here they proceeded to Purusapura, modern Peshawar, where they saw the stupa built by the Kushana king Kanishka (about A. D. 78-101). It was more than 400 cubits high and was lavishly decorated. In its "solemn beauty and majestic grandeur" it far surpassed all the monuments seen by Fa-hsien and his friends during their travels.

Shrine of Buddha

Afterwards they went to Hidda, west of Peshawar, Nagara (Jelalabad), Afghanistan, Bannu and Bhida in the Punjab. At the first two places they saw the gilded shrine containing the skull-bone of the Buddha, the stupas containing his tooth and sandalwood staff and the cave where he left his shadow. About the latter, Fa-hsien says, "Looking at it from a distance of more than 10 paces, you seem to see Buddha's real form with the complexion of gold and his characteristic marks in their nicety clearly and brightly displayed. The nearer you approach, however, the fainter it becomes, as if it were only in your fancy,"

Subsequently the Chinese travellers journeyed in a south-easterly direction and arrived in the country of Mathura, where Buddhism was in a flourishing state. To the south of this country was the "Middle Kingdom." It enjoyed a temperate climate and the people were many and contented. There were neither capital nor corporal punishments except for notorious rebels, whose right hands were amputated. Criminals had to pay a fine, the amount of which varied in keeping with the seriousness of the offence. Cowries were used as the media of exchange and there were neither magistrates nor the registration of households. The inhabitants did not take animal flesh, liquor, onions or garlic. the only exceptions being the *Chandalas* (low caste people). When the latter "enter the gate of a city or a market place, they strike a piece of wood to make themselves known, so that men may know and avoid them and do not come in contact with them." The ruler of the country was Chandra Gupta II (about A. D. 375-415) but Fa-hsien has not mentioned him.

From Mathura he went to Sankissa, 45 miles from Kanauj, where the Buddha descended after going to heaven. Here the pilgrim was struck by the productivity of the place and the happiness and prosperity of the people.

He and his companions then visited the kingdoms of Saketa, Sravasti, Kapilavastu, near Gorakhpur, Lumbini, Ramagrama, Kusinagara and Vaisali. All these places were connected with various important events in the life of the Buddha and in several of them there were stupas.

The pilgrims afterwards went to Pataliputra, modern Patna, in the Magadha country. Here were some of the greatest towns in the "Middle Kingdom." The people were well off, benevolent and righteous. There were several free hospitals for the sick and the wounded and they were endowed by the heads of the Vaisya families (traders). The palace and halls of Asoka situated in Pataliputra were of exquisite workmanship, so much so that to the devout pilgrim they seemed to have been "made by

spirits which he employed, and which piled up the stones, reared the walls and gates, and executed the elegant carving and inlaid sculpture-work—in a way which no human hands of this world could accomplish.”

Car Festival

Fa-hsien has described an imposing car festival which was held annually on the eighth day of the second month in Pataliputra and other kingdoms. A five-storied bamboo structure was set up on a four-wheeled car and in it were placed images of Brahmanical gods, made of gold, silver and lapis lazuli, with images of Buddha and the Bodhisattva inserted in niches on the sides. The procession might consist of 20 such cars, all decorated differently. Both Brahmans and Buddhists took part in the celebrations which were accompanied by singing, music and the giving of offerings.

From Pataliputra the pilgrims travelled to Rajagriha, which the Buddha had visited several times, and to Gaya, the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment, which was in a state of wilderness. Then they visited Varanasi (Banaras) and Sarnath, where the Buddha preached his first sermon. To the south of this region at a distance of 200 *yojanas* was the country of the Deccan, which Fa-hsien did not visit, as it was far away and dangerous for travellers. He then returned to Pataliputra, where he stayed for three years, studying Sanskrit and transcribing the Vinaya texts. It was only here that he found written texts, they being transmitted from mouth to mouth in other places.

Fa-hsien then visited Champanagar, near Bhagalpur, where there were Buddhist stupas, and Tamluk in West Bengal. In the latter place Buddhism was flourishing and he stayed here for two years, “writing out his Sutras and drawing pictures of images.”

Subsequently he boarded a ship at the mouth of the Hooghly and reached Ceylon after two weeks. He lived here for two years and collected some important Buddhist texts not available in China. The country, which was ruled by a king professing the Brahmanical faith, enjoyed a temperate climate and was very pleasant. The land was rich in vegetation and the people enjoyed peace and plenty.

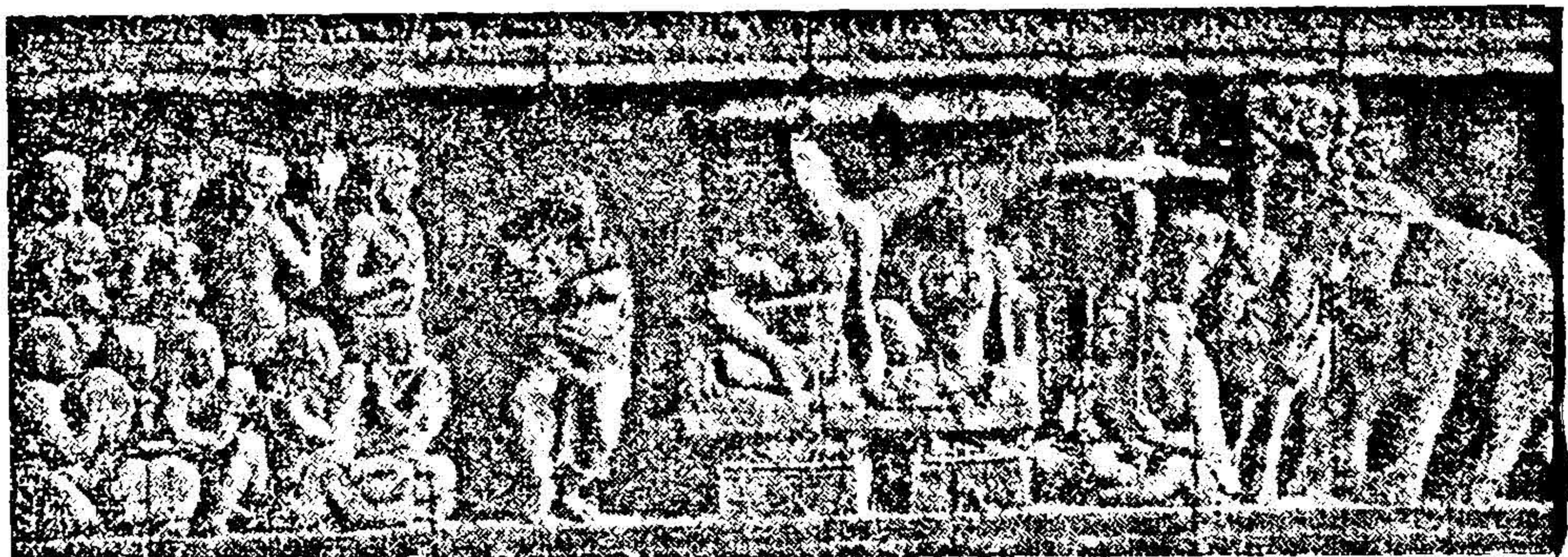
Homeward Bound

Fa-hsien embarked again on a large vessel carrying about 200 passengers—probably one of the largest vessels referred to in ancient Indian sources, and sailed eastwards. Suddenly there was a leak in the vessel and all the inmates were in a state of alarm. After 13 days they reached an island where the leak was plugged and the ship sailed again.

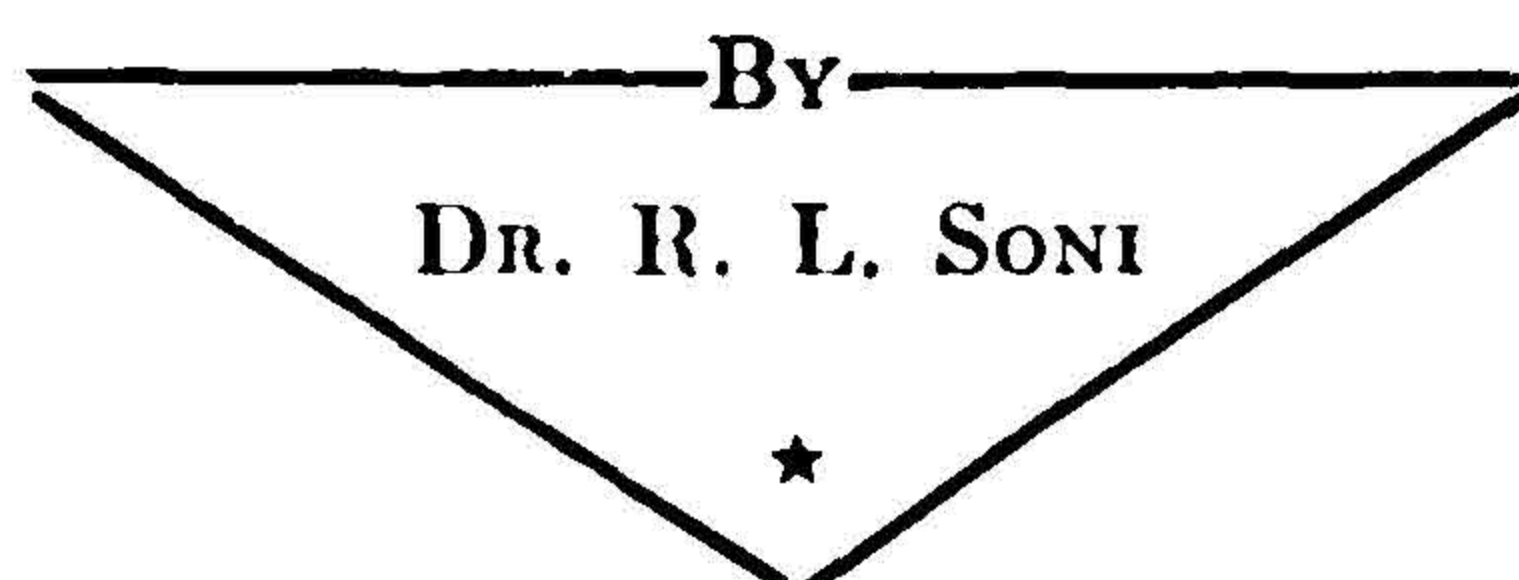
The pilgrim writes : " On the sea there are many pirates. The great ocean spreads out, a boundless expanse. There is no knowing east or west ; only by observing the sun, moon and stars was it possible to go forward. . . . The sea was deep and bottomless, and there was no place where they could drop anchor and stop. But when the sky became clear, they could tell east and west, and the ship again went forward in the right direction." Ultimately the vessel reached Java after a voyage lasting about 90 days. Fa-hsien stayed here for five months, although it was not an important center of Buddhism.

Then he boarded a vessel again and sailed towards the north-east and landed at Ts'ing-chow on the China coast after having safely withstood a storm en route. He passed a winter and a summer here and then proceeded to Nanking, the capital of the Eastern Chin Dynasty (A.D. 317-420), where he held an exhibition of the canonical texts collected during his travels.

Thus ended the pilgrimage of Fa-hsien. He arrived in India towards the end of A.D. 399, stayed here for over six years and then went back to China, taking about three years for the return voyage and passing through about 30 countries en route.



BUDDHIST EMPHASIS ON THE INDIVIDUAL



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The emphasis of Buddhism is not so much on the world as on the individual: this is so because the Buddha vividly realised that the world would never become better unless the individuals became so. Even though the betterment of the world be our target, our fundamental emphasis has to be on the betterment of the individual. And, there will be hope in the world because of this emphasis. Were this emphasis to be absent, the hope would vanish too. And, the hope shall remain green so long as the hope in the betterment of the individual does not snap.

The Buddha surveyed the world, assayed it scientifically, and tested it vitally: as a result, He found the individual to be the focal point of its existence. The world becomes good or bad in proportion to the wholesome or unwholesome trends working in the individuals. In other words, the remarkable discovery of the Buddha was that the world picture mirrored the total *kamma* of the individuals. And, it was not a convex or a concave mirror showing enlarged or diminutive pictures in distortion: it was rather a plain mirror showing things as they were. If we see the things in different colours or in forms which are a substantial departure from the actuality, the fault is not of the mirror (the world), but of the subjective storms and fogs in us.

The world as a whole is 'anicca', 'dukkha' and 'anatta': these general attributes are objective as well as subjective. The individual, however, cognises the objective world as something apart from himself. This initial error makes him disregard the truth of 'anatta', which leads him into a labyrinth, exit out of which becomes exceedingly difficult, for, once in the labyrinth he gets terribly involved in the tragedy of errors: and, though these errors lead to more and more errors, qualitatively and quantitatively, and also though all these errors spell tragedies more or less, the individual unfortunately in his delusion of individuality generally accepts these as comedies. It is thus that through the delusion of 'atta' (i.e. the reversal of the truth of 'anatta'), individuality becomes the focal point of reference, and in con-

sequence an evil centre breeding selfishness, appropriating to itself rights and privileges in a way almost exclusive. Exclusiveness as this leads to another serious delusion, namely the acceptance of life as a comedy rather than as a tragedy of errors. Such a happy-go-lucky notion spells acceptance of life as '*sukkha*', which again is a reversal of the universal truth of '*Dukkha*'. Also, the truth of '*anicca*' is automatically reversed to '*nicca*', for, where there is the faulty belief in '*atta*' there must also be the concomitant faulty belief in '*nicca*'. Thus the vicious circle is completed and the individual becomes effectively fenced from the rest of the phenomena.

Sequestered from the rest of existence, an individual becomes conditioned by activities connected with the defence and perpetuation of the barriers set by himself between himself and the rest of the world. He remains busy, as a matter of fact extremely busy, in such activities and has hardly a breathing time to think of any other worthwhile values. Such is the fundamental stuff that makes an individual.

If selfishness and delusion are the basic foundations of an individual, why did the Buddha lay so much emphasis on him.

The question is quite relevant.

The Buddha's emphasis on the individual is not because egoism has in it the hope of universal peace, but because a proper understanding of the stuff of which the individual is made is expected to switch off the concomitant delusions and to lead the individual to the realisation of the truths of '*anicca*', '*dukkha*' and '*anatta*'.

Our individual vision, usually is not '*yatha bhuta*' (i.e. of actuality), but is blessed by our views. Just as the beam of whitelight becomes a patch of rainbow with the interposition of a prism, the 'things as they actually are' begin to seem different with the interposition of the 'ego'. Thus, generally what we know is not factual but a coloured picture viewed through the tinted glasses of our biases. We see not 'the things as they are' but only the visible impression they make on us. That is why we easily lose the track of Truth and fumble about, making a mess of our lives.

Everyone of us wears a distinctive veil : it is unique in so far as the personal picture it gives of the world around us is concerned. Without this personal touch, the world would be the same to all, a place of bare cause and effect, with the elements of matter and mind ever aflux in integration or disintegration.

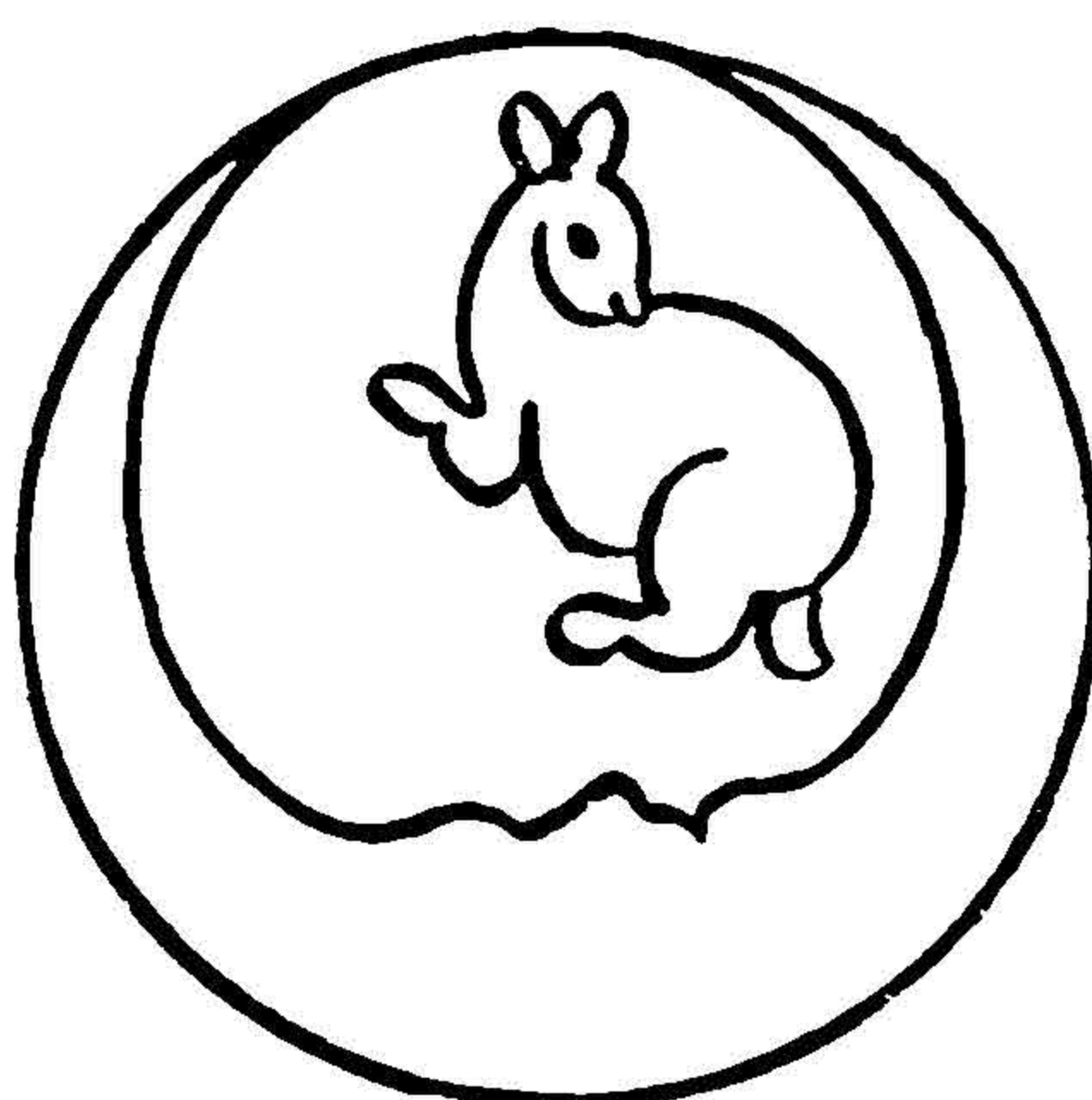
When the vision of a person attains to this true perception, he is hailed as a Seer, for, others see not the Truth but as it only appears through their wishful thoughts.

To witness the whitelight, the interposing prism must be set aside !

To cognise the Truth, the interposing ' ego ' needs be removed !!

Unless this is done, our vision shall be not '*yatha bhuta*' but distorted, discoloured and out of perspective. That is why the Buddha emphasised the value and importance of '*Anatta*', egolessness. So long as there is 'ego', the vision will be anything but 'Right': only when '*Anatta*' (egolessness) prevails, the vision becomes 'Right'. Only the person of the '*Anatta*' vision SEES in the true sense. All others are truly blind, for, even though they see, what they cognise is certainly faulty or only relatively right. However, it is the individual who attains to this achievement of Right vision. Hence the emphasis of the Buddha on the individual.

Once this vision is achieved, the barriers between man and man, between nation and nation and between a group and another become insubstantial. And, the result is highly beneficial. There dawns peace within and in consequence there is peace without. Security and happiness, of course, follow as inevitable concomitants.



“He who envisages Paticcasamuppāda realises the Dhamma”

(Buddha Gautama)

By

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The theory of dependent origination or causality as embodied in ‘Paticca Samuppāda’ is the one and the only source of Buddhist philosophy as distinct from other metaphysical theories like Kamma, Atta etc., etc., which have their parallelism in Buddhism as well as in other Indian schools of philosophy. Although we get similar concepts and beliefs as that of Buddhist theory of Kamma, transmigration of soul etc., in other Indian philosophies it is distinctly apparent that the theory of causality is Buddhistic and Buddha alone had expounded that doctrine.

To understand ‘Buddha’ one has to seek access to the vital parts of the Doctrine i.e.—Dhamma and it is quite applicable to say for a clear understanding of Buddha’s doctrine the insight to the theory of dependent origination is unavoidable. Hence the saying—

“*Yo paticca samuppadam passati so dhammam passati. Yo dhammam passanto so mam passati.*”

The whole citadel of Buddhism is founded on the foundation of the theory of Paticcasamuppāda. As long as Paticcasamuppāda preserves the solidarity of Buddhist metaphysics so long Buddhism too on the other hand preserves Paticcasamuppāda—as the central doctrine of Buddhist philosophy. When Thera Assajī, one of the very first disciples of Buddha was asked by a Brahmin prince for an explanation of his way of salvation he declared the whole doctrine of Buddhist philosophy in a single stanza—

“*Yo dhamma hetuppabhava—tesanhetu tathagathoaha, Tesan yo nirodho evam vadi maha samano.*” Here ‘dhamma’ refers to volitional activities, the ten sankhāra dhammas. Hence he said—the cause for the origination of all these volitional activities and the cessation of them Pathāgata, the Great Samana, had expounded.

Buddha too realised that this doctrine of dependent origination which lays the foundation of the whole structure of his Dhamma would be too difficult for the common masses to understand. Hence he had the assurance of Brahma sahampati prior to the declaration of the Dhamma but even then he reminds :—