

THE MAHA-BODHI TEMPLE
AND
The monastery of Bodh-gaya.

Balindralal Das, B. Sc., B. L.
Advocate,
Gaya.

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THE GREAT TEMPLE AND THE MONASTERY AT BODHGAYA

PREFACE.

The first two editions of this booklet were published under the title of "A Hindu point of view on the Bodhgaya Temple", and the immediate cause for their publication was the pendency of a bill about the Great Temple in the Legislative Assembly. The booklet was not bereft of a certain amount of topical interest, and therefore, it could not deal much with the historical and archeological aspects of the subject.

The encouragement which I received from the readers of the booklet, has led me to re-write it in a more comprehensive manner. I have also added certain new facts, to bring it up-to-date.

INTRODUCTION.

The Great Bodhgaya temple is situated in the modern village of Taradih which is adjacent to the village of Bodhgaya. It is seven miles from the city of Gaya and is connected with it by an excellent road. Gaya is one of the most ancient cities of India and is an universal place of pilgrimage for all classes of Hindus, who visit the place in very large numbers for the purpose of performing the last obsequial rites of their ancestors.

The holiness of Gaya is based upon a legend contained in the Vayu Purana. Gaya was the name of an *asura* (demon), who was a holy and saintly person and by his austerities he had excelled the Devas (Gods) in virtues and was in a fair way of ousting the latter from their heavenly abode. Being alarmed at this, the Devas finally appealed to Lord Vishnu (the Central God-head of the Hindu Trinity), who by a great deal of diplomacy managed to vanquish and bring to submission the great asura. But though vanquished, he refused to be quiescent and it was only on the solemn promise by Vishnu that, the site where he had fallen would be con-

sidered as the holiest of the holies, and, would have the inherent virtue of giving absolution to both living and dead beings, that the great *asura* was finally quietened. There is a footprint of the great Vishnu over the head of the great *asura* over which a beautiful temple now stands. This is the Vishnupada temple and the present one was built by Rani Ahalya Bai in the 16th Century A. D. The body of the great *asura* covered many square miles and the entire area is held to be sacred and sanctified.

Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra holds that the legend mentioned above, contains the key of the problem as to how Budhisim vanished and was absorbed in Brahminism in the ancient times. According to him Gaya *asura* was the mythical emblem of Budhisim (if not of the great Buddha himself) and his vanquishment by the Lord Vishnu is an allegorical representation of how finally Brahmanisim had conquered Budhisim and absorbed it. There are certain doubtful points about this explanation, and unless one is prepared to re-edit the entire scriptures of the Hindus, and expunge those portions that deal with Gaya as a place of sacred pilgrimage for the performance of the obsequial rites of the Hindus, we cannot reconcile the theory of

Dr. Mitra with the admittedly pre-Buddhistic origin of some of the said scriptures.

Be that as it may. I have only mentioned the aforesaid legend and Dr. Mitra's explanation in order to present the reader with one point of view of the origin of Gaya, that seems vastly plausible at first sight.

But there is no doubt about this, that the city of Gaya, the village Bodhgaya, and their surroundings were the central places of importance during the thousands of years of Buddhist supremacy in India. Moving about in the shady gardens that flank river Niranjana (now called Lilajan) and, in the quiet and peaceful surroundings of the great Temple, one is lost in contemplation of the poignantly romantic drama of the life of Lord Buddha. Wherever in the history of humankind was such a quest for knowledge ? And coupled with the vast sacrifice of Lord Buddha (a greater one cannot be cited or imagined), there arises the vision of his keen and undefeated search for the *Real* and the equally stupendous faculty of his mind of rising above the current thoughts and conventions and rejecting the illogical and illusory, without compromise. During the long period of itenary and the

longer period of his episcopal preachings, (graced with a radiant and happy humility and meekness), he remained undogmatic to the last, this greatest man of the modern times, whose width of vision was keyed to the Infinite, with a microscopical clarity. The whole-humankind is still throbbing with the thought currents started by this superman, and, we the Hindus count him as the embodiment of the Great Lord Vishnu Himself. No ceremonial, no ritual, no worship by a Hindu, can be done without remembrance of him; for we have to incant that we are doing them during the term of the Avatarship of Lord Buddha (Buddhavatarey).

I have written the few lines above, in order to furnish a back-ground for the next chapter, in which I shall deal with the ancientness of Uruvilla (the modern *urel*) as villages Bodh-Gaya and Taradih and their surroundings were known at and before the time of Lord Buddha.

CHAPTER I

—:~:—

Uruvilla & its ancient hermits.

—:o:—

The place where the present great temple is situated was formerly known as Uruvilla (the modern Urel) and was inhabited by a large number of Vedic Hermits who excelled in performing the rituals—and ceremonies enjoined in the Vedas. We find mention in the Buddhistic writings, that, a sect of Shaiva Ascetics called 'Jatilas' were inhabiting the place at the time when Prince Sidhartha first visited it, and holding unquestioned cultural sway over this region. (Vide Papancha-Sudami, Siamese Edition Part 2, Page 233 and Vinay Mahavagga, I, IX). It is said that Prince Siddhartha was the guest of, and, lived with, these ascetics. The popular but mistaken legend is that the

Uruvilla &
Bodhgaya
habitat of
Vedic
hermits.

place where Prince Siddhartha attained final illumination of his soul, was a solitary forest glade. This is not consonant with reason. It must be remembered, that Prince Siddhartha was in quest of knowledge, and therefore, we cannot imagine that he would shun the company of the learned, and cultured men, having advanced ideas and thoughts. On the other hand, it is extremely probable that he would confine his sojourn to such places as were inhabited by philosophers and highly advanced thinkers, more specially at a time, when painting and writing being unknown or rarely practised arts, all the human knowledge was retained in the memory, and was imparted by verbal instructions. During that time, and, during the time when Lord Buddha preached his early sermons, it is now a historically established fact, that there was practically no difference between the tenets preached by Lord Buddha and the principles of the Upanishads. In fact, Buddha's doctrines are only reiterations of some of the principles of the early upanishads, and, during his first formulation of the theories of deliverance from pain and the miseries of this world, Lord Budha did only

follow the paths laid down in the said books. We may say, that Lord Buddha only preached in popular language and made available to the common man the high doctrines of philosophy that were only stored up, in the learned minds, and were meant to be learnt and understood by persons who had undergone rigorous training in the schools of different philosophers. Sir Monier-Williams, in his famous work on "Buddhism" writes as follows:—

"Indeed there can be no doubt that it was generally held by the Brahmans of Buddha's time, that the way of knowledge was the highest way. But this way was not open to all. It was reserved for the privileged few, for the more intellectual and philosophically-minded Brahmans. The generality of men had to content themselves with the first and second ways (which were the "Karma-marga", and the "Bhakti-marga")

"What the Buddha then did was this:— First he stretched out the right hand of brotherhood to all mankind by inviting all without exception to join his fraternity of celibate monks, which he wished to be co-extensive with the

world itself. Then he abolished the first and second ways of salvation that is, Yajna, 'sacrifices' and Bhakti, 'devotion to personal gods,' and substituted for these, "meditation" and "moral conduct" as the only roads to true knowledge and emancipation. And then, lastly, he threw open this highest way of true knowledge to all who wished to enter it, of whatever rank or caste or mental calibre they might be, not excepting the most degraded. Without doubt the distinguishing feature in the Buddha's gospel was that no living being, not even the lowest, was to be shut out from true enlightenment."

Although we do not agree with all that the learned author has said, all the same one can not find any antagonism in teachings of Lord Buddha and those contained in the early Upanishads and we will find, that not only Lord Buddha has been taken and accepted as the Ninth Incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the Hindu scriptures but in his final meditations for enlightenment he is being helped by the Gods of the Hindu pathenon, such as, Brahma, Sakra etc., There is a theory formulated by Dr. Hermann Oldenberg to the effect, that Lord Buddha was either a mythical

personage or had come out of a common family from a tribe amongst whom according to Dr. Oldenberg early Brahmanic civilisation had not spread. For this theory about Buddha, Dr. Oldenberg has taken pains to quote from the "Satapatha Brahmanas" Upanishads; and "Chandiyoga Upanishad. We will not be in a position at present to discuss this theory, but even the sceptical author has been forced to the conclusion that the main theme of Buddhism is nothing but the Brahmanic tenets of the Upanishads clothed in popular garb.

In some of the inscriptions discovered at Barhut, it is written that the Hindus worshipped Buddha under the name of Dharmesa-Dharmeswara. There is also mention of the fact that Maheswara (or Siva) was the inspiring Deity of the Dharmeswara or Buddha. Therefore a study of the ancient relics and inscriptions yield the fact, that the place which is now known as Bodhgaya and Urel was held from the earliest times by Shaiva Ascetics and that Lord Buddha himself lived with them. Latterly when image worship became extant, the image of Buddha was worshipped as the Hindu Deity Dharmeswara, under the superior protection of Shiva or Maheswara.

worship of both images was being carried on by the Hindus.

We cannot also disregard the evidence of Mr. Wilmot's inscription which was published in Asiatic Researches or Transactions of the Socety, volume I, Pages 284 to 387 in 1785 A. D. by Charles Wilkins, Esq. According to this inscription the temple was erected by Amardeva (or Amar Singha), who was one of the chief counsellors of King Vikarmaditya. We beg to quote below the translation of the said inscription as it appeared in the Asiatic Researches in 1785 A. D.

“ In the midst of a wild and dreadful forest flourishing with trees of sweet-scented flowers and bounding in fruits and roots, infested with lions and tigers, lived Buddha, the Author of Happiness and a portion of Narayan. This Diety Haree, who is the Lord Hareesh, the possessor of all, appeared in this ocean of Natural Beings at the close of

Wilmot's
inscription.

Devapara and begining of the Kalee-yoog. He who is omnipresent and ever-lasting was to be contemplated to be the Supreme Being, the Eternal one the Divinity worthy to be adored by the most praiseworthy of mankind, appeared here with a portion of his Divine Nature.

Once upon a time the illustrious Amara renowned amongst men, coming here, discovered the place of the Supreme Being, Buddha, in the great forest. The wise Amara endeavoured to render the God Buddha propitious by superior service, and he remained in the forest for the space of twelve years, feeding upon roots and fruits and sleeping upon the bare earth; and he performed the vow of Moonee and was without transgression. He performed acts of severe morification, for he was a man of infinite resolution, with a compassionate heart. One night he had a vision, and heard a voice saying, "Name whatever boon thou wantest". Amara Dev, having heard this, was astonished, and with due reverence replied, 'First

Vision of
Amardeva

give me a visitaion and then grant me such a boon.' He had another dream in the night, and the voice said, 'How can there be an apparition in the Kalee-yoog? The same reward may be obtained from the sight of an image, or from the worship of an image as may be derived from the immedite visitation of a Diety." Having heard this he caused an image of the Supreme spirit Buddha to be made and he worshipped it, according to the law with perfumes, incenses and the like; and he thus glorified the name of the Supreme Being the incarnation and a portion of Vishnu:—

Worship of
Buddha a
portion of
Vishnu

"Reverence be unto Thee in the form
of Buddha

"Reverence be unto the Lord of the
earth

"Reverence be unto Thee, and Incarn-
ation of the Diety and the Eternal
one,

"Reverence be unto Thee, O ! God,
in the form of the God of mercy; the
dispeller of pain and trouble, the Lord
of all things, the Diety, who overcometh

Hymn to
Buddha

the sins of the Kaleeyoog, the guardian of the Universe, the emblem of mercy to those who serve Thee, Om, the possessor of all things in the vital form: Thou art Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh Thou art Lord of the Universe: Thou art in the proper form of all things, moveable immoveable, the possessor of the whole; and thus I adore Thee.

“Reverence be unto Thee, the bestower of salvation and Rhishi Kesh the ruler of the faculties.

“Reverence be unto Thee (Kesava) the destroyer of the evil spirit Kesh; O Damodara shew me favour.

“Thou art He who resteth upon the face of the Milky ocean, and who lyeth upon the serpent Sesa.

“Thou art Trivikrama (who at three strides encompassed the earth). I adore Thee who art celebrated by a thousand names and under-various forms in the shape of Buddha, the God of mercy; be propitious O most High God”

Reception of
the Great
Temple.

Having thus worshipped the Guardian of mankind, he became like

one of the just He joyfully caused a holy temple to be built of wonderful construction and therein were set up the divine foot of Vishnu, for ever purifier of the sins of mankind, the image of the Pandoos and descents of Vishnu and in like manner of Brahma and the rest of divinities.

This place is renowned, and it is celebrated by the name of Bodh-Gaya. The fore-fathers of him who shall perform the ceremony of the Sradha at this place shall obtain salvation. The great virtue of the Sradha performed here, is to be found in the book called Vayoopuran, an epitome of which hath by me been engraved upon stone.

Vikra-maditya was certainly a King renowned in the world. So in his court there were nine learned men celebrated under the epithet of the Nawaratnanee, or nine jewels; one of whom was Amara Deva, who was the King's Chief Counsellor, a man of genius and profound learning and the great favourite of this King who erected

Amaradeva
of Vikrama
ditya's
Court.

the temple, (the very sight of which destroyeth sins), in a place in Jambuu-dweep, where the mind being steady, it obtains its wishes, and in a place where it may obtain salvation. reputation and enjoyment, even in the country of Bharata and the province of Keekata, where the place of Buddha, purifier of the sinful is renowned. A crime of a hundred-fold shall undoubtedly be exipated from a sight thereof, of a thousand-fold from a touch thereof and of hundred - thousand fold from worshipping thereof. But where is the use of saying so much of the great virtue of the place ?. Even the hosts of Heaven worship with joyful service both day and night.

That it may be known to learned men that he verily erected the house of Buddha, I have recorded upon a stone the authority of the place, as a self-evident testimony, On Friday the fourth day of the New-moon, in the Mansion, of Ganesha, and in the year of the era of Vikra-maditya 1005",

The legend recited by Huen Tsang in 7th century A. D. does not clash very much with the substance of the inscription quoted above. Because apart from the similarity in name,

the builder of the temple, ultimately became the minister of a Great King according to the said legend. The above quoted inscription is noted with approval by General Cunningham (Vide Cunningham's Archeological Survey of India, Volume 1 Pages 6 & 7). Although Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitra has hurriedly rejected the evidence afforded by this inscription and characterised it as a spurious one, we find that it is mentioned as one of the genuine inscriptions in "Listed Inscriptions",

It is well to mention here that the earlier and the purer tenets of Buddhism did not favour the worship of any tangible material object, far less this worship of an image or idol. It can therefore be supposed, that at the time when the great temple was erected (be that the 1st century or the 5th century A. D.), the earlier and purer doctrines of Buddhism were being followed. Therefore, if any image or Icon had been installed in the big temple

Earlier
Buddhism
averse to
idolatry.

it was not done by any Buddhist votary. We find that in Huen Tsang's legend it is stated that after the erection of the great temple its builder was at a loss as to how to make the image of Buddha, for installation in the temple, as there was no extant image of Buddha which could serve as a model. It is claimed on a good authority that the earliest image of Buddha was practically a copy of the image of Shiva Maheshwara. From the premises stated above, there can be no doubt in ones mind that the erection of the temple and the instalation of the image therein was done by a votary of the Brahmanical religion for the worship of Buddha.

Bodh-Gaya
Temple
erected by
a Hindu.

The instalation of the image of a four - faced Shiva (Maha - deva - Schaturmukha) within this temple further strengthens the position of the Hindus. An important epigra-phot record of this is preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, on a stone containing an inscription and the three figures of Surya, Shiva, and Vishnu.

The inscription is translated as follows. Commencing with the Onkra the Vedic Pranava, it proceeds:—

“A figure of Chaturmukha Mahadev has been installed in the present abode of Buddha. the Lord of righteousness, (Dharmesa) by Keshva, son of Ujjvala for the benefit of 'Snatakas (the erudite Saivite Brahmanic scholars) and other inhabitants of the Village of Mahabodhi. A tank of the depth and holiness like Bishnupadi (Ganges), has also been excavated for them at the cost of 3000 Drachmas, in the 26th year of the reign of Dharmapada on the 5th day of the dark fortnight of Bhadrapada on a Saturday”.

Inscription
Re;—
instalation
of Mahadeva
by Kesava.

This image of Chaturmukha Shiva was found by Mr. Beglar and General Cunningham in the temple as early as 1870,

In this connection the statements of Mr. Beglar contained in a letter written by him to the Mahant of Bodh-Gaya on the 14th May 1895 is being quoted verbatim. Mr. Beglar was

Beglar-a
person of
truth and
honour says
Dharmapala.

the officer appointed by the Government of Bengal to conduct the work of restoration of the great temple and besides his official and unbaissed position, the late Dharmapala also considered him as a person of truth and honour (Vide the deposition of H. Dharmapala in the criminal case instituted against the men of the Mahanth Bohh-Gaya printed at page 34 of the High court Brief Book).

To

M. Ghose, Esq., & H E. A. Cotton
Esq., Barristers-at-law.

Dear Sirs,

Beglar's
account

I beg to forward to you for transmission to the Mahanth of Bodhgaya the statement I was requested by you to prepare setting forth the views of the Government, so far as I came to know them and the rights and privileges enjoyed by the Mahanth till the close of my works at the Bodhgaya Temple.

I have put in the form of a letter to him for my own convenience,

I beg to permitted to add, that I cannot think that a great Government with thousands of religious endowments within its territories, can descend to the mean and oppressive measure of depriving one of the holders of one of them of his rights.

I am behind no one in wishing to see ancient mounments in India conserved, but I recognise a vast difference between conservation and confiscation.

Gaya Dak Bungalaw, } I am, Dear Sirs,
14 th May, 1895. } Yours truly
Jos. D. M. Beglar

To

The Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya.

Sir,

I am requested by your Counsel, Messrs. Manomohan Ghose and H. E. A. Cotton, to prepare a statement showing, so far as I know, what the Government recognised and respected as your rights in the ancient Temple at Boddh Gaya, and I comply with request so far as I can do so from memory.

No definite written instructions were ever issued to me precisely or

Beglar's
account.

even a approximately defining what those rights were.

I have received verbal instructions only regarding them from time to time, from Public Works Secretaries and under-secretaries of the Bengal Government, from the Superintending Engineer under whose orders I was placed on first taking charge of the work of the repairs of the temple, from the Magistrate of Gaya, in 1871 and from the Director General of Indian Archaeology under the Government of India.

These orders and instructions in connection with my work of conservation and restoration at the temple, show what was then considered by Government to be your predecessor's rights in the Temple. And certain practices ordinarily observed in the temple, and of which I am cognisant, show, what universally by the people there, as well as by visitors and pilgrims, was regarded as clearly the Mahanth's the rights of the your predecessor, in the temple.

My first visit to the temple was during the cold season of the official year 1872-73. I was there only about a week. I then found Hindus and Hindus only as worshippers in the temple, and of the sacred pipal tree. I saw at that time certain men constantly in and about the temple, whose business it appeared to me to have been to offer daily worship by the recitation of the Shastras, by the ringing of bells and blowing of conch-shells, and by the offer of lights and flowers to various sculptured representations of various well known Hindu Divinities or their foot-prints, within and about the temple to the sacred pipal tree, and to certain sacred spots, adjacent, not marked by sculpture.

Hindus only
worshipper
at Boddhgaya
temple.

In addition to these, they employed themselves in assisting pilgrims in their performance of the ceremonies which sacred Hindu books enjoin on them as obligatory at Boddh-Gaya (which is situated within the sacred circuit of the Gaya Tirtha), for the repose or deliverance of the souls of

Pinda
offering

Beglar's
account

their deceased parents and ancestors. I did not consider it necessary personally to see the Mahanth on this occasion; but the Pujaris in and about the temple who were undoubtedly the Gosains or servants of the Math, referred me to him to do certain acts (copying inscriptions) in the temple, and I accordingly sent my Hindu peon to the Mahanth and obtained the needful permission after which no opposition has been offered to my doing any archaeological work in connection with the temple. *At this time there was the usual Phallic emblem of Shiva occupying the central spot in the floor of the sanctum of the temple, and I find I have noticed its existence in my official report printed and published by the Government in 1878. General Cunningham had also noticed it previously.* There was also the statue of Buddha, regarded by the people as a statue of Bhairon (Bhairaba or Shiva), on the pedestal or throne. Flowers and other offerings were regularly being made to the objects of worship within the Sanctum of the great temple as well as to the objects

Shiva Lingam
in the centre
of the temple

of worship in the minor temple adjacent, and to the sacred tree, at the foot of which among other sculptures, was an ancient figure of Hara-Gouri with four lines of modern Burmese inscription on its pedestal, noticed also before this period by General Cunningham, and still earlier in 1828, by Dr. Buchaman Hamilton.

Figure of
Hara-Gouri

"My second visit to Bodh-Gaya was made at the end of the year 1879 or early in 1880, under the orders of General Sir Alexander Cunningham, Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India, issued by him directing me to be sent to prepare an estimate for the conservation of the ancient temple. This time, as extensive measurements had to be made, and scaffolding put up, which could not be done without the then Mahanth's your predecessor's permission, I went and paid my respects to him personally, and obtained the necessary permission as well as orders from him on his Gosains and servants to help me in every way. I found, as before, worship

Beglar's
account,

11898

being carried on daily, and the Phallic emblem still occupying the centre of the sanctum floor of the Temple, and the figure of Hara-Gouri (Shiva and Parvati) still in its old place at the foot of the holy pipal tree north of the temple-platform or terrace at the back. There were, however, many changes in the exterior of the temple, owing to work done by the Burmese. The pilgrims, however, were still being assisted through their ceremonies, and used to make their offering precisely as before. On this occasion I noticed some Burmese Buddhists among worshippers.

Advent of
some
Burmese
Pilgrims.

Before actually taking up the work, I wrote to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Colonel F. S. Stanton, under whose immediate orders I had served in 1864 as Assistant Engineer. He told me that great tact was necessary in doing the work, and he warned me that I was not only to be most careful in doing nothing which would offend the Mahanth or wound the religious feelings of the Mahanth and the

Gosains, but that I was to carefully avoid doing what would look as a trenching upon his rights and privileges, and that the Government would assuredly not support me in any measures which might reasonably give offence to the Mahanth or trench on his rights. *Everything I might do must be done with the Mahanth's approval and consent.*

Not to trench
upon
Mahanth's
rights.

The most delicate part of my work was naturally the repair of the sanctum of the Great temple, where repair work could not be done without suspending the performance of the daily worship. I represented the matter to your predecessor, and he, after satisfying himself that it was absolutely necessary for the work of repair to remove the phallic emblem from the sanctum floor of the Great Temple, gave the necessary orders for its removal elsewhere. He also, on the same occasion, and for the same reason, authorised me to remove, and, when subsequently the removal was found impossible to destroy the brick and mortar gilt figure that occupied the

Removal of
Siva-Lingam

throne on the great pedestal in the sanctum of the temple. He also formally suspended the daily worship within the sanctum and made it over to me for the necessary repairs. When the repairs were well advanced, I looked out for a figure to take the place of the one destroyed. I represented the matter to the Mahanth, and he and I went round the temple and examined all the figures in the Math as well as in and about the old temple grounds to make a suitable selection. I selected the figure which is now in the sanctum. The Mahanth would have preferred another; but on my representing to him that no other could be obtained which was large enough to suit the throne, he with some reluctance agreed to give me the figure that I wanted. The Lieut-Governor and Sir Alexander Cunningham also saw and approved the figure on their visits and the Mahanth permitted me to remove it. It was a figure which under the name of Bhairon, was then being worshipped by the Mahanth at his math.

Selection of
new image.

(Note:—Bhairon or Bhairava is a diety of the Shaiva pathenon and

sometimes the name is used as a synonym for Shiva). It had the red vermillion Tilak on and in giving me the statue, the Mahanth insisted that the Tilak should not be washed off however much I might clean the rest of the statue. The statue needed very heavy cleaning owing to the lime-mortar in which it had been partly embedded tenaciously sticking to it, and in the process the Tilak did somehow got washed off. *The statue was installed on its throne in the sanctum by the Mahanth himself.* He used to come occasionally and see the progress of the work and it was arranged that I was to make everything ready for the setting up of the statue and give him information the evening previous to the day it was to be set-up. I made every arrangement, and slung the statue on the spot it was to occupy, and having everything in readiness sent him the information. He came with his principal Gosains next morning and while I superintended the work of the machinery, his hand in seeming.

Red Tilak
mark

guided the movements of the statue till it was safe on its throne in the desired position. I then left the place, not wishing to intrude any further in any ceremony he may have wished to perform.

“ When I again saw the statue, it was on its pedestal. It had the vermillion tilak on. I believe it was put on by the Mahanth himself, I have still, I believe, a photograph wherein the tilak can be seen”.

Beglar's
account

“ When I first came to Bodh-Gaya, there were no bricks ready to execute the repairs with, but I knew plenty of bricks would come out the excavations I would make. *The very first thing to be done, of course was to get the Mahanth's permission to carry on excavations. He readily gave it. I think Mr. Barton, the Magistrate of Gaya, wrote to him on the subject. Whether he did or did not, the Mahanth, your predecessor, without any hesitation gave me permission.*

“ I then spoke to Mr. Barton, the Magistrate, about the bricks,

requesting him to try and obtain the Mahanth's consent to my using them for the repairs of the temple. Mr. Barton said he would write, and if he had done so, no doubt his letter will be among your math archives. I was personally very friendly with the then Deputy Magistrate, Rai Bahadur Bimala Chander Bhattacharya, a man well and favourably known to Government, and as it happened, also favourably known and deservedly highly respected by the Mahanth. I got him to go to the Mahanth and procure me his consent to the use of the dug-out bricks by me. I also simultaneously sent my contractor (a Brahmin) on the same errand and through their mediation, the permission to use the dug-out bricks, which I sought, was given me, but the permission striatly confined me to their use in the temple. In consequence of this my bungalow, now the Inspection bungalow of the rest house was estimated for and built of unburnt bricks. The estimate was appricved and sanctioned by the Government *and the Government knew that it was this restriction imposed by the Mahanth on the use of the dug-out bricks that compelled me to send in an estimate for building the house of unburnt bricks.*

That it never was the desire of the Bengal Government to set up any claims to the

control of the Temple or to ignore the rights of the Mahanth, your predecessor, appears to me clear from the consistent attitude of the Government and of the Lieut Governor of Bengal.

Beglar's
account

In the entire period during which I have any personal knowledge of Buddh-Gaya temple. I have seen only one solitary instance (except the present one), where the right of the Mahanth to the control of the worship or to the offerings of the visitors or pilgrims has been contested. The Mahanth's Pujaris have always performed their Puja in their way by reading of Shashtra, by ringing of bells and blowing of conch-shells, by offering of flowers, of vermillion Tilak, and of Bel leaves; and in the case of the emblem of Shiva, by libation of water. by offering of the red powder on the festival of holi, by the burning lamps fed with Ghee. I have seen Burmese pilgrims and other non-Hindus drape the great statue *with the permission of the Mahanth or the Pujaris.* I

have seen all offerings made by the pilgrims, whosoever whomsoever they may have been, taken by Mahanth or by his regularly appointed Pujaris or servants and with the full knowledge of the donors. I saw a few days ago the great statue in the sanctum, draped as a Hindu statue, as may be seen in scores, in hundreds of temples, all over India. With the exception of the present audacious attempt, I have neither seen nor heard of any attempt made in Bodh-Gaya (or any where else) during my service, to set up any object of worship within a temple, in actual use as a place of worship, in opposition to or without the full approval and consent of the sacerdotal authorities, in charge of the temple. I feel certain, in no Church, in no Masjid, in no place of worship of any cult, would such a thing be attempted. I have seen many ancient places of worship of perhaps eighty per cent of the most important cults in Northern India, and there is not single ancient *place of worship still in use as a place of worship*, whether it be a temple of one cult appropriated by another, or whether it be a temple in which is still maintained unaltered its original cult, where I have heard of a pilgrim or a visitor, (whether worshipper of the cult or not),

Beglar's
account

attempting to set up an object of worship without the full knowledge and consent of the minister conducting the current worship in the temple, nor have I seen any instance or come upon evidence of such an attempt in the past. Bigoted and religiously intolerant Governments have, after conquest done such acts, but no private individual ever has in India within my knowledge. The solitary instance alluded to where I have seen the authority of the Mahanth attempted to be set aside, as regards the control of offerings made, was in the case of a Nepalese pilgrim to Bodh-Gaya. This man affecting strong religious feelings, took up his residence (as you may remember) within the sanctum and was tolerated by the Pujaris out of their good feelings for his enthusiastic devotion to a cult, different indeed from that practised in the temple but, nevertheless one in which the object of worship was pictured as one of the many forms in which the Infinite Formless is worshipped according

to the Hindu cult. The man was tolerated, till he developed his real desire and object in assuming such unusual devotional zeal by laying hands on the pilgrims' offerings. On this becoming known, he was promptly turned out and he on his part was equally prompt to lodge an informal complaint before the Magistrate, Mr. Boswell, well-known for his learning and for his sympathy with Buddhism generally, and the Nepalese Buddhists in particular. Mr. Boswell, greatly excited, came to Bodh-Gaya, bringing the Nepalese with him, and insisted on the man being allowed to worship in the temple if he choose; but it did not take many hours for Mr. Boswell to find out that his protege was more anxious about the material offerings of other pilgrims than of his own spiritual ones, and he was ignominiously dragged out of the temple, made to disgorge the coins he had taken and warned not to try that again. I was in Bodh-Gaya then, and Mr. Boswell showed his kind feelings to the Nepalese generally by bearing

Beglar's
account

the cost of the man's food after he knew him to be an imposter, until the man gave up as hopeless his bright ideas of installing himself as the master of pilgrim's offerings in the temple on the strength of the known sympathy of that kindest and warmest - hearted of Magistrates of Gaya, Mr. Boswell, and of his own priestly rank. Your predecessor was well aware of the share I took in exposing the true greed of this unscrupulous imposter under the cloak of religion, and he never resented the small charity I showed to the man after I had helped to expose his fraud and hypocrisy. In fact, if my memory serves me right, your predecessor gave him the usual charity which the Math offers to all poor who need it, without distinction."

I remain,

Gaya, Dak Bunglow Dear and Respected
14th May, 1885 Mahanthji,

Your most obedient servant,
Jos D. Melik Beglar.

The place which is now known as Bodh-Gaya, and, its surroundings were the homes of the Hindu Ascetics, and, Gautama Buddha had come to the place for final enlightenment, and

had formulated his doctrines moulded on the teachings of the Upanishads (which he must have studied in hermitage of the aforesaid Hindu Ascetics). In spite of the later apparent antagonism between the Hindus and the Buddhists, the Great Temple (which had been built by a Hindu for the purpose of the worship of Buddha as a Hindu Avatar), had and has throughout the two milleniums of its existence, been a Hindu Temple, and so far that records indicate, been in the possession and under the control of the Mahanths of Bodh-Gaya, who belong to one of the sects of Saiva Sannyasis founded by Sankarcharya. In his learned book written on the subject, 'Maitreya' has decidedly proved that Buddhism had never died out of India, but had been adopted, and, absorbed in the current religion of the Hindus, and on account of the similarity and sometimes the identity between the teachings of Lord Buddha and the Brahamanic religion and its philosophic principles, Buddhism in India has not flourished as one of the sects of current Hinduism differentiated, but had been completely absorbed by it. The reforms of Sankarcharya had become necessary on account of the abuses which had crept in the latter froms of Buddhism, which

was current during his time, and which on account of the said abuses had become antagonistic to the then current common Brahmanic culture and religion. As a matter of fact, there is an opinion amongst the Hindus that, Sankaracharya, was a secret Buddhist, and his 'Adwaitabad' was only a statement of the early principles of Buddhism in another language.

The letter of Mr. Begiar (who was in charge of the repairs and restoration of the great temple on behalf of the Govt. of Bengal), which has been quoted above, in extenso, was one of the exhibits in a Civil Suit in which the right of the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya with regard to the temple-lands was directly in issue. The suit was ultimately decreed by the High Court of Calcutta on the 7th March, 1910 by Holmwood and Chatterjee JJ. and the rights of the Mahanth of Bodh Gaya, were upheld. Indeed Mr. Barua, in his book on 'Gaya and Bodh-Gaya,' in which he has endeavoured to establish the Buddhist case for the control of the great temple has been compelled to admit that *'the Shaivait Sanyasis have exercised their rights over the temple as its hereditary custodians without any break from the earliest times'* (vide Barua's Gaya and Bodh Gaya Page 322).

A Burmese inscription records that the great temple had been built by a Mahanth on the ruins on the original temple pavilion erected on the spot by Emperor Asoka. We do not know whether the Amar Singh or Amar Dev mentioned in the quotation from the inscription published in the researches of the Asiatic Society in 1785 A. D, by Charles Wilkins (quoted above) had become a Mahanth or not, but the evidence afforded by the very people who now want to wrest the control of the great temple from the hands of the Hindu Mahanth, must be regarded as of the greatest value on this point.

There is a village called at present by the name of Bakrour, which was formerly known as 'Ajapur'. Mention of this Ajapur is found in the ancient Buddhist Chronicles. There has been change and distortion of the names of these ancient places in the current language spoken by the inhabitants of these places, and, so it is not difficult to infer how Ajapur has been converted into Bakrour, as 'Aja' which means a goat, is known in the current language by the name of 'Bakri'. In this village Bakrour there is a shrine, and, a large tank dedicated to the memory of a Sanayasi called Matanga Gir,

The claim of the Mahanth of Bodh Gaya is that their spiritual ancestors were disciples of this 'Matanga Gir' who must have flourished at or immediately after the time of Lord Buddha. We find mention of this Matanga Giri in the ancient scriptures of the Hindus. It may be said that the legend of Gandha Hasti in the Buddhist literature was built upon the name and tradition of the 'Matanga Giri' in the anxiety of the Buddhist authors of the said literature to absorb as many places of Brahmanic importance, as could be possibly done. We will not however, enter into discussion on the point here, but according to the legend found current in the neighbourhood, the Mahanth Ghamandi Gir mentioned by Mr. Greierson, in his notes on the district of Gaya, was the spiritual successor, of this Matanga Giri, who must be said to have belonged to the sect of Jatila Sannyasis who had been found to be inhabiting the place where Prince Sidhartha, had attained final enlightenment. Unfortunately there is no written record in the Math of the Mahanth of Bodh Gaya of the ancestry traced above but there is a 'Sanad' which dates back 800 years ago, by which, the then Raja of Padma had granted a village named Simaria

to the then Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya. This document proves conclusively, that at any rate the statement contained in Mr. Grierson's "*Notes on the district of Gaya*", to the effect, that the first Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya was Mahanth Ghamadi Giri who had flourished between 1590 to 1615 A. D. must be incorrect,

It would not be out of the way to mention here that the present river Lilajan which was formerly known as 'Niranjana', which divides the villages Bodh Gaya and Bakrour, was not in existence in its present form for a very long time. Formrly there was only a small rivulet intervening between the said villages. The river *Niranjana*, (called Lilajan at present) at that time used to flow by the east of village Ajapur (Bakrour), and, it must have changed its course, subsequently, and broken through and widened the then existing rivulet which was flowing by the west of Bakrour. After the change of this river-course it is possible that the then Mahanth who was the custodian and was in charge of the temple (probably one of Mahanth Ghamandi Giri's spritual ancestors or Mahanth Ghamandi Giri himself) had shifted his abode to the Bodh-Gaya side of the river, and established himself at the place which is

now known as Ghamandi Bagh which is nearly 2 miles to the north of the Great Temple. There are records in the Math as well, and, other indisputable evidence to shew that the successor of Mahanth Ghamandi Giri (known by the name of Mahanth. Chaitanya Giri) finally went to live in the Great Temple yard itself. Thereafter his successor, Mahanth Mahadeo Giri, built the monastery of Bodh Gaya which has been completely rebuilt at the time of late Mahanth Krrshnya Dayal Giri, whose picture is given in the front page of this book. under the able management of Goswami Ramsahay Giri who may be said to be the builder of present opulent esate of Bodhgaya and its magnificent math-bulding.

A very curious feature of the case is that whilst no other shrine established or buiit at any of the places of importance to the Buddhists has been under the control, and, possession of any Hindu, the Great Temple of Bodh Gaya, so far as living memory & records go, has always been in the control of, and, in the direct possession of the Hindu Mahanth of Bodh Gaya, and in the centre of the temple itself the 'Lingam of Shiva', had been installed more than a millenenum ago (according to the inscription quoted above), and, was being worshipped by the Hindus along with the image of Buddha. It

is also to be noted here that vast numbers of Hindu pilgrims visit this shrine, and there are Gods of the Brahamanic Pathenon installed and established in the temple, and, the temple yard. The Hindu Mahanthas for some generations had lived in the temple yard. We find their tombs only a few yards, a way from the Great Temple.

That the worship of a Buddha had been extant long before Gautama Buddha's time, is proved beyond doubt from the passages of the Mahabharath, quoted in the next chapter, which must have been written many centuries before the birth of the present and the last Gautama Buddha. The name of Buddha is only a title, and is given to and held by persons who attain final illumination of their soul or Buddhahood. Even according to the Buddhist Scriptures, there had been many Buddhas previous to the Gautama Buddha, and there would be other Buddhas who are to come yet. According to Dr Oldenberg, the theory 'of Avatarship', of the Brahmans, and, the theory of Buddhahood of the Buddhists, are either derived, one from the other or are analogous to one another. The place where Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment is said to be the exact place where the other Buddhas

preceding him had also attained Buddhahood. In this way only, we can reconcile how the Mahabarath mentions about the worship of Buddha long before the birth of the present Gautama Buddha. Whether the present Gautama Buddha and his teachings were adopted by the Bra mins not, would not be a subject of discussion here, but we find that due to the lapse of time, or due to other causes which are not known yet, the present Gautama Buddha, has been adopted by the Hindus and the Brahmins, as the 9th Incarnation of Vishnu and the place of his final enlightenment is considered holy and sanctified by the Hindus,

In the subsequent chapters, we have dealt with and answered categorically the claim of the Mahabodhi Society with regard to the Great Temple. At the time when the previous edition of this book was written, we had hinted at the fact, that it was only foreign Buddhists (and a few of them) who were organised to form a society for establishing a colony of foreign Buddhists at Bodh - Gaya. We had also mentioned that the whole scheme might be one of the tentacles which was being thrust from Tokio to grab India. Events have proved

how far my apprehensions were justified. One of the sponsors of the Bill regarding Bodh-Gaya in the Central Legislature of India, was a rebel and acted as the puppet Minister of the so called Independent Burmese Government under Japan.

When the sovereignty of the country was vested in a Buddhist King, named Dharampala (who flourished in the 5th century A. D.) we find the recognition of the right of the Shaiva sect in this temple to such an extent that, the image of Shiva was installed in the centre of the temple. Latterly when the country was wrested from the Hindu Kings by the Mahomedans, they, in their turn, acknowledged, that the ownership of the temple was vested in the Mahanth of Bodh Gaya. Under the British Government also, the Mahanth's ownership of the site and of the shrine is admitted, and acknowledged, not only by the Government itself, but also by an Independent neighbouring Buddhist King, namely King Thebaw of Burma. Even, H. Dharampala the bitterest enemy of the Mahanth of Bodh Gaya in respect of the control of the temple, has given it in writing that the Mahanth was the Malik (owner) of the place,

King of
Burma's
negotiation
for
worshipping
in Great
Temple

When the King of Burma wanted to send some presents to the Bodh-Gaya shrine, he, through the Political Department of the Government of India asked for, and took permission for the same. The following letter from the District Magistrate & Collector of Gaya may be read on the point.

By order of the Magistrate
of Gaya.

My dear Mahanth of Bodh Gaya.
May you live comfortably:—

In sending herewith an extract from the letter of the King of Burma to his Excellency, the Viceroy in Council, regarding the wishes of the King of Burma to have the compound of the Bodhi tree repaired and the deputation of two men near the said tree for the purpose of its daily worship, and also as regards the sending of articles of worship to be offered to the tree once or twice a year, *I request you to let me know whether you approve of, and, agree to the same.* Be it known that an early reply to it is required.

Dated 15th February, Sd. A. V. Palmer,
1875. Magistrate and Collector,

The following is an extract from the translation of the letter from the Foreign Department, Mandalay, to the secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department.

“ As in 1234 corresponding with 1872 A. D. His Excellency, the Governor General of India sent a delegate (envoy) with presents to the King of Burma, the King of Burma has now in return ordered a royal letter with presents to be sent by way of friendship, and also that his delegates do see the Bodhi Tree in Hindusthan. As under this Bodhi Tree, which has been very sacred and incomparable during three Jugas (ages), the all-knowing Buddha had his dominion under it, the King, therefore, wishes that religious offerings to God be made before the sacred tree. On this view the King has ordered that articles of offerings be made over to the delegates. The following four have been appointed delegates:—

1. Andok Mahe Manbila Zethoo;
2. Tarini Dego Nimboo Mandar Rithoo,
3. Ajud Mandar Kayoogong,
4. Noorthe Dore Tisi Thod,

The articles of offering have been made over to the above named persons for offering

to the Bodhi Tree, and, they are being sent to Hindusthan. It is hoped that on arrival of the delegates, the Secretary, by way of friendship will do his best towards the realization of their object. and, after helping them in delivering the letter and the royal presents, will render every assistance in their visit to the tree in the Hindusthan, and also in making offering and worshipping the Tree on behalf of the King. The King, further, desires that the compound of the tree, which may have been burnt on account of age. be repaired. It is also his wish that two persons be deputed near the Bodhi Tree for daily worship. He also wishes that once or twice a year his people may take offering to the Tree, as they may desire, and it is hoped that the Secretary will lay before His Excellency, the Viceroy, the objects of the king and help in the fulfilment there of.

King of
Burma's
letter to the
Viceroy
of India.

Next, the translation of the agreement executed by the Minister of the king of Burma, in favour of the

Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya is reproduced here.

Agreement dated the 11th February, 1877 Stamp Correct under Article 37, Section II, Act XVIII of 1869. Admissible Under Section 21, 23, 28, and 32 Act VIII of 1871.

I am Mahalia Chowdin Sadir, son of Mahalia Chowdin, inhabitant of Mandalay, in the Kingdom of Burma and Wazir (Minister) of the King of Burma.

Whereas the king of Burma is a Buddhist, and, there is a shrine of Buddha Bhagwan (God) at Bodh-Gaya, that is at Mouzah Taradih, which was constructed from time immemorial. At present it is in a dilapidated state and wants repairs. Therefore, the king of Burma desires that he, for his spiritual benefit and for perpetuation of his name, should repair the shrine. But the said shrine stands within the Zamindari, and, is in the possession of Mahanth Hem Narain Gir,

Agreement
by King of
Burma dated
11th Feb.
1877

King of
Burma's
agreement of
1877 A. D.

Gadinashin of Asthan Math at Bodh-Gaya, and I under orders of the King of Burma, want to make repairs. So I according to the orders of the King of Burma, spoke to the said Mahanth regarding the repairs of the shrine. The said Mahanth, understanding that the work of antiquity will be saved from being ruined, gave permission to make the repairs subject to the conditions herein setforth:—*That I shall cause the repairs to such portions of the shrine as will be shown by the Mahanth and in such a manner as will be directed by him, because close to the said shrine there are many gods of the Hindus and old temples of the Gods of his gurus as well as houses occupied by tenants, and he wanted that they should not in any way be molested in point of religion or any injury done to them. That it has been a long standing practice that he offers his worship to the God Buddha and Bodhi tree, as well to the idols which are placed beneath them, and such worship is allowable and people gather there for darshan and worship. His disciples are posted there to take care of the said shrine and to assist in the worship. So I shall have nothing to do*

with the taking care of the shrine. That after the repairs have been done, I shall not be competent to claim either the compound, or the door or any of the shrines or any of the buildings etc., and that the servants that have been and may hereafter be, there, for, the purpose of worship on behalf of the king of Burma, should stay there, observing the Zemindari rules of the zemindar. I also with permission of the Maha Dharam Raja king of Burma have accepted the said conditions and hereby declare and give in writing that I or the king of Burma or his servants, that have now been or that may there after be, shall never transgress any of the conditions set-forth above. Should it be so, it shall be held null and void before the Court for the time being. I therefore, give in writing these few words in the shape of an agreement that it may be used, when required."

Agreement
by the king
of Burma of
1877 A. D.

Next in the series, the agreement executed by H Dharmapala himself may in perused.

AGREEMENT EXECUTED BY DHARAMAPAL.

I am Dharampala Hevevitarana
son of D C. Havevitarna, Secretary,

Bodh-Gaya Mahabodhi Society, at Colombo in Ceylon, other wise called Lanka Dwipa.

Dharama-
ala's Agree-
ment with
Mahants,

Whereas one bigha and ten cuthas of land situated within the compound of Fortress (Killa), Jaggunnath in Mahabodhi, Perganna Maher, District Gaya belongs to Mahanth Hem Narain Gir, as his ancestral Lakhiraj property, that land- I have taken lease of, for erecting a house, from Mahanth Hem Narain Gir disciple of Mahanth Bhaipat Gir, resident of and Gadi Nashin of Math Boddh-Gaya, by profession zemindar, and mendicant on a rental of Rs. 8 - per bigha annually I therefore. promise and do execute this Kabuliat otherwise called Sarkhat Keraianama, that I will erect a house on the land and will either remain in the house myself or will settle tenants there in, that I will not do anything against the order of the proprietor Jagirdar, so that any injury may be done to the Malik. I also promise that I will pay the rent every year to the Malik Jagirdar. In

case of default in the payment of the above rent and in case of going against the (orders) of the Malik Khairatdar (Jagirdar), the said Malik has and will have the right to take possession of of the land with the house himself or through the assistance of competent court, any may settle the same with whomsoever he likes. In that case, I or the proprietors of the Committee or anybody else will not have any objection. In case it is objected, then we may pay the rent, remove the materials and vacate the land without any objection. This Kabuliat is therefore, executed that it may be of use, when required. Land rented 1 bigha and 10 cottahs Khairat land in the compound of fortress (killa) Jaggunnathji. situate in Mahabodhi, Pergana Maher, District Gaya."

Dharama-
pala's Agree-
ment

The Government has so far treated Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya, as the custodian and proprietor of the Great Temple. The following correspondence may be quoted in proof of it.

No. 1134

From

G. A. Grierson Esq.,
Magistrate and Collector, Gaya.

To

The Commissioner, Patna Division,
Dated Gaya, the 6th May, 1891.

Sir

I have the honour to forward here-with an extract from a letter written by the Superintending Engineer, regarding the Boddh-Gaya Temple.

"I request that you will cause the custodian to be fully informed of the peculiar and in some respects delicate position he occupies. *The building is not the property of Government. and is only taken charge of with the consent of the Mahanth. The custodian must at all times treat the Mahanth with the greatest respect and deference, and it would I think, be well for him to pay the Mahanth a monthly official visit so that he may be informed of any special course to be taken.* It would be absolutely impossible to retain the custodian in his office, if he gave any reasonable cause of offence the the Mahanth or the temple officials, and this fact should be thoroughly impressed on the custodian who can, with ordinary carefulness, maintain good under-standing with them. His efficiency will

be largely judged by his remaining on really good terms with the temple authorities."

2. Presonally I entirely agree wftth these instructions, which also accord with the tradition handed down from Magistrate to Magistrate as to the position held by Government with regard to the temple and have indeed reason to believe that the instructions are fouud on information given by me to Mr. Olding.

3. I should be glad to communicate the tenor of these instructions to the Mahanth himself with whom I am on excellent terms, but before doing so, I wish to be certain of my ground.

4 I can find no paper in the office definining the position of Government in regard to the Bodh-Gaya Temple.

Grierson's
Letter

5. The tradition is that, as Government has spent two lakhs on the temple, it has a certain, undefined right to see its preservation and protection, *the Mahanth remaning the proprietor, and all that we do, bcing done with his consent.*

6 I am not prepared to condemn this state of affairs which has grown up naturally and works smoothly.

7. The only thing I want to be certain about is, that it exists.

8. There must have been some negotiations between Government and the Mahanth when the repair of the temple was first undertaken and probably the rights of Government in the matter were then defined.

9. There are no papers that I can find on the subject in my office, and I shall be obliged if you will enquire from Government as to what arrangement if any, was come to, as to the right of Government:—

(i) In regard to the temple itself.

(ii) In regard to its precincts.

10. You can understand that while hitherto acquiescing in the traditional arrangement, I am unwilling to give the Mahanth a written document confirming it, till I am certain that no other arrangement has been previously made,

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
Sd. G. A. Grierson,
Magistrate and Collector,

|

(53)

No. 297 G.

From

C. C. Stevens, Esq.,
Commissioner of the Patna Division,

To

The Government of Bengal,
Public Works Department,
Dated Bankipore, 21st May, 1891.

Sir,

I have the honour to forward copy of a letter from the Magistrate of Gaya, on the subject of certain instructions proposed to be issued at the instance of the Superintending Engineer to the custodian of the Bodh-Gaya Temple.

Before issuing these instructions, Mr. Grierson, wishes to know what arrangement if any, was come to as to the rights of Government in regard to the temple itself and its precincts. There are no papers in his office or in mine which can throw light on the subject. I therefore, submit the matter for the orders of Government. It seems very desirable that the position of Government in regard to the temple and its precincts should be carefully defined.

I have the honour to be,
Sir

Your most obedient servant,
C. C. Stevens
Commissioner, Patna Division,

From

The Government of Bengal,
Public Works Department,

To

The Commissioner of the Patna Division,
Dated, Calcutta, the 7th July, 1891.

Archaeology.

Sir,

With reference to your letter No. 297 G, dated the 21st May 1891, with which you forward copy of a letter from the Magistrate of Gaya, on the subject of certain instructions proposed to be issued to the custodian of Bodh-Gaya temple, and requesting that the position of Government in regard to the temple and its precincts should be clearly defined as never yet been decided, and that the Lieut-Governor, would like the case brought before him whenever he visits Gaya.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient servant,
(Sd.) F. J. Johnstone,
Joint Secretary to Government,

(55)

No, 2498

From

G. A. Grierson, Esq.,

Magistrate and Collector, Gaya.

To

The Commissinor of the Patna Division

Dated, Gaya, the 4th November, 1891

Sir,

With reference to your letter
No. 333 G. dated the 14th July 1891.

I have the honour to say that I have
had the honour of discussing the
subject with his honour the Lieut
Governor during his late visit at Gaya,
and his honour is of opinion that it
is not advisable to take any action at
present in the matter *or to disturb exist-*
ing arrangements.

Not to
disturb
existing
arrangements

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

Sd. G. A. Grierson,

Magistrate and Collector.

No C. P. D. (Political Branch)

From

H J. S. Cotton, Esq., C S. I.
Chief Secretary to the Government
of Bengal,

To

H. Dharmapala, Esq.,
General Secretary, Maha-Bodhi Socceity,
Gaya,

Dated Darjeeling 5th May, 1894.

Sir,

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt your letter, dated the 14th April, 1894, and in reply, to inform you that *the Bengal Government is not in a position to give encouragement to any negotiations for effecting the transfer of the Bodh-Gaya shrine to the Mahabodhi Society. There is a perfect freedom of worship for all Buddhists at Bodh - Gaya, and the Hindu Sanayasis, who have held the place for over five centuries, are ever ready to meet all reasonable requirements of worshippers. Any well-grounded complaint that difficulties were imposed, would meet with ready attention and redress at the hands of the Bengal Government, but the Lieut., Governor can undertake no measures for the general objects of the Maha-Bodhi Society.*

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant

(H. J. S. Cotton)

Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal

The above quoted correspondence will clearly indicate that the position of the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya as the owner & custodian of the Bodh-Gaya Temple had been admitted by the Government. In recent years, the Government of Bihar has also accepted the position, as the correspondence quoted below will indicate.

Government of Bihar and Orissa.
Political Department.

From

The Commissioner of the Patna Division,
Patna, the 9/11th March, 1939.

Sir,

I am directed to enclose a copy a memorial which has been sent to His Excellency by the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya, and to request you to communicate to the Mahanth the following orders which have been passed upon the memorial.

Mr. Brett's
Letter.

2. In letter No-10765-B, dated the 26th November, 1935, addressed to the Superintendent, Archaeological Survey, central circle, the local Government in the Department of

Public Works sanctioned in fixing of a bell by the General Secretary of the Maha-Bodhi Society at the Bodh-Gaya temple. *This order was issued under a misapprehension and in ignorance of the fact, that the consent of the Mahanth has not been obtained. On ascertaining the actual facts the Local Government have cancelled the order. I am to request that the Mahanth may be assured that the inadvertent issue of the order in question in no way indicates any change from the previous policy with regard to the construction of works at the temple.*

3. The Mahanth may further be informed that the Local Government have in the past held that it is not desirable to declare the temple to be a protected monument under the Ancient Monument Preservation Act of 1904 and that they have no intention of revising that decision.

I have etc,

Sd. W. B. Brett,

Chief Secretary to Government.

Memo No. G 1144-11-2-2.

Patna Commissioner's Office,

Dated, Patna, the 13th March, 1936.

Copy with the copy of its enclosure forwarded to the District Magistrate of Gaya for information and for favour of communication to the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya.

Sd. R. P. N. Sahai,

Copy forwarded to the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya for information.

We beg to conclude this chapter by quoting from the judgment of the High Court of Calcutta in the case of Jaipal Gir and others, Vs. H. Dharmapala. In that case the question of the title and possession of the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya to the great temple was directly in issue. Macpherson J. held as follows:—

“A great part of the lengthy judgment of the Magistrate and of the Judge is devoted to a discussion of the Mahanth’s position in regard to the temple and the extent of his proprietary right and power of control. His possession is found, but the extent of his proprietary interest and power of control is questioned. *There is no doubt that he is in possession, that he is the sole superintendent of the temple, and, that he takes all the offerings both of Hindus and Buddhists, and the present state of things appears to have been in existence for many years, if not for centuries.* It is not proved, I do not think it is alleged, that any Buddhist priest has ever exercised any control

Calcutta
High Court’s
Judgment.

or authority in the temple within the living memory. The Government has had no occasion to interfere in the internal management, even if it could do so, and, that is not a question which need be considered in this case. If the control and superintendence of the temple is not vested in the Mahanth, it does not appear to be vested in any one". This judgment was used in deciding a later Civil Case between the Mahanth on one side, and, H. Dharampala and others, and the Secretary of State in Council on the other. In the later Civil Case also, the title and possession of Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya to the great temple precincts was upheld. In passing we may remark, that the letter of Beglar describing the conditions and circumstances of the Great Temple on or about the time of its restoration by the Government, was exhibited in the latter Civil Suit. We have quoted in extenso from this letter, and although now some persons are striving to throw doubts as regards the correctness of the statements contained therein, neither Mr. H. Dharampala nor his associate Buddhists nor anybody on behalf of the Secretary of State for India in Council could cast any aspersion on the same during the trial of the Civil suit.

We may conclude, therefore, that, Conclusion.
it has been amply proved that the
Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya is in possession
and is the owner of the Great Temple
at Bodh Gaya not as a squatter whose
rights have been perfected by the law
of limitation, but rightly and equitably
as a successor - in - interest of the
earliest Shaivite Sanaysis who held
the place and of the Mahanth who
built the temple and enshrined the
image of Buddha or Dharameswara
therein.

CHAPTER II

Right of
the Hindus
to
worship.

We will deal in this chapter about the right of the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya as a spiritual head of the Hindus and of the Hindus in general under the guidance of the Mahanth to worship the image of Buddha or Dharmeswara installed in the great temple at Bodh-Gaya and the famous Bodhi-Tree and the various other Gods and dieties scattered all over the temple area. It will be useful to broadly note the position of these various objects, of veneration and worship in the holy temple area. First of all is the great temple itself and in its various niches are still to be found images of the Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu Pathenon. Under another Bodhi-tree to the north of the temple (about 20 yards away), are the images of Ganesh, Sanischara, Hara Parvati etc,. Near the Toran Gate of the temple are two huge foot prints of Vishnu bearing inscriptions in in Devanagri character. Under

the Bodhi-tree itself is another pair of huge foot-prints, and below the *Bajrasan* throne are images of many other Hindu Gods and Goddesses. There is a Hom - Kund near the Bodhi-tree where Homam is performed by the Mahanth of Bodh - Gaya on every important religious occasion, as well as on every new moon day. Adjacent to the temple on the north is a cylindrical platform which marks the site where Mahanth Chaityana Giri, used to perform his Homam and immediately to the east are three small temples containing Phallic Shiva emblems under which lies buried the mortal remains of three of the great Mahanthas of the Bodh-Gaya Math. Inside the temple on the first floor, just at the centre, there is a circular slab of stone with a hole in it which denotes the site, where the Chaturmukha Shiva image had stood till 1832 A. D. when it had to be removed on account of the restoration work which was being carried on by Mr. Beglar. It will bear repetition to state here, that this very image had been installed during the reign of King Dharampala in the 5th century A. D. about which we have quoted an inscription in the previous chapter. Although the image has not been restored, but the site where it stood is

still worshipped. Inside the temple adjacent to the western wall is a big platform, or, Vedi which also contains images of various Hindu Gods and Goddesses, and on the platform itself is the big image which had been brought there from the Math of the Mahanth of Bodhi-Gaya and installed by him under Hindu Shastric rites. The image, as has been stated above, used to be worshipped in the Math of the Mahanth as Bhairon (Bhairab is a manifestation of God Shiva when he destroys all creation in his dance of death). Next is the Bodhi-tree itself, which has continued to be the object of worship veneration from the time of the vedas.

Pouranic
Hinduism
enjoins
Buddha
worship.

There is an opinion, that the Puranas in which mention is made of the worship of Buddha and Bodhi-tree are of a later age, although it is not understood exactly how that by itself can stand against the claim of the Hindus to worship them. Every Hindu worship and ritual is in most cases regulated by the tennets of those very Puranas, and, one may say that

Hinduism as extant now, is simply Pauranic in character. If that be so, it is simple to conclude that the present day Hindus are enjoined to and should perform the worship of Buddha and of the Bodhi-tree under their present religious codes.

Our claim, that is to say, the claim of the present day Hindus is, that we are directed by our religious books to worship Buddha and to worship the Bodhi-tree. We say, that, not to do so would be tantamount to heresy. And we further say, that, the Hindu who stands in the way of our doing so, is a heretic. But it has been proved satisfactorily, that the worship of the Bodhi-tree dates much further beyond the advent of Christ at any rate. As far back as the Kushana age it is enjoined in the epic version of the earlier Eulogium (Mahabharata) that every pious Hindu visiting Gaya should make it a point to go to the Buddha image of the place. A few quotations from epics and the Puranas are made here to establish the propositions stated above.

(A).

82. "The devout pilgrim as he reaches Gaya, pure in conduct and absorbed in thought, earns the merit of horse-sacrifice (aswamedha) and emancipates the line of his forefathers.

Mahabharat
Vana-parva
Ch. 84
vs. 83-103.

83. *There at the foot of the Undying Banyan of three world fame an offering to the departed spirits means to him a harvest of imperishable kind.*

84. At the bed of the Mahanadi (one of the confluents of river Phalgu), he should offer oblations to the dead ancestors with its waters so as to ensure the line of his descent as well.

85. Next to repair to the tank of Dharmeswara beautified by the outskirting sylvan expanse of Dharmaranya (at present called *Dhamaran*) in order to cherish the Bhramaloka as sure as the dawn of day follows the flight of night.

86. The great sacrificial post raised by Brahma (Brahma Yupa) and standing by the same tank, the pilgrims should go round about so that the result of Vajapeya (horse sacrifice) may be theirs.

*87-88. Thereafter, O Lord of kings, the devout one should walk to and stay day and night at the renowned region of *Dhenuka*. Thence he should proceed to Tiladhenuka. There, O Lord of kings, the prominent marks can undoubtedly

*N. B.:—Fossilised foot-prints of cattle are still visible on the top of the Mangola Gouri hills which is about 200 yards north-west of the tank of Brahmasarowar in which the Brahma-yupa post is still visible.

be traced even to this day, and, in consequence he inevitably enters the Somaloka with a mind purged of all sins.

89-90. The milch-cow Kapila ranged the very hills with her calf may be discerned there, O, King, even now. And a touch of these rocky impression would, O, the best of sovereigns, completely destroy effects of any human misdeed,*

91-92. Then he must journey to the foot of Giridharavanta the banayan tree marking approach to Gridhrakuta hill (the present Brahmayoni range) the holy site of the God, Shiva, the holder of the trident. Then going near the figure of the Bull, he shall besmear it with ashes. In the case of Brahmins the result thereof is the merits of observing the sacrificial rites which lasts for 12 years and in the case of other castes it is the end of all sins.

93-94. The pilgrim then, O, Lord of kings, visits the hills Udayana and *Gitanandito* where the site for the observance of Savitri can be seen. There the Brahmins, given to religious rites should invoke Sandhya+, a highly meritorious act which bears the fruit of 12 year's practice elsewhere.

*N. B.:—There hoofmarks can still be found imprinted on the granite-slabs on the present Mangaingonri hills.

95. There is then the famed Yonivadra (Brahmayoni, the passage of the womb). When a man passing through it succeeds in coming out he escapes from the danger of rebirth.*

96. The man who resides at Gaya during both the dark half and bright half of the lunar month ministers forsooth, O, Lord, to the pleasure of the dead forefathers back to the seventh generation.

97. A person should desire to have many sons (or descendants) in the hope that at least one of them may perchance undertake pilgrimage to Gaya, or perform the horse-sacrifice, or set at liberty a bull of the blue complexion. (The country round about abounds with blue bulls which are held sacred).

98. Then, O Lord, the pilgrim should wend his way to the Phalgu river to obtain the result of horse-sacrifice and to attain fulfillment of his objective.

99. Thereafter with all solemnity he should go to Dharma-prastha (the

*N. B. :—Pilgrims even now undertake this ordeal.

holy site of Dharma) where O, Great King Yudhishtira, virtue ever reigns and where he should drink the water of the well and bathe in the same and thereby get sanctified to offer oblations to the spirits of the forefathers. Freed from all sin, he then journeys into heaven.

101-102 There (at Dharamaprastha) stands the hermitage of the high-souled great sage Matanga.* On entering into that hermitage O, Graceful King, men's fatigue and sorrow all come to an end, and they obtain the result of cow-sacrifice. From a holy touch of Dharma (the Buddha-image), there accrues to them benefit of Horse-sacrifice.

103 The pilgrim should at last go, O Lord, of Kings, to Brahmasthana (the holy site of Brahma) of unsurpassed fame, and thereby enjoy the fruit of Rajasuya and Asvamedha sacrifices.

(B).

Bowing unto piety like (Dharmanga, that is, Dharmaraj Lord of Piety (Dharmeshawara, that is, Buddha Deva), one should next bow unto

Vayupurana
Uttarardha,
Lesson 43,
Verses 26-27

* The allusion is of the same Matanga Giri who has been described before as the spiritual ancestor of the present mahant of Bodh-Gaya.

the Mahabodhi tree saying, salutations to Thee, O Prince of Asvathava trees. Thee that hast Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva for thy soul, Thee that art the Bodhi tree, for (achieving) the rescue of both those that worship Thee and their Pitris. Let those kinsmen of our race as also of our maternal line that have met with a miserable end, attain to an eternal heavenly end through Thy sight and touch, O king of trees. By coming to Gaya, I have repaid my triple debts. Through Thy grace I am rescued from great sin (in the form of) rebirth.

The Mahabodhi Tree is an object of veneration with the Hindus who are enjoined to worship it. It is regarded as the prince of all Asvatha trees (*Ficus Religiosa*) and therefore Sir Edwin Arnold's assertion that it is nothing to the Hindus falls to the ground. It is supposed to be pervaded by the three dieties of the Hindu triad.

The triple debt, every man has three debts to repay. His debt to the dieties is paid off by worship; that to the Pitris (ancestors) by

N. B.:—By Dharmeswara is meant Buddha. The spot is called Dhammaran (Dharmaranyia) even uptill to day, and is situated on the bank of the Niranjana river opposite to Bodhi-Gaya.

Sraddha and begetting male children; and that to the Rishis, by a study of the scriptures. The sense is, that by the one act of coming to Gaya one pays off all the three debts aforesaid.

(C).

The following quotations will amply prove that the aswatha (Pipal or Banyan tree) has been held be sacred and sanctified by all Hindus from time immemorial.

I repeatedly bow to thee, O, Asvatha. Thou,, O tree. whose leaves are constantly nodding; Thou that art always the cause of preservation of the universe, Thou that art of the form of pure knowledge; Thou art the embodiment of all sacrifices.

Vayu
Purana
Uttarardha
Lesson
49. Verses
26, 29. X.

Thou art the eleventh one of the Rudras. And Pavaka among the Vasus. Thou art Narayana among the dieties and Thou art the prince of trees, O Pipala.

Since, O, Asvattha, prince of trees, Narayan dwells for all time in Thee, Thou art always auspicious and the most praiseworthy and the effective destroyer of earthly miseries.

I bow unto that Shining One, who is the bearer of the conch the discus, and the mace, and has assumed the form of the Asvatha, who is lotus-eyed, and is Hari bearing the form of a tree.

The following would prove beyond doubt that Buddha and the Mahabodhi tree used to be worshipped and venerated by the Puranas.

Agni-Purana
Lesson 11s.
verses 57.

A righteous man by bowing unto the Mahabohi tree, becomes the enjoyer of heavenly region. After this, under the Mahabodhi tree, for the desire of one's attaining to heaven one should perform the Sraddha as on Preta-Parvata, or offer the pinda alone.

(E).

Bhagwa-ta
Sakanda 6
Lesson 8
Vs. 17.

Displayed as grant incarnation of Vishnu for the protection of righteousness, let the illustrious islandborn (Vyasa) rescuse us from ignorance, Buddha from sinful wretches and the error of their ways, and Kalki from Koli, dirt of all Yugas.

(F).

Ibld, Skanda
10 Lesson 40
Vs. 22,

Salutations to Buddha, who is pure and who is the confounder of Daityas and Danavas.

I shall declare unto thee the indications of the ten incarnations of (Vishnu) beginning with fish, etc.

Beginning with the passage:—

“The incarnation known as the fish of the form of fish,” we have come upon ‘By establishing Vishnu in the form of Boar, one attains to sovereignty and succeeds in crossing the oceans of the world.’”

Agni-Purana,
Lesson 49.
Vs. 2-8.

“Of tranquil soul, long ears, and fair complexion, robed in garments, and seated upon a lotus, is Buddha He is giver of all boons and the dispeller of all fears”.

(H)

Fish. Tortoise, Boar, Man-lion, Dwarf, (Bamana), Parasu-Rama, Rama-Krishna, (or Baldeva), Buddha, and Kalki-establishing the image of these with the aid of the *Gaitri* one should worship, them.

(I).

After the same manner, on the 12th Lunar Day of the lighted fortnight of Sravana, Narayan should be worshipped with these Mantras Viz:—

Vavishya
Purana
Utraradha
Lesson 73.

Referring to the feet, the worshipper should say:—

Salutation to Buddha,

Referring to the wrist, he should say,
Salutation to Sridhara.

Referring to the belly, he should say,
Salutations to Him, He who has sprung
from the Lotus.

Referring to the neck, he should say,
Salutations to Him of excellent neck.

Referring to the two arms he should say,
Salutations to Him whose arms, extend
over all the Universe.

Referring to the conch the should say,
Salutation to the conch.

Referring to the discus, he should say,
Salutation to the discus.

Having worshipped Vishnu with
these Mantras, a golden image, of the
illustrious and divine Buddha should
be set up on a jar (full of water). It
should then be worshipped (with the
Mantras) and then given away to
Brahmans.

(K).

Varaha Pura-
na Lesson IV.
verse 8.

Tortoise, Boar, Man-lion, Dwarf,
Krishna, Buddha and Kalki, these are

the ten (Avatars). These ten, O, Upholder of all creatures, have been said to be his form, O beautiful one. These constitute a flight of steps for those who are desirous of obtaining a sight of Vishnu.

(L).

Salutations to Thee, O Buddha, and to Thee, O Kaliki. Both of you are givers of high boons.

Baraha
Purana
Lesson V.
Verse. 37.

(M).

A salagram, that is ended with a small hole and divested of chakra and close-grained, is known as the image of Buddha. Duly worshipped it rewards the worshipper with the highest end, *

Brahmanda
Purana.

(N),

For establishing righteousness and achieving the destruction of the asuras, He, of eyes like lotus-petals, through

Mastya
Purana
Ch. 47
Verse. 247.

*N. B.:—Rounded stones found in the beds of certain rivers, and rounded and polished by the effect of the current, are used for the the symolol-worship of Vishnu. These stones have diverse markings and each stone according to its special features is known as a particular from of Vishnu, such as Sridhara, Lakshmi - Narayan, Padmanava, Raghunatha Rana-Raghu &c. The kind of stone described in the above text is called Buddha.

the puissance of the penances, took birth as Buddha, His ninth incarnation.*

(O).

Kurma
Purana,
Ch. 6.
Verse. 16,

Salutations to Buddha, the pure, salutations unto Thee that art the from of knowledge. Salutations unto Thy from of joy, salutations unto Him that is witness of the universe.

(P).

Ibid

Salutations to Buddha, the pure, salutations to Him that is emancipated, to Him that is the Cause Repeated. Salutations unto Thee that art the beguiler. Thee that art the Creator.

(R).

Vayu Purana
Sec. 80.
Verse 115.

Salutations unto Buddha, the pure, to Him who agitated (the hearts of sinner) and to Him that is immutable.

(S).

Pratistha
Mayukha

One should worship the navel, saying, salutation unto Krishna; one

*N. B.:—Vishnu took birth as Buddha in consequence of the puissance of penances. In the case of every other being, birth is determined by the actions of his previous life. It does not rest upon choice. As regards Vishnu, however, His birth in any particular form rests upon his choice. The freedom about the assumption of form is due to the puissance of His penances.

should worship the intellect, saying,
salutations unto Buddha.

(T).

Let Buddha rescue us from multi-
tudinous swarms of sinful wretches;
but Kalki rescue us from sin.

Gadura
Purana
Lesson 202
Verse 51.

(U).

I bow to Thee to that Effulgence,
who assumed the form of Buddha for
stopping the slaughter of animals.*

Debi Bhagbata
S. 10,
C. 5,
Verse 51.

(V).

Repeated bow to Buddha, to Him
that was pure, Him that was filled
with great humanity.

Padma Pura
na, Kriya
Khandach.11
Verse 95.

(W).

I bow to Thee that art the embodi-
ment² of Illusion, to Thee that takest
innumerable forms, to Thee that takest
the form of Buddha for beguiling many
creatures.

Mahabharata
Santi Parva
Hymn of
Vishnu to
Krishna.

*N. B.;—Deva literally means light or shining one. The common theory is that in sacrifices, offering of grain only should be made and not of animals. It is only in the sacrifice of the wicked that animals are slaughtered. Buddha protested against the in-humanity of such sacrifices owing to the slaughter of animals.

(X).

Having worshipped the two dieties, Viz;--Hari (Vishnu), and Sankara (Mahadeva), he once more adores Vishnu in the following verse which bears a double meaning (for it applies to both Vishnu and Buddha).

Shankara
Vijaya
Lesson 12.
Verse. 8.

I adore Him who subjected the Fish-Bannered (hero), Him whose condition of omniscience was made manifest, Him who reached the highest grade of compassion, Him who favoured hatred to sacrifices, Him who was the highest goal of knowledge, Him who was great.

Skanda
Purana
Abanti,
Khanda
Ch. 68
p. 304
Lucknow
Edition.

*Koti Koti Janakirna Matrinamn Sakti
Bardhini, Gaya Skhetrey Mahapunnyey
Phalguschaib Mahanadi; Purushottam Giri
Srestho Yatra Buddha Gaya-Samrita, * *
* * * * Trishulokeshu bisrutah. **

*N. B;—It can be said that Purushottama (which literally means, the best amongst men), is another name for Buddha; the word Giri means best, the highest etc., So Purushottama Giri would mean the all Highest and the most excellent amongst men. It is curious to note that the Mahants of Bodh-Gaya Math always append the word Giri to their names. This is a coincidence which cannot be said to be accidental. We have stated before that Prince Sidhartha had come and lived amongst the Shaivite Sannyasis in the region now known as Bodhgaya, and that the said Sannyasis have held the place since then. It is possible that Prince Sidhartha was also known as Purushottam Giri, having accepted the cult of the said Sannyasis.

(Y).

As regards the Bodhi tree the following further quotations would suffice to convince everybody, that the same was held in high veneration by all Hindus and was worshipped by them from prehistoric times.

"I bend my head low in obeisance to thee, Asvatha, the Lord of trees, standing as living from of the Holy Triad of our pathenon with thy high fame as Bodhi-druma, the renowned Bo, for the release of the dead forefathers, and maker of the line of descent."

Gaya-
mahatma

"Those in my direct line and connected with mother's line, the kith and kin who have gone into the state of woe, may they, from Thine holy sight and touch, pass into an eternal state of heavenly life.

"The triple debts have I paid, O, King, of trees, by coming on pilgrimage to Gaya. By Thy benign grace am I rescued from the awful ocean of existence and liberated from deadly sins."

The ideal of the Bodhi Tree is not

only confined to the ancient texts of the religious books of the Hindus but forms a part and parcel of the present day living Hindu religion. The contention that the Hindus are enjoined to worship and offer Pindas under any Bo tree and not the tree under which Buddha had attained enlightenment has no basis at all. We can not agree with the suggestion that the Hindus do not pay homage to the fig tree which stands close to the west of the temple but to another tree which stands apart from it to the north. The wordings of the invocation quoted above makes it clear that the object of veneration of Hindus is none other than the Bodh tree. (Vide Gaya Mahatma).

52 earlier
Buddhas.

On the strength of the Buddhist scriptures we can say that the spot where Gautama or Prince Siddhartha had attained Enlightenment, was the same where fifty two prior Buddhas had attained supreme wisdom, but it is to be noted that none of these fifty-two earlier Buddhas have left any

proof of having formulated any special cult, which was at variance with the religion prevalent amongst the Hindus of their time. Connected with the meditation or tapasya of these fifty-two enlightened Sages or Rishis was the association of the Pipal or Asvattha Tree that had sheltered them during the period of their meditation, and, hence we find that the Pipal Tree is held in high veneration by the Hindus from the time of the Vedas.

Holy association of the Bodhi-tree.

In Vayua Purana there is explicit mention for the worship of Bodhi tree after the worship of Buddha. Rhys Davids maintains that the veneration for the Asvattha or Bodhi Tree (*Ficus Religiosa*) amongst the Buddhists may be traced to the ancient fire worship of the Hindus. As the wood of this tree was specially used for the fire-drill (arani) for kindling the spark for lighting the yagna-fire, it might be that the tree came to be regarded as sacred by the Hindus. This regard for the tree was maintained by Buddha, who handed it down to his followers

(See Rhys Davids, Buddhist India, Page 231). Everybody knows and is familiar with the texts which extol the virtue of the Asvatha Tree. In the Katha Upanishads (Katha, VI) (i) “ *Urdhvanmulo ‘Adhasakha Esho Savattah Sanatanah*” and the Bhagvad Gita

KathaUpani-
shadandBhag
bat Gita.

(Bhagvata Gita) XV. (ii) *Urdhva-mulam Adhasakham Asvatham Prahurh Asyayam*)

the evolution of life has been illustrated by an Asvatha tree. In the first Mandala of the Rig. – Veda we find a marvellous symbolisation of the dual forces controlling the life as it exists on this planet. Rig. Veda, 1. 22. 164, 20). Referring again to the Bhagvata Gita we find that the highest place has been given to the Asvatha Tree for its Divine sanctity (*Aham Sarvavrikhaham Asvathah*). In Padma Purana Uttara-Khanda Ch. CLX we find that the Asvatha Tree is symbolised as a living form of Vishnu.

Rig Veda's
symbol, of
life, the
Peepul-tree.

Padma
Purana

In reply to the argument held out by a certain section of the Buddhists that the Hindus do not really venerate or worship the Bodhi Tree of Bodh-

Gaya but worship Asvatha trees in general, and therefore there can be no special case for the worship of the Bodhi-tree by them, nor any claim built on this, one might say, that sufficient refutation of their arguments is contained in the texts quoted above. The Hindus no doubt to venerate all Asvatha trees, but at the same time they are also enjoined by their Shastras to worship the Bodhi-tree in particular which stands at Bodh-Gaya. No ritual of Pindadanam would be complete without a visit to Bodh-Gaya, and the offering of Pindas under the Bodhi-tree and worship of the same and of the image of Buddha. A twisted argument is made to the effect, that, as the Hindus do not worship the other Bodhi-trees (in Ceylon and other countries) which had been planted out of the grafts taken from the parent Bodhi-tree at Bodh-Gaya, their claim of worshipping the Bodhi-tree at Bodh-Gaya is a mere pretence. We do not know if this argument is advanced with any seriousness, but since it is

Ritual of
Pinda danm
incomplete
without wor-
ship of Bodhi-
tree and
Buddha.

there, we may as well proceed to consider it. The answer is as follows:—

(i). The Hindus would certainly venerate and worship the Bodhi-trees in other countries just as they do the other Asvatha trees in general, if only the Buddhist custodians of the other Bodhi-trees would allow it.

(ii). The worship of the Bodhi-tree at Bodh-Gaya under which Buddha had attained Divine knowledge, and, the offer of Pindas under it, is a part and parcel of the ritual of the Gaya Sradha and that cannot be performed under the Bodhi-tree of Ceylon or Burma or any other country,

We have thus proved convincingly that the worship of Buddha, and the worship of Bodhi-tree, and the offer of Pindas under it, is a part and parcel of the present day religion of the Hindus and the same is enjoined upon them by the Shastras. Coins have also been discovered of the time of Hindu kings which have a Brahamanical inscription on one side, and the images of the Chaitya and the Bodhi-tree on the other (Vide Cuninghams' Coins of Ancient India, Page 75 to 78).

According to the rule of Hindu law the duty of offering pindas to the ancestors is practically

the basis of the right of inheritance. Buddha himself sanctions this custom. (Vide Singalovada-Sutta, Digha Nikaya, Volume III Page 183). We may say here, that Buddha never wanted to disturb or upset the long-established customs. In fact in Mahaparinibana-Suttanta, Digha, Nikaya, Volume II, 75) Buddha says that *"So long as the members of a nation will continue to pay due honour, reverence, respect and homage to whatever shrines of their own there be, and not allow them to fall into disquietitude the offerings, made and granted to them out of faith, so long they will be expected to prosper and not to decline."* Even Sree Gouranga himself had offered Pindas in the manner enjoined upon by the Shastras,

As regards the other Dieties, and the other places of sanctity inside the temple and outside it, within the temple area, and the worship thereof by the Hindus, and, by the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya, we need not speak much. Suffice it to say, that the right of worship by the Mahanth and by the Hindus, and their present day worship by them is sufficiently borne out by Mr. Beglar, and, any unbiased visitor to the Great Temple may find that their

Mahanth's
right of
worship in
traditional
Hindu method
-admitted

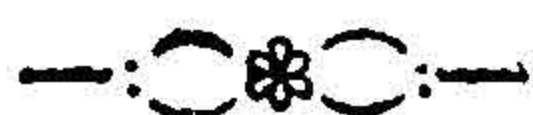
worship is being carried on from day to day by the Hindus and by the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya. Even Dr. Barua although he has written with the unkindest spirit against the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya, had to admit in his Monograph, "Gaya and Bodh-Gaya"; at page 234 that "considered in the light of historical evidence one has to pronounce his judgment in favour of the Mahanth Bodh-Gaya and freely recognise his right of worship at the Shrine in accordance with the traditional Hindu mode." We lay stress on the last words—"With the traditional Hindu mode".



Sri Mahanth Harihar Gir

CHAPTER III

A few words about the present day claim of the Buddhists regarding Bodh-Gaya Temple.



Besides Bodh-Gaya there are three holy places directly associated with the great Gautama Buddha, the Lumbini Gardens at Kapilavasthu the place of his birth), Saranath (the place where he first preached his theory of the Cosmic Laws of Karma), and, Kushinagar (where he attained Nirvana). One wonders therefore, why Bodh-Gaya has been singled out for an invidious campaign by a certain section of the Buddhists inspite of the fact, that there neither existed nor does exist any serious reason for their dissatisfaction. Bodh-Gaya as a place for Buddhist pilgrimage has been boomed only a few decades ago, whereas it has been well established that as a place of Hindu pilgrimage it had been

Other holy
places of
Buddhism,
not in
lime-light.

Hypersenti-
mental logic
of the
Buddhist
cause.

resorted to by a very large number of Hindus every year from time beyond memory, If the case had been, that the freedom of worship for the Buddhists (in a way and manner that did not clash with the Hindu worship), was not allowed, or that the Hindu Mahanth of Bodh Gaya was pursuing a biggotted policy of obstruction and annoyance to the Buddhist visitors to the place, there would have been, perhaps, some meaning in the sustained caluminous propaganda of the Mahabodhi Society for the usurpation of the Great Temple. But save and except the hyper-sentimental appeal, that since the place is known as Bodh-Gaya, it should vest in the self-appointed custodian of Buddhist faith, the Maha-Bodhi society founded and cherished by Dharmapala, there is nothing to support the claim that is now being put forward.

"On the 24th of January, 1891, there came to Bodh-Gaya a young man of some 25 years of age, from Colombo in Ceylon, with the object of worshipping the Bodhi-tree and the image of

the Buddha inside the temple at Bodh-Gaya. He stayed there for some two months and was given a right royal reception by the then Mahanth and his disciples the Gosains of the Bodh-Gaya math. He visited the place at least three times in that very year, and every time was received with open arms. Every facility was afforded to him for his comforts and every freedom of worship was accorded to him. This gentleman whose pertinacity of purpose is unequalled, was no other than the late Mr. Dharmapala the founder and secretary of the Mahabodhi Society, and, the Editor of the "Journal of the Mahabodhi Society. The Mahabodhi-Society was founded in 1891, and neither in its inception, nor during the first few years of its activity, was there any question of wresting from the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya, the control of the Great Temple.

Advent of
Rev:—
Dharmapala
in Bodh-Gaya

To quote from the Journal of the Mahabodhi Society of the month of August 1862, page 7:—

Original
ideals of the
Mahabodhi
Society.

To recapitulate the work done by the Society within the past 12 months.

1. The establish-ment of the Mission of Bodh-Gaya on July 21, 1891, with four Singhalese Bhikhus.

2. The acquirement of the plot of land on a permanent lease at the sacred spot for the erection of a Monastery.

3. The establishment of branches of the Society in Chittagong, Burma, Darjeeling, and, working centres in Arakan, Bangkok, Mergui, in Lower Burma.

There is nothing here about the temple. The temple was an after-thought which perhaps was an outcome of the complex of self-importance in the mind of Rev. H. Dharmapala. The above cited paragraphs prove our contention, and we cite another, to show that it was far from the idea of the late Rev. Anagarika Dharamapala or of anybody, to acquire the Temple at that time. At a so-called Interantional Buddhist Conference held on the 31st of October 1891 *attended by only eight persons besides Mr. Dharampala*, after a long discussion, it was resolved, that a deputation should wait on the Mahanth to make the proposal about the purchase of the Bodh-Gaya Temple. It was

resolved further, to call for subscriptions from all countries to meet the expenses. Although this International (?) Conference was held on the 31st October, the proceedings were recorded a day previous, that is, the 30th of October, which shows that the entire thing was of spurious origin. (Vide the Journal of the Mahabodhi Society No. XII April, 1893). From this we can judge as to how far the idea of acquiring the Great Temple by some of the Buddhists was genuine one.

Origin of the
idea of acqui-
sition of the
Great Temple

The idea came into being in the following manner. Mr. Dharamapala, having received the present of an image said to be seven hundred years old, determined to instal it with due ceremonies in the sanctum in the Great Temple. In May 1894, without the permission of the Collector, in an editorial note in the Mahabodhi Journal Mr. Dharamapala announced as follows:—"The historic image of Buddha presented by the Buddhists of Japan through the Rt. Rev. S. Ashai of Teutokuji Temple Shiba, Tokyo to the

Great Temple of Bodh-Gaya will be placed there by H. Dharamapala on the 19th instant (the full-moon day of the week) in the presence of Mr. D. J. Macpherson., Collector of Gaya." It is only fair to add that Mr. Dharamapala had not obtained any permission whatever of the Collector to announce this fact, or to associate his name with the proposed function. It would appear also, that an order had been issued by the District Magistrate that no image was to be set up without the consent of the Mahanth.

Some how or other (probably because the consequences were apprehended to be serious) the idea was then dropped. But on the 25th of February 1895, Mr. Dharmapala who was again goaded to under-take this mis-adventure went to the Great Temple for the purpose of placing the image on the alter of the upper storey. The Mahanth's people interfered, and the image was cast out and removed from the place.

Mr.Dharama-
pala's coup-
de-etat

A protracted litigation followed this affair which is known as the Bodh-Gaya Temple Case, as a result of which the District Magistrate convicted three of the disciples of the Mahanth to undergo simple imprisonment for one month and pay a fine of one hundred rupees or in default to undergo 15 days' additional imprisonment. There was an appeal to the Sessions Judge who remitting the sentence of imprisonment ordered that the accused were to pay the fine of Rs. 100/-only, as ordered by the Magistrate or in default undergo 15 days' simple imprisonment. An appeal was then preferred to the High Court of Calcutta wherein Mr. Justice Macpherson and Mr. Justice Gurudas Banerjee declared that the conviction and sentences were to be set aside and the fines if realised were to be refunded. In the course of the judgment, Mr. Justice Macpherson observed in conclusion:—
 "It is greatly to be regretted that this criminal case should have been brought and pressed in the way it has been

High Court
 Judgment
 Macpherson J

done. Dharamapala's motive in bringing it, is, I think, very questionable; and a perusal of his evidence which is open to severe criticism, shows that he is responsible for the great length to which the trial has been prolonged"

"The insult which Mr. Dharmapala felt in losing the case made him anxious to get the Temple, anyhow."

Genesis of
the struggle

Here is the genesis of the struggle. People will understand why :Kapilavastu, Saranath, and Kusinagar, had been been relegated to oblivion, and so much attention has been bestowed to Bodh-Gaya. In fact, the bitterness and acrimony of the Maha - Bodhi Society against the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya and the Hindus generally is self-evident from the publications of the Society. Losing to the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya in another Civil Suit, the Maha-Bodhi Society felt that recourse to law-suits would be of no avail. The Government of India true to the traditions of its neutrality in religious matters, and recognising the wisdom of the principle of maintaining the

'*Status Quo*' refused to be made a tool in the hands of the late Rev. Dharamapala. Now the Society, is trying to take advantage of a certain section of the Hindus who have confused politics with religion; and another *Coup*, has been essayed by giving out that the Buddhists are really Hindus, and, with the political aspirations of the Hindu India, the foreign Buddhists are in sympathy. In the Buddhist conference at Tokio (held a few years ago) we find the members of the Hindu Sabha attending as honoured guests. To crown it all, Rev. Ottama was also elected a joint president of All India Hindu Mahasabha.

The present situation.

No doubt the fiction, (that the present *foreign* Buddhists are Hindus is a very comforting one. But it may be noted that all this lip sympathy is being shown only to further the cause of the usurpation of the Bodh-Gaya Temple by the Buddhists. I confess that it is a very cynical reading of the situation, but when one remembers that in in Buddhist Burma the only creed of

Lip Sympathy of Buddhists,

politics that is ruling now, is intensely anti-Indian in its outlook, and, same is the case in Ceylon, and, when one is reminded that many of the Buddhist Temples in Ceylon are really old Hindu Temples, or have been built by demolishing Hindu Temples and the Ceylonese Buddhists would never dream of restoring them to the Hindus, one is inclined to examine the motives of the Maha-Bodhi Society a little closely. The utterances of the Maha-Bodhi Society only a few years ago, were professedly anti-Hindu. Why this change of heart? The reason is not far to seek. It is for the purpose of gaining the sympathies of the Hindu politicians and thereby trying to legislate a confiscatory enactment, for wresting the Great Temple, from the hands of the Hindu Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya, a thing which could not be done by resorting to the law-courts.

From the pamphlet on Bodh-Gaya Temple published by Mahabodhi Society containing the report of a Committee appointed by the Bihar Provincial Hindu Maha-Sabha, the demand of the Buddhists as made by the Maha-Bodhi Society before the said committee appear to be as follows:—

(a). To worship, meditate, offer flowers according to the Buddhist methods at Bodh-Gaya.

(b) Brahamacharis, Upasaks, Upasikas, Bhikshus, to live unmolested at Bodh-Gaya.

(c) The Mahanth being a Shaivite should not be allowed to appoint menials to desecrate the holy image inside the temple.

(d) The Bodhi-tree worshipped by the Buddhists to the west of the temple to be set apart for their exclusive worship, as was intended by the late General Cunningham who planted a separate Bodhi-tree for the Hindus to worship.

Mahabodhi
Society's
grievances

(e) The offerings made to the Lord Buddha by Buddhists should not be removed by the Mahanth.

(f) To build a paribhoga house as directed by the King of Burma and deposit all valuables offered by Buddhists there in.

(g) A Buddhist chowkidar should be appointed to look after the Buddhist pilgrims staying in the Mahabodhi Dharamasala erected by the Mahabodhi society.

(h) No Japanese pilgrims to have negotiations with the Mahanth of a political nature.

(i) No animals to be sacrificed within the precincts of the temple; no liquor to be brought within the sacred area.

(j) More cottages to be built for the pilgrims who intend to pass their days in prayer and meditation at Bodh-Gaya.

(k) The ex-officio President and General Secretary of the Maha-Bodhi Society to be members of the Great Committee which shall be formed hereafter with the consent of the Buddhists, Hindus and the British Government.

(l) To start an unsectarian Buddhist College at Bodh Gaya for students of all creeds and castes on the basis of the Nalanda University.

(m) No movement to be set on foot at Bodh-Gaya which shall not win the confidence of the British Indian Government.

*The statement of objects and reasons of the proposed Bodh-Gaya Temple Act do not refer to the demands mentioned above, specifically. It only mentions of a strong desire to control management of the temple and the temple land by the Buddhists and mentions that for many

*N. B.;—I have allowed this portion to remain in the present Edition although the Bill that was pending in the Central Assembly in 1935, (when the first Edition of the pamphlet was published) was ultimately dropped by the sponsors thereof. It appears that much the same arguments are still being made by the foreign and other Buddhists to push forward their claim to the Great Temple at Bodh-Gaya.

years past the Buddhists have been greatly dissatisfied with Mahanth's management. Therefore the grievances that were put before the Committee by the Hindu Mahasabha are not reiterated. We shall try to reply, however to the said grievances as placed before the Hindu Maha-Sabha Committee.

Temple Bill
Silent re:—
M. B. Society
demands &
grievances.

(a), To worship, offer flowers, according to Buddhist Methods at Bodh-Gaya.

No one offers any obstruction to the worship or meditation or the offering of flowers by any Buddhist at Bodh-Gaya, according to the Buddhist methods, provided it does not offend the injunctions of the Hindu Shastras. *Every one knows that the majority of the Buddhists who live outside India are beef-eaters and a large section of the Buddhists have no hesitation to offer the same kind of food which is partaken of by them, to their deity.* Therefore if the worship of Buddha according to certain Buddhist method dominates, it would automatically include in it an offering of the prohibited meat which will be absolutely abhorrent to

Worship
according to
certain
Buddhist
rites.

the Hindus as also to some other sects of the Buddhists who are against the offering of any animal food in their worship. If there has to be an universal and unobjectionable method of worship by Buddhists of all sects the best method would be that which is in conformity with the Hindu worship of Buddha (who is treated as an incarnation of Vishnu) under the Vaishnava rites.

(b). Brahamacharis, Upasakas, Bhikshus, to live unmolested at Bodh Gaya. This presupposes and hints that such molestation was or is being offered. We challenge the Maha-Bodhi Society to furnish a single instance of any molestation. Unless this demand has an end in view (for covering the temple area with buildings for the accomodation of the Brhamacharis etc), there is nothing to stop at the present moment the realisation of this object by the Buddhists. The laws of the Indian-Government are strict enough to stop any molestation by the Mahanth or by other Hindus and the voice of the Mahabodhi Society is loud enough to broadcast even an imaginary grivance before the whole world. We know it only too well, from past experience, that the members of the Mahabodhi Society do not scruple to take any step on even a self-

self-provoked molestation. The Bodh-Gaya Temple case was started by H. Dharamapala in 1895 against the Mahanth'smen on a similar self-imposed imaginary grievance

(c) That the Mahanth being a Shaivite should not be allowed to appoint menials to desecrate the holy image inside the temple. If the grievance was based on any substance it would certainly be commendable to resist such desecration to the utmost. But that is again a purely imaginary complaint which has no basis at all. The Hindus and the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya regard the images in the temple as their own Gods. As mentioned by Beglar in his letter quoted above, the present image in the temple used to be worshipped at the Math of the Mahanth and was duly installed by him with Shastric Hindu rites. It does not stand to reason, therefore, that the same Mahanth would desecrate the holy image in any manner and commit sacrilege himself; and even if the Mahanth was guilty of this offence,

Desecration
by menials.

would the Hindu public who worship there, stand by quietly, and allow the sacrilege ?

The Buddhists have no caste system. The Hindu Mahasabha also (with which the Mahabodhi Society is in close alliance) is attempting to break down the barriers of the caste-system. It appears to me therefore, that this complaint is paradoxical and has been invented solely for the purposes of propaganda.

Hindus to
worship a
substitute of
Bodhi-tree

(d) "The-Bodhi tree worshipped by the Buddhists to the west of the temple should be set apart for their exclusive worship as was intended by the late General Cuunigham who planted a separate Bodhi - tree for the Hindus to worship." This claim is based upon an unfounded fact. As a matter of fact, General Cuunigham did not plant the northern pipal-tree at all, but on the other hand, near about the time of restoration, the Bodhi-tree to the west of the Great Temple had fallen down in a storm, and the tree that stands there was planted

from an off-shoot of the old tree by General Cuuningham. Uptill the present day the Hindus are offering pindas at the foot of that tree, and *alimement it is the only tree where they can do so not proper.* The Mahanth performs Homam on every new-moon day and on every important religious occasion under the same tree. We do not know on that basis or claim the Buddhists want to appropriate to themselves the Bodhi-tree which is to the west of the temple. In fact this attempt lays bare, that only a sense of intoleration and bigottedness is the motive force of the agitation set up by the Mahabodhi Society. They were originally allowed by the Hindu Mahanth to worship and to visit the temple out of a sense of toleration and liberality that actuates the Hindu religion. Now they want to oust the Hindus themselves. No doubt in allowing this priviledge to the Buddhists the Mahanth was actuated by the large-hearted tolerance which all Hindus possess, and which always places them at a disadvantage later on,—their generosity being mistaken for weakness, and the leave and license given, twisted into a right. The Bodhi-tree is an object of worship of and veneration by, nearly 280 millions of Hindus of India, and unless and until Pinda is offered at the foot of this tree

by the Hindus, their ancestors have no salvation. Under what authority could General Cuuningham have ousted the Hindus from the worship of and from the offering of Pinds under the Bodhi-tree by planting a second tree (even if this statement is correct), it is difficult to understand. As a matter of fact, the whole story is a fiction. General Cuuningham could not have usurped such power. And even if he did so no one would have tolerated it. The Bodh-Gaya shrine is visited every year by more than one hundred thousand Hindu pilgrims whereas only a few hundreds of Buddhists visit the place annually. The temple was built by a follower of the Sanatana Dharma and has been owned by the Hindu Mahanth openly and without question from time immemorial. The Hindus have enjoyed their right of worship in the temple and of offering Pindas at the foot of the Bodhi-tree, and the Mahanth has been performing Homam underneath this tree, for more than a millennium. Is it proper to deprive so many Hindus of their rights only to satisfy a few hundreds of Buddhist pilgrims who visit the place every year? The situation is fraught with very grave and dangerous possibilities.

(e) The offering made to the Lord Buddha by Buddhists should not be removed by the Mahanth.

It is well known that during the recent years on account of insidious propaganda by the Maha-Bodhi Society the Buddhists as a rule, do not bestow any tangible material offerings to the Lord Buddha at the temple, and therefore nothing can be gained by the Mahanth from the offering of the Buddhists only. It is curious to note that running parallel to the religious and spiritual propaganda of the Mahabodhi Society, there is a sustained effort and craving for worldly wealth. Probably the idea is to make this place of pilgrimage a paying concern, and the main item of attraction of the show appears to be the Great Temple.

Buddhist's
offerings

(f) The next item in the agenda of the Mahabodhi Society is:—"To build a Paribhoga-house as directed by the King of Burma, and deposit all valuables offered by Buddhists their in."

Paribhoga
House

No doubt the ex-king of Burma negotiated with the Mahanth for building a Paribhoga House, but for reasons best known to the Burmese the idea was dropped. This idea has been resurrected by the Mahabodhi Society only in order to gain the sympathies of the people of Burma. Of course inside the Temple area no building can be put up by anybody, but outside it, there is no impediment to anybody's putting up a house or building. In fact several houses have been erected already. But under what right or authority can anybody appropriate the offering of the temple is not clear to us. If appears, that this is another covert attempt to usurp the rights of the Mahanth of Bodhgaya. We are not in a position to support the idea of establishing a Buddhist monastery at Bodhgaya which will function as a rival establishment to the Hindu math of the Mahanth of Bodhgaya. The ideals of the Mahabodhi Society all glitter, but there is no solid worth in them.

(g) The next claim is, for—
 “A Buddhist chowkidar to look after the pilgrims staying in the Mahabodhi Dharamasala erected by the Mahabodhi Society.” It is well to mention here that the Buddhist-Rest-House or Dharamsala is under the control and supervision of the District Board of Gaya. In spite of the rules of the District Board to the contrary, two Buddhist monks have made this Rest-house their permanent abode, and are more or less forcibly occupying three of its best rooms. We have seen bonafide Buddhist pilgrims hailing from distant places like Nepal, Bhutan Sikkim, Tibbet, and Arakan being refused accommodation by the said two monks and turned out in the open and compelled to pass their days of pilgrimage in the fields. Because the District Board chowkidar who is in charge of the said Rest-house has started to complain about this, a Buddhist chowkidar (who would probably be a nominee of the Mahabodhi Society), is sought to be substituted, so that, the Rest-

Buddhist
 Chowkidar.

Why a
Buddhist
Chowkidar
required.

house might be converted into a branch building of the Maha-bodhi Society and a footing might be obtained for propagation of scandal-mongering propaganda.

(h) The next claim is as follows:— “ No Japanese pilgrims to have negoti-ations with Mahanth of a political nature.”

The clause has been inserted to ward off the apparently just suspicion on the part of the people of India and the Indian Government against the Maha-bodhi Society with regard to its close affinity with the Japanese. One might say, that it is a veritable eye-wash. The Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya can never have any occasion to have negotiations with the Japanese pilgrims. On the other hand it is within public knowledge, that only a few years ago due to the efforts of the Maha-bodhi Society, a so called conference of Buddhists was held in Japan. The Bodh-Gaya Temple Bill immediately following upon the said conference, undoubtedly raises a reasonable apprehension that there might have been more in the conference than meets the eye. We have seen and heard about

Japanese
Complica-
tions.

Pan-Islamism. Is there going similarly to be a Pan-Buddhistic league or a Pan-Asiatic Federation, with a Buddhist conscience to further the political and commercial ambitions of Japan? And is the demand a kind of a preliminary measure for the establishment of a big Buddhist colony aggressive in its outlook in the heart of India? These are questions that naturally arise in the mind, after reading the unnecessary reference to Japan, and, the superabundant caution invoked by the Maha-bodhi Society regarding the Mahanth's possible relation with the Japanese.

(i) "No animals to be sacrificed within the precincts of the Temple, no liquor to be brought within the sacred area.", is another demand by the Mahabodhi Society.

Neither any animals are sacrificed within the precincts of the temple, nor any liquor is brought within the sacred area. This is too well-known to every one concerned. The Hindus worshipping Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu under Vaishanva rites would detest these things. On the other hand the Buddhists in the majority being meat-eaters, it is difficult to imagine that the killing of animals would not come into vogue, if the Temple and its surroun-

things went in their hands. At least in the college and in the residence of the other Buddhists which is proposed to be built near about the Temple meat-eating will prevail, and, as one cannot procure meat without killing animals for it, the slaughter of animals would be a necessary concomitant. In fact, since many of the Buddhists are beef-eaters by habit, there will be a question of cow-slaughter also, and the Hindus will have to stand by and see foreigners slaughtering their most sacred and deified animal, within the sight and near the temple of an Incarnation of Vishnu. On the question of liquor, the Buddhists of Tibet under the rules embodied in the Hinayan Tantras have to use liquor in their worship. This they cannot do now, when the control of the Temple is under the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya, but it is difficult to think that Buddhists (when they will have the control), will be able to stop their co-religionists of Tibet and other places from worshipping Buddha according to their own methods. In that case, the Hindus will have to witness another desecration of their holy Temple of Vishnu by the foulest method imaginable,

(j) More cottages to be built for the pilgrims who intend to pass their days in prayer and meditation at Bodh-Gaya.

(1) To start an unsectarian Buddhist College at Bodhi-Gaya for students of all creeds and castes on the basis of the Nalanda University.

These two items conclude the series of demands and claims and grievances made out by the Mahabodhi society.

The matter contained in the above demands can hardly be said to be connected with the Bodhi-Gaya temple. No one objects to cottages for pilgrims or for a College at Bodhi-Gaya provided the Buddhists can secure land for that purpose out-side the Temple area. Of course there will have to be special precautions taken and the public authorities shall have to be on the alert constantly and guard against the possibility of International complications specially with Japan, as the said institutions are very likely to be founded on Japanese money, and would most certainly have Japanese agents - provocateurs to further Japan's aggressive foreign policy. If indeed the Maha-bodhi Society is really serious about the restoration or revival of the past glories of

Pilgrims
cottages and
University
plea for a
foreign
Buddhist
Colony

the Nalanda University, the best site for the proposed new University, would be Nalanda itself. But why the choice of the Society has fallen on Bodh-Gaya? And notwithstanding the admitted Hindu inception, and the past and the present Hindu ownership and control of this Great Temple, which is undoubtedly a Hindu shrine, all possible ways and means, every logic and propaganda must be explored and used and money spent like water to wrest it from their hands? With the amount that has been spent by the Mahabodhi Society in this fruitless effort very big Universities and hostels, could have been built elsewhere. One therefore, pauses to think, that apart from the obstinacy of the late Rev. Dharamapala there must be some other motive-force driving the Maha-bodhi society in this quest.

Again looms large in our mind, the last Buddhist conference at Tokio; and the rise of Japan; her ambition to become the over-lord of the whole of Asia; her ruthless commercial propaganda; and her vast military powers. One who runs may read these signs of time writ in letters of fire across the firmament of Asia. The question invariably crops up in the mind, is this propaganda for possession and control of

Bodh-Gaya simply a religious mania, or obsession or there is something more sinister behind ?

We have categorically examined the demands and grievances of the Maha--bodhi society as put before the Hindu Mahasabha and aired through the press widely. We feel that at the root thereof lies, if not anything else, at least, the intolerance of the idea that the Great Temple should be owned by a Hindu. There is also (even if we forget the political aspect of the question), a commercial and lucrative side of the proposition, that the Buddhist offerings should only vest in a certain number of individuals forming the Mahabodhi Society, an organisation which is sure to dominate the proposed Committee. While at present under the Hindu dominion and control of the Temple, there is absolute freedom of worship for the Buddhists, (provided it does not offend the Shastras), the position is sought to be reversed. Hindus are being assured that provided they agree to give-up their shrine and their god under Buddhist control they would have freedom of worship. No specific case is made out, to justify the usurpation of the private rights of the Mahanth, or of the general rights of the Hindus. Ever since the time that the Buddhist

pilgrims have started regularly visiting the shrine, (for a period of 50 years or so), has there been any incident to justify this attitude of intolerance and suspicion which can be the only motive--force pushing forward this claim for wresting the Temple ? The Buddhist pilgrims are treated with kindness and consideration by the Mahanth and many of them stay as his guests. Quite recently (18th Jan. 1937) a distinguished Ceylonese Buddhist, Sri Nissanka, an Advocate of Ceylon, wrote to the Mahanth a letter which is reproduced below. The letter will speak for it self:—

Sri Nissanka, Advocate,

Colombo, 18th January 1937. Phone 4174.

My dear Mahanth,

I am enclosing herewith a newspaper account which appeared in the "*Dinamina*" of Ceylon, which has the largest circulation and which is by far the most influential organ of public opinion.

The passage relevant to you is underlined in blue pencil and it can be translated for you by the Singhalese care-taker of the Buddhist Rest-House.

I have said there, that I had the pleasure of meeting you, and that you were a holy and good man, and that the Buddhists of Ceylon have nothing to fear from you. I have said that Bodha-Gaya is safe in your hands and that no attack should be made to disturb your position, for you are our best friend and custodian.

I have of course a natural desire to take over the other Holy places in India of the Buddhists which are not in occupation or possession of our Hindu brethren, that is waste lands at Rajgrihi Kund and Sarbasti.

When the Buddhist Congress of Ceylon meets this month on the 28th, I shall make a further kind reference of you and the report of my Presidential Address will be forwarded to you in English for your information. I hope that you will cherish our acquaintance and let it grow into a real friendship, and as far as I am able, I shall give you all the support of the Buddhists of this country who are amenable to me and their prayers for your continued prosperity.

Bodh Gaya
Temple Safe
in Mahanth's
Hands.

With kind regards.

Your very sincerely,
Sd. Sri Nissankā

Buddhists
demand not
unanimous

Thus it will appear that the Buddhists themselves are not unanimous in their demand for taking away the Great Temple from the hands of the Mahanth. Most probably, they feel, that since the Buddhists are themselves divided into various sects and creeds, whose methods of worship are at variance with one another, they would not be able to agree to an undisputed and universal form of worship. Therefore, the custody, care, and supervision of the Great Temple if vested in a particular group of Buddhists, would certainly lead to differences amongst themselves, and would impair their solidarity. Many of the Buddhists are just enough to perceive the unjustness of the claims made by the Mahabodhi Society, and honest enough to express their dissent from it.

Congress &
Hindu Sabha

In our country some members of Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha have expressed their views in support of the aspiration of the Maha-bodhi Society. The signs of the time, suggest the idea, that in their

so called fight with the British Imperialism, they want to barter away their birth-right for an anticipated support of the foreign Buddhists against Britain. [Alas ! time had a great disillusionment in store for them]

The Hindu-Mahasabha has (in its rivalry and struggle with the Mahomedans of the country) of late grown a "census" complex. The number of Hindus in India and outside India must be increased. They have already started this programme by various methods; by the re-conversion of the Mahammedans Christians etc. and by inclusion into the elastic folds of Hinduism people of other religions which have the slightest affinity with Hinduism so that it can be given out that the Hindu population of the world is enormous. The report of the committee appointed during the Muzaffarpore Sessions of the Hindu Mahasabha, has been incorporated in the pamphlet published by the Maha-bodhi Society and curiously enough dedicated to the members of the Indian Central Assembly. We are not aware whether this report was accepted by the Hindu Mahasabha in its general sessions, or, whether it has remained the isolated opinions of the signatories thereof. However

be that as it may the conclusions arrived at, in the report, to the effect, that the Buddha is not a Hindu Avatar (incarnation) and the Bodh-Gaya Temple is a Buddhist temple out and out, which should be banned by all Hindus, does not further the idea of including the Buddhists in the category of Hindus. By following their own logic, it is only by accepting (the now indisputable fact), that Buddha is an Incarnation of Vishnu, and that the Boddh-Gaya Temple is a Hindu shrine, that we can claim that the Buddhists who worship Buddha and make their pilgrimage to the shrine are all Hindus.

Buddha
Mimansa
Proves
Buddha a
Hindu
Avatar

Maitreya in his book "Buddha-Mimansa" has conclusively proved by elaborate and learned quotations that:-

Worship of
Buddha en-
joined by
Hindu Shas-
tras in the
prescribed
modes.

1 Buddha himself was a follower of the original religion of the Hindus.

2 The Hindus themselves were the original followers of Buddha.

3 Buddha is an Avatar of Vishnu and, was and is an object of their worship by the following manner and means:-

(a) By the method of Murtipuja (image worship)

(b) By the method of Salagram-puja or Symbol worship.

(c) By Tilak Dharana or carrying a special symbolical mark on the forehead.

(d) By Parta-Smaran (early morning salutation of Buddha).

(e) By Dhyana (or Meditation).

(f) By Brata-Puja (or reading his life-story or hearing the same recited by another).

(g) By Gayatri (or vedic formula for a special address to Buddha).

(h) By Buddha Mantra (or the incantations proper to him).

(i) By Namaskara (or the Final salutation to Buddha).

(j) By Tirtha-Jatra (or pilgrimage to his resorts).

It is to be regretted, that, although Maitreya's Buddha-Mimansa was before the committee appointed by the Hindu Mahasabha, there is no refutation of the conclusions reached in the said book or even an attempt to meet the arguments made in support there of. On the other hand, passages from the said

Irrefutable
conclusions
of Buddha
Mimansa.

book have been quoted with approval in the said report. We are, therefore, in the undisputed position that the conclusions of Maitreya are irrefutable. If that is so, it must be held that Bodh-Gaya Temple is a Hindu Shrine. The mere fact that people of other religions have been allowed inside the porch of the Temple, does not prove that it is not a Hindu Temple.

Case of
Jaggannath
Temple at
Puri may be
a Parallel to
Bodh-Gaya
Temple.

On the theory that there are exceptions to every rule, there are relaxations of the strict Shastric rules even in the case of the management of the affairs of the most orthodox Hindu Temples. Thus within the precincts of the Jaggannath Temple at Puri, no caste distinction is observed. People of all castes are enjoined to eat out of one another's hands. The food touched by a Chandala, cannot be shunned by the highest Brahmin. If he does so, he perils his very salvation. Similar instances can be multiplied.

In our opinion in all places where the temple contains images of Buddha, the orthodox rules have been

relaxed and are to be found tinged with the liberality of the doctrines of Lord Buddha, In fact this only proves more conclusively, that the Hindus worship Lord Buddha not only in form, but with the spirit imbued in his teachings.

If the logic contained in the report submitted by Babu Rajendra Prasad and others is accepted. then, in no time, the Maha-bodhi Society will lay claim to the Jaggannath Temple at Puri. It is not difficult to imagine the preliminary steps leading upto it. Just as about forty years ago, a number of Buddhist pilgrims started to visit and worship the images installed in the Bodh-Gaya temple by the Hindu Mahanth of Bodh Gaya, and, just as gradually the leave and license granted to them by the Mahanth, were transformed into a claim and a right, which being pushed by the force of an agitation of the most virulent character, has resulted in the introduction of a Bill in the Central Assesmbly. in the same fashion (since in the opinion of

All Hindu
Temples may
be usurped
by Buddhists.

Babu Rajendra Prasad, the image of the Jaggannath Temple is nothing but a Buddhist image), Buddhist pilgrims might very well start visiting the Puri Temple, and if the custodian thereof was generous enough to allow access, a claim (to be followed by Legislation) could in no time be foisted by demanding the transference of the Puri Temple into Buddhist's hands. Well-meaning Hindu supporters would not be lacking in that instance also, and research scholars, on the ground of the unorthodox methods prevalent in the Jagannath Temple at Puri, (backed up by a partisan reading of any obscure road-side inscription) may declare that the temple and its image should belong to the Buddhists. We hope one instance would be enough. We know that there are many Hindu Temples in Hindusthan, where the images worshipped as Hindu Gods, are in reality Buddhist images. The same reasoning as is being employed by and on behalf of the Buddhists (in the case of the Bodh Gaya Temple) might with a little ingenuity suffice to take away all those temples from the hands of the Hindus. Therefore, if we consider that the attempt made

Disastrous
Consequences
of Bodh Gaya
Temple Act

in the present instance is one which may result in the future, to a forfeiture of many Hindu temples of India, and the vesting thereof in Buddhist hands, we cannot be far from wrong.

If there was any cause of complaint, on some just grounds, or if the Hindu Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya, was found systematically oppressing and ill treating Buddhists coming to worship there, there might have been something to go upon. But fortunately (as challenged before), there is no such cause.

In this connection we cannot but refer to the repeated requests made to Buddhists by Jagat Guru Sri Sankaracharya, to place their case in writing. This they have failed to do, and it can therefore be said with justice, that that the case of the Mahabodhi Society has not the merits to be put down on paper.

Buddhist claims as interpreted by many Hindus are supported on theories of misconceived cosmopolitanism and altruism. Such softness of heart, if encouraged further, would indeed portend very disastrous consequences to all Hindusthan. For instance since the holy tomb of the Saint at Ajmere is worshipped by Hindus and Mohammedans alike, and since the

Case of Aj-
mere Sherif.

Hindus have from time to time made munificent offerings and donations to the said shrine, why should not its affairs vest in a joint committee of the Hindus and the Mahomedans ?

A hyperbolic appeal to the Hindu politicians of India, concludes the argument of the Mahabodhi Society in support of their case.

It says, that, please legislate to wrest the great Temple of Bodhgaya from the hands of the Hindus and there-by oblige 500 millions of Buddhists of the world. First of all, we doubt very much if the Buddhists who are supporting this movement and are the participants of the opinion shared by the Maha-bodhi Society are even five thousand in number. An idea can be formed as to how many of the Buddhists of the world are interested in the Bodh-Gaya temple by the number of Buddhist visitors and worshippers that come to the place every year. The number would not exceed five hundred at the most, and this is the state of affairs inspite

of cheap fares and other facilities of journey, and inspite of the boosting of Bodhgaya Temple by the Mahabodhi Society. As compared to this more than a lac of Hindu pilgrims come to worship and offer Pindas at Bodh-Gaya ever year. It can be then safely concluded that compared to the esteem and reverence which Hindus cherish for the Bodh Gaya shrine, those held by the Buddhists of the world is negligible, and the stake of the Hindus in the Temple is very much higher and weightier than that of the Buddhists.

A further allegation is made to the effect that the Mahanth and his disciples have desecrated the image of Bodh-Gaya by putting Tilak Mark and by clothing it. This grievance was first aired by late H. Dharampala in his deposition in the criminal case which he wrongly brought against the men of the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya, when they prevented him from installing an image in the Temple. From the account given of Mr. Beglar which has been quoted above, it must be held

Buddhist
Pilgrims of
Bodh-Gaya
a small
fraction of
the Hindu
Pilgrims.

Original
Image different from
the present
one.

to have been proved that the present image of Buddha had been enshrined by the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya as a Hindu God and under Shastric rites. Another confirmation of Beglar's account on this point is to be found in General Cuuningham's Archeological Report, Volume, I, Page 6, where he has described the dimensions of the original image of Buddha which had been there before the repair of the Great Temple had been taken in hand by the Bengal Government. The dimensions given were that the said image was 11 feet and 5 inches in height, and 6 feet 2 inches across the shoulders. The present image is undoubtedly not of this dimension.

All Buddha
Images are
clothed and
have Tilak
marks, Sacred
Thread
etc.

An examination of many of the images of Buddha that are found in this country or else-where would reveal the fact that those images have clothes which are carved in the image itself, and in many instances we find signs of the sacred thread and the tilak

It has been very pertinently asked Prof. Samaddar in his pamphlet on Bodh-Gaya:—

"First let me ask one question. Are the Buddhists really permitted to worship images? The early Buddhists whose doctrines were expressed in the stone picture of Saranath and Bharhut did not dare to form an image of their dead teacher. Did they not when they wished to indicate his presence in a sense, merely suggest it by a symbol, an empty seat, a pair of foot prints, and so forth"?

Therefore the image which now stand on the pedestal inside the Great Temple is a Hindu image and it is only by a freak of fortune and the generosity of the Hindus and of the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya, that the Buddhists have been allowed to worship that image. . If that is so, and if further in accordance with the rites prescribed for the purpose, additional clothing and tilak mark is put on the said image by the Hindu Mahanth of Bodhgaya in course of his worship of the said image, what grievance can there be of the Buddhists in the doing there-of ?

Present
Buddha
image a
Hindu image

That the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya is desirous of meeting all just Buddhist demands, will appear from the letter of the Rev. Sri Dhamma Dhara Guru Mahasthavira of the premier vihar (monastery) of Ceylon. The letter is addressed to the Mahanth and is dated. the 28th January, 1925. A passage from it is quoted below:—

Shree
Dhamma
Dhara Raja
Guru Maha-
Sthabira's
letter to
Mahanth

"As a member of the Buddhist priesthood, I desire to express my appreciation of the facilities you have been accustomed to afford to Buddhist pilgrims who visit Bodh-Gaya for worship. The Singhalese as nation are deeply indebted to you for these facilities,"

To claim the Great Temple simply on the ground that Gautama Buddha had attained divine knowledge at the spot, is ridiculous logic. One may as well claim the control and the ownership or an educational institution simply on the ground of his having his diploma by studying there. *

Usurpation
of Hindu
Temples of
Ceylon by
Buddhists.

It is a well-known fact that numerous Hindu temples of Ceylon have been usurped by the Ceylonese Buddhists and converted and used as their own shrine to the exclusion of the Hindus.

What about the restoration of these temples and the properties attached thereto the Hindus. It is a trite saying that he who seeks equity must also do equity, It is idle for a section of the Ceylonese Buddhists to make a grievance of the proprietorship, and, the possession of the Great Temple by the Hindu Mahanth of Bodh Gaya, (who at any rate, has shown the generosity of allowing them to worship there), while they themselves at Ceylon, would never dream of allowing any Hindu to enter the premises, far less to worship there.

We should be just before we are generous. We should not be led away by mush-room political considerations or by questions of mere expediency. We should not, without very serious consideration, and, unless the situation is of an impera-tive nature, (refusing

Justice
before
generosity.

Charter
guaranteeing
private
rights are
pillars of
all States.

to yield to any other solution)
forfeit private rights of the citizens of
the State. A number of very good
things can be achieved by confisca-
ting the wealth of the rich people of
India. But let not the end justify the
means. There must be in the ad-
ministration and policy of every State
having stability, a recognition of the
private rights of individuals. Unless
there is that charter guaranteeing
private rights, no state can survive.
Therefore, unless the Mahanth of
Bodh Gaya has offended any law of
the land, why should he be deprived
of his rights. The amply sufficient
safeguards of the law, are sufficient
for the protection of all people. Why
should confiscatory legislation be
resorted to, to bring forward a measure
which is on the face of it unjust ? If
the Buddhist claims are just and
equitable, are not the law courts
competent enough to grant them
relief ?

Babu Rajendra Prasad says in his
report that the rights of the Mahanth

cannot exceed the those of a Shaivite and cannot be treated as a private right. The logic is rather sweeping. The Mahanth is the chief executive and the representative of the Sannyasis of the Bodh-Gaya Math, and as such he has got his rights. These rights may be analysed and stated to be the rights of all Hindus worth the name for all time to come.

Are not all the said rights going to be confiscated if we, in our hastiness and impatience enact any measure to hand over the control of the great Temple of Bodhgaya to a small section of Buddhists ? In doing this there is not only the question of the confiscation of the right of an individual, but the rights of an entire community which vests in that individual. Even assuming that the Great Temple was a Buddhist temple and was possessed by the Buddhists till five centuries ago, of which there is not a shred of evidence, have the Buddhists not lost their rights to it by open abandonment ? We know that the Buddhists of Burma, Ceylon etc., were neither the builders nor the original holders of the Temple. Then under what rights are the Buddhists of Burma, Ceylon etc. claiming to usurp the Temple ?

It has been proved above that the site of Bodh Gaya has been held by Shaivite Sannyasis from the time of the Vedas. The Great Temple was built by a Hindu, if not by the Mahanth who was the predecessor of the present Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya about 2000 years ago. The image of Buddha and the image of Shiva and of other Hindu Gods and Goddesses have been worshipped in the Temple and in its precincts from the very beginning of times. Even as early as the Mahabharatha we find an injunction to worship the Buddha image and the Bodhi-tree. Several of the Mahanths of Bodh-Gaya have lived in the temple area itself, and, the site contains their last mortal remains over which two Samadhis (tombs) exist uptill now. It is said that one of the previous great Mahanths got the Supreme boon (Siddhi) from the Goddess Annapurna in this very temple, and the said Goddess gave him the cup of bounty from which alms are distributed uptill now in the math of the mahanth of Bodh-Gaya. There is the Hom-kund close to the Bodhi-tree where, from time immemorial the successive Mahanths of Bodh-Gaya have performed there fortnightly homam ceremony.

The rights of the Mahanth had been proved and accepted by the highest tribunal of the country. The very Buddhists themselves (no less than the King of Burma, and the late Rev. Dharampala, the founder of the present agitation), have admitted the the said rights over and over again. On what plea of justice and equity can the Mahanth be deprived of them ? There is sufficient provision in law to guard against any possible mismanagement by the Mahanth. The mismanagement alleged so far has been a frivolous grievance with no tangible instance to support it.

Mis-manage-
ment by
Mahanth
a gross
untruth.

The question of where and how the Hindus are to offer pindas to their ancestors, in case the Buddhists insist in monopolising the Bodhi-tree, remains without any solution. How the Hindus will worship Lord Buddha according to their own Sacerdotal methods, if hereafter the Buddhists and their monks think that the Hindu method of worship militates against their own ? How the mahanth of

Bodh-gaya will perform the worship of the Samadhis of his ancestors, which are only a few feet away from great Temple, or the customary Homam ceremony, if the Temple remains under the control of the Buddhists ? The amicable and friendly relation between the Hindus and the Buddhists and the harmony with which the affairs of the Temple have been conducted, for nearly a century, is sought to be disturbed only on the sectarian propaganda of a few Buddhists of the Mahabodhi Society. For what reason and to what purpose ? We cannot find any rational answer to these questions (as we have already discussed), in the apologia of the Mahabodhi Society or its sympathisers.



Goswami Ramsahay Giri

A few words about the Sannyasis of the Bodh-Gaya Math.

The Sannyasis of the Bodhgaya Math are Shaiva and they belong to the Giri sect of the Dasnami Sannyasis. It has been stated before that the place where Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment (and which is marked by the great Temple at Bodhgaya), was at that time inhabited by Shaiva Sannyasis who were known as *Jatilas*, (from the long matted hair kept by them), and Gautama had lived with them for some time. In ancient India, the national culture and education were preserved and guided by the forest universities, which used to be in charge of groups of Rishis, or Munis or Ascetics. The vpanishads, which are also known as *Aranyaks*, were composed in these forest universities, and the sages and ascetics in charge of these centres of learning were the old law-makers of India. Living apart and secluded from the common world of strifes and

desires, and, disciplined like the Spartans in mind and body, these holy men practically ruled the land, by force of their character and intellect. When Buddha in his later life felt the necessity of organising his celibate disciples into a common brotherhood (or Sangha), the ideals of these ascetics of the Brahmanical School must have provided him with the pattern and model. Later on, when Sankara-charya reorganised the religious institutions and ideals of the country, (which had become full of corrupt practices and shibboleths), the ancient Vedic ideals of the old hermitage associations of holymen served him as models.

Sankaracharya did not found any new sect, He merely purged the society of the unclean and unreal ideas and practices that had grown there from contact with the foreign Buddhist culture. When Gautama Buddha had preached and popularised his doctrines, which in essence were the same as in the Upanishads, he never thought that he was going to make any revolutionary changes in the principles and customs that were in vogue in his time. In fact, he had openly disparaged the idea of any revolutionary change. Sankaracharya, also upheld the inner tenets of Buddhism; in fact

there were many people who held (and probably still hold), that the *uttar-minansa* or the commentaries of Sankaracharya were nothing but veiled Buddhism.

The reorganisation of Sankaracharya consisted in founding four principal *Maths* at the four cardinal points of India. They were, the *Sringeri Math*, the *Sarada Math*, the *Gobardhan Math* and the *Joshi Math*. Sankaracharya had four principal disciples, namely, *Padmapad*, *Hastamalak*, *Mandan* and *Totak*. *Padmapad*'s two disciples had assumed the title, (or had them from previously), of *Tirtha* and *Asram*. *Hastamalak*'s two disciples were known as *Ban* and *Aranya*. *Mandan*'s disciples were called *Giri*, *Parbat* and *Sagar*. And *Totak*'s three disciples were *Saraswati*, *Bharati*, and *Puri*. Thus were formed the *Dasnamī Sannyāsi Sect*. Out of the aforesaid four cardinal *Maths* founded by Sankaracharya, the *Sringeri Math* ruled the *Puri*, *Bharati* and the *Saraswati* subsect; the *Sarada Math*, the *Tirtha* and *Asram* subsect; the *Gobardhan Math*, the *Ban* and *Aranya* subsect; and the *Joshi Math*, the *Giri*, *Parbat* and the *Sagar* subsect. Whether these titles (of *Giri Puri* etc), were in use from before, or were appended to their respective disciples by the four above-named main disciples of Sankaracharya, is

very difficult to say. But my view is, that, that most of these titles were being used from before. At any rate, we find the *Giri* title was being used from the time of the *Mahabharat*.

Be that as it may, the inference can be said to approach certainty, that the present Sannyasis of the Bodh-gaya Math are the spiritual descendants of the *Jatila Shaiva Sanyasis*, who had lived in the place where *Gautama Buddha* had sojourned before attaining enlightenment. It is possible that after the cult of Sannyasis had fallen out of order, and when, during the renascence of the religion of the *Vedas* by *Shankaracharya*, the cult of the *Dasnami Sannyasis* had been reorganised, the association of the remnants of the old *Jatilas* had been absorbed into the said *Dasnami* organisation.

The spiritual geneology of the Mahanthas of Bodh-gaya, so far as is known, is reproduced below. (This has been taken from "*Notes on the District of Gaya*" by George A. Grierson, I. C. S. Collector of Gaya, and printed in 1893 A. D., at the Government of Bengal's Secretariat Press. Mr. Grierson's authority appears to be the *Travels of Dr. Buchanan-Hamilton*, published in the 18th century).

(i)	Mahanth Ghamandi Gir	(1590-1615 A. D.)	
(ii)	Mahanth Chaitanya Gir	(1615-1642	„)
(iii)	„ Mahadeva Gir	(1642-1682	„)
(iv)	„ Lala Gir	(1682-	?)
(v)	„ Keshav Gir	(? -1748	„)
(vi)	„ Raghav Gir	(1748-1769	„)
(vii)	„ Ramhit Gir	(1769-1806	„)
(viii)	„ Balak Gir	(1806-1820	„)
(ix)	„ Siv Gir	(1820-1846	„)
(x)	„ Bhaipat Gir	(1846-1867	„)
(xi)	„ Hemnarain Gir	(1867-1891	„)
(xii)	„ Krishnadeyal,,	(1891-1932	„)
(xiii)	„ Harihar Gir	(1932-	„)

(The present incumbent).

Mahanth Ghamandi Giri's hermitage was at a place which is a mile to the north of the Great Temple. In fact the said hermitage (which contains the tomb of Mahanth Ghamandi Gir) is still in existence and is called *Ghamandi-bagh*. Mahanth Ghamandi Gir was an ascetic of very high order of spiritual development. and it is said that he actually resurrected to life a Brahmin boy, who had been given-up for dead, and was being taken to the river-side for cremation. He made this boy his disciple and named him Chaitanya Gir, who succeeded him. It was this Mahanth Chaitanya Gir, who

shifted his hermitage to the yard of the Great Temple. Mahanth Chaitnya Gir had thirteen disciples and the best and ablest of them, Mahanth Mahadeo Giri, was chosen as his successor. About Mahanth Mahadeo Giri, Mr. Grierson writes as follows:— “Tradition says that he worshiped *Annapurna*, the Goddess of Plenty, who pleased by his devotion presented him with a wondrous cup for the distribution of grain, the virtue of which was such, that so long as alms were distributed by the Mahanths from it, the Monastery would never lack. Moreover, its contents were always sufficient to exactly satisfy the appetite of the recipient of the alms dealt from it, be he a man, or a woman, child or adult, full or hungry. This cup (*Katora*), is still in existence and is used daily for the distribution of alms to the numerous pilgrims who pass by the Monastery. It was during the time of this Mahanth that the present large monastery (Math) was built.”

The Samadhis (tombs) of Mahanth Chaitnya Gir, and Mahanth Mahadeo Gir, still exist in the yard of the Great Temple only a few feet away from the Temple itself. The *Homkunda* of these Mahanths almost touches the walls of the Temple.

This monastery (Math) built by Mahanth Mahadeo Gir (with additions and alterations by his successors); has been demolished and reconstructed about 300 years after, under the supervision and planning of Goswami Ram-sahay Gir, who is managing the Bodhgaya Math and its properties for the last 25 years, and the present prosperous condition of the *Math*, is due much to his efficient and honest management. The present monastery is a three-storeyed substantial and beautiful building with a fine pavilion in the centre of its court yard, which contains the Mahanth's gaddi, and the images of Goddess Anna-purna and of the Nine Durgas (Navadurga) of Shiva, Parbati, Ganesh and other dieties. There are extensive grounds and gardens surrounding the Math, and there is a beautiful and modern guest-house inside the compound.

Starting from very humble beginings, with a small grant of land from the then riegning power, the Bodhgaya Math is now one of the richest Maths of India. The thrift, and tireless efforts of the suceessive Mahanths and the Sannyasis of the Math, and, the frequent agumentation to its properties due to some customs prevalent in the Math, is responsible

for this prosperity. During the time of Sri Mahanth Krishna Dayal Gir, (whose picture adorns the front page of this book), there was considerable improvement. Sri Mahanth Krishna Dayal Gir was an ascetic of very high order and reputation of his great learning and spiritual powers had spread far and wide. It was during his time that the late Rev. Dharamapala had tried to take possession of the Great Temple and failed. He abdicated at a ripe old age (just like his predecessor Sri Mahanth Hem-narain Gir), and placed the best and ablest of his disciples, Sri Mahanth Harihar Gri on the Gaddi and the latter by his great power of character and asceticism is ably fulfilling the work entrusted to him.

We will very shortly notice here, a few of the ruling customs of the Bodhgaya Math. Our family being connected with that institution as its solicitors and lawyers for three generations, I have gathered them from my conversations with old Sannyasis of the Math (who are now dead) as well as from its Mahanths and old documents, court decisions and other papers. They are enumerated below.

(1) All the Sannyasis of the Bodh-gaya Math must be celibate.

(2) They are recruited from the twice born castes, (excepting the Vaishya), that is to say, Brahmins, Bhumi-har Brahmins, Kshatriyas (Rajputs).

(3) Before initiation into the brotherhood, they (if the Mahanth so chooses) have to serve a period of *novitiate*.

(4) The initiation takes place with due Shastric rites, culminating with the ceremony of *Biraja Homam*.

(5) None but the Mahanth can initiate a Sannyasi disciple.

(6) All the properties of the Math. as well as those belonging to the Sannyasi disciples vest in the Mahanth. The properties earned or acquired by the Sannyasi disciples can be enjoyed by them during their life-time, (without power of alienation), but on their death the same vest in the Mahanth of the Math. This custom is known by the name of *Murdouli* and it has been responsible for a considerable agumentation to the Math properties.

(7) The Mahanth may abdicate during his lifetime and with the concurrence of the members of the brotherhood instal such of his own disciples as he considers to be the

fittest, on the Gaddi or reigning seat of the Mahanth. In case he dies without such nomination, if there is difference of opinion amongst the sanniyasis of the Math regarding succession, the following procedure is adopted. All the personal disciples of the last Mahanth, select five or seven or more arbitrators (who may be called electors), to select one amongst them to succeed to the last Mahanth, but these electors must be the other sanniyasis of the Math, that is to say, they must not be from out of the personal disciples of the last Mahanth. These transactions are generally reduced to writing and the decision of the arbitrators is also given in writing and the one selected succeeds to the *Gaddi*.

(8) None but a personal disciple of the last reigning Mahanth can succeed to the *Gaddi*.

(9) Certain ceremonies are preformed to formally announce the accession of the new Mahanth. It is generally known as the *Chaddar* ceremony.

(10) The reigning Mahanth is the sole proprietor of the properties of the Math, and he has absolute power of control and supervision.

The affairs of the Math are generally managed by its Sannyasi disciples, and very few outsiders are employed. The Zamindari of the Math is very well managed indeed, and there are excellent irrigation arrangements. In fact, without any technical knowledge, the vast irrigational arrangements (such as pynes or water-channels constructed through hard granite rock cuttings. sometimes 100 feet deep, from 10 to 15 miles in length), designed and constructed by Goswami Ramsahay Gir must be considered to be wonderful achievements for a lay-man

Sadabrat or giving of cooked and uncooked food to all comers (according to their position in life), is a special feature of this Math. The *Annapurna Katora* (which was given by Goddess *Annapurna* to Mahanth Mahadeo Giri), is still used for distribution of the uncooked food, and a large number of people have their food at the Math every day.

The Sannyasis of the Math are provided with their fooding (which consists of 4 meals every day) and clothing by the Mahanth. There are several schools (or tolls) for Sanskrit teaching which are maintained by the Mahanth at various places. There is a big library containing old manuscripts and books in the Sanskrit,

English, Hindi. Germarn, Pali and French languages of not less than 2500 volumes.

There are free distribution of indigenous medicines to the poor. A special lemon preparation, Sankhadrab, is manufactured by the Mahanth of Bodhgaya, and it is a wonderful cure for all liver and other stomach ailments. It has attained almost an all-India fame.

The Mahanth and the Sannyasis live very simple and unostentatious lives. They call themselves Samajik Sannyasis, and observe very strictly all the religious pujas, rituals and ceremonies that are now extant amongst the Hindus in this part of the country. There are numerous temples in the Math and its neighbourhood. There are many Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu Pathenon in the Great Temple itself, including the image of Lord Buddha, and in the temple area, which are worshipped daily by the Mahanth and the disciples of the Math.

Almost all the properties of the Mahanth of Bodh-Gaya are self acquired, and secular in character, and, there is no trust express or implied that can attach to them.





THE AUTHOR

Printed at Indian Printing Press, Gaya.