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# A Buddhist Catechism

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE  
Teaching of the Buddha Gotama

SUBHADRA BHIKSHU



# **A BUDDHIST CATECHISM**

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE  
**Teaching of the Buddha Gotama**

**Subhadra Bhikshu**

Authorized Translation  
from the Eighth German Edition  
by

**C. T. Strauss**

Revised Edition

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**“A Buddhist Catechism” was originally written in German and translated into English by C. T. Strauss. The present edition has been revised by the Editors of the Buddhist Publication Society.**

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

The original German version, first published in 1888, had 14 editions up to 1921, when a revised edition was prepared by Dr. Karl Seidenstuecker.

An English translation appeared first in 1890, followed by separate editions for the U. S. A. in 1895 and for Ceylon in 1908; the latter was reprinted in 1949 by the Maha Bodhi Society, Colombo.

There had been three French editions (for France and Switzerland); three in Hungarian, while each of the two Russian editions was soon after publication suppressed by the Czarist censorship.

### The Author

SUBHADRA BHIKSHU was the pen-name of a German lay Buddhist, Friedrich Zimmermann (1851-1917). Since 1892 he represented the Maha Bodhi Society in Germany and was the President of its German Branch in 1911-1912. Protracted illness prevented him from doing other literary work after his **Buddhist Catechism**.

### The Translator

C. T. STRAUSS (1852-1937) was the first Westerner who, in a Western country, publicly took the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts. He received these from the Anagarika Dharmapala in 1893 at a public meeting, during the Congress of Religions in Chicago. In the years 1906-1908, he travelled in Japan, Ceylon, Burma and India. His book "The Buddha and his Doctrine" appeared in German and English (London 1923).



## **TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.**

to the 1907 edition

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The little book presented here is a concise representation of Buddhism according to the oldest and most authentic sources, the Pāli Tipitaka. It contains the spirit and essence of the true teaching of the Buddha, omitting all additions with which scholastic learning of later times has amplified the words of the Master, and superstition and the imagination of the people have encumbered them.

Fifty years ago the pure doctrine of the Buddha Gotama was hardly known by name even among the educated classes in Europe and America. There were few only in the West who saw in this most ancient and most noble world religion anything but a strange passing phenomenon of times long past, instead of a living truth, just as valid now as 2,500 years ago. Today, thanks principally to the labours of eminent scholars, who have given us with rare patience and disinterestedness translations of the Sacred Books of Buddhism, the Western world has been informed of the grandeur and beauty of the Buddhist conception of the world. This world conception will be of far-reaching importance on the spiritual movements of the present and the future and its dissemination is a mission of civilization of the highest importance. Already the sublime teaching of the Indian Sage begins to influence in a high degree the opinions of all in the West, who reflect on the problems of life.

Of recent years a great many works have been published in favour of and against Buddhism. Everywhere comparisons are being made between Christianity and Buddhism, and the Church looks uneasily at the new adversary. The



Christian Church is far-seeing enough to observe that from no quarter is its supremacy menaced so strongly as from the teaching of the Indian Prince of the tribe of the Sākyas. Even the German Emperor was moved to call Christendom to a united battle against Buddhism in an allegorical painting, wherein he depicts the same as a disastrous, destructive power. But the truth promulgated by the Buddha is not destructive to the civilization of Europe, as the Emperor ignorantly imagines; it is a destroyer only of error, delusion, superstition, and of mental and moral bondage; and only those have occasion to become alarmed to whose advantage it is, when darkness reigns instead of light.

The teaching of the Buddha appeals to all who do not expect salvation from "divine grace without personal merit", but who have enough courage and strength to stand on their own feet; who are bold enough not blindly to follow authority, but to think for themselves; who do not want to believe, but to know. It is the true refuge of all who do not consider the highest aim of existence to consist of material progress and increased comfort, but who, repelled by the savage struggle for possessions and enjoyments, yearn for new surroundings, among which true humanity can thrive. It is the real comforter and guide for all who, dissatisfied with the doctrines of other religions, long for a clearer view, a higher goal, and a firmer support, than the dogmas and myths of Christianity and Hinduism, or the brilliant results of science, confined only to the world of phenomena, and not penetrating into the essence of things, can give them.

For such as these this "Buddhist Catechism" has been compiled. If they read and comprehend it rightly, they will find therein what they seek—a doctrine free from dogmas and formalism, in accord with nature and its laws,



containing the highest truths, satisfying head and heart in equal degree, and everything in such simple garb that it can be grasped by the most modest understanding, and at the same time so profound that even the most highly cultured European or American, mentally equipped with the results of the latest philosophical and scientific achievements of a highly advanced civilization, cannot easily fathom it. He alone who reads the "Buddhist Catechism" in this sense reads it rightly.

The first German edition of this Catechism appeared in 1888, and this translation is made from the eighth edition, showing that the good Law is making progress. This work has also been translated into French, Dutch, Swedish, Italian, Bohemian, Hungarian, Russian, Spanish and Japanese, demonstrating that it is supplying a want and fulfilling a mission.

This translation has been approved and endorsed by the High Priest, the Venerable H. Sri Sumangala, without a doubt the most learned and highly respected of all living Bhikkhus. He is over 80 years of age, but still very active and alert; he is the Principal of Vidyodaya College in Colombo, the leading institution for the study of Buddhist Pāli and Sanskrit in the Island of Ceylon, and holds the honorary title of Tripitaka Vagiswarāchariya or Knower of the Tripitaka, a distinction that has not been conferred on anyone else for the last 400 years. This is a guarantee that in this booklet the true, unadulterated doctrines of Buddhism are presented.

May this new English edition also contribute its share to the enlightenment of the world.

In the year 2451 after the Nirvāna of the Blessed One,  
1907.

C. T. STRAUSS



# NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMĀSAMBUDDHASSA

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. To which religion<sup>1</sup> do you belong?

I am a Buddhist.

### 2. What do you mean by a Buddhist?

A person who reveres the Buddha as the Enlightener of the world, our highest spiritual guide and master, and who earnestly strives to live according to his teachings.

### 3. How does one become a Buddhist?

By free determination. Not by birth, not by nationality nor race; not by consecration, baptism, or any other legally binding ceremony, for Buddhism possesses neither the power of a state religion, nor a hierarchy. Whoever lives according to the teachings of the Buddha is a Buddhist, whether he belongs to a Buddhist congregation or not. The entrance to such a one is effected by a simple declaration of intention and the utterance of the formula of guidance, recited three times.

### 4. What is the formula of guidance ( tisarana )?\*

I follow the Buddha as my guide,  
I follow the Doctrine as my guide,  
I follow the Order<sup>2</sup> as my guide,

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1. This and succeeding numbers refer to notes at the end of this book.

\* Literally: "The Threefold Refuge". See 'The Wheel' No. 76 on this subject. — When taking the Refuge, generally the Five Precepts (see Question 96) are accepted for observance and recited along with the Refuge. — (Editor)



**5. What is meant to be expressed by the solemn utterance of this formula?**

He who professes it desires to testify before all the world that he henceforth elects the Buddha as his teacher and model; that he knows the Doctrine to contain the essence and fundamental principles of truth and justice, as well as the road to self-perfection and deliverance; that he looks upon the Order as the successors of the Buddha, worthy of veneration as the true practisers, promulgators and expounders of the doctrine.

**6. Is this formula of guidance binding on all Buddhists?**

On all without exception, whether they belong to the Order and have therewith chosen the life or a begging monk (*bhikkhu*, *samaṇa*), or whether they are lay followers (*upāsaka*). The profession of the formula of refuge is however a voluntary vow, and possesses only a moral validity. There are no legal obligations of any kind connected with it.

**7. How is the holy Triad called to whose guidance the Buddhist confides in pronouncing this formula?**

The Three Gems. They are the models of perfection, the highest ideals of the Buddhist, and shine before him as guiding stars through the turbulent ocean of ignorance, passion, and sorrow to the haven of eternal peace.

Therefore the Buddhist looks on these Three Gems full of confidence, gratitude, and reverence, and says with a devout heart:

All reverence to the Holy One, the World-enlightener, the Buddha.

All reverence to the holy, the pure, the liberating Doctrine.

All reverence to the Brotherhood of the Elect, the noblest of mankind.



## **THE BUDDHA**

### **8. Who is the Buddha?**

He who, of His own strength attained perfection, enlightenment, and deliverance in this life; the holy and wise proclaimer of the truth and founder of the Buddhist religion.

### **9. Is the Buddha a god who manifested himself to humanity?**

No.

### **10. Or was He a god's messenger who came down upon earth in order to bring salvation to men?**

No.

### **11. Was He then a human being?**

Yes, He was born a human being; but such a one as appears only once in many thousands of years; one of those sublime world-subduers and world-enlighteners who mentally and morally tower so far above erring and suffering humanity, that to the childlike perception of the people they appear as "gods" or "god's messengers."

### **12. Is Buddha a proper name?**

No, Buddha is the designation of an inner state or spiritual condition.

### **13. What is the meaning of the word?**

The awakened or the Enlightened One; it designates a being who by His own power has acquired the highest wisdom and moral perfection attainable by a living being.

### **14. What was the Buddha's real name?**

At His birth He was called Siddhattha; His family name was Gotama.



**15. Who were His parents?**

King Suddhodana and Queen Māyā.

**16. Over what people did King Suddhodana reign?**

Over the tribe of the Sakyas in India.<sup>4</sup>

**17. When was Prince Siddhattha born?**

On the full-moon day of the month of Vesak (May) in the year 523 before the beginning of the Christian era.<sup>4</sup>

**18. Do we know any details about the Buddha's birth and youth?**

The holy books give us many details but as with all founders of great religions the birth and youth of the Buddha have been adorned with many miraculous and poetic events.

**19. What do the books tell us?**

Already at the birth of Prince Siddhattha the brahmins who lived as priests and astrologers at the court of King Suddhodana predicted the child's high destiny. They prophesied: If Prince Siddhattha mounts the throne, he will become a king of kings, a world ruler; but if he renounces the throne and chooses the life of a recluse, he will become a world-subduer, a universal Buddha. "And the hermit Kāladevala hastened from the wilderness of the Himalaya, threw himself at the feet of the child, and said: Verily, this child will one day become a perfect, a supreme Buddha, and will show unto men the way to emancipation; and he wept, knowing that on account of his high age he would not live to see that day."<sup>5</sup>

**20. Did King Suddhodana rejoice in Kaladevala's prediction?**

No. On the contrary, he tried by all means in his power to prevent its fulfilment, for he desired that Prince Siddhattha should one day become a universal monarch.



**21. What means did he employ to attain this object?**

The brahmins had told him that the sight of human suffering and earthly impermanence would induce the prince to abandon the world. Therefore, the king kept away from the prince everything that could give him knowledge of human misery and death. He surrounded him with enjoyments and kingly splendour of every kind, so as to chain him firmly to a worldly life. The most distinguished teachers had to instruct him in the arts and sciences and in all knightly accomplishments befitting a king's son. When Prince Siddhattha reached manhood his father had three palaces built for him, one for each of the three Indian seasons—the hot, the cold, and the rainy season. All were furnished with the greatest luxury; all around them spread vast gardens and groves, with clear ponds full of lotus flowers, cool grottoes, splashing fountains, and beds of the most beautiful flowers. In these gardens and groves the prince passed his youth, but he was never allowed to leave them; and all the poor, the sick, and the old were strictly prohibited from entering. Sons of the noblest families in the land were his companions. In his sixteenth year his father married him to the Princess Yasodhara, and he was surrounded besides by a harem of beautiful girls, skilled in dancing, singing and music, according to the then custom of Indian princes.

**22. How was it possible for the prince, in the midst of all this splendour and delight, to think of flight from the world?**

While driving in the gardens and parks of his palaces he perceived four significant apparitions, which enlightened him as to the true nature of existence.



**23. What were these apparitions?**

An infirm old man bent by the weight of years; a sick man covered with ulcers; a decaying corpse and a venerable begging-monk.<sup>6</sup>

**24. What impression did these apparitions produce on Prince Siddhattha?**

They affected him deeply. The utter transitoriness and vanity of life now became clear to him. The delusive and short earthly enjoyments, which bring old age, sickness, pain and death in their train, lost all attractions for him. Henceforth he abstained from all amusements. The conviction ripened within him that existence is not a blessing but an evil, and that it is foolish and unworthy of noble natures to pursue sensual pleasures. All his aspirations were now directed to a higher aim.

**25. What was his Aim?**

He longed to discover the causes of misery in the world: of birth, suffering, old age, death, and rebirth,<sup>7</sup> and to find the way to put an end to them. He decided to leave the world and go into the wilderness, like the venerable ascetic who had appeared to him.

**26. Was it easy for him to take such a resolution?**

No; for he had to renounce all that men generally consider the greatest happiness—a king's throne, power, honour, riches, and all enjoyments connected therewith, and even the companionship of his beloved wife and of their son Rāhula, who had just been born.

**27. Did not his father and Princess Yasodhara try to dissuade him from his purpose?**

He did not communicate it to them, but preferred to leave secretly for he feared that the entreaties of his aged



father and the tears of his wife might make him waver.<sup>8</sup> One night, when all were asleep, he arose quietly, took a last farewell glance at his wife and infant son, woke his charioteer, Channa, ordered him to saddle his favourite horse Kanthaka and rode away. He passed the guards at the gate without being noticed and sallied forth into the darkness as fast as his steed would carry him. Having reached the top of a hill, he looked back on his native city. There Māra, the Tempter, approached him. He showed him the kingdoms of this earth, represented to him once more all the allurements of power and splendour, and promised him the sovereignty over the whole world, if he would desist from his purpose.<sup>9</sup> The Buddha rejected the Tempter with scorn. His resolution could not be shaken. And the books say: "Henceforth Māra followed the steps of the Tathāgata"<sup>10</sup> hoping to find another opportunity to cause his fall.

**28. How old was Prince Siddhattha when he left the world?**

Twenty-nine years.

**29. Where did he go first?**

To the river Anoma. There he cut off his beautiful long hair with his sword, handed his arms, ornaments, and horse to his faithful Channa, and directed him to return with them to Kapilavatthu and reassure the King and the princess as to his fate. After Channa had left him he passed seven days in solitude on the bank of the Anoma, entirely given up to contemplation filled with holy joy at having taken the first important step towards the realization of his aim and at having stripped off the fetters of a worldly life. Then he put on yellow robes and walked towards Rājagaha, the capital of the kingdom of Magadha.<sup>11</sup>



**30. Why did he go there?**

In the neighbourhood of Rājagaha dwelt two brahmins, Alāra Kālāma and Uddaka, renowned for wisdom. He joined first one and then the other as disciple under the name of Gotama.

**31. What did these brahmins teach?**

They taught that mystic meditation and direct intuition of the eternal are the road to emancipation.

**32. Did Gotama find this teaching correct?**

No, He acquired all the knowledge of these brahmins and zealously joined in all their religious exercises without getting any nearer to his goal. He soon found that their knowledge was futile, and would not lead to deliverance from suffering, death, and rebirth.

**33. What did he do after this disappointment?**

There were still other brahmins, celebrated religious teachers, who believed that the true way to emancipation was through asceticism, namely, the complete and forcible mortification of all emotions pertaining to the senses, of the will, and passions. Gotama now decided to follow their precepts. For this purpose he retired to a thick forest near Uruvelā and applied himself in solitude to the severest penances and self-tortures.<sup>12</sup> Soon the fame of his holy life spread and brought him five companions, who pursued the same aim. In admiration of his fortitude and the endurance with which Gotama devoted himself to his castigations, they remained with him expecting that he would surely some day attain emancipation. Then they intended to become his disciples.

**34. What were the names of these five ascetics?**

Kondañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma and Assaji.



**35. How long did Gotama remain in the forest near Uruwela?**

Nearly six years. The strength of his body dwindled with continual self-tortures, fastings, and vigils, but he did not flag in his endeavour. One night walking up and down in deep meditation, he sank to the ground unconscious from sheer exhaustion, so that his companions thought him dead. After some time he recovered however.

**36. Did he continue his ascetic practices?**

No. He understood that asceticism never leads to perfection and deliverance. He had almost sacrificed himself and still not attained his aim—spiritual and moral self-perfection.<sup>13</sup> He therefore relinquished all real mortifications and took food again regularly. When his companions saw this they began to doubt him; they thought that he had forsaken his resolution and they abandoned him.

**37. Did Gotama despair of gaining his aim?**

Not for a moment. Deserted by all, he understood that salvation could not be attained by the doctrines taught by others, and he resolved in future to follow only his own inspiration. He had realized that self-mortification was injurious and confined himself henceforth to strict abstinence from all sensuality; at the same time he strove in perfect seclusion for revelations from within for the complete unfolding of his higher spiritual powers. One night he sat under a tree, not far from the shores of the river Neranjarā.<sup>14</sup> It was under this tree that he victoriously accomplished the last and severest struggle.

**38. What struggle was this?**

The struggle against the inclinations and desires of the human heart, which arose once more within him,



although he believed that he had completely conquered them; the struggle against delusion, love of the world, and that craving for existence and enjoyment, that will-to-live, which are the root and mainspring of our being, as well as the source of all our woes. Once more honour, fame power, wealth, love, happiness of family life, and all delights and joys which the world offers to its favourites, presented themselves to him in their most seductive form; once more gnawing doubt raised its serpent head. But firmly determined to die rather than renounce his aim, Gotama struggled with these dire powers and gained the victory.<sup>15</sup> And now, after the last attack of human weakness had been overcome and the deep peace of Nirvāna had entered his heart, his spirit rose to that sublime height where the struggler attains supreme enlightenment.<sup>16</sup> He had reached the goal—the veil had fallen from his eyes and the highest insight had been won. He had become perfect—a Buddha.

**39. Had He now understood the causes of misery, of birth, suffering, old age, death and rebirth?**

Yes; “He had obtained the pure spotless Eye of the Truth,” as the holy books express it, and He understood the cause of the arising and passing away of beings the cause of suffering, death, and rebirth; but also the means to put an end to all suffering, to escape the continual rotation of birth and death, and to reach deliverance—Nirvāna.

**40. How long did He abide under the Bodhi-tree?**

He remained at the foot of the tree for seven days in deep meditation. Then He arose and went to the Ajapāla fig-tree (the tree of the goat-herds). There the thought occurred to Him: “I now comprehend this



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expression of His countenance made such a mighty impression on them, that they involuntarily bowed down before Him and listened to His words with deep reverence.

**45. What is this first discourse of the Buddha called?**

“The Setting in Motion of the Wheel<sup>18</sup> of the Law”, or “The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness”. This sermon contains in concise terms the fundamental points of the whole doctrine.

**46. What effect did this discourse produce on the five ascetics?**

They acknowledged the Buddha as the Enlightener of the World, and desired to become His disciples. And the Awakened One admitted them as the first ones into the Brotherhood of Monks (Sangha) with the words : “Welcome, oh Brethren; well taught is the doctrine. Lead henceforth a holy life for the sake of the complete extinction of suffering”.

**47. Who was the first of the five disciples to attain perfect insight?**

The aged Kondaṇṇa. He obtained the pure, the spotless Eye of the Truth, and reached the degree of Arahat.<sup>19</sup> The four others soon followed.

**48. Did the Buddha gain other disciples in Benares?**

Many others. The next one to be converted was Yasa, a youth of noble family. But not only brahmins, noblemen, and gentlefolks lent an ear to the words of the Sublime One, but also the plain people; for He made no distinction of caste, rank, or station, as the brahmin priests did, but preached to all who were willing to listen. After five months the number of disciples already amounted to 60, not counting the lay followers. Thereupon “the sending forth of the Brethren” took place.



**49. What is meant by “the sending forth of the Brethren”?**

The Buddha assembled the Brethren about Him and commanded them to wander forth singly into the world and to proclaim the doctrine of emancipation everywhere.<sup>20</sup>

**50 What words did the Buddha use?**

He said to the Brethren; “Ye are delivered from all fetters, human and divine. Go forth, oh Brethren, and wander about, and proclaim the Law, for the deliverance of all living beings, out of compassion for the world, for the joy, for the bliss, for the welfare of gods<sup>21</sup> and men. Proclaim, oh Brethren, the glorious doctrine; preach ye a life of holiness perfect and pure. There are many of pure heart and good intentions, but if they do not hear the saving doctrine, they will perish. These will be your adherents and the followers of Truth.”

**51. Did the Buddha remain in Benares?**

No, He returned to Uruvela, where there dwelt many brahmins in huts, keeping up the holy fire and performing the sacrificial rites prescribed in the Vedas. To these He preached of the consuming fires of passion, sensuality, and desire, and He gained many of them as disciples and followers. Then He proceeded to Rājagaha, where he converted King Bimbisāra and a large number of noble-men. Thus the doctrine spread farther and farther.

**52. Did He never return to His home, Kapilavatthu?**

From Rājagaha He wandered to Kapilavatthu and the fame of His teaching preceded Him. He did not go to the King's palace, but remained with the Brethren who were with Him in a grove near the city, as prescribed by the regulations of the Brotherhood. There King Suddhodana and all His male kindred went to greet Him. But when they saw Him in the poor garb of a bhikkhu (mendicant



monk) with shorn hair and beard, they felt ashamed of Him. The next morning the Buddha, according to the custom of the Order took His alms-bowl<sup>22</sup> and went to the city, for the purpose of collecting His food before the house-doors. When the King, His father, heard this, he hastened to Him and said in words of reproach: "My son, why do you disgrace me so, asking for gifts like a beggar?" The Buddha replied: "Great King, this has ever been the custom of My ancestors." King Suddhodana, however, did not comprehend Him, and exclaimed: "We spring from a race of kings and warriors, and not one of them has ever abased himself so far as to beg his daily food." Thereupon the Sublime One smiled and spake: "You and yours justly glory in being descended from a race of kings. *My* ancestors, however, are the Buddhas of past ages,<sup>23</sup> and they did even as I am doing." Then King Suddhodana kept silent.

### **53. Did the Buddha see His wife and son again?**

On the very same day He went to see the Princess Yasodhara accompanied by two of His disciples.<sup>24</sup> And when Yasodhara saw Him in the garb of a begging-monk, she could not utter a word, but sank down before Him, clasped His knees, and wept bitterly. Then the Buddha lifted her up, comforted her, and instructed her in the doctrine in tender words. And his words found a loving abode in her heart. And when the Buddha had gone, Yasodhara clothed her son Rāhula in his finest garments, and sent him to the Exalted One,<sup>25</sup> that the Prince might ask his father for his heritage. The boy stepped up to the Buddha and said: "Father, I shall some day be king and occupy the throne of the Sākyas. Give unto me therefore, my inheritance." Then the Enlightened One took him by the hand, led him out of the city to the Nigrodha



grove, where He and the disciples had taken up their abode, and spoke thus to Rāhula: "You demand of me an heritage which is subject to impermanency and leads to suffering. Such an one I have no longer to bestow. But the treasures which I have gained under the Tree of Wisdom shall be yours. This is the spiritual heritage which I bequeath to you; this none can wrest from you." And thereupon He bade Sariputta adopt Rāhula into the Brotherhood of Monks. Besides Rāhula many relatives of the Buddha were admitted to the Order, among them Ananda, Devadatta, and Anuruddha.

**54. Who were the most prominent disciples of the Enlightened One, besides those named?**

Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Kassapa, Upāli and Kaccāno.

**55. How long did the Buddha remain in Kapilavatthu?**

He passed there the four months of the rainy season of the second year of His Buddhahood. Then He departed to continue His work in other places.

**56. How long did the Buddha preach the Doctrine?**

Until His death; 45 years in all. During all this time, for eight months of every year, He wandered from village to village, from town to town, and from country to country always accompanied by a multitude of disciples, and everywhere instructing the people by discourses, exhortations, and parables. The four months of the rainy season,<sup>26</sup> however, He always spent in one place, either in the house of one of His followers, or in groves and parks, which had been presented to the Brotherhood by rich adherents.

**57. Where did the Buddha prefer to dwell?**

In the bamboo grove (Veluvana) near Rājagaha, a former park of King Bimbisāra, which he had given to the



Brotherhood, and in the Jeta park (Jetavana) near Sāvatti, a gift of the rich merchant Anāthapindika. In both of them monasteries (vihāra) for the bhikkhus had been erected. These places are famous in the history of Buddhism, for it was here that the Exalted One delivered most of the discourses recorded in the holy books.

**58. Did Buddhism become firmly established during these 45 years?**

Yes; the fame of the Master and the Doctrine of Deliverance spread extensively; persons of all classes, weary of worldly vanity and priestly imposture, took the higher vows and entered the Order as begging-monks or nuns, and thousands declared themselves lay followers of the Blessed One.<sup>27</sup>

**59. Was not the Buddha during His career subject to persecution and hostilities on the part of the dominant Brahminic religion?**

No; for as Buddhism, so true Brahmanism is free from all intolerance and religious fanaticism. But one of His own disciples rose against Him.

**60. What was the name of this disciple?**

Devadatta. Infatuated by ambition he wanted to usurp the direction of the Brotherhood in place of the aged Master; and when he failed in this he even attempted to take the Buddha's life. But all his plots miscarried.

**61. Do we know anything about the Buddha's last days and his decease?**

Yes; the Mahāparinibbānasutta, or the Book of the Great Decease, gives a detailed account of the Passing of the Enlightened One into Eternal Peace (Parinirvāna).



## 62. What does this book tell us?

When the Blessed One had reached His 80th year He felt His strength failing. But He still wandered on from place to place as was His custom; and one day He addressed Ānanda<sup>28</sup> as follows: "Oh, Ānanda, I am now grown old and full of years, my journey is drawing to its close, I have reached my sum of days, I am turned 80 years of age." Thereupon Ānanda was seized with great sorrow; but the Buddha consoled him and said: "Oh, Ānanda, have I not often declared to you that it is in the very nature of all things, howsoever dear and beloved they may be to us, that we must divide ourselves from them, leave them, sever ourselves from them? Anything born, brought into being, and formed contains within itself the inherent necessity of dissolution. How then can it be possible that such a being, even if he is a Buddha, should not be dissolved? No state of permanence can exist. In three months from this day I shall enter into Eternal Peace. Therefore, Oh Brethren, you to whom the truths I have perceived have been made known by me, make them surely your own, practise them, meditate upon them, and spread them abroad; in order that pure religion may last long and be perpetuated, in order that it may continue to be for the good and happiness of the great multitudes, out of pity for the world, to the good and the gain and the weal of gods and men. Whoso faithfully perseveres on this road to holiness will safely cross this ocean of life and reach that sublime goal where all suffering ceases."

And although growing weaker and harassed by pain, the Perfect One continued His wanderings, everywhere gathering the Brethren and lay followers about Him, and exhorting them to unswerving perseverance on the path of emancipation.



When Ānanda one day asked Him for instructions about the Order the Blessed One replied: "Oh Ānanda, should there be any one who harbours the thought, 'It is I who will lead the Brotherhood, or the Order is dependent upon me', it is he who should lay down instructions in any matter concerning the Order. Now the Tathāgata, Ānanda, thinks not that it is he who should lead the Brotherhood, or that the Order is dependent upon him."

In Pāvā the Blessed One halted in the mango grove of Chunda, a man of the caste of the smiths. And when Chunda heard this he joyfully hastened there, invited the Tathāgata to his house, and entertained him with rice, sweetened bread, and a dish of edible mushrooms.<sup>29</sup> The Buddha ate of the mushrooms, and ordered the smith not to give any to the disciples, but to throw the rest away. And after having cheered and edified Chunda by religious instruction he wandered on to Kusinara. On the way He was attacked by a severe illness and violent pains afflicted Him; but the Exalted One, strong in mind and full of self-control, endured them without complaint. But soon His weakness became so great that he was obliged to rest under a tree by the road-side. And He said to Ānanda: "Bring me some water, Ānanda, I am thirsty." Ānanda did as the Sublime One wished, and the Buddha drank and became refreshed.

Now, it happened that young Pukkusa, a merchant of the tribe of the Mallas, passed along the road with a caravan of carts. And when he saw the Blessed One seated under a tree he approached full of reverence, saluted Him, and bowed down before Him. Then he ordered one of his servants to bring a couple of costly garments of burnished cloth of gold, and said: "Oh Lord, show me the favour of accepting these robes at my hands." The



Buddha answered: 'In that case, Pukkusa, give one of the robes to me and one to Ānanda.'" Then Ānanda clothed the Buddha <sup>with</sup> ~~is~~ one of the golden garments, whereupon it seemed completely to have lost its lustre. Surprised, Ānanda exclaimed: "Lord, so radiant is thy countenance and so clear; that this robe of burnished cloth of gold seems to have completely lost its splendour." And the Buddha replied: "It is as thou sayest, Ānanda. Twice during his earthly career the countenance of the Tathāgata, appears so bright and clear—in the night in which he attains complete enlightenment, and in the one in which he passeth into Eternal Peace.<sup>30</sup> And this very day, Ānanda, in the third watch of the night, the utter passing away (Parinirvana) of the Tathāgata will take place."

He then gave directions to Ānanda to pacify Chunda's remorse for having given him bad food by telling him that on the contrary, his having given the Buddha his last meal would redound to his good fortune. So thoughtful was the Blessed One even in dire pain and shortly before his death.

Thereupon the Enlightened One arose and proceeded with his disciples to the Sāla grove of the Mallas near Kusināra, on the bank of the Hirāṇṇavati. And he said to Ānanda: 'I pray you, Ānanda spread for me a robe on the seat between the twin Sāla trees; I am weary and would lie down.'" "Even so Lord," answered Ānanda, and he prepared for the Exalted One a couch between the Sāla trees, with the head to the north. And the Buddha laid himself down. And lo and behold! the twin Sāla trees were all one mass of bloom, although it was not the season for flowers; like rain they showered their blossoms over the Blessed One, and celestial melodies resounded in the air. Then said the dying Sage: 'Behold what a



spectacle! Heaven and earth vie with each other to honour the Tathāgata, But this is not the right adoration, the right veneration, the right glorification, due to a Buddha. Those of my disciples and lay followers who ever live according to Dhamma and faithfully follow the precepts of righteous conduct, those only render me the right honour, the right veneration, the right glorification.”<sup>31</sup>

Now, at that time a religious mendicant named Subhadda who was not a believer in the Buddha, heard that the final passing away of the Enlightened One would take place that night. And having some doubts whether other teachers had found the truth, he resolved to ask the Tathāgata. At first Ānanda did not want to admit him into the presence of the Blessed One, for fear of causing Him trouble in His last moments. But the Exalted One, hearing Ānanda's refusal, gave orders to allow Subhadda to enter; and when the latter had stated his doubts, the Blessed One said; “In whatsoever doctrine and discipline, Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, neither is there found a true ascetic of the first, second, third or fourth degree of saintliness (Ariya-puggala). But in whatsoever doctrine and discipline the Noble Eightfold Path is found, therein also is found the true ascetic of the first, second, third and fourth degree of saintliness. Now in this doctrine and discipline, Subhadda, is found the Noble Eightfold Path; and in it alone is found also the true ascetic of the first, second, third and fourth degree of saintliness. Devoid of true ascetics are the systems of other teachers. But, Subhadda, if the Bhikkhus live righteously, the world will not be destitute of Arahants (perfected ones).” Subhadda was converted and asked to be admitted into the Order, which prayer was granted



by the Buddha, so that Subhadda became the last disciple whom the Blessed One himself converted.

And the Sublime One once again turned to His disciples and said: "It may be that after my demise in some of you the thought may arise: The lips of our Master are closed, we have no longer a guide. But it is not thus, Brethren, that you should regard it. The Doctrine which I have taught you and the rules of pure living which I have laid down for you, these shall be, after I am gone, your guide and master."

And the Blessed One further ordained: When I am gone, let the Order, if it should so wish, abolish all the lesser and minor precepts.

And after a short time the Buddha once more raised his voice and said: "Behold now, Oh Brethren, I exhort you: Decay is inherent in all compound things; work out your emancipation with diligence."

These were the Master's last words; then He entered into Parinirvāṇa.

Before the eastern gate of Kusināra the chiefs of the Mallas cremated the body of the "Light of the World" with all the honours due to a universal monarch.

## **THE DOCTRINE (DHAMMA)**

### **63. What is the Doctrine?**

The doctrine consists of the Truth, as intuitively seen and proclaimed by the Buddha, which has been preserved for us by tradition through the Arahats, and recorded in the holy writings.



**64 What are the holy writings of the Buddhists called?**

The Three Piṭakas or collections (Tripiṭaka): Sutta-Piṭaka, Vinaya-Piṭaka, and Abhidhamma-Piṭaka.

**65. What are the contents of the Pitakas?**

The Sutta-Piṭaka contains the discourses, sermons, and sayings of the Buddha, which are destined for the Brethren as well as the lay followers (upāsakas); also a number of parables and aphorisms for the better elucidation of the Doctrine.

The Vinaya-Piṭaka contains the regulations and rules of conduct for the Brotherhood of the Elect, the Bhikkhus and Sāmaneras.

The Abhidhamma-Piṭaka contains religio-philosophical and psychological treatises.

**66. Do these three collections contain divine revelations?**

No; there are no divine revelations. Buddhism totally rejects the supposition that the truth should be disclosed or revealed to a favoured or elected one by a god or angel. Mankind has never received any revelations, except from the mouth of the Buddhas, those sublime teachers of humanity who by their own strength have raised themselves to mental and moral perfection. The last of these "Lights of the World" is the Buddha Gotama. What He has perceived and proclaimed is contained in the Piṭakas.

**67. Why do we need such world-enlightening Buddhas?**

On account of our sufferings and our ignorance.<sup>34</sup> To be sure suffering and the vanity of life awaken in noble natures the longing for deliverance; but ignorance prevents our finding by our own powers the way out of this sansāra. Therefore we need the Master to show it to us.



**68. What is Sansāra?**

Sansāra is the world in which we live, the world of error, craving, birth, suffering and death; the world of becoming and decay, of continual change, of disappointment and sorrow, of the perpetual, never-ending succession of rebirths.

**69. What is the cause of rebirth, suffering, death and rebirth?**

It is the all-pervading wrong desire (thirst, *taṇhā*),<sup>35</sup> the craving for individual existence in this or another world (heaven or paradise) or the desire for annihilation after this life (materialism).

**70. And how can one terminate this never-ending succession of births and deaths?**

By the relinquishment of this desire, by the suppression of the craving for individual existence in this or another world, or for annihilation. This is deliverance, emancipation, the way to eternal peace.

**71. What then prevents our relinquishing this desire and attaining deliverance?**

Our ignorance (*avijjā*),<sup>36</sup> our infatuation, our want of insight into the real nature of things.

**72. What knowledge leads us to the elimination of this desire?**

The knowledge of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism.

**73. Which are these Truths?**

The Truth about suffering; the Truth about the Cause of Suffering; the Truth about the Cessation of Suffering; and the Truth about the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering.\*

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\* See Wheel No. 34/35: The Four Noble Truths, by Francis Story.



#### 74. Explain these Truths further.

Listen, then, to the very words of the Buddha. "It is through not understanding and grasping the Four Noble Truths, Oh Brethren, that we have had to wander so long in this weary path of transmigration, both you and I. And what are these four? The Noble Truth about Suffering, the Noble Truth about the Cause of Suffering, the Noble Truth about the Cessation of Suffering, and the Noble Truth about the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering. But when these four Noble Truths are fully grasped and known, that grasping desire is destroyed, and the succession of rebirths ceases.<sup>37</sup>

Now this, oh Brethren, is the Noble Truth about Suffering: Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, separation from beloved objects is suffering, union with the unpleasant is suffering, unsatisfied desire is suffering; in short, existence by its very nature is suffering.

This, oh Brethren, is the Noble Truth about the Cause of Suffering: Verily, it is this thirst (*taṇhā*), the craving for existence and enjoyment which leads from rebirth to rebirth, seeking satisfaction now in this form, now in another. It is the craving for the gratification of the passions, the craving for individual happiness in the present life or hereafter, or the craving for annihilation after this life.

This, oh Brethren, is the Noble Truth about the Cessation of suffering: Verily, it is the complete destruction of this thirst, of the craving for existence and enjoyment, or annihilation. This desire must be conquered, got rid of, relinquished, harboured no longer.



**This, Oh Brethren, is the Noble Truth about the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering: Verily, it is this Noble Eightfold Path discovered by me whose parts are called: Right views, right aspirations, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right meditation.**

**There are two extremes, oh Brethren, which he who strives for deliverance ought not to follow; on the one hand, the craving for the gratification of the passions and sensual pleasures is low, mean, degrading, and ruinous; it is the way of the worldly-minded; on the other hand, the practice of self-mortification and asceticism is gloomy, painful, and useless. The middle path only, discovered by the Tathāgata, avoids these two extremes, opens the eyes, bestows insight, and leads to freedom, to wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvāna.”<sup>38</sup>**

#### **75. What is Nirvana?**

**A state of mind and heart in which all desire for life or annihilation, all egotistic craving has become extinct, and with it every passion, every grasping desire, every fear, all ill-will, and every sorrow. It is a state of perfect inward peace, accompanied by the imperturbable certainty of having attained deliverance, a state words cannot describe and which the imagination of the worldling tries in vain to picture to himself. Only one who has himself experienced it knows what Nirvāna is.<sup>39</sup>**

#### **76. Is Nirvana synonymous with salvation or deliverance?**

**Yes, It is the deliverance attainable already in this life, the total annihilation of lust, hatred, and delusion.**



**77. Can everybody attain Nirvana already in the present birth?**

Only very few can. Most men have so defective a mental and moral nature as the result of their deeds in former births, that they require many rebirths before they have perfected themselves sufficiently to gain release. But every one who earnestly strives can gain a rebirth under favourable conditions.

**78. Does our rebirth depend solely upon ourselves?**

Entirely upon our inner nature, our will. This craving desire (*taṇhā*), based on ignorance, (*avijjā*) which pervades us all and forms the essence of our being is the real creative power;<sup>40</sup> it is what other religions personify as god; it is the cause of our existence and our rebirth, and in truth the creator, preserver, and destroyer of all things — the real trinity.

**79. Are the nature and quality of our rebirth also dependent upon ourselves?**

Yes. The nature and quality of our rebirth are dependent on our Karma.

**80. What is Karma?**

Karma is our action; our merit and our guilt in a moral sense. If our merit preponderates, we are reborn in a higher scale of beings, or as man in favourable circumstances; but if we are heavily laden with guilt, the necessary consequence is a rebirth in a lower form and full of suffering.

**81. Are not our actions the natural result of our inborn individual character?**

Certainly. But this inborn character is nothing else than the product of Karma *i.e.*, of all our thoughts, words,



and deeds in former lives.<sup>41</sup> We are in every moment of our existence exactly what we have made ourselves to be, and we enjoy and suffer only what we deserve.

**82. On what law does this depend?**

On the law of causality, the fundamental law of all that happens. Just as in the physical and material world, so also in the spiritual and moral sphere, every cause of necessity produces exactly its corresponding effect—though subject to modification by other Karma—good or bad—, which may act as mitigating, aggravating or cancelling.—*Editor.* No living being can evade this law of nature; even the highest gods are subject to it. On this law depends the physical as well as the moral world order, the equalizing justice in the life of man and in the universe.<sup>42</sup>

**83. What is the difference between Tanha and Karma?**

Taṇhā is the cause which produces our existence and rebirth in general; Karma is that which decides the manner and condition of our existence and rebirth, *i. e.*, our form, our disposition, the world in which we live, our joys and sorrows. Karma is our action, our individual character, and at the same time that which other religions call gods, dispensation, providence, or fate.<sup>43</sup>

**84. Is man reborn only on this earth?**

No. There are innumerable inhabited bodies in boundless space on which there live beings some less and some more highly developed than man. In all these worlds a rebirth can take place.

**85. Are the heavenly bodies unchangeable?**

All are subject to continual mutations, like our earth, constant change reigns in the whole of animate and inanimate nature. Heavenly bodies originate, develop, and pass away again—such is the order since eternity.



**86. Did the world originate out of nothing?**

No. Never can *something* be produced out of, or originate in, *nothing*.

**87. Did a creator god call the world into existence by his will?\***

There is no <sup>god</sup>~~good~~ creator upon whose grace or will the existence of the world depends. Everything originates and develops by and out of itself by virtue of its own will and according to its inner nature and condition (its karma). Only the ignorance of man has invented a personal creator-god.\* The Buddhists however, absolutely reject the belief in a personal god, and consider the doctrine of a creation out of nothing a delusion.<sup>44</sup>

**88. Did the Buddha not teach anything of the beginning and end of the universe?**

No.

**89. Why not?**

Because this knowledge transcends the power of the human intellect; and even if it could be gained and taught in words, would not advance man in his mental and moral development, because it does not lead to the cessation of suffering, to salvation, to deliverance, to Nirvāna. Imagination, intellect, and abstract reasoning will for ever vainly endeavour to conceive or think of a beginning of time, a limit of space, an origin of existence, of the universe, and of individuality.

**90. Then an explanation of the ultimate secrets of existence is impossible?**

Yes; because no form of finiteness, to which thoughts and language also belong, can express the infinite; no

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\* See the Wheel No. 47: Buddhism and the God Idea.



temporal definitions the timeless; nor can thinking resultant from the chain of causality grasp the uncaused, the self-existent. And where this has nevertheless been attempted in other religions, it has only led to useless speculations, vain assertions, fanciful fictions, and to strife, misunderstandings, yea to war, murder, and horrors of all kinds, and has therefore produced error, evil, and suffering instead of truth, happiness and peace. Hence the Buddha put aside all such questions and also forbade his disciples to occupy themselves with them.<sup>45</sup>

### **91 Will we then never solve these riddles?**

Never, so long as we are individuals and fettered by the desire for life. But everyone who has grasped the Buddha's teaching and lives conformably to it, can gain deliverance from the fetters of finiteness and attain enlightenment and emancipation, when in the light of universal knowledge the essence of things will unveil itself to him and all those enigmas will disappear, with which his intellect, limited by the desire for individuality, at present vainly grapples. He must only have an earnest desire for perfection and must enter upon the Noble Eightfold Path with firm resolution.<sup>46</sup>

### **92. How can this be done in right manner?**

By renouncing a worldly life, joining the Brotherhood of the Sangha and devoting all one's energies to the attainment of the highest goal according to the example of the Blessed One.

### **93. Can anyone do this?**

Everyone is able to do so who earnestly *wills* it<sup>47</sup>; but the majority do not want to renounce the world and its illusory enjoyments.



**94. Cannot also he who remains in the worldly life attain perfection and deliverance?**

Yes, it is possible, but extremely difficult. To attain Nirvāna in this life is reserved for those who follow the Noble Eightfold Path,<sup>48</sup> and as an upāsaka (lay-follower) it is almost impossible to do so.

**95. By what are the Upāsakas distinguished from the Bhikkhus?**

The Upāsakas or lay followers of the doctrine, take only the five general vows and try to the best of their power to live up to the precepts of virtuous conduct and benevolence contained in the Sigālovāda Sutta, but remain in the world and faithfully perform their duties as members of a family and citizens. The Bhikkhus, however, the true disciples of the Buddha, renounce the world completely, join the Brotherhood of the Sangha, take the ten vows, and regulate their life entirely according to the rules contained in the Vinaya.

**96. What are the five vows of the Upāsakas?**

The five vows (pañca-sīla)\* are:

I take the vow —

I. Not to kill or injure any living being.<sup>49</sup>

II. Not to take anything which does not belong to me or has not been given to me voluntarily.

III. To abstain from all sexual excess, incontinence and adultery.

IV. Not to lie, deceive, or slander.

V. To abstain from all intoxicants and excitants.

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\* See the Wheel No. 55: 'The Five Precepts'. For the Pali text of these, see The Wheel No. 54: The Mirror of the Dhamma.



**97. What are the precepts of righteousness and benevolence in the Sigalovada Sutta?\***

*Parents* shall train their children in virtue, restrain them from vice, give them a proper education, assist them by word and deed, and not withhold their inheritance.

*Children* shall obey their parents faithfully, perform all filial duties, not squander their parents' property, support them in old age and infirmity, make themselves worthy in all particulars to be their heirs, and always honour their memory.

The *pupil* shall respect the teacher, obey him, show him esteem by word and deed, hearken attentively to his teaching.

The *teacher* shall train the pupil in all that is good and true, instruct him in the arts and sciences to the best of his ability, and watch over him.

The *husband* shall treat his wife with love and respect, be faithful to her, esteem her above all others, and give her suitable clothes and ornaments.

The *wife* shall keep her household in good order, receive friends and relatives hospitably, be faithful to her husband, take care of his property, and fulfil all the duties of a housewife with diligence and zeal.

The *friend* shall treat the friend and companion as he wishes to be treated by him, always show him kindness and civility, watch over his interests, share his property with him, keep him from imprudent steps, offer him a refuge in time of need or danger, and stand faithfully by him in misfortune.

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\* Full translation in The Wheel No. 14: Everyman's Ethics.



The *master* shall care for the welfare of his servants and assistants by not exacting any work from them which exceeds their strength; he shall give them suitable food and wages, support them in sickness, let them have a share in unusual profits and allow them sufficient holidays.

*Servants* and *assistants* shall always do their work cheerfully and willingly, shall be satisfied with what they receive and not speak ill of their master.

The *lay follower* of Buddhism shall show the *Bhikkhus* his friendly disposition of thought, word and deed, welcome them in his house, and supply them with what they need for the maintenance of their bodies.

The *Bhikkhus* shall caution the lay followers against doing wrong, shall exhort them to virtue, cherish kind feelings towards them, instruct them in the doctrine, clear up their doubts, and show them the way to a happy re-birth.

**98. What benefit follows the observance of the five vows and the precepts of righteousness and benevolence?**

He who keeps them faithfully will be held in respect on earth by all good men, will remain free from many sorrows and sufferings, will have an easy conscience, and live in peace with his neighbours. His wisdom will grow, and he will be reborn into more favourable circumstances. But still higher merit is gained by him who observes the eight vows (*atthangasila*) for a longer or a shorter time, but at the least on holidays (*uposatha*).

**99. What are the eight vows?**

The five mentioned above and the following three: I take the vow —



VI. Not to eat at improper times, *i. e.* not to take solid food after mid-day.

VII. To abstain from dancing, the singing of worldly songs, from attending plays or musical performances; in short, to abstain from all worldly and distracting amusements.

VIII. To avoid the use of ornaments of every kind, of perfumes, fragrant oils or ointments, in short anything that tends to vanity.<sup>50\*</sup>

The vow to abstain from all sexual excess is replaced during the time of the observance of Atthangasilam by one exacting complete chasity, even by married people.

**100. What are the ten vows (dasa-sīla) of the Samaneras?**

They are, besides the eight already enumerated, the following two :

I take the vow —

IX. To abandon the use of luxurious beds, to sleep on a hard, low couch, and to avoid all and every worldliness.\*

X. To always live in voluntary poverty.

**101. In how many ways can these vows be broken?**

In three ways : in thought, word, and deed.

**102. Why is it advisable to become a Bhikkhu in order to attain Nirvana?**

Because in the worldly life the thorough fulfilment of the ten vows, the throwing off of the ten fetters—in short,

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\* Generally, in taking the eight vows, the ninth is added to the eighth, forming with it one unit. In the ten vows, however, they are separately recited.—For the Pali texts of the 8 and 10 vows, see The Wheel No. 54: The Mirror of the Dhamma.—(Editor)



the total annihilation of desire, hatred, and delusion—are almost impossible. All worldly activity rests in the main on selfishness and ignorance.

**103. Must we then, in order to gain deliverance, go the way of complete renunciation?**

Not the way of *renunciation*, but the way of *deliverance*. He who considers the abandonment of earthly possessions, pleasures, and enjoyments as a painful renunciation, is still far from true wisdom. But he who views this abandonment as a deliverance from worthless, vain, and troublesome things, from oppressive fetters, looks upon it from the right point of view.<sup>51</sup>

**104. Cannot the Buddha by his own merit absolve us from the consequences of our guilt?**

No; nobody can be saved by another. No god and no saint, so teach the holy books, can protect one from the effects of one's evil deeds. Everyone must work out his own emancipation. The Buddha has merely shown the way for every one to become his own saviour.

**105. Why is no vicarious atonement possible?**

Because justice is the fundamental principle of all that takes place, because in the universe there reigns strict conformity to law, and not the arbitrary will of a personal god. That the guiltless one should be able to take upon himself the sins of the guilty one, and that the evil-doer should be released from the consequences of his deeds by grace, is a foolish assumption,<sup>52</sup> which rests on a complete misconception of the moral constitution of the world. Guilt and suffering, merit and reward, always balance each other.



**106. How does one acquire merit in a moral sense?**

By faithfully observing the vows in thought, word, and deed, by zealously striving for perfection, but above all, by righteousness and benevolence towards all living beings.

**107. Is it particularly the visible deed which determines one's desert?**

By no means. No outward action is meritorious in itself; the merit depends principally on the inner motive, on the purity of the will. The action is only important because it is the outward and visible sign of the disposition, of the tendency of the will and mind of the individual.

**108. Illustrate this by an example.** *D. Martin*

Many a one gives much money for the support of the Brotherhood, the relief of poverty, or public institutions, and yet gains very little or nothing for his true welfare, because he does everything with the sole purpose of obtaining credit and honour among his fellow-men. Such a one has received his reward already in this life by the honour conferred on him, and has gained no merit. He, on the other hand, who acts kindly and charitably with the object of promoting his self-perfection and of obtaining a favourable rebirth gains merit, the fruit of which he will enjoy in the next life. But the highest merit is gained by him who does good to his fellow-beings without expectation of reward in this or a later life, out of profound insight into the unity of all life and into the sorrows of the world, out of sincere pity, out of pure good-will undefiled by any selfish motive. Such a one is near to Nirvāna, and certain of rebirth in one of the bright worlds.

**109. What then must we do to gain true merit?**

Conquer selfishness, avoid evil, do good.<sup>53</sup>



**110. Why must selfishness be conquered?**

Because selfishness (egotism) is the principal cause of all our errors, follies, and evil deeds, and the main hindrance to the accomplishment of good ones.

**111. What is a good action?**

Every action done with the pure intention of furthering the welfare of other living beings, and to alleviate their suffering.

**112. What is a bad action?**

Every action done with the intent to injure or harm other living beings, or to cause pain to them.

**113. What is a selfish action?**

One in which the doer considers only his own welfare, unconcerned whether he thereby causes pain to others.

**114. But are there not actions which subserve only one's own welfare, without harming another?**

Such actions cannot be called either good or bad. If they further the temporal well-being of the doer, they are prudent; if they promote his self-perfection, they are wise; but if they harm him in body or mind, they are foolish.

**115. Have we any duties to ourselves?**

No; we have *duties* to others, but we have *rights* to ourselves and to the free development of our powers. Buddhism expressly recommends the exercise of these rights and attention to one's own well-being in a reasonable way.<sup>54</sup>

**116. Is it wrong to retaliate upon an enemy who has caused us harm and suffering?**

Yes, it is wrong to requite evil with evil<sup>55</sup> and unworthy of a noble man striving for perfection. The lay



follower may go in quest of his just dues in a legal way; but it must be done without hatred or bitterness towards his opponent. But this does not become a Bhikkhu, who has renounced the world. He leaves the offender to eternal justice, he forgives and pities him, for the aggressor will have to atone for his wrong in this or the next birth, and that so much more severely the more he now exults and the more stubbornly he closes his eyes to the higher wisdom.

**117. Must the inveterate evil-doer suffer for ever for his bad deeds?**

No. No *temporal* guilt, no matter how great can bring *everlasting* punishment.<sup>56</sup> That would be an unjust, yea, cruel system of the world which would allow this. But the moral world order which the Buddha revealed rests upon *eternal justice*, and hence every evil deed receives only its adequate temporal retribution in this or the following birth.

**118. Is there any positive or absolute evil?**

No. Everything temporal is relative, including things morally good or bad. Both expressions denote morally the higher or lower degree of egotism of a living being, whose roots are the will-to-live and ignorance. No living being, no matter how deeply it may be sunk in selfishness and ignorance, is excluded from emancipation. Every one can attain wisdom and perfection, *if he really wants to*, though perhaps only through a long series of re-births. On the other hand, no being, no matter how good and noble, is certain of emancipation until it has reached Nirvāna. As long as the least craving for life and the least remainder of ignorance exists, a relapse may occur. For all action,



good as well as bad, remains in the sphere of *finiteness* and does not lead beyond. To Nirvāna lead only the *separation from action*<sup>57</sup> and the complete overcoming and total annihilation of the will-to-live through true knowledge.<sup>58</sup>

**119. Then there is neither a hell nor a heaven?**

Not in the sense of the Christians, Jews, and Mahomedans. But there are dark worlds<sup>59</sup> of suffering and despair, into which no ray of the redeeming light penetrates. There he who is heavily burdened with guilt must abide, until he has expiated the fruit of his evil deeds. Thereupon his good Karma (his merit) leads him to a rebirth as man, where he again has the opportunity to gain knowledge, and by righteous conduct to get to the path of deliverance. Just so there are also bright worlds of joy, where the good man, who is not yet ripe for emancipation, enjoys the fruit of his meritorious actions. But when this fruit has been consumed, he also must return to earth as man, as there still remain the will-to-live and uneradicated Karma.<sup>60</sup>

**120. Is the iniquity of the parents visited upon the children?**

No; this would contradict eternal justice. No one suffers for the guilt of others. The superstitious assumption that a god would avenge the sins of the fathers upon innocent children rests on an entire misconception of the moral constitution of the world.

**121. But we see that children resemble their parents throughout in bodily and mental qualities, that they inherit from them good and bad tendencies, health and sickness. Does not this seem to contradict the doctrine of Karma?**



No, it confirms it. For just because our *inner* being, our individual character, resembles that of our parents we have become their children. Because at the moment of our rebirth the *elective affinity* we had for our parents was greater than for any other living being, just therefore we took rebirth with them. Like causes produce like effects; the inner conformity in the nature of parents and children therefore necessarily expresses itself in their outward appearance, their inclinations and their character. It is only the doctrine of Karma and rebirth which shows us clearly the inner necessity and moral justice of the "law of heredity", which in materialistic science has led to such strange and erroneous conclusions.\*

**122. How can the frequently appearing dissimilarities between parents and children be explained?**

By precisely the same law, for in spite of the elective affinity with their parents children are independent individualities, they have their own Karma, and therefore, besides the qualities in agreement with those of their parents, must possess many which appertain to them alone. Now if just these latter chiefly reach development in this life the children appear very unlike their parents. In fact, the strongest affinity between parents and children exists only in the moment of procreation: from birth every being follows its separate cause of development, which often leads far away from that of the parents.

**123. How is it compatible with the rule of eternal justice that the good and righteous so often must suffer on earth?**

They atone for the as yet uneradicated guilt with which they burdened themselves in former lives. It is the

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\* See the Wheel No. 12/13; The Case for Rebirth, by Francis Story.



consequence of unfavourable Karma, which just at this time reaches maturity.

**124.** And how is it to be explained that the bad and unrighteous often enjoy the highest consideration and all the pleasures of this earth?

It is the consequence of their merit in former births, their favourable Karma. But after having enjoyed the fruit of their merit, they will also have to taste the bitter fruit of their misdeeds in this or subsequent births.<sup>61</sup>

**125.** Does not *chance* often bring happiness or misfortune into our lives without any merit or guilt on our part?

There is no chance. Only short-sightedness and the deficiency of our knowledge make us view events as "chance", which are not in direct connection with our present actions and intentions, and are to us entirely unexpected and incalculable. If our insight into the nature of things would extend far enough, we should perceive that in reality all apparently fortuitous events are connected with us by a long chain of causes and effects which of necessity determines the nature of the events as well as the moment of their occurrence.<sup>62</sup> This chain of causes and effects is for us immeasurable, because interrupted for our perception by the change of births.

**126.** To what does this conviction lead us?

The unfortunate one comes to understand that he need not accuse gods nor men for his sufferings, neither the world, nor luck, much less devils and demons, but himself alone; he comes to see that the source of all his sorrows is his own wrongdoing, his own infatuation, and that a



*lasting, thorough* remedy cannot be attained by external means, by the increase of one's comforts, but only by inner conversion and the striving for perfection.

The fortunate one, however, is led by this conviction to true modesty, to a just and benevolent use of his position and wealth. For if he does not constantly strive to increase his merit, if he succumbs to pride and conceit, greed and hard-heartedness, then, after the fruit of his former virtuous conduct has been consumed, the consequence will be misery and suffering already in this life or in the next, while the despised, poor and lowly one perhaps goes to a joyful re-birth.

**127. Can one not escape from the consequence of one's misdeeds by suicide?**

No; no one can escape eternal justice; its rule is inexorable and omnipotent, and nobody can fly from it. Therefore it is said in the Dhammapada: Not in boundless space, not in the midst of the sea, not in the depths of mountain-chasms canst thou find a spot to escape the consequences of thine evil deeds."

**128. Is suicide a wrong or a sin?**

Suicide is a wrong, as all killing is strictly prohibited by the first vow every Buddhist takes. It is besides a foolish action, as it seeks to forcibly cut the thread of life, which of necessity must be taken up again, and that generally under still more unfavourable circumstances than those from which the suicide tried to escape.

**129. Why under more unfavourable circumstances?**

Because our sufferings are solely the consequence of our own errors and our own guilt. So long, therefore, as



error is not dispelled and guilt expiated, it is not possible to attain a more favourable birth. He who knows this will endure all suffering patiently, and endeavour to gain as much merit as possible by righteous conduct, sincere self-knowledge, and good deeds, so as to be worthy of a more favourable re-birth. But he who foolishly tries to escape by suicide from the suffering conducive to his purification, thereby shows that he is still far from self knowledge and that he lacks the will to become good and wise. In his blind folly he destroys the body, this fleeting, perishable phenomenon which he takes for his true being, and thereby enters the downward path.<sup>63</sup>

**130. What then is it in us that is re-born?**

Our will-to-live and our moral character. These form the core of our being, and create for themselves after the disintegration of our present body a new one, corresponding exactly to their nature.

**131. Is not the individual will-to-live or individuality the same as what is called "soul"?**

No, it is not the same. The belief in an "immortal soul"—that is, an indivisible, eternal, and indestructible entity, which has only taken up its temporary abode in the body—Buddhism considers an error, based on ignorance of the true nature of being and of living beings.<sup>64</sup> Buddhism teaches no "transmigration of soul" (metempsychosis), but the new formation of the individual in the material world of phenomena in virtue of its will to live (Tanhā) and his moral character (Karma).



132. Is perhaps the “ego” ~~identical~~ identical with the soul?

No. The “ego” likewise is no lasting entity, no immaterial *substance*, but a *condition*, arising from the union of the five khandhas.

133. What are the five Khandhas?

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The five elements of the clinging to existence: the body (corporeality, rūpa); sensation (vedanā); perception (saññā); mental tendencies (sankhāra); consciousness (viññāṇa). Through the combined action of the five Khandhas arises the conception of the multiform external world and at the same time of the “ego”. In death the five Khandhas become extinct; in re-birth they arise anew through the operation of taṇhā and karma. And with them a new ego, a new evanescent personality.

134. Then the being which is re-born is not the same which died?

It is not the same and not another. It may seem to be another to a man still in the state of ignorance, who wrongly identifies the personal ego-consciousness with his true being. He who has attained wisdom knows that his real being is his taṇhā and karma; but that the recurring ego-consciousness is only a transient phenomenon, to be compared to the torch lit by a wanderer at night to find his way. When he does not need it any more, he extinguishes it, to light a new torch for a later wandering. Thus, though the ego-consciousness may change, it is in a sense by the tie of Karma always the same individuality which in one birth does the good or bad deed and in the next reaps the fruits of these deeds, though in the absence of any substance passing from one life to the next it is not absolutely the same.



**135. How long does the individuality continue to appear in constantly recurring embodiments?**

Until perfect wisdom and moral purification, Nirvāna, are attained. Then after the death of the last body it becomes totally extinct in Parinirvāna.

**136. What is Parinirvana?**

It is not possible to form any idea of Parinirvāna: it is beyond all knowledge, beyond all conception. It cannot be said that it is, nor that it is not, because no forms of existence are applicable to Parinirvāna. One can only say it is final emancipation, the complete extinction of individuality—eternal rest and peace.

“There is, oh disciples, a state where there is neither earth nor water, neither air nor light, neither infinity of space nor infinity of time, neither any form of existence nor nothingness, neither perception nor non-perception, neither this world nor that world. There is neither coming into existence nor decay, neither death nor birth, neither cause nor effect, neither change nor stability. There is, oh disciples, an unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, unformed. Were there not, there would be no escape from the world of the born, originated, created, formed.” Thus says the Master in the Udāna.

**137. How is it that we do not remember our former births?**

Because we cling too strongly to individuality, and build in every birth a new body for ourselves, whose limited faculties and organs are destined to serve only the purposes of this short life.<sup>65</sup> Only he who is mentally matured has understood that our life resembles a dream and that the awakening is deliverance.



**138. Explain this by a simile.**

At night we have dreams. In these we are now a beggar, now a king; in one dream imprisoned, poor, menaced by sufferings and dangers; in another, favoured by fortune and full of joy. And yet it is the same "ego" which assumes all these forms in dream. Further, while dreaming we do not remember that we have dreamed before, but awake we remember the dreams of many nights. It is exactly the same with our various lives: birth is a dream of the individual will-to-live, now frightful, now delightful. As long as we are in one of these life-dreams, we do not remember former life-dreams. The mentally perfect one, however, a Buddha or Arahant, has ceased dreaming. He is the Awakened One, and remembers his former births.<sup>66</sup> But this knowledge arises only after the "ten fetters" have been completely thrown off and the final deliverance from existence is attained.

**139. Which are the ten fetters?**

I. The *delusion* that the ego, or the soul is immortal.

II. *Doubt* in the moral constitution of the world and in the path to deliverance.

III. The *superstition* that outward religious observances, such as prayer, sacrifice, listening to sermons, adoration of relics, pilgrimages, and other rites and ceremonies lead to salvation.

IV. *Sensuality*

V. *Ill-will*

VI. *Desire for life in the worlds of form.*

VII. *Desire for life in the formless worlds*

VIII. *Pride.*

IX. *Agitation*

X. *Ignorance.*



**140. Do not repentance and penance contribute to self perfection and emancipation?**

Yes, but with repentance and penance *alone* nothing can be accomplished, for eternal justice cannot be bribed, cajoled, or coerced. Repentance is of value only in so far as it implies the keenly felt acknowledgment of our guilt, and as it incites us to make amends to the utmost of our power for the wrong and suffering which we have inflicted on others, and henceforth to gain merit. But *inactive* repentance and wailing contrition are entirely useless. Equally useless is every outward penance,<sup>67</sup> as the taking upon oneself of any punishment, self-torture, and the like. The true repentance of the Buddhist is shown in bravely entering the path to salvation, and the true penance is the suppression of selfishness, passions, and craving desires.

**141. Does the *belief* in the Buddha help us on the road to salvation?**

Mere belief has little value, because it is not founded on one's own judgment and examination. By mere belief nothing is gained; only conviction gained by strenuous effort can make us free. We ought not to become *believers*, but *knowers* and *well-doers*. For this the life and teaching of the Buddha are an example and a guide.<sup>68</sup>

**142. What is the position of Buddhism in relation to the adherents of other religions?**

It enjoins us to look upon all men as our brothers, of whatever race, nationality, or religion they may be; to respect the convictions of all who have other beliefs, unless those beliefs are patently wrong and harmful.\* Buddhism is pervaded by the spirit of perfect toleration; never

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\* A Buddhist is not required to respect beliefs which are superstitious, degrading, obstructive, or which lead to oppression and injustice. — Editor.



has blood been shed for its propagation; it has never, after gaining ascendancy, persecuted or oppressed the followers of other religions. He who does not perceive truth or does not want to listen to it only harms himself, and hence awakens the pity of the Buddhist, not his hatred.

**143 Many take the mild disposition of the Buddhists for weakness. Is it true that Buddhism paralyses energy?**

It may seem so to the deluded, for it is true that Buddhism paralyses the coarse, brutal energy, which manifests itself in the eager striving after wealth and enjoyment, in the wild, pitiless struggle for existence, in that it teaches that real happiness is not to be gained through material progress and outward refinement,<sup>69</sup> but only through mental and moral development. Nevertheless the Buddhist does not go through life without struggling, but the place of combat is changed—instead of the outer world it is his own heart; and although at peace with the world, and therefore apparently inactive, the Buddhist strives incessantly, putting forth all his higher and nobler faculties against the selfish impulses of his heart and the allurements of the senses. This is the energy of the true Buddhist, and this struggle is more difficult, nobler, and more profitable for mankind than the battles and victories of all conquerors and kings which history reports.<sup>70</sup>

**144. Are prayers, sacrifices, and the observance of religious rites necessary for the attainment of Nirvana?**

No; prayer and sacrifice do not exist in the Buddhist religion. But the recital of texts, the reading of holy writings, the listening to sermons, and the like are of great value, if done with true understanding, as they raise and fortify the courage of the follower in hours of temptation, strengthen his confidence in his own power and the Doctrine, and



promote mental collectedness. All religious rites have the same purpose, they are important and indispensable to the lay follower, to remind him of the true significance of life, to divert his mind from the temptations of the world, and to constantly set before him the highest goal. But he who has already entered the path of deliverance, and as a Bhikkhu is living only for his mental development and moral self-perfection, does not need such expedients. Earnest *meditation*, on different topics takes the place in Buddhism to large extent of prayer in other religions.<sup>71</sup>

**145. Why do Buddhists offer flowers and burn incense before the statues of the Buddha?**

To give expression to their veneration and gratitude for the "Light of the World" by a visible outward sign; and as a help to concentrate their mind on the virtues of the Buddha and the impermanence of everything, as symbolized by the beautiful flowers which will soon fade. Such a custom is not to be condemned; but he who imagines to gain some special merit by this practice alone is mistaken.\*

**146. Are there miracles?**

No; a miracle in the strict sense of the word would be an arbitrary violation of the laws of nature by some super-human being. No such thing can happen. Buddhism teaches that everything happens in conformity to law without exception. Even the highest gods are subject to this conformity to law.

**147. But there are phenomena and events which are inexplicable to us?**

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\* See The Wheel Nos. 18: 'Devotion in Buddhism', and 139: Prayer and Worship, also Bodhi Leaves A. 8: Buddhism and Worship.



There are many such: they follow natural laws still hidden from us, but known by the Buddha in their full conformity to law. Such phenomena and events may therefore only figuratively be designated as miracles,<sup>72</sup>

**148. What is the principal difference between Buddhism and other religions?**

Buddhism teaches perfect goodness and wisdom without a personal god; the highest knowledge without a revelation; a moral world order and just retribution, carried out with necessity by reason of the laws of nature and of our own being; continued existence without an immortal soul; eternal bliss without a local heaven; the possibility of redemption without a vicarious redeemer; a salvation at which every one is his own saviour, and which can be attained in this life and on this earth by the exercise of one's own faculties without prayers, sacrifices, penances, and ceremonies, without ordained priests, without the mediation of saints and without divine grace.

**149. What is the spirit and essence of the whole doctrine expressed in a few words?**

An ardent desire for deliverance from the fetters of existence, from mental, moral, and physical bonds, ardent desire for deliverance from suffering, death, and re-birth; and the right instruction for attaining this goal.<sup>73</sup>

**150. Is not the spirit and essence of the doctrine pessimistic?**

Neither pessimistic, nor optimistic. Pessimism and optimism are extremes; therefore one-sided and equally distant from the truth. The Buddha taught the truth which lies in the middle. Life is vain, sorrowful, full of errors, disappointments, bodily and mental sufferings, and



through birth already predestined to death. This is the pessimistic side of the truth. But we are not compelled to continue this sort of existence for ever, if it no longer suits us. There is an overcoming of evil; our highest, true emancipation by our own exertion. This knowledge inspires us with courage and confidence, and justifies an optimistic conception.

The frame of mind of the Buddhist, especially that of the Bhikkhu, is therefore by no means a gloomy one: he does not indulge in useless complaints about the misery of this world, or abandon himself to melancholy moods. Earnest in this earnest life, but filled with serenity and confidence, he follows unswervingly the path which leads him to that goal where all suffering and all error end. His life may appear full of privations and cheerless to the worldly-minded, the deluded one; but he himself, in the consciousness of being on the road to perfection and emancipation, in the growing diminution of desires and in the knowledge of the truth, enjoys a beatitude which far transcends all sensual delights.<sup>74</sup>

**151. Are all these teachings recorded in the holy writings (the three Pitakas)?**

These and many others which the Buddha has proclaimed.

**152. Were the holy writings composed or written by the Buddha himself?**

Neither by the Buddha nor by the Bhikkhus, who were his immediate disciples. It was not customary in India at that time to record in writing religious or philosophical truths. These were handed down orally from teacher to pupil, and most minutely impressed on his



memory by continual repetition, word for word and sentence for sentence. In this manner they were transmitted from generation to generation.<sup>75</sup> This was done also with the teachings of the Buddha. Not till several centuries after the Buddha's decease were the holy writings written down on palm-leaves in Ceylon during the reign of King Vaṭṭagāmini (104-88 B. C.). Prior to that, the Buddha's Discourses had been carefully rehearsed at three Councils, of which the third was held at Pataliputra during the reign of the Emperor Asoka.

### **153. Who was the Emperor Asoka?**

One of the mightiest and most humane monarchs of India. He reigned from 259 to 222 before the Christian Era, was converted to the religion of the Buddha and endeavoured to propagate Buddhism over the whole earth. To this day rocks and stone-pillars, on which he caused to be engraved his religious edicts, testify to the efforts of the Emperor Asoka, and his name is held in the highest veneration by all Buddhists. He sent missionaries to most of the then accessible countries, and his own son, Mahinda, and daughter, Sanghamittā, went to the Island of Ceylon and effected the conversion to Buddhism of practically all the inhabitants from the King down. And it is in this island that the teachings of the Buddha have been kept up to this day, and that the most authentic text of the holy writings has been preserved in Pāli.

### **154. What is Pali?**

It was the language of the kingdom of Māgadha and adjacent countries at the time of the Buddha. It is closely allied to Sanskrit; but while this was reserved for the teaching and writings of the Brahmins, Pāli was used



colloquially, and the Buddha in order to reach all classes of the population with his gospel of deliverance, held his discourses in this language.

**155. Is there such a thing as Esoteric Buddhism, i. e, a Buddhist secret doctrine which has not been written down, but has only been preserved by oral tradition among the Arahants?**

No, there is none such. The Buddha taught no esoteric doctrine, but "the road of deliverance for all", and brahminic secrecy, mysticism, occultism, and esotericism, these lurking-places of superstition and deceit, were entirely rejected by him. Only after Buddhism had spread over all India and advanced into China and Tibet there arose, beside the pure doctrine, under the influence of brahminic speculations, mystic, fantastical conceptions of the world, which must be considered a deterioration of the original Buddhism.<sup>76</sup>

**156. As everything which has come into existence must perish, will the Doctrine of the Buddha also pass away?**

The Doctrine of the Buddha will never perish, as long as the world exists, for its essence is *eternal* Truth itself, appearing under the mundane forms of word and idea, and embodied in the person of the "Light of the World". But its outward form and wording varies; in every age of the world, numbered by thousands of years, a new Buddha is born, who proclaims the Truths of suffering and of emancipation once more<sup>77</sup>.



## **THE ORDER (SANGHA)<sup>78</sup>**

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### **157. What is meant by the Order?**

The Order or Brotherhood of the Elect means the union of all those who, as true disciples and followers of the Buddha, have left the world and entered upon the Noble Eightfold Path of consummation and deliverance, and those who have attained the fruit thereof.

### **158. Who is entitled to entrance into the Order?**

Every one without regard to race, colour, station, or sex, who is free from the impediments to admission mentioned in the Regulations.<sup>79</sup>

### **159. Whom do the Regulations exclude from admission?**

All afflicted with contagious or incurable diseases; minors without the consent of their parents or guardians; slaves and bondmen, as long as they have not been emancipated in a legal manner; all who are prosecuted by the authorities, as long as they have not been acquitted or have not undergone their punishment; debtors, as long as they have not fulfilled their obligations; and soldiers and officials of all kinds, as long as they continue in service; also those who have committed a great sin, such a parricide &c.

### **160. In what manner does admission into the Order take place?**

By the investiture with the yellow robes of the Bhikkhus. This "going forth" (pabbajjā) from home into homelessness, from a worldly life into the seclusion of the monastery or hermitage, constitutes the first, preliminary



step. The novice (sāmaṇera) has then to pass a term of probation under the supervision of a spiritual teacher (upajjhayo) or guide (ācārya), whom he may himself choose among the Brethren before he is admitted as a full member of the Brotherhood.

**161. What duties must the Samanera fulfil during his term of probation?**

A Sāmaṇera from the day of his investiture takes upon himself all the obligations of the Brethren. He must completely renounce all worldly activity, strictly keep the ten vows, devote himself zealously to the study of the holy writings, to self-inspection and earnest meditation, faithfully fulfil the laws and regulations of pure conduct and moral self-culture, and strive only for one goal—by resolute progress on the Noble Eightfold Path to attain deliverance, Nirvāṇa.

After the Sāmaṇera has been instructed in the correct practice of all vows, regulations, and precepts, has blamelessly concluded his term of probation and is at least twenty years of age, there takes place his reception (upasampadā) as Bhikkhu by the Elder or Superior (Thera) in a solemn assembly of the Brethren.\*

**162. What are the ten vows of the Brotherhood?**

I. I take the vow not to kill or injure any living being.

II. I take the vow not to take anything which does not belong to me or has not been freely given to me,

III. I take the vow to live in perfect chastity.<sup>80</sup>

IV. I take the vow always to speak the truth, and not to lie, deceive, or slander.

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\* See The Wheel No: 56 : Ordination in Theravāda Buddhism.



V. I take the vow to abstain from all intoxicating, exciting, and stupefying things.

VI. I take the vow to eat only at the prescribed time.<sup>81</sup>

VII. I take the vow to abstain from dancing, the singing of worldly songs, attending plays or musical performances, as well as all other worldly amusements.

VIII. I take the vow to renounce vanity, and to abandon the use of ornaments of every kind, of perfumed waters, ointments or oils.

IX. I take the vow not to use luxurious beds and seats and to sleep on a hard, low couch.

X. I take the vow not to accept gold, silver, or money of any kind.

**162. Of what do the regulations for the Brotherhood consist?**

Of the precepts of pure and holy conduct given by the Buddha and contained in the Vinaya. These are substantially divided into four parts;—

I. Regulations which relate to outward discipline and order.

II. Directions for the proper collection and use of food, wearing apparel, and other necessities of life.

III. Instructions for overcoming sensual desires and passions.

IV. Expedients for the attainment of higher spiritual knowledge and self-perfection.

**164. Which are the eight parts of the Noble Path?**

I. *Right views*; free from prejudices, superstition and delusion.

II. *Right aspirations*; in other words, righteous thoughts.



III. *Right speech*; kind, plain, truthful.

IV. *Right action*; peaceable, righteous, benevolent, and pure.

V. *Right livelihood*; such as neither harms nor injures any living being.

VI. *Right effort*; directed incessantly and with exertion of all one's strength to the overcoming of ignorance, of craving desires, and of the will to live, devoted only to the highest goal.

VII. *Right mindfulness*; right presence of mind, right recollection in moments of weakness or temptation of all resolutions taken and of all past experiences.

VIII. *Right meditation*; complete withdrawal of the senses, of perception, and thinking from external objects, and a merging of self-consciousness and the will in pure knowledge.\*

**165. Is retirement from the Brotherhood possible after admission?**

At any time. Neither the Buddhist doctrine nor the regulations of the Brotherhood know "eternal" vows or coercion. He who longs for the pleasures of the world may confess his weakness to the Elder. The Brotherhood does not restrain him, and retirement is lawfully permitted to him, without incurring thereby any disgrace or opprobrium. But the Bhikkhu or Sāmana who dishonours the robe he wears and the holy community to which he belongs, by grossly transgressing his vows incurs the severest punishment which the regulations allow: expulsion from the Brotherhood.

**166. Are the Brethren permitted to choose their abode at will?**

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\* For the traditional explanations of these factors of the Eightfold Path, See The Wheel No. 34/35 : The Four Noble Truths, p 59 ff.



No; they must live in monasteries (vihāras) or as hermits in the forest.<sup>82</sup>

**167. In what relation does the Brotherhood stand to the lay members?**

Simply in a moral one, not based on any outward obligations. The Brethren are to be a living model of abstinence, self-denial, and holiness for the lay adherents: they are to preach and expound the doctrine to them, and assist them with spiritual advice and succour in all circumstances where they may require encouragement or consolation, as did the Buddha whose disciples they are.

**168. How are the lay followers to conduct themselves towards the Brotherhood?**

They ought to render to the Brethren due respect and reverence, and provide for their maintenance—food, clothing, dwellings &c. They thereby gain merit, and promote their own welfare in this and subsequent births.<sup>83</sup>

**169. Has the Brotherhood any spiritual power over the lay followers?**

No; the Buddhist doctrine knows neither excommunication nor penance done by order of the church, nor outward correctives for the lay followers. But the Brotherhood refuses all intercourse with a lay adherent who is guilty of great moral offences or who has slandered the Buddha, the Doctrine, or the Order, by turning the begging-bowl upside down before him, that is by declaring him unworthy of henceforth offering gifts to the Brethren.



## 170. How should the true Bhikkhu behave?

The holy writings say:—

“He who, apt and willing to do what is good, longs for that state of highest peace, Nirvāna: Let him be guileless, righteous and conscientious, mild in words, kind, modest, content, of few wants, without care, calm, unpretending, without cravings. Let him not do anything base, let him constantly live conformably to the holy Doctrine and the regulations in thought, word and deed; let him strengthen within himself the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths and let him walk irreproachably on the Noble Eightfold Path. Fortune shall not gladden, nor adversity sadden him; approbation shall not elate, nor disgrace and persecution depress him; let him always keep the equanimity of one who is free from cravings. Let him ever bear in mind that it is not the garb that makes the Bhikkhu, not the outward observance of the vows and precepts, not life in solitude, poverty and lowliness, not learning nor erudition. He who is free from all sensual propensities and desires, who has a pure heart and has conquered selfishness, he alone is a true disciple of the Enlightened One. Let him therefore strive only for inward perfection; let him cultivate within himself wisdom, serenity and benevolence. Let him deceive no one, threaten no one, despise no one, injure no one. As a mother on her only child, so let him look full of pity and kindness on all beings; let him cultivate this sentiment every day and every hour. As a deep mountain lake, pure and calm, so shall be the mind of him who walks on the Noble Eightfold Path. To all living beings, on earth or in worlds beyond, to the weak and the strong, the lowly and the high, the good and the bad, the near and the far—to all let him be kindly disposed.



“And he lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of goodwill, with thoughts of pity, with thoughts of sympathy, with thoughts of equanimity; and so the second and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around and everywhere, does he continue to pervade with heart of goodwill, with heart of pity, with heart of sympathy, with heart of equanimity, far-reaching, grown great, and beyond measure.

“For he who lives in purity, free from superstition and delusion, from hope and fear, passion and desire, love and hatred, who has completely overcome the desire for existence and annihilation, and has attained true knowledge, will make an end of suffering and rebirth and enter into the highest Nirvāna.”



## NOTES.

1. It is a question often raised whether Buddhism should be called a religion or a philosophy. It is in reality both: in it the most lofty religio-moral doctrines are united with the deepest philosophical truths to form one inseparable whole. Buddhism enlightens its followers as to the nature of the universe and the laws and forces reigning therein; it discloses to man the essence of his being, showshim his true higher destiny, extending beyond this fleeting earth-life, awakens his slumbering moral forces and faculties, kindles in him a desire for the good and noble, teaches him to be humane, patient, unselfish, gives him consolation in sorrow, confidence while dying, and leads him to the highest aim of every living being, to emancipation, to consummation, to Nirvāna. Hence Buddhism is a *religion*.

It is however at the same time a *philosophy*, for it demands of its adherents not blind faith, but a conviction gained and confirmed by one's own investigation and examination and by earnest reflection. Its doctrines are not based on the will of an incomprehensible creator god or a supernatural revelation, but on the natural constitution of the world and of life which are open to all. It does not seek to frighten the evil-doer by the threat of eternal punishment, but to clear up the eye of the erring one, obscured by earthly delusion, so that he may be able to see the truth; and it leads the honest struggler on the way to spiritual development and moral self-perfection up to a standpoint where everything transitory lies behind him as unsubstantial appearance, and where prejudice, doubt and illusion disappear in the light of knowledge.



2. As this formula is always pronounced in Pāli, it is here given in that language:

Buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi,  
Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi,  
Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

The text for the second and third recitation is:

Dutiyampi Buddham (Dhammaṃ, Saṅghaṃ)  
saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
Tatiyampi Buddham (Dhammaṃ, Saṅghaṃ)  
saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

The literal translation of the formula is: “I go to the Buddha for refuge”.

3. The district occupied by the Sākyas was situated in the north-eastern part of India, at the foot of the Himālayas, and the capital, Kapilavatthu, was about 100 miles north of the city of Benares, on the river Rohini.

4. This is the date accepted in Theravāda tradition which gives 543 B. C. for the Buddha’s passing away (Mahā Pārinibbāna). Some Western scholars have calculated the latter date as being 483 B. C.—(Editor).

5. Already centuries before the birth of the Buddha there existed brahminic penitents, hermits, and ascetics in India. They lived together in small huts in the forest, devoted to the study of the holy mystic writings (Upanishads) of the Vedas, or as recluses in caves and under trees. Many wandered from place to place as homeless ascetics,



begging their food before the doors and giving themselves up to the most painful self-tortures, in order to forcibly kill all sensual emotions, to liberate the soul from all earthly ties, to attain union with the supposed Eternal, Brāhman.

6. The books tell us that when Prince Siddhattha was driving in the park one day he suddenly perceived an infirm old man, with back bent by the weight of years, who was creeping painfully along, leaning upon a staff. Siddhattha in astonishment asked his charioteer, Channa, what that strange being might be, and Channa answered that it was an old man. "Was he born in this state?" further inquired the prince. "No, Master; he once was young and blooming as thou." "Are there more such old men?" asked the prince with growing astonishment. "Very many, Master." "And how did he arrive at this deplorable condition?" "It is the course of nature that all men must grow old and feeble, if they do not die young." "—I also, Channa?". "Thou also, Master." This incident made the prince so pensive that he gave orders to be driven home, having lost all pleasure in the beautiful surroundings. Some time after this, while out driving again, he saw a leper, and when in answer to his questions Channa also explained this apparition to him, he was so deeply affected that thereafter he avoided all amusements and began to ponder over human misery. In the course of time a third apparition was perceived by him: he saw by the wayside a corpse in a state of decomposition. Violently agitated, he returned home immediately, exclaiming: "Woe is me, what is the use of kingly splendour, all pomp and all enjoyment, if they cannot guard me from old age, sickness and death! How unhappy is mankind! Is there then no way of forever ending suffering and death which are renewed with every birth?" This question occupied him henceforth uninterruptedly. The



answer to it came to him at a subsequent drive. There appeared to him an ascetic in yellow garb, as worn by the Buddhist Brethren, whose venerable features clearly reflected his deep inner peace. This apparition showed to the prince, troubled with the enigma of existence, the way in which he had to seek its solution. Henceforth the resolution matured within him to leave the world and to step on the path which every one must travel who strives for perfection.

This allegorical narrative is evidently not to be taken literally, but it is full of a deep inner truth, for it teaches us that it is only the insight into the transitoriness and vanity of life which leads a susceptible nature to retirement from the world and renunciation, to that total change of mind which all saints and world-vanquishers have experienced, and which the worldly-minded do not comprehend.

7. The doctrine of rebirth is the oldest and most venerable belief of the human race, that primitive knowledge or religion which almost forces itself on the unbiased intellect, if not inoculated in early youth with false doctrines and clouded by prejudice. In the religions of all civilised nations, with the exception of the Jewish-Christian and Mahomedan, it forms the foundation-stone on which all the other doctrines are based. And even in Christian countries, in spite of the pressure of the Church and persecution, many great minds have at all times secretly adhered to it. It alone is able to free us from the delusion that man is a creature called into being out of nothingness by the arbitrary will of a god, and that he must withal be grateful for so doubtful a gift as life. The doctrine of rebirth alone gives back to man his true liberty and self-determination which can never exist with a belief in an all powerful creator-god; it alone rests on true justice, and



only in it the word of Jesus of Nazareth becomes true: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap." The doctrine of rebirth alone solves the riddle of our existence, explains satisfactorily why the righteous are often poor and despised, while evil-doers enjoy riches and honour, and answers the hopeless question which rises vainly to heaven from millions of tortured human hearts: why must we suffer so much? It explains that of our own will, deluded by the craving for existence, we have entered this life and continued it in constantly changing forms through beginningless time until this very day. Death is not annihilation, still less deliverance or consummation, but merely a transition from one perishable form to another. He who finds satisfaction in life may be confident that no god and no devil can deprive him of it. Man's fate depends alone on his inner being, on his own will, for which innumerable re-births are still in prospect, in which he will reap the fruits of his good and evil deeds. To him, however, who is earnestly weary of constantly renewed existence with its sorrows and joys, the way to deliverance is open. Let him only tread it with firm resolution, and he will of his own power attain that sublime goal where the individuality, which by its very nature is necessarily limited, full of sorrow and error, will completely dissolve in Nirvāna. This is the bliss, the eternal peace, which all living beings consciously or unconsciously desire, and which, blinded by delusion, they cannot find.

8. Queen Māya no longer lived: she died seven days after the birth of the prince.

9. Māra, the tempter and prince of this world, the god of passions, of lust, and of death, in short, the personification of evil, plays in Buddhism about the



same part as does Satan, "the prince of this world", in Christianity. According to the evangelical legend, Jesus also was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, just as the Buddha by Māra. In fact, the life of Jesus, as related in the gospels, contains so many features paralleled in the Buddhist Jātaka stories, and even some from the life of the historical Buddha, that it seems almost certain that some Buddhist material was drawn upon by the compilers of the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

10. Tathāgata, one of the epithets of the Buddha, meaning he who has gone the way of previous Buddhas.

11. With this momentous step the story of Prince Siddhattha ceases, and there begins the historical career of the recluse Gotama, whom his contemporaries called the Awakened One, the Buddha. The Perfect One expressed himself to his disciples only occasionally, in short simple words, as to the reasons which induced him to abandon the worldly life.

Thus we read in the Majjhima Nikāya: "There are two goals, oh disciples, the holy goal and the unholy goal. And what is the unholy goal? There, one who is himself subject to birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, and sin seeks what is also subject to birth, old age, sickness, sorrow, and sin, viz., wife and child, manservants and maid-servants, hearth and home, gold and silver. This, oh disciples, is the unholy goal. I also, oh disciples, acted thus, while still searching for the truth, before I had become an Awakened One, a Buddha. Then the thought arose within me, instead of the transitory and sorrowful which I had comprehended as evil, to seek deliverance from birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow and sin, the peerless security, Nirvāna. This is the holy goal. And after a time, young, strong, dark-haired, in the first bloom of manhood, against the wish of my weeping



and wailing parents, with shorn hair and beard, and clad in the yellow garment, I went forth from home into homelessness.”

And in another place, after speaking to his disciples of the splendour and pomp which had surrounded him in his palaces, he continued: “By such affluence, ye disciples, was I surrounded, in such magnificence dwelt I. Then there awoke in me this thought: a foolish, ordinary person, although himself subject to old age, sickness, and death, feels repugnance and loathing when he sees an old man, a sick person, or a corpse. This repugnance, however, turns against himself; for he also is subject to old age, sickness, and death. As I thought thus, ye disciples, all juvenile ardour perished within me.”

12. This spot, where the Buddha dwelt for many years as an ascetic, and where he also attained Enlightenment, was later called Buddha-Gayā. Temples and monasteries arose there, which a thousand years later when Buddhism had spread over all of Central and Eastern Asia, were inhabited by numerous monks, and formed a chief place of pilgrimage for devotees from all Buddhist countries. Even today a partly ruined temple, which has lately been restored, and which has become a centre of Buddhist pilgrimage, marks the consecrated spot.

13. Not only the sublime founder of Buddhism, but also Christian saints of earlier times had by personal experience to arrive at the knowledge that asceticism does not lead to salvation. “By mere mortification”, says Nāgasena, the great apostle of Buddhism, “One does not even attain a fortunate rebirth, much less emancipation.” And in the Dhammapada we read: “A knife grasped at the



edge wounds the hand, Wrongly practised asceticism leads on the downward path." Hence Buddhism rejects every kind of self-torture and forcible "mortification of the flesh" as useless and injurious, and aims only at the purification of the heart and will of all passions and evil tendencies, and at the development of insight and the spiritual forces of man. As a necessary preliminary condition thereto, it demands the relinquishment of every possession, of sensual pleasures, and voluntary poverty and chastity.

14. This tree is called by Buddhists the Bodhi- or Bo-tree, that is, tree of wisdom; by naturalists, *Ficus Religiosa*. An offshoot of this same tree is still flourishing near the temple at Buddha-Gayā. Another sprig was taken to Ceylon by the Princess Sanghamitta, daughter of the Emperor Asoka, and planted at Anuradhapuram, the former capital of this island. It is still in full growth, and is the oldest historical tree in the world.

15. The holy books in a magnificent, brilliantly coloured allegory, represent this inward struggle of the solitary Sage as a fight of Gotama with Māra. Māra recognises that the decisive moment has arrived. He approaches Gotama, seated under the Bodhi-tree in deep meditation, and once more offers him the sovereignty over the whole world. Gotama repels him with scorn: he is no longer susceptible to the allurements of ambition. Māra now becomes enraged, and summons his hosts, the destroying powers of nature, to attack the audacious One, who is about to wrest from him the dominion over human hearts. All the elements are set in an uproar. Thunder crashes, lightning flashes, an earthquake shakes the continent, torrents of rain pour down and threaten to drown everything, a hurricane uproots the strongest trees, and pieces of



rock rolling down from the mountains threaten to crush the Sage, who, calm in the midst of these horrors and heedless of danger, continues his meditation. Even fear of death no longer moves him. Then Māra has recourse to his last and most dangerous weapon. He sends his magically beautiful daughters Tanhā. Arati, and Rāga (craving, desire, hatred, and sensuality). These put forth all their skill to ensnare the solitary recluse, while the surroundings are transformed into a fairy grove. But Gotama penetrates their real nature, and turns with loathing from the tempting forms. This decides the battle, Māra flees filled with despair: he feels that his throne is tottering. The World-Subduer has wrested from him the dominion over human hearts.

16. Enlightenment in the Buddhist sense is not to be understood as a miraculous or mystic occurrence caused by the influence of extramundane, divine powers, but that direct apprehension of the truth, that intuitive penetration into the nature of things, which brings complete liberation.

17. The books tell us that the god Brahma Sahampati came to him at this time and begged him to proclaim the Truth to the world. The mind of the people has always and everywhere endeavoured to depict such inward events and struggles under the guise of an outward, dramatic occurrences.

18. The Wheel is a favourite Buddhist emblem, and is often used as a simile to represent the succession of births, deaths, and rebirths, rolling on in a circle; it means "life" as opposed to Niravāna.\*

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\* See The Wheel No. 147/148/149, "The Wheel of Life and Death" and No. 137/138, "The Wheel Symbol",



19. An Arahant is he who has reached the fourth and highest degree of holiness and therewith Nirvāna.

20. Only because the Buddha himself instructed the disciples in the doctrine, and that they were mostly brahmins, therefore men who had already passed their whole life in self-denial, meditation, and holy striving for emancipation, was it possible for them to come forth as preachers in the short space of five months.

21. Buddhism does not deny gods, nor does it attribute to them any special importance; it simply does not need them, neither as a prop to its ethics nor for the attainment of salvation. Whoever wishes to believe in gods may do so, only he must not forget that the gods, like all living beings, are perishable and subject to rebirth, though their lives last for millions of our years, and that the saint who has reached perfection, and above all the Buddha, is far superior to all gods. In the above quotation the "gods" referred to are the Brahmin gods, who certainly, like all other gods worshipped in the five continents, stand in urgent need of salvation through the progressive intelligence of mankind.\*

22. The alms bowl of the Buddhist begging-monks is an earthen or metal bowl, which every member of the Brotherhood always carries with him, and in which his daily food is collected. Even the Buddha never deviated from this rule, he always ate out of his own alms-bowl.

23. In the distant ages of the past, into whose darkness no historical researches can penetrate, there also arose world-enlightening Buddhas, who proclaimed the Law of Deliverance, for salvation, like error, guilt, and suffering, is always present. The feasibility to attain salvation is

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\* See Bodhi Leaves No. B 4, "Of Gods and Men".



never lacking to the man who earnestly strives for wisdom and deliverance. Whenever the pure doctrine has disappeared completely, and mankind is about to be sunk in sensual desires and spiritual darkness, a new Buddha is born. The last of these Buddhas, the light of our age, was the Buddha Gotama, whose Law we are following.

24. No member of the Brotherhood may enter the domicile of a woman alone, except in cases of necessity.

25. "The Exalted One" is an expression often used to designate the Buddha. In the holy books of Buddhism there are found a number of others, all expressing a quality of the Buddha. Thus he is called "Sākyamuni", the Sage of the Sakya race; "the Holy One" and "the Blessed One", because he is free from all will-to-live, from all passions and desires; "the Perfect One", because after a long struggle with error and earthly desires he has attained perfection; "the Awakened One", because, awakened out of the dream of this life, there arose within him under the Bodhi-tree the highest wisdom; "the World-Conqueror", because he conquered Māra, the prince of this world, of sensual love, of death and darkness, the tempter of all beings; and finally "the World-Enlightener", because he not only freed himself, but proclaimed the liberating doctrine to all, and shed the light of Truth over the whole world.

26. The rainy season in India is the time of reviving of animal and plant life. A northerner can hardly form a conception in what enormous abundance animal and plant germs develop after the very first rainy days, which during the withering dryness of the hot season had been lying in a state of coma, comparable to the hibernation of northern climes. It is then impossible to work in woods or fields



without destroying plant and animal life. Therefore the Buddha did not wander about during the rainy season, and also forbade it to his disciples, except in cases of urgent necessity.

27. Buddhism still has more adherents than Christianity of all denominations together, namely, 450 millions, therefore nearly one-third of the entire human race, although in the last 1,500 years the propagation of its doctrines has been at a standstill. A hundred years before the birth of Jesus the disciples of the "Enlightener of the World" had already advanced east and west far beyond the boundaries of India, and in the city of Alexandria in Bactria dwelt many Brethren and lay followers. It is therefore very probable that Jesus of Nazareth, whose teachings in some respects agree with those of Buddhism, may have had some contact with Buddhistic influences from his twelfth to his thirtieth year, of which time the gospels have nothing to report about him. Now, the time has arrived for Europe and America, to hear and understand the unadulterated doctrine of the Buddha. This will be the religion of the future, for it alone is not a matter of belief, as are all "revealed" religions, but a doctrine of knowledge and conviction; it is the religion of a free, noble, self-relying humanity, that desires no divine grace and fears no divine wrath, and that sees the judge of its actions only in its own heart, in its own higher wisdom.

28. Ananda became the personal companion of the Buddha from the time of his admission to the Order. He it was among the disciples who became the Master's constant attendant.

29. See the note to "Sukaramaddavaṃ" in The Wheel No. 67/69 "The Last Days of the Buddha".



30. Out of this occurrence the legend has made a "transfiguration", though the plain meaning of this is obvious. Before the spiritual light radiating from the countenance of a Buddha all the lustre of this earth's gold pales. The multitude, however, always snatches at the miraculous.

31. The wonderfulness of this occurrence is evidently incidental, is only the allegorical form, in order to impress the adherents most forcibly with the fact that the Buddha esteems very lightly even divine worship offered to His person that He cannot be honoured by praise, glory, and thanks, by empty word and vain pageantry, but solely by faithful observance of His precepts. To be sure, as everywhere and always, the mass of the people in Buddhist countries also prefer doing the former, for it is easy to praise the Master, but difficult to imitate Him.

32. The Buddha thus showed most unmistakably what He considered the essence of His teaching—no metaphysical speculations, but a pure and holy life,

33. This declaration, and the disavowal of wanting to leave special directions for the Order, demonstrate the truly marvellous non-assertiveness of the Exalted One at the close of a long and successful career. The injunction about the minor precepts also shows that He did not attach particular importance to these.

34. Because we do not understand the nature of the universe, because we are ignorant of the working of the moral world-order, we cling blindly to life, and get continually entangled anew in guilt, sorrow, and rebirth. Because we are deluded by earthly glamour we strive for objects that are of value only in our imagination, and



produce more pain than pleasure: we prize highly what is vain and transitory, grieve over events that do not deserve our interest, and rejoice over what harms us and may even cause our undoing. Because we do not possess the right insight we attach ourselves to perishable things, involve ourselves in strife and hardship in the struggle for existence, and completely lose sight of our true welfare. Thus our entire life is an endless chain of unfulfilled wishes, painful deceptions, and cruel disappointments; of passions and desires which miss their object, or, if gratified for a short time, continually burst open again like badly healed wounds, undermine our bodily and mental forces, and keep us in an incessant state of suffering, from which there is no escape for the ignorant and deluded.

35. The expression “will-to-live” (*tanhā*) signifies, in the Buddhist sense, not only what is generally understood as the *conscious* will, but that innate desire for life, partly conscious and partly unconscious, which is inherent in all beings; it is the totality of all selfish endeavours, emotions, desires, inclinations, and aversions directed to the preservation of material existence and the attainment of well-being and enjoyment; as well as the desire for annihilation. The reader should always bear in mind this meaning of the word.

36. Ignorance (*avijjā*) is that innate, erroneous way of looking at things, in consequence of which we consider the fleeting, vain, ever-becoming and dissolving world of phenomena to be the true reality, and therefore cling to it eagerly; while we regard the eternal, imperishable, never-becoming nor dissolving as a mere chimera. But he in whom true insight has arisen knows: this life is no real being, but an incessant becoming, and dying and fresh becoming, perpetual change of all material, moral and mental conditions amidst constant struggle and suffering.



37. Mahā-parinibbāna-Sutta.

38. Dhamma-cakka-pavattana-Sutta.

The Non-Buddhist will not easily perceive the amount of profound knowledge and religio-philosophic truths contained in these few sentences from the sermon of Benares. Repeated and earnest meditation thereon is therefore to be highly recommended. Nobody can expect to thoroughly and correctly understand the true nature of existence and the sublime doctrine of the Buddha before he has completely penetrated the meaning and significance of the Four Noble Truths and comprehended their full import.

39. In spite of the correct explanation of Nirvāna given by eminent scholars long ago there still exist among most Europeans and Americans strange ideas concerning it. Nirvāna, literally translated, means: to be extinguished, to be blown out, like a flame blown out by the wind, or extinguished for want of fuel. From this the inference has been drawn by some that Nirvāna signifies nothingness. This is an erroneous opinion; on the contrary, Nirvāna is a state of the highest spiritualization, of which indeed no one who is still fettered by earthly ties can have an adequate conception. What is it then that is extinguished or blown out in Nirvāna? Extinguished is the will-to-live, the craving for existence and enjoyment in this or another world; extinguished is the delusion that material possessions have any intrinsic or lasting value. Blown out is the flame of sensuality and desire, forever blown out the flickering will-o'-the-wisp of the "ego" or "I". It is true the perfect saint, the Arahant (for only such an one can attain Nirvāna already in this life) continues to live in the body, for the results of error and guilt in former births, which



have already begun to operate and are presenting themselves just now as a living organism in temporality, cannot be suppressed; but the body is perishable, soon the hour arrives when it passes away. Then nothing remains which could give rise to a new birth, and the Arahant passes on to eternal peace, the ultimate Nirvāna (Parinirvāna).

Parinirvāna, in the sense of other religions and of scientific materialism, is indeed total annihilation, complete dissolution of the individuality, for nothing remains in Parinirvāna which in any way corresponds to the *human conception of existence*. But from the point of view of one who has attained to the state of the Arahant it is rather the world with all its phenomena which is “nothingness”, a reflected image, an iridescent bubble, a terrifying dream; and Parinirvāna is the entrance into real being, into the eternal, unchangeable, imperishable, where there is no diversity, no strife, and no suffering.

40. The student of Buddhism must again be expressly reminded not to confound the “will-to-live”, that is to say, our innate love and desire for life or attachment to existence, with the *conscious* will. The *conscious* will constitutes only a small part of our entire will, namely that which rises into our brain-consciousness; the larger part of this will is perceived only very indistinctly by most men, and by plants and animals not at all; it manifests itself as a blind, instinctive desire, as a stubborn love for existence, as a tendency to go in quest of everything that renders existence painless and agreeable, and to flee from everything that menaces or hurts it. Many so-called pessimists, for example, who pretend to scorn life, and whose *conscious* will actually rejects their *present* state, are often under the erroneous impression that they have



conquered the "will-to-live". But this is not the case, for their selfishness, their attachment to pleasures and enjoyments, their want of self-denial and kindness, and their bitterness, prove that the unconscious desire for life is still active within them. and will certainly lead them to a new rebirth. The same observation applies partly to the followers of all religions. They condemn this terrestrial life because their faith requires it, but yearn the more fervently for individual continued existence in heaven or paradise. The real extinction of the "will-to-live" shows itself in complete unselfishness and self-denial, patience in suffering, the absence of all passions (anger, hatred, envy, ill-will, covetousness, sensuality, haughtiness, avarice, vanity), and in perfect equanimity, sincere good will towards all living beings, and the renunciation of any reward for good deeds in this world or one beyond (heaven or paradise,)

41. "All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him as the wheel follows the foot of the beast of draught. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him." (Dhammapada.) "My action is my possession, my action is my inheritance, my action is the race to which I am kin, my action is my refuge." (Anguttara Nikāya)

42. Strict immutable justice rules the whole realm of animate and inanimate nature. Of necessity every bad and every good deed bears its fruit. No grace of a personal god can save the evil-doer, tortured by pangs of conscience, from the consequences of his bad action; no arbitrary will of a ruler of heaven and earth can curtail the merited



reward of a good man. Hence the Dhammapada says: "Not in the boundless distances of space, not in the midst of the sea, not in the deepest mountain chains, is there a spot where one can escape the result of one's evil deed." With those who deny the moral constitution of the world we do not dispute: it is a question of a fundamental truth which cannot be proved, but must be felt and seen by intuition. He who occupies the standpoint of the mass of the people which sees in man only the product of nature, which he in reality is from a purely physical point of view, knows only one-half of the world, the outer one. But to him who is capable of looking deep enough into the core of things, nature reveals itself as *our production*, as the reflection of our inner being. Therefore it can only result according to our inner constitution, and one man will perceive the working of an equalizing justice and of a higher harmony where another sees only wild chaos, the sport of blind chance and glaring disharmony. Thus here also everything after all depends on the degree of our insight and moral development.

43. It is one of the most difficult tasks to give a correct conception of Karma to a European or American, who is brought up in an entirely different way of viewing things; it is hardly possible to do so in a few words, for it means penetrating into one of the deepest and most far-reaching fundamental doctrines of Buddhism. Much will have been gained if the learner constantly keep in mind that Karma is not a force working from without (as for instance a god), but one dwelling within, in the heart of every living being. He who is able to think profoundly enough will finally arrive at the point where for him our actions, our Karma, our individual character, our fate, and the moral world order are one and the same.



44. "Creation" is for the Buddhist only the renewal of an extinct world or system of worlds. The destructions of worlds are caused by forces of nature and catastrophes of various kinds, but they always remain confined to a small part of the universe at one time. Such destructions and renewals of heavenly bodies take place continually in immeasurable space. Modern Western science stands in this respect—as far as the *outward* circumstances are concerned—exactly at the point which the Buddhists have occupied for the last 2,400 years.

45. "Oh disciples, do not think thoughts such as the worldly-minded do: that the world is eternal, or the world is not eternal; the world is finite, or the world is infinite. Concentrate your thoughts rather on suffering, on the cause of suffering, on the cessation of suffering." (Samyutta Nikāya)  
"Without beginning and end, oh disciples, is this Sansāra. Undiscernible is the beginning of beings who, involved in ignorance and driven on by the will-to-live, stray and wander about. What do you think is more: the water in the four great oceans, or the tears which have flowed and been shed by you, since ye have been wandering about on this long road, wailing and lamenting, because ye hated what fell to your lot and loved what did not fall to your lot? The death of father, mother, brother, sister, children, the loss of kin, of property, the torments of disease,—all these ye have suffered since time immemorial, and on account of these more tears have been shed by you than there is water in the four great oceans." (Samyutta Nikāya.)

As follows from these and many similar passages in the discourses of the Buddha, the Exalted One did not declare anything about the origin of the world, the creation,



a first beginning, or the like. He disdained to build His system of ethics and His philosophy on fancies and fables. He accepts the existence of the world and of living beings as a fact; He does not ask; how did the world or existence originate? but only: *what* is this so enigmatical life, what is its object, where does it lead to? And as He found that it always leads to suffering, strife, old age, death, and rebirth, that it is an incessant becoming and passing away, an endless painful rotation, He shows the way to deliverance. But to those pupils to whom this does not suffice, and who do not want to have confidence in the road to deliverance taught by the Buddha, before the secret of the origin of the world has been disclosed to them, the Master replies with the following parable: "A man was hit by a poisoned arrow; thereupon his friends and relations called a skilful physician. Now, if the sick man would say: I will not have my wound attended to before I know who the man is who wounded me, what his name is, whether he is tall or short, to what family he belongs, and how the weapon was constructed with which he hit me.—What would be the end of such foolish conduct? The man would die of his wound." (Majjhima Nikāya).

46. Resist bravely, oh samana, the stream of passions, drive away all cravings. When thou hast understood the non-reality of all that has come into existence, then thou hast become a knower of the eternal." (Dhammapada)

47. Many a one will make but little *perceptible* progress in the *present* life, even with the best intentions, because too much evil Karma of former lives obstructs his way. But instead of growing discouraged and giving up the struggle he should strive all the more zealously for inner purification, and in spite of his ill success, not waver



in his resolution to obtain moral perfection. Only thus can he overcome the still powerful unfavourable Vipāka, so far as to approach his goal under better outer and inner conditions, if not in this then in the next birth. As in the physical and material sphere, so also in the mental and moral, the only guarantees for success are earnest determination, courage, patience, and indefatigable perseverance. We must never forget: Even a Buddha needed six years of uninterrupted exertion to attain wisdom and deliverance.

48. The Upāsakas, those who remain in the worldly life, only with the greatest difficulty become Arahants, as there are so many obstacles and temptations in the way. However, it is not the yellow robe, nor the outward observance of the laws which distinguishes the Bhikkhu from the Upāsaka, but solely the disposition, the purity, the insight. Hence one can lead the life of a Bhikkhu without having entered the order by a formal act of admission. For it is said in the Dhammapada: “He who has calmed his heart and restrained his senses, who lives in chastity and peaceableness with all beings, who is forbearing towards everyone, he is in truth a Bhikkhu, though he wear not the garb of one.”

49. This first and foremost of the vows comprises “all living beings”, not only man. He who wantonly kills, injures, or torments animals is no adherent of the Enlightened One, and cannot attain a favourable rebirth.

50. The observance of the eight vows serves as a very salutary practice for the lay adherents. He who has never imposed upon himself any privation or restraint will certainly not be able to conceive how much our mental and moral powers are strengthened by voluntary abstinence



by voluntary abstinence, and how they are gradually qualified for higher things.

51. It is a delusion, cherished to his own affliction by the sensual man, engrossed by the craving for existence and enjoyment, that the satisfaction of desires and inclinations affords true happiness. All desires are appeased for a short time only by their attainment, but always awaken anew, and all the stronger, the more one yields to them. Every gratified desire produces a new one, and no final satisfaction is conceivable in this way. Moreover we must take into account all the unavoidable disappointments and failures, the conflict, struggle, and strife with our fellow-beings who are pursuing the same aim. But this incessant struggle can only be carried on at the expense of our bodily and mental forces. Therefore, the more we indulge our desires and inclinations, the more they increase, and the more at the same time our forces, which are the only means of enjoyment, diminish. Increase of desires and the simultaneous decrease of the means for their gratification—this is the inexorable law of nature to which such perverse striving is subject. It must, therefore, be evident to everyone who earnestly reflects upon it that it is foolish to pursue sensual enjoyments, the ardently yearned-for happiness can never be gained. Hence the Dhammapada says:

“How can ye laugh, how merry find this life,  
Which only holds the flame of low desires and strife?  
Ye’ll walk in darkness ever deep and fell,  
Until ye seek the light it to dispel.”

52. “It is thou who doest evil, it is thou who sufferest for it. By thine own exertion thou gainest merit, by thine own exertion thou gettest rid of guilt. Suffering as



well as salvation depend upon thine own doing. Nobody can disburden another.” (Dhammapada.)

53. “To shun evil, to do good, to purify one’s heart from passions—that is the teaching of all the Buddhas.” Not to blame anybody, not to injure anybody, to practise abstemiousness according to the Doctrine, to be moderate in eating and drinking, to sleep and dwell alone, and to turn one’s thoughts to the highest—that is the teaching of all the Buddhas” (Dhammapada).

54. Religious fanatics and moral rigorists assert that every action which is done with a view to one’s own welfare is selfish, and therefore without moral value. We do not agree with such foolish exaggerations. The care for one’s own wellbeing is by no means objectionable as long as it remains within the proper limits. Selfishness, in a morally reprehensible sense, commences only where one’s well-being is pursued regardless of that of others. To be sure, nobody can go through life without scruples, and the good and just man will often hesitatingly pause on his way and get perplexed when his own rights and his duties to others seem to conflict. In such moments no dogma, no written moral precepts can guide us aright, but only clear insight and a pure mind. Let everyone constantly remember: there are no duties to gods, ancestors or hallowed errors of any kind; only to our fellow-beings, who also fight in the struggle for existence, and to posterity. He who unselfishly employs his powers for the weal of humanity, for a great idea, for the propagation of truth and light, possesses an unerring guiding star, which will never let him go astray. But not everyone can strive for the highest: vigour and aptitude vary in different individuals. Therefore, let it be a consolation to us that honest endeavour, conscientiousness, and a sense of one’s duty have opportunities even in



the smallest sphere of activity to manifest themselves in a helpful manner, and that everyone can be of service to another by serving in the best sense himself. In proportion as we elevate and perfect ourselves mentally and morally, we are enabled to help our fellow-men and to be of use to them. All real culture comes from within—not from without—and every improvement of the world must begin with self-improvement. Keeping mankind in view, let everyone work at his own perfection, and let him consider that nobody can further his own weal at the cost of his fellow-men; that, however, on the other hand only *that* benefits mankind which in the highest sense has been done for oneself.

55. “He defrauded me, beat me, ruined me. He who harbours such thoughts will never cease to hate. For hatred is not overcome by hatred; by good-will hatred is overcome; this is an eternal law.” “Overcome the angry by gentleness, the wicked by kindness, the miser by liberality, the liar by truth.” (Dhammapada.)

56. Reward and punishment, merit and guilt, good and bad, are, properly speaking, only metaphorical expressions, suited to our limited human comprehension. The order of the world knows at the bottom neither reward nor punishment, merit nor guilt, justice nor injustice. Everything is the necessary and natural consequence of our own right or wrong knowledge, volition, and doing. A correct knowledge of the laws of our own nature and of the universe, and obedience to these physical, moral, and mental laws is therefore the only way to deliverance from suffering and to the attainment of eternal peace, Nirvāna, that sublime goal which lies beyond good and evil, guilt and suffering, beyond all thinking and conception, and is exempt from all laws and forms of finiteness.



57. "Separation from action" does not mean complete inactivity, but *not to do anything from selfish motives*. Unselfish actions in the service and for the welfare of others do not adhere to us: we are freed from an action which we do solely with regard to others who require our advice, our comfort, or our help without the least purpose of temporal benefit or hope of reward hereafter. It does not increase our Karma.

58. "Knowledge" in the Buddhist sense does not signify the *outer knowledge of the intellect*, which has no influence on a man's character, but that *intuitive penetration*, that *profound insight into the world riddle and the enigma of man*, based upon outer and inner experience, whereby is brought about a complete change in the manner of thinking and feeling, a total inner transformation.

59. Instead of *worlds* they might be called *states*. That which subjectively is felt as a state of mind presents itself to the senses and the outer consciousness as its objective counterpart, as a world. The one corresponds to the other.

60. He who has understood the Four Noble Truths will therefore long neither for earthly life nor for life in the bright heavenly worlds, but only for deliverance, Nirvana. For as long as individuality is not destroyed, so long will suffering, birth, and death not be overcome. Even angels and gods (such may the beings living in the higher spheres be called) are subject to becoming, decay and rebirth. But everything changeable is sorrowful. Hence the Dhammapada says:

"Better than sovereignty over the earth, better than life in the heavenly worlds, better even than dominion over



the whole universe, is the first step on the road to deliverance."

61. "An evil deed is not like fresh milk which quickly curdles, but as a smouldering fire under the ashes. Unseen it glows, and then suddenly bursts forth to destroy the delusive structure of happiness, in which the evil-doer imagines himself safe" (Dhammapada).

The inequality in the outward course of life on this earth, the evident injustice in that good men are often afflicted with dire suffering, while the bad are living in splendour and joy, is for every thinking being a proof of the moral necessity of rebirth. That this vast and admirable universe cannot be a play of blind chance but only the result of forces acting according to law; that causality and compensating justice bear the same relation to each other as physical to spiritual phenomena respectively, and that these are therefore in reality the same, only looked at in different ways, either from without or within—this is a truth which nobody can gainsay after earnest reflection and mature examination. With him who denies this truth we do not argue. For him who acknowledges it there follows of necessity that guilt and suffering, merit and happiness must exactly balance each other. When therefore, we see the good suffer, and the cause of this suffering cannot be found in the actions of the present life, it must be based on guilt in a former birth. When there are prosperity and happiness there must exist merit from a former birth. There is here no alternative: he who acknowledges the moral world-order is forced, if he is able to think logically, to the conviction of the truth and reality of rebirth.

62. This must, however, not be construed into a belief in the inevitableness of everything that happens and a



consequent neglect to take the necessary precautions against possible accidents and dangers, to use proper medicines in case of sickness &c. Worse still would be a belief in the futility of working for one's physical, mental, and moral betterment, and a consequent apathy and disinclination to do so. This would be fatalism, as in Islam, or predestination in the Christian sense. This view is an extreme, and is, like all extremes, one-sided, and therefore condemned in Buddhism, which, as in so many other matters, also in this enjoins a rational "middle way".

63. This does not hold good, to the same extent, with every suicide, but only with those who kill themselves in order to escape punishment for crimes committed, or out of despair that their impassioned desires have not been fulfilled. But there are also suicides which spring from noble motives. For such as voluntarily depart this life from noble motives there is no entrance upon the downward path. But there is always an error at the bottom of every suicide, a misinterpretation of the moral constitution of the world, and the consequences can therefore never be favourable. Only he who in this life has already attained Nirvāna, an Arahant may leave this world voluntarily at any time, as his Karma is completely exhausted. But such a one will not do so, rather thinking like Sāriputta: "I do not desire death, I do not desire life; I wait until the hour arrives, like a servant awaiting his wages. I do not desire death, I do not desire life; I wait until the hour arrives, conscious and alert." (Theragātha).

64. The widespread belief in an immortal soul within us—that is, an individual entity, endowed with knowledge, differing from others, created or come into existence, and



nevertheless eternal—arises principally from the egotistical desire for eternal, personal continued existence. Hence this superstition is a consequence of the deluded will-to-live, and belongs to the “ten fetters” which chain man to existence and prevent his salvation. To understand that after all it is the individuality with its wants and desires opposed to those of other individualities, which causes all suffering in the world, that therefore striving for individual happiness is according to its very nature wrong, and that it is best to relinquish it voluntarily—that is to take a great step, yea the greatest, on the road to true knowledge. But man wants to preserve his individuality at any price; hence the popularity of those religions which promise eternal continued existence of the individuality; hence the never-ending struggle for existence; hence all suffering, all sorrow, of which life is full; hence the difficulty of emancipation.

“Individuality is a burning fire, oh disciples. And by what is it kindled? By lust, ill-will, and delusion.” (Mahāvagga).

65. Memory belongs to the phenomenal part of our being, to the Khandhas. The torch of the limited, individual consciousness illuminates only the actual road (in the present embodiment); it is no sun emitting its rays over a world system. Nevertheless, what we have striven for, suffered, experienced, and in the highest sense, learned, is not lost; for the sum of our experiences and our knowledge is preserved as tendencies of the mind, as increased *ability* and *capacity*, and appears in the next birth as innate aptitude. But if anyone should object and say that the lack of recollection is a proof against rebirth, he should consider that nobody remembers anything of the time between conception and birth, and yet no one will



deny that he then already led an individual life. Conscious recollection with most people begins only at the fourth or fifth years; few can dimly remember even a single event of their first years. And how important are just these completely forgotten events and impressions of early childhood for our later life, for our tendencies of mind and character! Still there are cases on record of persons at the present time, principally children, remembering one or more of their lives, generally the last one.

66. It is Buddhist doctrine that self-consciousness only illumines those parts of the individuality which just in that birth are being developed, that therefore it by no means exhausts the whole individuality. Further, that besides the limited *egoconsciousness* of the actual personality there is an *individual consciousness*, comprising the entire line of the past phases of development, but which is, as it were, in a latent state, and only enters into activity after the attainment of Nirvāna; after lust, ill-will, and delusion, which prevented its unfolding, are totally exterminated.

67. "Not mortification, not shaving one's head, not praying, fasting, doing penance, or living in poverty, purifies him who has not overcome desires." What avails a shorn head, oh fool, what a garment of rags? Within thee there is wickedness, but thy exterior feigns sanctity." (Dhammapada.)

68. The sons of Kesa, from Kālāma, came to the Buddha and said: "Master, every priest and monk extols his belief as the only true one, and condemns that of others as false. I am worried by doubts. I do not know whom to believe." The Buddha answered: "Your doubts are



well founded, listen well to my words: Do not believe anything on mere hearsay; do not believe traditions, because they are old and handed down through many generations; do not believe anything on account of rumours, or because people talk much about it; do not believe simply because the written testimony of some ancient sage is shown to thee; never believe anything because presumption is in its favour, or because the custom of many years leads thee to regard it as true; do not believe anything on the mere authority of thy teachers or priests. Whatever according to your own experience and after thorough investigation agrees with thy reason, and is conducive to thine own weal and welfare and to that of all other living beings, *that* accept as truth and live accordingly.” (Anguttara Nikāya.)

69. “To honours and riches there is a way very different from that leading to eternal peace. Hence do not yearn for honours nor wealth, only for overcoming this world.” (Dhammapada)

70. “Greater than he who conquers in battle a thousand times a thousand men is he who ‘conquers himself. Verily he is the greatest of conquerors.” (Dhammapada)

71. To be truly kind, just, and benevolent is the highest religiousness. To him who knows this, all ceremonies and dogmas appear only as crutches for the infirm, who cannot stand on their own feet. Unfortunately most men need such mental and moral crutches. But the mentally free throw them away as soon as they feel within themselves the strength to continue their way without such expedients. In this sense the Exalted One spake shortly before his decease to his disciples: “Be your own lamp and your own refuge; do not betake yourselves to any



others. Hold fast to the truth as your refuge; do not look for refuge to anybody besides yourselves. Those who now and after my decease will be their own lamp and their own refuge, who trust their own strength and the truth, and who in the unremitting struggle for perfection rely on nobody but themselves, it is these among my disciples who will reach the highest goal." (Mahā-parinibbāna sutta)

72, When Kevatta, a follower from Nālanda, requested the Buddha to allow His disciples to perform a miracle of magic power for the conversion of the inhabitants of Nālanda, as customary with founders of a religion, the Exalted One answered: "I despise and reject the miracles of magic power and divination. I and my disciples gain adherents only by the miracle of instruction." (Dīgha Nikāya)

For the African negro telegraphy is a miracle, while we know the powers and laws of nature on which it depends. But the same position in which the savage finds himself in regard to telegraphy the ignorant European or Indian occupies in the face of events and phenomena which are inexplicable to him. In such a case he easily believes in a miracle. As a rule the degree of superstition of a man stands in inverse ratio to his knowledge. The less the one, the greater the other.

73. "As the broad ocean, oh disciples, is permeated all through by the taste of salt; so this doctrine and law is permeated all through by the spirit of salvation." (Culla Vagga)

"The craving for life is the worst of all diseases, individuality the greatest evil. He who knows this truly sees in Nirvāna the highest bliss."



“This salutary advice I give unto ye all who are here assembled: totally eradicate the craving for life, that the god of death (Māra) may not break you again, as the storm breaks the reeds.”

“He who is filled with the desire for life is like game in a snare. Therefore, oh Bhikkhu, conquer the desire for life, and strive only for dispassionateness.”

“The wise man does not regard chains or ropes as fetters, but riches, honours, wife and child, all that draws him down to a worldly life. Therefore he leaves all these with their sorrows and joys and goes forth into solitude.”

“Renounce what lies behind thee, renounce what the future promises thee, renounce the pleasure of the present, if thou wouldst reach the further shore (of the ocean of life). Hast thou entirely freed thyself mentally, then thou wilt not again fall a prey to birth and death.” (Dhammapada)

74. “He who has recognised the value of earnest meditation finds therein his true happiness. He rejoices in the knowledge of the elect.”

“Strive not for the vanities of this world, nor for a life full of love and lust. He who is earnest and meditative has joys in plenty.”

“It is pleasant to be in the solitude of the forest: where the worldling pursuing the pleasures of sense finds no joys, they bloom for him who has overcome his passions.”

“The Bhikkhu who has the right knowledge does not even yearn for the joys of heaven. Only in the overcoming



of all his desires and inclinations does he find true happiness.’’

“Happy are they who do not hate. Let us live happily then, free from hatred among those who hate. Happy are the pure. Let us live happily then, pure among the impure. Happy are they who are free from desires. Let us live happily then, free from desires among the desiring.—Happy are they who call nothing their own. They are as the bright gods who live on happiness.”

“Health is the greatest blessing, contentment the best possession, a true friend the nearest of kin, Nirvāna the highest beatitude.”

“Sweet is solitude and peace of mind; sweet is it to be free from fear and desire; sweet is the draught from the cup of the holy Doctrine.”

“The sight of the Elect affords joy; to live with them is happiness. Therefore attach thyself to the wise, the intelligent, the learned, the meek, the passionless, the perfected. In their companionship live always as the moon in the company of the stars.” (Dhammapada)

75. All European scholars who cultivate Indian languages and philosophy agree in stating the amazing power of memory of Indian Brahmins. Max Muller, one of the greatest authorities in this field, asserts that if suddenly all written and printed Brahmanical books were destroyed, their holy writings could nevertheless be reproduced word for word with the help of the Brahmins who know them by heart, as it is still customary with them for the teacher to transmit his knowledge orally to the pupil.



76. “To three things, oh disciples, secrecy is peculiar, and not candour: to woman, to priesthood, to false doctrine. Three things, oh disciples, shine before all the world, not secretly: the moon, the sun, the teaching of the Tathāgata. These three, oh disciples, shine before all the world, not secretly.” (Anguttara Nikāya)

When Ānanda asked the dying Buddha whether he would not, before passing away, make a last disclosure to his disciples, the Exalted One answered: What dost thou mean, Ānanda? Does the Brotherhood expect that of me? I have proclaimed the truth to you without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine. I am not like those teachers with the closed fist who keep back the best.” (Mahāparinibbāna-sutta)

In explanation it must be mentioned that it was not the custom of the leaders of the numerous Brahmanical sects to disclose their highest knowledge to all their disciples, but only to a few favoured ones; often only at the hour of death to one whom they had destined for their successor to the leadership of the sect.

From the passages quoted above it follows beyond a doubt that the Buddha did not teach any secret doctrine, and that everything to which pretending adepts give currency is an invention of later times.

77. Buddhism does not intend to teach natural science; it does not concern itself with the outward condition of things, but with their inner being, and therefore stands neither in a hostile nor a dependent relation in regard to science. The educated Buddhist occupies a perfectly unprejudiced position concerning natural science: he examines its results, and accepts, uninfluenced by religious scruples, such of its teachings as appear to him correct.



Hence European scholars have always found a friendly reception and ready hearing in Buddhist countries. The Buddhist knows that science, like all earthly things, is changeable, progresses continually, and can teach many useful and great things now-a-days which were unknown in the time of the Buddha; but that on the other hand nothing can be discovered, no matter how far scientific research may progress, which could contradict the words of the Buddha. Science teaches us to find our way in the maze of phenomena, and to subject the material world; it enlightens the understanding, and makes the mind susceptible of higher knowledge. But the eternal Truth which the Buddha proclaimed leads to consummation and deliverance. He who has completely apprehended and thoroughly grasped the Four Noble Truths can do without science. While the most extensive scientific knowledge still belongs to ignorance (*avijjā*) from the point of view of the highest wisdom, as it does not lead to deliverance from suffering and rebirth.

78. It is difficult to translate "Sangha", as it is not an "Order" in the Christian sense; but for brevity's sake this word has been used, although "Brotherhood of Bhikkhus" would more nearly express its meaning. The Sangha is the brotherly union of all bhikkhus or samanās, the true disciples and followers of the Buddha. But neither for "bhikkhu" nor "Samana" is there an adequate English word. Literally bhikkhu means "beggar". But the bhikkhus are not beggars in the modern European sense, where the word has a degrading and dishonouring signification. Samana designates a person who, for the purpose of spiritual development, abstains from all worldly pleasures, therefore an ascetic in the higher sense. It would perhaps be the simplest and most expedient way to translate bhikkhu as begging-monk or mendicant, but even this might lead to



misunderstandings, for the bhikkhus are not begging monks in the Christian sense, as they do not take the vow of obedience toward their superiors. To render bhikkhu as priest, as several European scholars have done, will not answer at all, as the Buddhist bhikkhus do not claim priestly prerogatives. The "Noble Eight fold Path" is not for the poor in spirit, but for the noble, the aspiring ones, who disdain the pleasures of life and desire only wisdom and emancipation for the spiritually strong, who can bear the truth and live conformably to it.

79. In Theravāda countries, the Order of Nuns has become extinct. But there are many communities of Religious Sisters, observing the Novice Rules and living in convents, which may well be called "nunneries". (Editor)

80. For the bhikkhu the observance of complete chastity is essential, not however because intimate intercourse with the other sex is wrong or a sin. Man, in yielding to his natural impulses, commits no wrong, as long as he thereby does not harm or injure anyone. But sexual indulgence is the strongest expression of the will-to-live, the highest expenditure of energy in the direction of the sensual material side of existence, hence diametrically opposed to the goal of the bhikkhu. The bhikkhu who indulges in sexual desire commits a "destruction of the bridge"; he cuts off his way to deliverance and perfection for this life.

81. After mid-day the bhikkhus should not take any solid food.

82. It goes without saying that the female members of the Order (bhikkhuni) live together in separate monasteries.



Life as hermits is not permitted to them, and they are constantly subject to the supervision of the Elders of the Brotherhood.

83. The giving of alms to the Brotherhood is not an obligation for the lay follower, but it is a pleasant duty. What he gives is done voluntarily with the knowledge that he thereby promotes his own interest. According to Buddhist doctrine it is not the bhikkhu who owes thanks to the lay adherent for any gift received, but the latter to the former, because he is given the opportunity to acquire merit by the practice of charity.



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### CORRIGENDA

Page 19, Line 3: for is read in  
 „ 28, „ 6: for good read god  
 „ 33, „ 11: for Atthangasīlam read Atthangasīla  
 „ 37, „ 2: from below: for craving read craving  
 „ 67, Note 14: for Anurādhapuram read Anuradhapura



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