



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA

Also by T. L. Vaswani

KRISHNA : THE SAVIOUR
KRISHNA'S FLUTE
THE ANCIENT MURLI
MY MASTER
THE DIVINE SPARK
RELIGION AND CULTURE
WISDOM OF THE RISHIS
DIARY OF A DISCIPLE
GLIMPSES
THE VISION OF INDIA
ATMAGNAN OR LIFE IN THE SPIRIT
THE SECRET OF ASIA
A PILGRIM'S FAITH
THUS HAVE I LEARNT
BUILDERS OF TOMORROW
MY MOTHERLAND
APOSTLES OF FREEDOM
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SPIRIT OF HINDU CULTURE
BODHI DHARMA
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YOUTH AND THE NATION
WITNESS OF THE ANCIENT
AWAKE! YOUNG INDIA!
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KRISHNA : STORIES AND PARABLES
THUS HAVE I LEARNT
GITA : MEDITATIONS
A PROPHET OF THE PEOPLE
THE FACE OF THE BUDDHA
SAINT MIRA

In the Footsteps of the Buddha

**By
T. L. VASWANI**

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PUBLISHERS of books and journals,—of interest to those who believe that Knowledge is one, that Sages and Seers [*Rishis*] are the true Leaders of civilisation, that alike in East and West they have been the true benefactors of the Race who have lighted the way forward with *Bodhi*, the Wisdom of the Heart.

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DEDICATION :

Blessed be He who sent you among men
to serve them and be blessed !

HARSHA DEVA,—

Shanti Deva's grand-father,—

one of the greatest kings

of whom History has any record.

You have inspired India for centuries.

Of you the great Chinese Pilgrim rightly said :—

*“In devotion to good works,
In service of the poor and needy,
You forgot your sleep.”*

Verily, Harsha Deva!

You were a servant of the poor,

And a friend of the humankind!

T. L. VASWANI

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INTRODUCTION

IN THESE pages I write of one who walked in the footsteps of the Buddha. He was a great thinker and poet, a lover and servant of the poor and lowly ones, a singer of the Song of Compassion. Shanti Deva was his name. Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu and Shanti Deva were three of the great Buddhist thinkers of Asia.

Shanti Deva wrote and taught at Nalanda in the seventh century. In that century, India and China both lived an intense life,—political, artistic, cultural, spiritual. And China honoured India as a Teacher of the East. The message of the Buddha had brought India and China into contact with each other : and Chinese travellers came to India to study her philosophy and the teaching of the Buddha.

The message of the Buddha was a force in the life of Asian peoples from Ceylon to Japan, from India to China.

One of the Chinese pilgrims, Hsuan Tsang, in his "Travel Diary", bears witness to the fact that India was then,—in the seventh century,—a nation that regarded wisdom as richer than material wealth. India's social life was vital. The Chinese pilgrim speaks in high terms of the four classes of Hindu society. They were not "castes" : they were four "classes", four "orders", "differentiations" which reflected one Life. "The Brahmins," we read, "were men of spotless life." The Kshatriyas of the "royal race" were rulers : and from their ranks came great statesmen and men of valour,—guardians of India, her ideals and her honour. Rich were they in patriotic devotion to the Motherland. There were the Vaishyas, the merchants, some of whom, also, carried on trade with far-off countries. The fourth class was that of the Sudras who were not "outcasts", but members of the one Aryan race. They were labourers, farmers, peasants, who tilled the soil and toiled, rejoicing in their one Motherland.

Hinduism and Buddhism "co-existed" and the great Buddhist kings, Asoka and Harsha (Shanti Deva's grandfather), honoured the Brahmin and the Bhikkhu. The Buddha exerted a great influence on the life of Bharata and Lanka. The Buddha influenced, also, the Indo-Greek kingdoms which were built by the Generals of Alexander

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the Great. And Buddha's influence travelled beyond India to Central Asia, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, Siam and the East Indies.

The Buddha gave his message to the common man in the simple *prakrit* of the common man. His teaching spread far and wide. Surely, there was an un-earthly quality in the words he spoke. Great kings carved them on tablets, on rocks and in caves : and sages and disciples enshrined them in scriptures and in their hearts. Millions of men and women still bow down to his name today and utter the sacred words :—“*Buddham saranam gachchami!*” “I take refuge in the Buddha!” Yet he claimed to be no more than a man amongst men. And I have learnt to salute him as a Brother of the humankind, as a Friend of the forlorn and lonely, as a Teacher of the Law (*Dhamma, Dharma*), as the Light of Asia, the Light of the Ages. He was, for several years, an Arhat,—a Saint in seclusion : but he, also, became a Bodhisattva,—a Servant of suffering humanity.

In the early centuries of Buddhism, India was blessed with the teaching, also, of Vaishnavism. The inspiration of the Vaishnava Faith was *bhakti*,—love or devotion. Vaishnavism and Buddhism influenced each other. Vaishnavism was a Religion of the Heart : the Buddhist Faith, also, became a Religion of the Heart.

Shanti Deva speaks of the Wisdom of the Heart, again and again. And this teaching spread rapidly over North

India and Tibet, Central Asia and China. This Faith of the Heart spread as far as Siberia and came to be known as Mahayana. Shanti Deva was, perhaps, the greatest poet of Mahayana Buddhism.

“Mahayana” means the “Great *yana*”, the “Great Way”, the “Great Vehicle”, the “Great Career”. The Mahayana movement was a movement of the Heart. The emotional side of Religion,—and Ethics,—appealed to multitudes. The Buddha came to be revered as “Amitabha” : the meaning of the word is “He of the Infinite Light”, “He of Infinite Splendour and Grace”.

Shanti Deva offers his Poems to the Buddha, the Saints and to the Brotherhood (Sangha). Shanti Deva sings :—

*Great is their compassion
And worthy are they of the most precious gifts.
May they,—the Saints and their Sons,—
Accept this of me!*

*Poor am I
And of merit shorn :
What else have I to offer ?
Myself I offer!*

*To the Buddhas, the Saints and their Sons,—
The Conquerors, indeed,—
I give myself*

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Without reserve :

I give my all!

SHANTI DEVA's aspiration is to be a Bodhisattva. There is a difference between the Bodhisattva and the Arhat. An Arhat is one who receives into his life the Buddha, the Holy Spirit, by a *transmutation* of the senses : an Arhat passes from the flesh to the Spirit. A Bodhisattva is he who purifies himself and enters into *bodhi*, Enlightenment,—enters into the Light, yet denies himself the joy of *nirvana*, in order that he may be on the threshold of this life with a view to serve all creatures (men and beasts and birds) who are in suffering and pain.

The great Bodhisattvas, Shanti Deva points out, are the “words”, the “epiphanies”, manifestations of the great Buddhas. Gautama Buddha is the Buddha of our world. But there are other worlds, too : and there are other Buddhas, also. To them all does Shanti Deva pay the homage of his heart. The Buddhas are the Blessed Ones, the Silent Ones, who love and whose eyes shine with Light like the morning star!

The Bodhisattvas are the helpers of men on the way to the Supreme, the *nirvana*. Shanti Deva attaches little importance to rites and ceremonies. He believes profoundly in the worship of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas.

The Bodhisattvas are the Blessed Ones who put out the Three Fires, in their hearts, of (1) *moha* or attachment, (2) greed, and (3) hate.

One such Bodhisattva, we read, was he who was named Sumedha. At one time he was exceedingly rich. Sitting one day in solitude, he began to realise the vanity of the world, its pomp and pleasure. And he said to himself :—“What I hoard, I lose : what I give, I gain.” To give, he understood, was to sow a seed of which the fruit was blessing. So he gave away his wealth to the poor and needy. Becoming poor, he went and lived in a forest,—in an humble hut. And he said to himself :—“I shall be a helper : and I shall not cross the sea of *samsara* alone!” Meek and gentle was he : and the very birds would sit in his presence and sing : and he blessed them all. And everyday he breathed out the blessing :—“May all living beings be happy!”

The “obstacles to Enlightenment”, says Shanti Deva, are passions. Are you enchained in the cycle of birth, in *samsara*? It is due to desire. The root of *samsara* is craving, *tanha*. This craving is the “flame” of life. This is extinguished when the “fuel” of the “fire” is annihilated : this “fuel” is the false sense of “I”, “ego”. When “I” goes, the “flame” is blown out and you attain to *nirvana* : you enter into “stillness” or “self-realisation”.

How is the Perfect Life attained? Shanti Deva’s answer is simple. By liberation from desire. Liberation is not

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suppression. Hence the value of meditation.

1. Meditate on the transitoriness of pleasures. Pleasures come and go : they do not abide.

2. Meditate on death. See what becomes of the body from which life has departed.

3. Reflect, too, as far as you can, on the peace, the eternal peace of *nirvana*. Do not forget that *nirvana* is “dying to all desire”. *Nirvana* means, literally, “extinguishing the flame”. And, remember, there is no flame like the flame of lust, desire. Remember, too, that true joy is the joy of peace.

4. Meditation and compassion are both essential to the life which leads to *nirvana*. There is suffering in the world : therefore, give compassion to all creatures.

5. Remember that the secret of meditation is silence.

Shanti Deva, like all the interpreters of the Buddhist Faith, stresses the thought that there are “two verities”—(1) the veiled Truth ; and (2) the Transcendent Reality. This is beyond the range of the understanding. “Understanding” moves in the realm of the “veiled” Truth. Beyond it must you look for that True Life which is the life of true *Dharma* (*Dharmam saranam gachchami*).

The Bodhisattva, Shanti Deva urges, (1) goes through purification and (2) attains to emancipation, but (3) refuses to enter *nirvana*. Why ? He realises his unity, spiritual oneness with others. He sees their sufferings : and out of

compassion, devoted love, he stays on the earth-plane to serve and suffer for all creatures, until they, being purified, pass at last into *nirvana*.

Meditation and compassion or compassionate service go hand in hand. The goal is *nirvana*. It is reached in a flash. You recall a word spoken by a Buddha, and the "veil" drops down and your bonds are broken, and you see the Secret unveiled !

Blessed is the Bodhisattva. In compassion he gives himself to us and he serves and suffers for humanity, for all creatures who groan in pain. He realises that there is something better even than "holiness", and that is "sanctification" of others. Listen to the words of Shanti Deva :—

Do you wish to attain? Then learn the Great Secret.
Put yourself in the place of others!

If the suffering of many is brought to an end by the suffering of one, the one should foster this suffering in himself by means of compassion.

Have one passion only,—the Good of others!

Behold! the swans swoop into a clump of lotus-flowers. So must you be ready to descend into hell itself to smooth away the sorrows of others.

All who are unhappy are unhappy from having sought their own happiness. And all who are happy are happy

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from having sought the happiness of others. You must exchange your well-being for the miseries of others.

It is through *actions* that I should proclaim *Dhamma*, the Law. What is the use of simply repeating the words? What good can an invalid get merely from reading a book on medicine?

The thought of sacrificing all one possesses,—even the fruit of one's sacrifice,—to *all* beings is the perfection of compassion.

Shanti Deva's whole heart moves out in compassion to the poor and lowly and to all beasts and singing birds. "Guard them," he prays to the Buddhas, "guard them with tenderness, with sympathy, with compassion."

Renouncing his throne, Shanti Deva went to the Forest and spent sometime there in solitude and meditation. In that period of silence, what radiance passed into his life, what power and grace, what beauty and blessedness made him an instrument of the Life Divine!

And when he left that *tapobana*, that Forest, for the Nalanda University, Shanti Deva filled the hearts of his students with the one truth:—Subjugate pride, extinguish the "ego", and make life a sacrifice to the One Serene, the Ever Free!

The nations, alas! are not yet weary of strife! Must hate be

still the lord over life? So I questioned in the midnight hour,
and in the morning I heard Shanti Deva's wondrous words
breathing out peace and happiness to a weary world:—

In this birth

*And all my incarnations to come,
I do renounce my all!*

*And all my merit (punya),—
Past, present and future,—
I renounce, renounce, renounce,
If only that all beings
May be truly happy!*

*I renounce, too, my body
To the service of all beings!
I have but one longing in my heart,—
That they may win the bodhi, the Wisdom true!*

*Verily, to serve the creatures
Is to serve the Buddhas!
Their children, alas!
Are still in Maya lost!*

*May all pride perish!
May "I" vanish!
May my hunger for the happiness of others grow!*

May I to the vow of service

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Be ever true!

*And in the longing to give
May I grow from more to more!*

T. L. VASWANI

BY THE SEA-SHORE

IT WAS evening. I was in Karachi, many years ago. The sun was setting. I sat by the sea-side watching the sunset. I gazed at the beauty of the many-coloured scene. I gazed and gazed and I heard a marvellous music. Nearby were a few children,—playing! In the play of the little ones, methinks, was the play of the Eternal Child. I saw, too, a few persons, men and women, worshipping,—as the sun was setting,—the Great Mystery of Life-in-death, of Death-in-life!

Filled with joy was the heart within me. The ancient verse of the Upanishad flowed into me :—“Out of *ananda* (bliss) is the world you see : into *ananda* flows back the universe!” And in that silence by the sea-side, as the sun

was setting in beauty inexpressible, I recalled the words of the Buddha to his disciples :—

Go forth, O bhikkhus!
For the good of the many,
For the joy of the many,
In compassion for the world,
For the good and joy
And blessings of Gods and men!

Go forth, ye bhikkhus!
And speak to them
Of the Dhamma Eternal!

Proclaim, O bhikkhus!
The holy life,—
The life that is perfect and pure!

Tears stood in my eyes. Into silence I went for a while. Then, opening my eyes, I read in a journal the following words of wondrous beauty. I asked myself :—“Whose are these enchanting words?” I read the words, again and again :—

May I be for all beings
The healer of pain !

May I be to all who ail
The doctor and the nurse!

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*May I give food and drink to all
Who suffer from pangs of hunger and thirst!*

*May I be to the poor
A treasure untold!*

*May I be the defender of those
Who forsaken lie on the roadside !*

*May I be to those who long for the Other Shore
The boat and the bridge!*

*May I be the lamp that holds the light
To those who lose the way!*

These words of Shanti Deva have haunted me, again and again. I have read them, again and again, and my eyes have been touched with tears.

SHANTI DEVA was a prince who renounced the palace to become a servant of suffering humanity. The exact date of his birth is not known. He lived in the seventh century A. D.

Shanti Deva was born in Surat. His father, named Sila, was a king of Gujerat. It was named Saurashtra, "the Good Kingdom". Sila was a son of Harsha, the great emperor of India, who ruled for forty two years (606 to 648).

India was honoured as a great nation in Harsha's

days. The Chinese pilgrim to India, Hsuan Tsang, tells us in his "Travel Diary" that he was deeply impressed with king Harsha's generous nature. In the course of a talk, the king said to the Chinese pilgrim :—"For many years now I have been ruling over India. I was growing anxious because I was not making progress in virtue. I almost despaired of my efforts in well-doing. Then it occurred to me to amass at Prayag (Allahabad) an immense quantity of riches, and every five years I distributed them all." This, the king called, the "Distribution of Deliverance".

The Buddhist pilgrim conferred on the king the title "Siladitya", "the Sun of Virtue". King Harsha was, indeed, strong as the sun is strong : and the king was generous and tolerant of different faiths in India. He was a scion of the Gupta line and the Gupta kings were at once strong and tolerant.

The Gupta rule was disturbed by an invasion of the Huns : and India relapsed for a century into chains. Then came Harsha. He recaptured Northern India. He transferred the capital of India from Thaneswar to Kanauj. He gave to India the peace she piteously needed. He wrote poetry and drama : he became known as the "Poet-king of India". To his court were drawn literary men : one of them was Bana, a great master of Sanskrit.

King Harsha wrote, among others, the following books :—
(1) Ratnavali ; (2) Nagananda ; and (3) Priyadarsika.

Harsha became a disciple of the Buddhist Faith : and he rejoiced in being a friend and a servant of the poor. The noble example of Asoka inspired him and he put a stop to animal slaughter in India : he forbade the eating of flesh-diet. He established Travellers' Rests and built Shrines on the banks of the Ganges. He realised that the One Light of Truth shone in different faiths, and he gave generously to Brahmin as to Buddhist scholars.

Every five years, the king opened what he called the "Plain of Almsgiving". To this Plain were attracted five lakhs of people to receive alms from the king and to bless him with the blessings which the poor ones give in abundance. The king, entering his spacious tent, bowed in reverence to the Name of the Buddha, reciting the *mantra*:—"Buddham saranam gachchami!" ("I take refuge in the Buddha!") and gave liberally to the poor, seeing in them all his Master. Harsha gave gifts not alone to Buddhist *bhikkhus* but, also, to Brahmins and heretics,—for twenty days at a stretch. He gave generously, also, to the poor and the orphans, to widows and old men, to the blind and the cripple. Every day the king gave until, as the Chinese pilgrim says, "all the wealth that had been accumulating in the Royal Treasury was found to be completely exhausted."

This "Almsgiving" the Buddhists rightly called the "Feast of Salvation". At this impressive ceremony, the king gave away everything he had,—his necklaces, his ear-

rings, his bracelets, the garland of his diadem, the pearls which adorned his neck, the diamond that gleamed above his head. Aye, the very royal robes he wore he gave away in charity : and parting with his clothes, he looked to his sister to give him a common, worn-out garment, and he put it on repeating the words :—“*Buddham saranam gachchami!*” And he bowed in reverence to “all the Buddhas of all the countries”! Then said he in deep humility :—“So by giving away all my treasures I deposit them in the Land of Happiness! And may I in future births, too, learn not to hoard but to give away,—to all who are poor : in them resides the radiant Buddha!” As an offering, too, to the Buddha, Harsha gave a little poem composed by him in reverence :—

O Buddha! hail!
O Dhamma! hail!
O Sangha! hail!

He, the Divine One,
The Enlightened One,
The Adorable One,—
The Buddha, adored by multitudes of the Gods,
And by the Perfect Ones and the Divine Singers,
And the Great Spirits in Heaven and on Earth,—
Him, the Buddha, I hail!
Him, the Buddha, I hail!

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HARSHA WAS succeeded by his son, named Sila,—in moral life and spiritual aspirations worthy of the great king Harsha. King Sila's son was Shanti Deva. On the day he was about to receive royal consecration, Shanti Deva saw, as in a dream, a Blessed One named Manjusri,—regarded as a hero and a saint. Of Manjusri, we read :—"He takes joy in giving : he serves by giving." Shanti Deva was a psychic. Manjusri's voice spoke to Shanti Deva in the dream :—

Shanti Deva! Shanti Deva!
Renounce! Renounce!
Renounce the glory of kingship,
And be a servant
Of the poor and lowly!

Shanti Deva obeyed the Voice. He renounced the palace : he put on the humble garb of a *bhikkhu* (mendicant). Shanti Deva joined the brotherhood of the poor. Shanti Deva remembered how his Master, Gautama Buddha, too, having left the palace, had become a wanderer in search of Truth, and having attained to Enlightenment had become a Teacher of Wisdom and a Healer of suffering humanity. Shanti Deva took the vow :—

I believe in the great Beings, the Bodhisattvas, the Servants of suffering humanity.

And birth after birth shall I be a Server and a Healer of the world that travaileth and groaneth in suffering and pain.

Shanti Deva resolved to be a Bodhisattva. He said :—

*Wise be the vow of a Bodhisattva,—
Not to attain nirvana for his own sukkha (happiness),
But to come, again and again, to the maya-dominated Earth
And take all who inhabit the Earth forward to the Supreme
Height!*

Shanti Deva breathed out, day and night, the aspiration :—

*May there be not one in pain!
May there be not a single sinner!
May there be not one who ails,
Not one who is despised and forlorn!

And may all things,
All beings of breath,
Be wholly happy,
Filled with the bliss
Of the Holy Buddhas!*

Significant is Shanti Deva's aspiration to be a Bodhisattva. Full of meaning is the word "Bodhisattva". "Bodhi" means "Enlightenment", "Wisdom", "Knowledge", "Gnosis", "Vision" of Noble Truths : "sattva" means "being" or "essence". "Bodhisattva" means "one whose being or essence is *bodhi*, Enlightenment, Wisdom". Such an one is a devotee of Wisdom or Illumination, a lover of the

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Light. The Bodhisattva is the great Giver, the Giver of his life to others, the Giver of his best,—the Radiant One, the Merciful One, the Illumined One, the Giver of Light to a world dark with delusions and doubts. The Bodhisattva is he who serveth suffering creation with compassion and wisdom in his heart.

AN ANCIENT UNIVERSITY

SHANTI DEVA renounces the palace, then stays for sometime in a forest (*tapobana*). How I wished we had information regarding the life Shanti Deva lived in silence, in meditation and in the solitude of the Forest, where he fed the birds and served the beasts and received blessings of the voiceless ones! From the *tapobana*, Shanti Deva comes to the University of Nalanda. It lay to the north-east of Bodh-Gaya.

There were other universities, too, built in Kurukshetra, Kashi, Nadia, Taxila, Vidarbha, Ajanta and Ujjain. From the second to the ninth century, Nalanda was one of the greatest universities in India. Kashi was the greatest centre of Brahmin scholarship. Taxila was, even at the

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time of Alexander's invasion of India, known all over Asia as a centre of Hindu philosophy. Ujjain was noted for the study of astronomy, as Ajanta was for the teaching of art.

Nalanda was famous as one of the greatest centres of Buddhist thought and the Hindu philosophy of yoga. The residents, at any one time, amounted to ten thousand men, of whom eight thousand five hundred were students, the rest were teachers. Students came from different parts. From India came the largest number : but there were students, also, from Japan and China, Korea, Mongolia and Tartary. And out of this great University went scholars to Tibet and China and spread the culture of India.

The University of Nalanda had a hundred lecture-rooms and six hundred blocks of dormitories four stories high. Hsuan Tsang was astonished at its observatories which, he said, "were lost in the vapours of the morning and the upper rooms towered above the clouds". The University was built by the devotion of great scholars and the generosity of merchants and kings. Six kings helped the University. The first of them was a lover of the poor. He served the widow and the orphan. And he had reverence for scholars and sages.

When Hsuan Tsang visited Nalanda, the Head of the University was Silabhadra, surnamed the "Treasure of the Good Law". He was a very learned man. He had wandered to many parts of India and, after many wanderings, had

come to Nalanda. He could, if he liked, be a Raja in East Bengal, but he realised that wisdom was richer than rubies. And Silabhadra moved on in quest of knowledge,—until, at last, he came to Nalanda and there became, one day, the President of the great University. Silabhadra was not only a great scholar : he was a man of awakened *buddhi*,—a saint filled with the true spirit of *seva*, service of humanity.

Hsuan Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, comes to Nalanda and in reverence bows down to Silabhadra and asks :—
“Tell me, Master! what is knowledge?”

Silabhadra says to him :—“My child! knowledge is perception of the principles or laws of life.”

“What are they?” asks the pilgrim.

Silabhadra says :—“The principles or laws of life are five :—
(1) the principle of fellowship; (2) the principle of reverence;
(3) the principle of concentration, meditation, *dhyana*;
(4) the principle of tolerance; and (5) the principle of compassion, sympathy, *seva* and *yagna*, service and sacrifice.”

In these few words, the saintly, old man, already a hundred and six years old, summed up the whole philosophy of education.

“And I am come from China,” said the Chinese pilgrim, “in order to study under your direction the laws of the *yoga-shastra*.” He expressed three wishes :—“(1) After having studied in India, I desire to return to my country,—China. (2) I desire to be born again, one day, in the Heaven

of the Blessed Gods and to serve Maitreyi. And (3) I long that I may one day be, like the Buddha, a servant of the suffering ones."

Silabhadra sheds tears and says :—"So true has proved the dream I dreamt asking me to await here the arrival of a monk from China and instruct him in the Wisdom of India."

For fifteen months, Silabhadra interprets to Hsuan Tsang the mystic philosophy of the *yogachara*.

"Yoga", "synthesis", was the essence of the Wisdom of India. The Nalanda University was in itself a synthesis of the Community's life in its various aspects,—economic, intellectual, social and spiritual. There was a farm-house belonging to the Nalanda Colony : and the University was supported by the revenues of a hundred villages.

The present-day distinction between vocational and liberal education is, to my mind, artificial. Every system of education must be liberal *and* vocational. It must relate knowledge to life,—to ideal values *and* to utilities of national and social life. At Nalanda, professors and students studied and meditated : they, also, did manual work.

The secret of education is communion of students with their teachers. Nalanda had great teachers. One of them was Nagarjuna, the famous Buddhist philosopher. He developed the doctrine of *sunyata* (void). If Nagarjuna was the greatest Buddhist philosopher, Shanti Deva was the greatest poet of Mahayana Buddhism.

WHAT A noble ideal was enshrined in the very word “Nalanda”!

The word suggests “service without intermission”,—uninterrupted service, unbroken *seva*.

Nalanda had a number of able teachers, scholars who were men of character and charged with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Look around you, today ! Think for a moment what many of our schools and colleges are striving for. Degrees ! And my bewildered heart has asked, again and again :—“Where is character-building ?” Beloved India is broken. She stands urgently in need of men of character, heroic men, pure men, sacrificial men,—men who would pour their lives as an offering in the great *yagna* of humanity.

Shanti Deva was a man of sacrifice. He “took refuge” in the Buddhas and the Dhamma and the Sangha (Brotherhood), and rejoiced in the service of humanity and all creatures. “In giving,” said he, “is the secret of the wisdom that ever shines.” “No knowledge,” he said, “do I desire, save such as may serve all living beings, high and low.”

Compassion,—was his constant word. “In purest compassion,” he said, “give, give,—and enter into joy !” “Three rules,” he said, repeating the teaching of the Buddha, “must you observe in daily life :— (1) speak what is true ; (2) from anger abstain ; and (3) give,—even if it be a little,—to him who is in need !” And again :—“More than myriad stars hath He given of His eyes to serve and succour men ! And

more than all the seas hath He shed of His life to serve and succour life!"

Nalanda was a great experiment in education. It aimed at pursuit of Truth and service of man and bird and beast. It taught yoga (the science of the soul), the psychology of the conscious and the subconscious. It taught a system of discipline with a view to union with the Truth. It aimed at development of inner powers by (1) meditation and (2) service.

One of the truths taught at Nalanda was "karma". Karma is the Law,—of cause and effect. In obedience to this Law, man builds his character. Indeed, a man's character is his *karma* : for just is the Law. If but the nations would understand that "justice" is the Law of the universe ! Justice may, to many of us, appear to be slow in coming, but come it must,—sure as the sun rises in the East. Every nation carries within its actions and aspirations its own "fate", its own future,—its Destiny.

Reverence, too, was taught to pupils,—reverence not alone for elders but, also, for what is "beneath" us,—for brother bird and brother beast.

And the teaching was given, again and again, that one must sit at the feet even of "strangers" to learn of them *vidya* and arts. It was recognised that knowledge was international : and he who was a scholar claimed all respect at the Nalanda University,—no matter what his country or creed.

The greeting given to Hsuan Tsang indicated the catholic vision of Nalanda. He was a stranger but he was a scholar: and he was received with the respect due to a scholar. Four men of distinguished positions in the University came out a long way off,—seven *yojanas*,—to meet him. On the way he halted at a village : and the four men were soon joined by two hundred teachers and some thousand lay patrons to escort him to the University. They carried standards, umbrellas, flowers and perfumes to do him honour. As he entered Nalanda, the whole University greeted him. He was requested to take a special seat by the side of the President. An *upasaka* and a Brahmin accompanied him with a riding elephant. What a reception! What a recognition of “internationalism” of culture!

Nor was aesthetic life ignored in the Nalanda University. I believe profoundly in the values of aesthetic and spiritual ideals in education. Ethics and aesthetics entered into the life of Nalanda and shaped the energies and aspirations of the student-community.

The current system of education in this country has awakened aggressive intellect and aroused ambitions : and nothing is sadder than to see intelligence stripped of moral obligations and those aesthetic impulses which find satisfaction in the joy of altruism.

Nalanda recognised the truth that the Immaterial was the Vital, that the Ideal was the Real, that the truly dynamic

and transforming things are those of a spiritual order. In the hearts of the teachers of Nalanda was reverence for the spiritual truths of life. Are the teachers and the teaching dead, today? Are the songs and the lore of the Buddha and Shankara, of the Vedic Rishis and the Sages of the Upanishads a matter of history? Or do they still slumber in India's heart, making India still a *punya bhumi* (Holy Land), the hope of a new world-culture, the cradle of a new synthetic civilisation? Ask not the fettered school-master of today : ask the singers in the streets,—for an answer.

Nalanda gave to all her students free tuition, free board and lodging, and free medicine. And Nalanda taught her students to be simple and pure in daily life. Ten great swimming pools belonged to the University. Cleanliness was recognised as the way to holiness. The students were taught for thirteen years : some stayed for thirty years : some, indeed, remained at Nalanda till death. And in the teaching they received, the emphasis was always on purity, simplicity, reverence, service and sacrifice.

NALANDA WAS built in the heart of spaciousness, in an atmosphere of the beautiful. The record of the Chinese pilgrim-scholar speaks of the "richly adorned towers", the "fairy-like turrets". "From the windows," we read, "one may see every hour the winds and the clouds

produce new forms. And above the soaring eaves one may see the conjunctions of the sun and the moon.” “Round the monasteries,” we read further, “there flowed a winding stream of azure water, made more beautiful by blue lotus flowers. Within the Temple beautiful trees hung down their dazzling golden blossom and outside groves of mango sheltered the dwellings with their thick shade.” “The roofs were covered with tiles” that reflected “the light in a thousand shades”. “These things,” says the Chronicle, “add to the beauty of the scene.” Surrounded by such things, Nalanda stood erect to bless teachers and students and develop in them the impulse to worship and to serve for Beauty’s sake.

Shanti Deva was revered as a poet and a Bodhisattva,—a lover of the Beautiful and a servant of all creatures in suffering and pain. He loved the contemplative life : he loved, also, the teacher’s vocation. He loved to draw the youths, nearer and nearer, to the Buddha. Shanti Deva has been rightly compared to the Asian mystic who renounced his throne and said :—“Write me as one who loves his fellow-men!”

In his teaching at Nalanda, Shanti Deva emphasised the thought :—“Build your lives in *bodhi* (wisdom).” He further taught :—“Learn self-control, for to the pure is given *bodhi* or Illumination.” Therefore, he said, “take the vow of purity in the presence of the Buddha or the Teacher : for

such a vow is not likely to be broken.”

Shanti Deva emphasised the *moral* foundation of knowledge or wisdom. So he asked his pupils to take special care of their *sanga*,—company or environment. And he stressed the life of discipline. Never, he said, praise yourself even if you really have the virtue of which you speak. And never speak lightly of any teacher. Never boast of your attainments, and resist the temptation to speak of *siddhis* or “psychic powers” or “higher attainments”.

Shanti Deva’s heart was filled, through and through, with the prayer which he prayed, again and again, in the “presence of the Buddhas”:—“May I still the pains of all creatures in suffering and pain!”

Shanti Deva taught in an atmosphere full of the associations of nature. “For a *yojana* around this spot,” we read, “the space is full of sacred trees.” Such a site gave scope for outdoor life, for nature-communion, for fellowship with birds and beasts of the woods,—a fellowship emphasised in the teaching atonce of the Rishis and of the Buddha. The beautiful surroundings of the University of Nalanda secured that co-relation of the physical, intellectual and aesthetic powers which is essential to sound training.

It was difficult to find fault with the discipline of Nalanda. The Chinese pilgrim says that “during the seven hundred years since the foundation of the Nalanda University, there has been no single case of guilty rebellion against the rules.”

Shanti Deva rightly points out that the true discipline is one of Dhamma, not of the "rod". Yes,—right discipline is not of the "barrack-room" but of the *ashrama*. The Community of the teachers and the taught at Nalanda lived a life of self-control and self-discipline. Study, toil and duty were intermingled one with the other and the main-spring of this discipline was the inspiration of human fellowship in the service of the Sangha (Brotherhood), and reverence for the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Comradeship of the right type made the teachers one Community, one Fellowship of Service : and the pupil was often addressed as a "son". Nalanda was a Family.

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GLIMPSES INTO great Ideals of Nalanda are given us in the teaching of Shanti Deva to students in the University. The founders and builders were Buddhists, but the University was not denominational. Denominationalism, sectarianism, is the death of culture. The Vedas and the *shastras* of the Brahmin were studied side by side with the Buddhist canon.

Shanti Deva's teaching is presented here in the form of questions and answers.

Q :—Who is a true man of culture?

A :—The true man of culture is he who lives a life of (1) study and (2) self-control (*tapas*) ; and (3) he shuns worldly honour as he would shun poison.

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Q :—What is the way to emancipation?

A :—The way is two-fold :— (1) meditation,—in silence ; (2) compassion, selfless service.

Q :—What is the secret of the true life?

A :—Self-control.

Q :—Why did the Buddha ask his disciples to keep clear of asceticism ?

A :—The Buddha did so because self-torture engenders pride : and pride poisons the very springs of holiness.

Q :—What are the marks of the man of true knowledge?

A :—The following five :—(1) he is free from impurity ; (2) he has peace in his heart,—amid the fleeting phenomena of life ; (3) he is free from pride ; (4) he has illumination in his heart ; and (5) he is holy.

Q :—How may Dhamma be guarded?

A :—Quench desire!

Q :—What things are necessary for spiritual advancement?

A :—Only two things :—(1) realise that all things are transient, all things pass away ; and (2) give brotherly love or compassion to all.

Q :—Where may I seek the true joy of life?

A :—In these three :—(1) almsgiving ; (2) compassion ; and (3) meditation.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA

Q :—On what may I meditate ?

A :—Among other things, on this :—that all you see around you is transient, passing!

Q :—How may I grow in holiness?

A :—Surrender your person (*atma-bhava*) and all your pleasures to the service of all creatures.

Q :—Who is a Bodhisattva ?

A :—The word means “one whose essence (*satva*) is *bodhi* (Enlightenment)”. A Bodhisattva, then, is (1) egoless and (2) compassionate. He is a treasure of virtues (*guna-sambhara*) : and he is boundless in *dana* (giving).

Q :—What is compassion?

A :—Compassion is *atma-yagna*,—sacrifice of yourself in the service of others.

Q :—What is true wisdom?

A :—Not a brain-activity but illumination of the heart, *hridaya-sutra*. It is Wisdom of the Other Shore.

Q :—What is true pilgrimage?

A :—A pilgrim aims at purifying himself. But it is not the water of a river or a pool which purifies. What the Holy Buddha said to a Brahmin who desired to be purified by bathing in the sacred waters is equally true today :—

Be compassionate to all creatures :

Speak the truth :

Harm not life :

Be honest in your dealings :

Practise self-denial.

What wilt thou gain by going to Gaya?

Any water may well be Gaya to thee!

Q :—What are the deepest aspirations of your heart?

A :—In the presence of the Buddhas, I aspire that I may through virtue acquired become as one who stills the pains of all creatures.

I pray that I may never hesitate to confess my sins to the Buddha.

I pray, too, to the Buddha to see that my *nirvana* is delayed for the service of all creatures.

I pray that the thought of Enlightenment, the *bodhi-chitta*, may raise me through higher and higher planes of existence, until I attain to the state of the “celestial Bodhisattvas”, who have attained the highest beatification and only are delaying their departure into the Infinite Stillness of *nirvana*, in order to continue their service as loving Guides and Helpers of all living beings.

I pray for transference of my merit to other beings for their happiness and spiritual sanctification.

Q :—What is meant by taking refuge in the Dhamma,—
Dhammam saranam gachchami?

A :—Dhamma is Law,—the Law of the Buddhas. It is the sum total of the Scriptures, the Wisdom of the Buddhas, which obeying we cross the river of *samsara*. *Samsara* is “wandering” in suffering and *avidya*, in pain and error. He who obeys the Law goes beyond *samsara*, beyond the suffering and pain of empirical life and enters into the peace and holiness of the Life Transcendental.

Q :—Master! give us a map of daily life.

A :—Aspire, each day, to live a holy life. And, therefore, note the following :—

Never speak untruth.

Always avoid slander.

Harm no living creature.

Heal divisions.

Strive for harmony.

Be compassionate to all creatures.

Shun luxuries, shows, dances, idle conversations, vain arguments.

Abandon incontinence.

Live in perfect charity.

Breathe out peace to all beings.

Q :—What is the aspiration of the Bodhisattva?

A :—The Bodhisattva has this one aspiration that his heart may be in harmony with the Buddha.

In this harmony is the Bodhisattva’s liberation, *nirvana* :

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and he postpones his *nirvana*, until they whom he would serve are purified and prepared for the Blessed Day when they, too, shall enter into the Buddhahood.

The Bodhisattva stays on the Earth as a servant of suffering creation. He serves and he bears the burden of humanity, until the day he enters into the joy which is boundless,—the joy that is beyond the senses,—enters into the Light, —of “a lamp in a windless place that flickereth not”.

Q :—What is the essential mark of him who is a servant of suffering humanity?

A :—Meditation or *dhyana* is one essential mark of the true servant. He, therefore, is a lover of silence. In silence he sits to gather strength for service.

Q :—What is Truth (*satya*)?

A :—*Satya* or Truth is two-fold :—

1. There is the Veiled Truth,—the truth we experience in empirical life.

2. There is the Transcendental Truth. The perception of this Truth comes to him who realises that empiric life is “void”, the life of the senses and the mind is void, empty, and does not really give us true *sukkha* (happiness).

Every individual thing or entity is seen to be void of true reality. This perception grows as you grow in meditation.

Q :—What is *nirvana*?

A :—Peace Imperishable. This Peace is above thought and above empirical consciousness.

Nirvana is stillness,—is rest in the stillness of the Infinite. And stillness lies in surrender of all things.

Nirvana is release,—from the bondage of birth and death.

Rebirth is the result of *tanha*, desire. Freedom from rebirth is attained by the extinguishing of desire or *tanha*.

Nirvana is a state attainable in *this* life by :—(1) right aspiration; (2) purity of life; (3) *dhyana*, meditation, which flowers in ecstatic trance; and (4) elimination of “I” or “egoism”.

The Buddha speaks of *nirvana* as “the Unborn where is the refuge of what is born”, i.e. the refuge of the “formed phenomenal world”.

In *nirvana* there is cessation of phenomenal existence, of all “becoming”. In *nirvana* there is the attainment of Being or Union with Ultimate Reality. In the ecstasy of Divine Union is he who attains to *nirvana*.

Q :—Who are the Saints?

A :—Saints are of two types :—(1) there are saints who are named Arhats, who relinquish all connection with earthly life and enter into *nirvana*; (2) there are the Bodhisattvas : they renounce *nirvana* and remain in touch with life, as servants and helpers of humanity,—indeed, of all suffering creation. They follow the path of sacrifice. They aim at

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serving and suffering for others.

To build the *inner* life, (1) they train themselves in the virtues of everyday life; (2) they prepare themselves for *heroic* deeds : they discipline themselves for the welfare of the world : they suffer for others, gladly; and (3) they train themselves in meditation.

Q :—What is the relation of the Bodhisattva to the Buddha?

A :—The Bodhisattva becomes a Buddha, one day. He delays becoming a Buddha in order that he may become a servant of suffering humanity.

Q :—What was the character of the Buddha's teaching?

A :—The Master's teaching was not merely verbal. He did not ask the disciples to rest in words. He realised that to teach aright was to *heal* the *hearts* of men. The teaching of the Buddha was *healing*. The Buddha was the great Healer of Humanity. They rightly called him a "physician". "The uprooting of sorrow," the Buddha said, "is the aim of all I teach." "One thing only do I teach," he said; "that there is sorrow in the world and how sorrow may be uprooted. Even as the ocean has everywhere but one taste,—that of salt,—so my doctrine has one mark,—deliverance from sorrow." The "Middle Path" of the Buddha was a path of Healing.

Shanti Deva regarded Buddhism as a Religion atonce

of service and meditation. The earliest hospitals and asylums were opened by Buddhists in the inspiration of the life of the Buddha. The thought which coloured Shanti Deva's teaching at Nalanda was that the noblest thing in life was service of the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas and the Brotherhood (Sangha) of Dedicated Lives.

THE WAY OF THE BLESSED ONES

IN 528 B.C., Gautama entered into Enlightenment and became a Buddha. He passed into *nirvana* in 483 B.C. In the same year was convened the First Buddhist Council at Rajagaha (Rajgar). A century later met the Second Council at Vesali.

In the third century B.C., Asoka appeared on the scene. He became a guardian of the Buddhist Faith. The "Third Council" was held at Pataliputta : and Mahinda, Asoka's son, went forth on his great mission to Lanka (Ceylon).

In the second century B.C., rose the Mahayana School of thought in Buddhism. "Maha" means "great", "yana" means "career". Buddhism entered on its "great career" of devotion and love and spread the message of the Buddha to Eastern countries.

Two hundred years after Asoka's death, Buddhism became a mighty influence in the East. The Buddhists of South India and Ceylon held fast to the creed which came to be called "Hinayana", i.e. the "Lesser Vehicle". But in Northern India, in Tibet and Mongolia, in China and Japan, Mahayana Buddhism prevailed : it was propagated by Kanishka's "Council".

It was in the first century A. D., that the "Council" was held in the reign of king Kanishka. Buddhism had developed a new reverence, a new *bhakti* (love, devotion) for the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. In the second century A.D., was developed the school of Nagarjuna. In the fifth century A.D., appeared the Yogachara School of Vasubandhu and Asanga.

Not till the seventh century A.D., did Shanti Deva appear. In him Mahayana Buddhism is seen in a very attractive and appealing form. Shanti Deva was a great and gifted poet. And Shanti Deva's life of renunciation and devotion to the Buddha reflected the beauty of a Bodhisattva.

He was filled with the longing to serve all creatures : the Bodhisattva's ideal shone in his brief, beautiful life. For fifty years he lived and he ravished the hearts of many. Renouncing the throne, he became a teacher and impressed the Buddhist Ideal on the youths of the Nalanda University.

The teaching of Shanti Deva is enshrined in two small books :—

1. One he calls "Siksha Samuchchaya" ("Compendium of Teaching"). It reveals the beauty of spiritual life. Heroic, altruistic and self-sacrificing is the spiritual man. He is not morose, not melancholy : he is calm and self-controlled. The inspiration of his life is the ideal :—"May I help in the redemptive process of life so that all creatures may be saved, at last!"

2. The other book he calls "Bodhicharyavatara" ("Introduction to the Practice of Enlightenment"). It is, I believe, one of the finest poems in the literature of the world. I can only read it in translation. The more I read it, the more I love Shanti Deva. This poem indicates some of the duties which must be fulfilled by him who strives to become a Bodhisattva,—a true servant of humanity and of all creatures.

Wondrous, says Shanti Deva, is the Buddha's way, the way of the world's welfare, the way of holiness, of peace, of love. In this spirit did Punna go forth, at the risk of his life, to teach the Truth to savage border tribes. In this spirit did Shanti Deva teach in the great University of Nalanda. Pupils flocked to him in large numbers. He taught them to "extinguish the fire". Yes,—a "fire" was spreading in towns and villages,—the triple fire of greed, passion and pride. India, alas ! was soon after the death of the great king Harsha to go into a "fire",—the flame of a revolution. And at the Nalanda University, Shanti Deva taught his

students the way to right living.

His book named the “Siksha Samuchchaya” is a poem of twenty-seven verses to which he adds a commentary consisting of extracts from Mahayana scriptures. The book is a beautiful anthology.

Shanti Deva begins with paying homage to the “Three-fold Jewel”, the “three pearls”, *triratna* :—(1) The Buddhas ; (2) the Dhamma (the Law preached by the Buddhas); and (3) the Sangha (the Brotherhood of Dedicated Lives).

Shanti Deva says :—

I bow in reverence before the Blessed Ones, their Sons,
the Body of the Law and all the Worshipful Ones (Sangha).

The “Blessed Ones” are the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. They are designated as the *Sugata*, “the well gone”,—they who have entered into the Light, the Illuminated ones who have chosen to remain in the “world of becoming” (*samsara*) to become helpers of the world. They have renounced, yet are in our midst to serve and bless this broken world. “Sons of the Buddha”, too, are they called. They are Teachers (1) of Enlightenment and (2) of the Disciplines which help us to keep in control the flesh to walk the Way. They tell us of the Law, the Dhamma.

Shanti Deva, also, bows in reverence before the “Body of the Law”, i.e. the Law of the Buddha. The Law is the

sum total of the scriptures. The Law of the Buddha is the Wisdom of the Buddha.

The "Worshipful Ones" are members of the Brotherhood, the Sangha. Their *chitta*, mind, is filled with *bodhi*, Enlightenment. The Sangha consists of men who have *bodhi-chitta* : their aspiration is to so live as to become, ever increasingly, helpers of humanity. They have the yearning to become free, unfettered servants of all who are in pain and darkness.

In what deep humility he writes :—

Nothing new have I to tell you : nor have I the skill to write a book. I write only to invoke blessings on my thoughts.

SHANTI DEVA'S two little books,—Bodhicharyavatara and Siksha Samuchchaya,—are full of thoughts which should do good to us all to read and reflect on. I select a few :—

Overcome passion by holding fast to wisdom.

He who would be holy should find his highest joy in silence.

Wouldst thou be a true man? Learn to be a disciple of all men!

Never forget that your enemy is your helper in the way to Enlightenment.

The burden of suffering sits heavy on the world.

This suffering can be annihilated. Our Master, the Buddha, has told us of the Way. It is the Way of the noble Eight-fold Path. The essence of the Way is,—elimination of desire or craving.

Indryas are sense-organs : when these are united with the world outside, the *samsara*, a sensation is produced. Out of it comes “desire” or “craving”. And from desire comes attraction or attachment to individual life or finite existence. Then come stages of birth, disease, sorrow, and death.

*

In his two books, as in his talks to students at Nalanda, Shanti Deva repeatedly urged :—“Let us make all creatures happy!” “There is in us,” he said, “a spark out of which, indeed, arise the virtues of the Buddhas. This spark is present in all creatures. By reason of the presence of this spark, all creatures are to be revered.”

Shanti Deva fain would suffer for all if only that his suffering might remove the burden and the pain of others. “The human caravan,” he says, “moves on, hungering for happiness. O ! spread out before them the banquet of happiness for all.”

Shanti Deva ends his book on “Bodhicharyavatara” on a beautiful prayer charged with the thought that his life may be dedicated to the service of his fellow-creatures :—

THE WAY OF THE BLESSED ONES

Blessing comes to me as I think of the Path of Enlightenment!

And I exclaim :—

May all beings be brightened still

By walking in the Path!

May I walk in the Path!

*And may I be spent entirely in the service of all who are sick
and in sorrow!*

May the world win forever the joy of the Sons of Enlightenment!

*May they who are afflicted with cold find warmth and be happy
forever!*

*May they who are smitten with heat be cooled in the rains which
come from clouds of the Sons of Righteousness!*

May there be health for the sick!

May prisoners be blessed and be happy!

May the weak become strong!

To those who are asleep, intoxicated or careless,

In stress of sickness or in the jungle,

To orphans, to children, to aged persons,

May the Gods give protection!

*May all beings ever have the society of the Buddhas and of the
Sons of the Buddhas !*

And may they worship the Teacher of the world!

*May there be no being in pain, no sinner, no sick person, no one
low or despised or ill-disposed!*

*May all the Buddhas be worshipped by all beings in many ways !
May they be made wholly happy with the inconceivable bliss of the
Buddhas!*

SHANTI DEVA, like other great teachers of the Buddhist Faith, urges that life is infected with suffering.

What is the cause of suffering ? To this Shanti Deva's answer is,—*avidya*, ignorance. This *avidya* is involuntary. It is the craving of nescience,—not knowing better. Ignorance is rooted in our consciousness : ignorance is mistake about the true essence of reality and is the cause of our suffering. Not knowing the true way of life, we suffer. This “not-knowing” is a blend of cravings, longings, fears, regrets. The craving which is at the root of our suffering is “thoughtlessness” : it is referred to as the “path of death”. The essence of the new life is wisdom, *bodhi*. They who are established in wisdom are called Bodhisattvas. They abide in the “love for all beings”. They are “loving servants” of all living beings. “Liberation of the heart through love”,—is emphasised in the teaching of Shanti Deva and other great disciples of the Buddha.

Listen to the the thrilling words of Shanti Deva :—

*When famine is abroad,
These Noble Ones,—the Bodhisattvas,—become*

*The food and drink of men,
And hunger and thirst vanish !*

*When the war is on,
These Noble Ones send out to all
Compassion and service true,
And millions are taught to harm no one !*

*When strife and hate appear,
These Noble Ones do smile
And send out to multitudes
The thoughts of peace and love.*

*Into hell itself are seen
These Noble Ones as servants true
Of love : they set their faces
For the welfare of all the worlds.*

*In the worlds of animals, too,
These Noble Ones are seen
Preaching the Law and serving all :
So are they called the "Guides" to Perfect Life!*

*Where'er there be the fallen ones
In sensual pleasures sunk,
These Noble Ones are seen
To help, to lift men
Out of mire and dust!*

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA

*And where men in meditation sit,
The Bodhisattvas there are seen
To meditate in their midst
And drive dark powers out!*

Centuries ago were these words sung. And I recall them as I read today the words of the great Russian writer, Dostoevsky. He speaks in one of his thrilling novels, written in the last century, of Father Zossima,—one of the most impressive characters of Dostoevsky. Father Zossima, we read, kneels down, kisses the ground before a great sinner, then says :—

Love all God's creation: every grain of sand, every leaf, every ray of God, you should love ! Love animals ! Love plants ! Love everything ! Love everything ! And you will arrive at God's secret,—His inmost secret in all things !

Shanti Deva's ideal, too, is not the cold ascetic monk nor the Arhat. The Arhat, it is true, is a saint : he controls his passions, but he lives for his own salvation. Shanti Deva's ideal is the "Bodhisattva" who works for the welfare of the world,—of all the worlds,—and for the salvation of all creatures.

Shanti Deva prays that the merit he gains by his work may be accepted as an offering for the service of others. He

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prays, too, that until they enter into *nirvana*, he himself may wait outside, on the threshold.

The Bodhisattva, Shanti Deva says, has infinite love for all creatures in suffering and pain. The Bodhisattva is a man of active compassion or "charity".

Through service, through compassion and through Knowledge or Enlightenment, the Bodhisattva is devoted to the Buddhas and the Dhamma (the Supreme Law). He adores, too, the Sangha (the Brotherhood, the Fellowship of all who aspire to Perfect Wisdom).

The Bodhisattva realises, too, the supremacy of the inner world as he grows in the power of silence and meditation. He does not succumb to distractions of the outer world. He realises that all things are transitory and empty : but he realises, too, that they have a relative value for ordinary men : and the Bodhisattva has for them all a deep compassion.

In silence and meditation he learns concentration of mind, learns self-discipline, and gradually attains to tranquillity, the "peace that passeth understanding". So does he become free from pride and egoism : so does he become meek and patient. All things, he steadily realises, are subject to constant transformation. All things, he sees, are empty and transitory,—as a dream or as lightning or as clouds that come and go.

The Bodhisattva becomes thus a "Path-finder", becomes a "Bridge" to the "Other Shore", becomes a Bridge-builder.

"Understand, my brother!" says Shanti Deva, "that every thing is void, like space!"

"All is transient, empty of abiding worth," he says, "transient, yet not unreal. For in all the Buddha dwells." Alas! we look upon things as "real" : but they are a void! "Awake! Awake!" cries Shanti Deva. Alas! we awake not! Our eyes are blinded with passion.

"Sunya",— is the word Shanti Deva uses, again and again. "Sunya" means "empty". The "ego", too, is empty : we have, alas ! the vanity of the ego. The body and the mind, the intelligence,—all is vanity, all is *sunya*. But the background of all is the Eternal Being, the Centre of all activities. "Realise," says Shanti Deva, "the momentariness of phenomena!" Get behind the senses, behind the mind and understanding to attain to the "Inner Being". For everyone can become a Buddha : every creature is an embryo of the *Tathagata*.

In the "Noble Eightfold Path" of the Buddha, Shanti Deva emphasises specially the seventh and the eighth steps. The seventh is "right mindfulness" : the eighth is "right concentration". You have right mindfulness when you are thoughtful at all times. Be thoughtful, do not forget to seek the meaning and significance of things, events and experiences. And right concentration is necessary, too.

THE WAY OF THE BLESSED ONES

Practise at all times strict control over your thoughts, words and deeds. Be strong in the discipline of contemplation. Concentrate your mind on the truth of “emptiness”,—the “vanity” of what is around you. And in this concentration, develop your intuitions and enter intuitively into the Essence of Mind and Life.

QUENCH THE FLAMES !

NAMELESS WAS he, in tattered clothes,—a broken man. Frustration and failure he saw around him. Some deep anguish was in his heart. Yet he exclaimed, again and again :—
“*Buddham saranam gachchami!*”

Blessed to him was the name, “Buddha”! The dust of the day’s long road fell on him : yet his face seemed to leap to a laughing star as he exclaimed :—“*Buddham saranam gachchami!*”

I looked into his eyes and I heard him say :—“Face I life without a fear. The very stones shall my helpers be!” This man was not a pessimist : he was a believer : he believed in Life, in Law, in a Divine Brotherhood.

I humbly submit it is not right to speak of what the Buddha

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taught as a creed of atheism. The Nepalese schools of Buddhism speak of the “One”, the “Uncreate”, and give That the name “Swayambhu” (Self-subsistent, existing in Himself). In Nepal, they call the “First Buddha”, the “Adi Buddha” by the name “Swayambhu”. The word is used by Guru Nanak in the “Japji” to designate the Eternal One.

Shanti Deva refers to the “One”, the “Uncreate” as the “Root” of all that is. He who perceives the “One” has true Wisdom. Indeed, in a realisation of the One,—the Unity of Life,—is the birth of Wisdom. This Unity is not an intellectual inference. The great truth of the “oneness of all” is known in the blessed moment of Enlightenment. In the purified heart is the birth of Wisdom. And the heart is purified when the “I”, the “ego” is extinguished. Around us, alas ! are noise and strife : we dwell in discord : and we are denied the gift to love and adore.

Two truths does Shanti Deva stress in his great Poems. One of them is “Wisdom”, the other is “Void”. All things you see are passing. Rightly does the singer of the “Psalms” in the Jewish Testament exclaim :—

*Man's days are as grass,
As a flower of the field :
So it flourisheth :
But the wind passeth over it,*

*And the flower is gone,
And the place thereof
Shall know it no more!*

Yes : all things pass. There is the “fire of suffering” in the world. In this “fire” men and women are being burnt, everyday. When “Wisdom” comes, the “burning” is no more. And when we learn to look upon things as “empty”, we grow in true Wisdom of the Heart. Listen to Shanti Deva’s words :—

*Men, alas! are being burnt in the fire of pain.
When shall I bring them peace?
And when shall I in reverence
Teach the “Void” to them
That look upon the things of the world as real?*

Humanity is one, but is split up, alas ! into sections. The East and the West fight each against the other. The Light of sympathy and compassion, the Light of love is the world’s piteous need. The Light still shines in a few hearts. A Muslim poet names it :—“Shamai-e-Gautam”,—the Light which Gautama Buddha kindled.

Devadatta intrigued against the Master, again and again. Again and again, did the Buddha forgive him and bless him. The same Light shone in the life of Jesus. The Russian writer, Dostoevsky, draws a moving picture in one of his great books. The “Grand Inquisitor” flings Jesus into

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prison, reviles him bitterly and resolves to see that he is "burnt" on the morrow. "If anyone deserves our fires, it is thou! Tomorrow I shall burn thee,"—says the Inquisitor. But Jesus,—what does he do? He is compassionate. He is silent. He looks gently in the face of the Inquisitor, then approaches the old man and "softly kisses him on his aged lips". The answer of Jesus to the Inquisitor was,—Compassion!

When the Light of Compassion grows again, as once it did when Asoka ruled and great ones like Shanti Deva taught at Nalanda and saints like Nanak and Francis blessed the earth, the current civilisations of aggressiveness and exploitation will end and a new Brotherly Civilisation will begin.

Compassion was the supreme note Shanti Deva sounded in his talks at Nalanda. How his pupils came to him, thronging and standing in his presence over-shadowed by the Holy Presence of the Buddha! How they gazed at Shanti Deva's face, as tears fell from his eyes like autumn rains! Then, from his lips came answers to their questions, as he spoke to them from a realm of Light. And one said to him :—"Beloved! your love has kindled such a Light that the least ray thereof consumeth all craving, all sin, and we feel purified!"

Then from Shanti Deva's lips and from his eyes flowed forth a smile, and a voice spake to students who gazed at him with eager eyes :—"Children! from hate and strife keep

ye aloof alway! And to all give ye the compassion of your hearts !”

In a Song full of the rapture of self-giving,—the rapture of compassion,—Shanti Deva breathes out the Great Peace of the Buddha,—the richest aspiration of the Upanishads,—in most moving words. And these I am tempted to quote as I close :—

*All the flowers
And all the fruits,
And all the treasures
Of all the worlds,
I fain would gather together
And offer them all
To the great Buddhas
And their Sons !*

*May they, worthy of the finest gifts,
Accept my humble offerings!
And may they have compassion on me,—
The Great Compassionate Ones,
Aye,—the Ever-Blessed Ones!*

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