



THE TEACHINGS
OF THE

BUDDHA

K. D. BHARGAVA

In Memory of
U Mya Kyaing (a) Walter L Eng Chye
Donated by
Wife Daw Betty (a) Tan Hui Cheng,
Son Dr Victor Paw Hoon Li and
Dr Tania Li
Grandchildren Nicky Simon & Ailannah
of Halifax
Canada

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A brief review of the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha

by

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PREFACE

This book is being brought out on the occasion of the 2500th anniversary of the *parinirvana* of Lord Buddha. It aims at a popular exposition of his life and teachings. Suitable passages from the *Light of Asia* and the *Dhammapada* have been incorporated in the text with a view to bringing out clearly the significance of Lord Buddha's teachings.

I am thankful to Shri A. R. Mukherjee who has undertaken the publication of the book at very short notice. My thanks are also due to my friend, Shri A. B. Ganguly, for reading the proofs.

K. D. BHARGAVA

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THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA



BUDDHA: GUPTA PERIOD, MATHURA.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA

BUDDHISM is one of the great civilized religions practised by millions of people throughout the world—especially in China, Japan, Thailand, Burma, Indo-China and Ceylon. It was founded 2500 years ago by Gautama Buddha, who was born a prince of the Sakya clan inhabiting a part of the territory now embraced by Nepal and the adjoining areas of North India. Its capital city was Kapilavastu. At the time of conception Queen Maya had a dream. She saw a six-tusked elephant with a head of the colour of rubies, who entered her right side. When asked to interpret the dream, the Brahmans said that the child in her womb would be a holy child and would achieve perfect wisdom.

Every school boy knows how Gautama decided to renounce the world, give up his worldly possessions, forsake his wife and children, and seek the truth. Everyone knows how he determined to renounce the world and in the last night in his palace he cast one look at Yashodhara, his wife with whom he had lived a supremely happy life and the baby Rahul, the “impediment”. He peeped into his wife’s chamber and saw her as she lay asleep on a pillow of flowers with one hand on Rahul’s head. The father’s instinct prompted him to embrace his child for the last time, before he departed on his mission of renunciation, but his sacred vow made him refrain as he realised that if he did so, his wife would be awakened, and her clinging arms and piteous cries would keep him chained to the palace, and imprison him in worldly desire. He turned away with a sad heart, rejoined Channa and cast himself out of the world, a penniless wanderer.

There is a famous legend which tells us that he had an experience similar to that of Christ. The spirit of evil,

Mara, pursued Gautama in his journey, and tried to persuade him to return home. He was promised boundless wealth and universal sovereignty if he went back to his wife and child. But Buddha's mind was made and he adhered to his vow with inflexible resolve. From this time onward, Gautama devoted his life to training himself for his mission, and later on, after a severe training, he began to preach his doctrines, and uttered the famous formula "I take refuge in the Buddha ; I take refuge in the Doctrine ; I take refuge in the Order," when he converted Bimbisara the king of Magadha. His teachings may be briefly told. He did not invent a new religion, and aimed merely at purifying the dominant beliefs. He was opposed to the power of the Brahamans and denied the efficacy of sacrifice: He attacked priestcraft, and the gods of his days, and did away with penances and self-mortification. He abolished caste, though this rule has been observed only in those countries where caste had not existed before. Buddha laid down eight principles:—

(1) Right belief ; (2) Right aims ; (3) Right speech ; (4) Right actions ; (5) Right means of livelihood ; (6) Right endeavour ; (7) Right mindfulness ; (8) Right meditation. The aim of the eightfold path was the attainment of Nirvana:

"Nirvana is the highest bliss
And of all paths the eightfold 'tis
That unto death-less safety leads."

At the time of the rise of Buddhism the belief seems to have been common among the people of India that true salvation of man consisted in a person evolving into an eternal personality exhausting all possibilities of rebirth. It was argued that to be subject to birth is to be subject to decay and death. There can, therefore, be no escape from decay and death, and even a Buddha or *Tathagatā* cannot

escape it in spite of his perfection and greatness. For the individual there was and there is *Samsara*, the painful necessity of undergoing the countless processes of birth and death. Hence the *Samsara* is of "contingent character," and is naturally concerned with the world of life and existence. It is clear that such an experience cannot be an unmixed blessing ; in fact the experience of this world must necessarily be partly painful, as pleasure cannot be felt as such, until it is compared with pain. However, the religious quest of a permanent ground of existence of reality is, and has been, the natural and spontaneous object of every human being. A golden age has always haunted the mind of man in this world, which may be regarded as a state of perfect bliss in which the soul attains all the qualities which are necessary for the attainment of the Absolute. Regarding the former, one need only refer to the series of romances in which a region called Arcadia is described with enthusiasm. It had become the wonder-world of noble youths and maidens, at Madrid no less than at Ferrara in the Elizabethan England, no less than in Marie Antoinette's Paris. To Sir Philip Sidney belongs the glory of having explored Arcadia in England and mapped out its borders, and there is no doubt that other countries, such as France and Italy, had also produced a Columbus of this visionary hemisphere.

What is Buddha's answer to a question which has been asked since the world was created? He is represented as saying, "Having been myself subject to the contingency of birth, and experienced its unpleasantness, I sought for *Nirvana* which is without such contingency—which is unsurpassed and secured from all worldly yoke, and obtained it. The knowledge with the vision arose: such is my final emancipation ; this is the last birth, there is no longer the possibility of rebirth. "Then this thought occurred to me," Buddha went on, "I have reached this element of things which is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, tranquil,

excellent, not within the access of mere logic, subtle and to be experienced only by the wise each for himself. The multitude find delight in the home, they are attached to the home and rejoice over it. It is difficult indeed for them to apprehend this position of *Samsara*, namely the casual delineation of all occurrence in fact—to apprehend also this position (of *Nirvana*) namely, that it is the subsidence of all predisposition towards the form of creation, the relinquishment of all ideas of belongings, the extinction of desire, the dispassion, the cessation, the ultimate (*Majjhima*).

B. C. Law says that the verbal testimony (*anna ajna*) of all the early Buddhist brethren and sisters is to this effect: “I have lived the holy life, done all that I was to do and am now free from all attachment. Completely destroyed is the cause of both through cycles of existence, there is no longer the possibility of my rebirth.” A question naturally arises,—what happens to a *Tathagata* (perfect man) after death? Does he continue to exist? Buddha used to remain silent when this question was put to him. He declared on another occasion that to obtain *parinirvana* is to see the “fire of life extinguished in that elemental condition of extinction which allows no residuum of possibility or recognition”.

Again, the manner in which Buddha attained *parinirvana* is said to have been described by Thera Anuruddha in the following terms: “There was then no process of respiration to be noticed in the organism of the great saint whose mind was then unshaken, steadily concentrated, and was of its peacefulness when it expired. With an unperturbed mind he did bear the pangs of death. Just as fire extinguishes in the exhaustion of all materials of burning, in the same way his consciousness became completely emancipated.” (B. C. Law). Again, in the *Ratana Sutta*, the disciples of Buddha who experience or realise the bliss of *Nirvana* are praised as personages who

“expire like a burning lamp on the exhaustion of oil and wick”. Finally I may quote the words put into the mouth of Buddha in the *Udana* on *Parinirvana*. They are “where matter, earth, heat and air do not find footing, where no light burns, and the sun does not shine, the moon does not shed her radiant beams, and darkness does not exist. When a sage who is a Brahmana has realised the truth by silent concentration then he becomes free from form and formlessness, happiness and sufferings.”

Buddha devoted forty five years to his mission and journeyed through different parts of northern India. He was attacked by a severe illness in his eightieth year which he believed to be fatal. Yet he journeyed on, as he had the immovable structure of a character, the stubborn effort of an intelligence, the free immolation of a being that could give all and take nothing, could even receive nothing, and above all the quality of a soul in which neither opposition nor praise could change its exceptional purity. In his last journey, Buddha reached a grove outside Kusinagara, about one hundred and twenty miles north-east of Banaras, and lay down there to rest for the last time. Buddha said to one of his devoted disciples, Ananda, before he died, “You may think that the world ends when the teacher goes, but it is not so. The law and the rules of the Order which I have laid down will be your teacher. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Seek salvation alone in the truth. Look not for assistance to any one besides yourselves.” His last address was delivered to a crowd of Buddhist *bhikshus*, and his last words were, “Decay is inherent in all component things ; work out your salvation with diligence.”

Buddhism and Asoka.—The doctrine which Buddha preached was propagated by the great Emperor Asoka (272-232 B.C.) with extraordinary zeal. His conversion to Buddhism has been described by many historians. Asoka had been victorious over numerous foes and had carried

his arms successfully over all India. He had however perpetrated a horrible massacre in Orissa. It is said that he was haunted all his life by it, and to escape from his remorse he became a Buddhist. We find the following passage in one of his edicts: "If a hundredth nay a thousandth part of the persons, who were then slain, carried away captive, or done to death, were now to suffer the same fate, it would be a matter of remorse to His Majesty." Asoka preached the Law of *Ahimsa* with fervour and lived the doctrine which he preached. He converted Ceylon, Burma and Thailand to Buddhism and sent missionaries to the courts of Egypt, Macedonia, Magus of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus. His envoys did not succeed in converting the rulers of these countries, yet it is undoubted that their preaching had considerable effect on men's minds. The descendants of Demetrius, the Greek ruler of Bactria, who had invaded India and conquered a part of the Punjab, were converted to Buddhism. Again, Kanishka, the greatest ruler of a section of the Kushans who invaded India, became an ardent propagandist of Buddhism and his missionaries converted China and Japan.

Asoka's later life was devoted to the propagation of Buddhism on a scale which had never before been regarded as possible. He received some sudden inspiration towards the eleventh year of his reign and he records the following in Rock Edict No. V. "Work I must for the public good—and the root of the matter is in exertion and despatch of business, than which nothing is more efficacious for the general welfare. And for what do I toil? For no other than this, that I may discharge my debt to animate beings and that while I make some happy in this world they may in the next world gain heaven." His vast missionary enterprises were conducted with consummate skill, and preachers in groups of five were sent all over Ceylon, the kingdoms of southern India, to Mysore, the Bombay coast,

to the Himalayas and Kashmir, and to Pegu. Buddhism was propagated throughout India with a fervour which has never been witnessed before, and India became the centre of spiritual energy that was diffused throughout the Far East.

Asoka's Law of Piety.—A discussion of this law will take up too much time and space and I content myself with a summary of the Law given by Professor Rhys-Davids. 1. No animal should be slaughtered for sacrifice. 2. Tribal feasts in high places to be prohibited. 3. Docility to parents is good. 4. Liberality to friends, acquaintances and teachers and Brahmans is good. 5. Not to injure living beings is good. 6. Economy in expenditure is good. 7. Self mastery, purity of heart, gratitude and fidelity are excellent even for the man who is too poor to be able to give largely. 8. Right conduct towards slaves and servants is inculcated. 9. Toleration. 10. The Law is good. The question is, What is Law? Law consists in having little in one's own mind of the intoxications (arising from lusts, craving for a future life, ignorance and idle speculations) doing many benefits to others; compassion; liberality; truth; purity. 11. Self-examination and discipline. Man sees his good deeds but does not see his evil deeds. Yet a man must watch over himself saying, "Such and such acts lead to corruption—such as cruelty, anger and pride. I will zealously see to it that I slander not out of envy. That will be to my advantage in this world, and to my advantage in the worlds to come."

Asoka took stock of himself and his work, and inscribed his last words in Seven Pillar Edicts about 242 B.C. He reiterated his convictions concerning the Law of Piety, and recapitulated his ordinances concerning the election of the Censors, the treatment of animals, and the propagation of the Law. Asoka retired in the 30th year of his reign, though he did not abdicate from active

government. As no layman could attain the *Nirvana*, the Emperor assumed the yellow robe for the second time and became a devout monk. The administration of his vast empire was carried out by Ministers or Regents and the heir to the throne though he still issued edicts under his authority. India was therefore governed by an Emperor in monastic robes. Beyond the information yielded by the supplementary Pillar Edicts, there is no record whatsoever of the last eight years of his life, and we know only the bare date of his death, *viz.*, 232 B.C. His personality knit up the scattered parts of the vast empire, but after his death it disintegrated and his dynasty disappeared within about fifty years. Though his Empire perished his work remained, and we can see its profound effect in the Far East, in China, Japan, Thailand and Annam at the present day, as these countries were converted to Buddhism by Indian monks who started their sacred task in his reign, and kept it up for several centuries. While Buddhism in India is confined to a small section of the people, the life and thought of the Far East has been moulded by a succession of pious and learned Indian monks who preached Buddha's gospel throughout the Far East. Asoka appears as a Colossus astride the gulf of two thousand years and one recognises the wisdom, tolerance and piety of one of the greatest rulers the world has ever known. Asoka yearned for spiritual perfection, and has been deemed a visionary by some scholars. He would have been delighted with the epithet, for as an Emperor he dedicated himself to the task of breeding good and righteous men. He was the first great emperor who gave and conferred not only spiritual, but also political unity on India, and he extended his empire over a large part of modern India. India ere long became the country of his love, the firstborn of his yearning.

According to Mr. H. G. Wells he was the greatest emperor of all times. Asoka is India's gift to humanity. In his

time Buddhism was fused into a living organism from which successive generations derived purpose and inspiration, and there was an instinctive conviction that man was more important than wealth, and moral health was of greater significance than mere intelligence. Buddha had regarded ethics as the essence of his doctrines, and morality became the foundation of a creed which carried the new ideal into the secular organization of the Buddhist state. Its purpose too became moral. The state was now regarded as the fittest instrument for producing virtuous men and women, imbued with the Law of Piety, and rooted in the morality of Buddha.

We can picture the royal monk inspired by the new doctrine, and turning with the zeal of a convert to the sacred task of conversion. The discipline of the cloister must have left its trace upon the imperial monk, and the wings of dream must have withered the royal cheeks. The spirit of prayer quivered over his eager lips, and it must have been heightened by the grey Indian landscape which for hundreds of miles melts into blueness, like the blueness of a clear Indian sky, flecked here and there with wandering cloud-shadows. Asoka and his court must have been deeply affected by the grass-grown streets of the sacred city of Patna when the first flash of the authentic genius kindled his faith.

Religion is not the product of an elaborate chain of reasoning, but of intuition and instinct. It comes into being as simple intuition, and the old creed subsists until a stronger enthusiasm and new intuition, or a fresh outburst of emotional vitality supplants the old doctrines. The impulse of regeneration comes not from countries which are pre-occupied with a stagnant and effete culture, or are satisfied with the serenity and perfection of their art or are hardened to the infamy of their corruption but from the virile enthusiasm and simple faith of a vigorous people.

This explains why Arabia became the source alike of inspiration and of a world religion ; it also explains why Christianity took its origin in Palestine and not in effete, pedantic metaphysics-ridden logic-chopping and decadent Greece of the later period. It illustrates the progress of the Reformation among the hardy races of the North, and its failure to influence the highly cultured, cynical, sceptical and morally decadent Italians of the Renaissance.

Buddha did not develop the metaphysical implications of his doctrines, as he was concerned primarily with the moral life of the people and at a time when contemporary religion in Buddha's time had petrified into gross superstition, his teachings were intertwined with the very heartstrings of the Indian people. The morality of Buddhism is represented by the eightfold path and is a compromise between the extremes of self-indulgence and flagellation. As Buddha himself said: "There are two extremes which we must avoid. The life of carnal pleasure is ignoble contrary to the spiritual life, unworthy and vain. But a life of austerities is also sorrowful, unworthy and vain. Between these two extremes, the perfect is the middle way." The whole life of man, intellectual, emotional and volitional, was to be fundamentally modified by strict adherence to this path.

Again Buddha did not adhere to the caste system, and his teachings emphasised the unity of man and the sanctity of human personality. Yet he cannot be regarded as a social reformer, nor did he interfere with the domestic ritual which continued to be conducted according to the ancient rites. He refused to discuss abstruse metaphysical questions regarding the permanent nature of Ultimate Reality. He avoided metaphysical questions as he felt that philosophical arguments regarding the nature of God and other cognate problems with which metaphysics was then concerned, distract men's minds from the consistent pursuit of a moral ideal. Probably Buddha felt that it is better to act according

to the eight-fold path which he had engraved in the heart and mind of man through his teaching and personality, than to indulge in an interminable dialectical gymnastic on the nature of morality and the validity of moral sanctions. It is better to win the Victoria Cross than to write a ponderous folio on physical courage.

Many students of philosophy are surprised at the stagnation and decay of Greek Philosophy after the conquest and subjugation of Greece by Macedonia, and every school boy knows how the sublime teachings of Aristotle and Plato degenerated into pure sophistries and logmochies through the misspent energy of "professional" philosophers and windy sophists. The danger against which Buddha warned is real, and we cannot ignore the possibility of the moral laws being made the subject of metaphysical wrangling, instead of being followed in our daily life as stern, inflexible and inviolate rules of conduct. A society which indulges in subtleties of philosophical discussion on the most sublime subjects in a spirit of levity and scepticism is incapable of tragic passion, lyrical rapture, intense emotion, sublime conduct or heroic activities. It may be well-bred and be wholly satisfied with inactivity and dilettantism, but it lacks the capacity for chivalry, and forgets that a community must rest on a realised capital of morality and sentiment. The moral nature of man is stronger than abstruse metaphysical abstractions, and morality is attained not by disputing about its foundations, but by acting on its well-known rules with fixed determination.

Every nation must have a reserve fund of public morality to draw upon in the critical phases of its national life. Hence the real wealth of a people consists in its character, which exemplifies morality in action. The very romance of Buddha's career and the wonderful career of Asoka, their self-abnegation, persistence and courage have endeared both of them to the Indian people and the doctrine he preached

to the Indian masses who crowded round him wherever he went through our graceful Indian cities. As a result he planted a seed of thought in the heart and mind of millions of his countrymen, the prince as well as the pauper, which enabled them to resist and ultimately cast off the purely negative and futile reasoning of the decadent philosophies of his time. Buddha consistently refused to define abstruse metaphysical problems, as he felt that this has no real bearing on the problems of conduct which is spiritual and inward and is not based on dialectics or logic.

Hence the *Nirvana* is negatively defined and is not synonymous with annihilation, or with the "Night of Nothingness". It is timeless existence, full "of confidence, peace, calm, bliss, happiness, purity, and freshness". Against metaphysics and logic that sought to destroy man's faith and character, and weaken his moral fibres, Buddha reinforced the instinctive but inarticulate spiritualism of the ordinary man with a clear code of moral laws which would be capable of withstanding the traditional doctrine on its own ground. In place of mere dialectical consistency and ideal uniformity he set the glamour and pride of chivalrous action, based not on ceremonies, but on the realities of human nature. Disraeli put it in a prophetic passage, nearly two thousand years later: "Without something to worship, man would merely fashion his own divinities and find a chieftain in his own passions. If no church comes forward with its little deeds of truth sustained by the tradition of sacred ages and by conviction of countless generations to guide him, he will find altars and idols in his own heart and his own imagination."

That Buddha stirred his audience to their depth and produced a magical effect on the mind of his contemporaries, is clear from the account of his success as well as from the details of his tours. We can imagine him ascending the altar steps of prophecy, and standing like Moses on the

Mount between the thunders of God and the tabernacles of pain, fulminating, period after period, of impassioned eloquence. When Buddha left his palace, his wife, his father and only child, on his spiritual quest, he was, as it were voiceless, powerless, without the control and development of his exquisite qualities, but with the consciousness of prophetic mission and of potent spiritual energy within him. After his departure from the town which he loved, where the happiest days of his boyhood and adolescence were spent, he brooded alone and out of harmony with the spirit and tradition of the beautiful, pleasure-loving city. The charm of the gardens of his palace, the loveliness of the son whom he adored, and the wife whom he was going to leave for ever, these passionate and intense movements in his life must have sunk deep into his fiery soul. He was however giving up his palace to serve a larger organism, the great multitude whose spiritual yearnings must have attracted his own keen spirit by an invisible bond of spiritual sympathy. Henceforth he gave up everything which man on this earth regards as his dearest possession and instead of his fair city and its handsome revenue, his charming wife and lovable son, he propagated the truth which gave discipline, culture and the amenities of refined existence to the Far East. Buddha restored to India her spiritual hegemony and political unity. Having conceived a spiritual resurrection for his country, and dedicated himself to his mission, Buddha never looked back and henceforth lived the doctrines which he preached to millions.

India's contribution to the culture of humanity must therefore be assessed in terms of her spiritual vigour which was expressed in masterpieces of profound metaphysics, as well as in the revolution which Buddha wrought in the mind and spirit of man. The two must be taken together, if we are to evaluate India's place in the scale of spiritual and mental progress. Her spiritual supremacy before

Buddhism became the dominant religion in India and the Far East was acknowledged by all contemporaries ; after the rise and growth of Buddhism, India became the spiritual mentor of the whole of Eastern Asia.

I have given above a brief account of the work done by Indian missionaries in foreign lands under Asoka. I may amplify this by giving particulars of some of these missions. It may briefly be said that before Islam made its influence felt in some of the regions of the Far East, the pattern of spiritual life of a large part of that enormous region had been woven by the ideas discovered and propagated by the pious and learned Buddhist monks of ancient India. About this time, the cultural and spiritual ideals which inspired Indian thought were introduced into Ceylon and Burma, into Thailand, Cambodia, and Cochin-China, into Malaya and Indonesia. China, Japan and Korea were also transformed through their contact with the missionaries from India. In Indo-China and Indonesia the spread of Hindu culture seems to have been originally due to commercial intercourse. Commercial relations between these two countries had been carried on for centuries, and the Brahmans and other teachers followed in the wake of Indian merchants. Indians did not go out into these lands as conquerors, but as peaceful traders, and later on, as missionaries, who used persuasion and example as the simplest and most efficient means of cultural infiltration. It was the humble Indian *Bhikshu* dressed in the yellow garb of sewn and tattered rags, and the ascetic missionary with a scanty loin cloth who "trekked" into China and Cambodia and carried to these people the message of Buddha. It appears from the report of the Chinese envoy Chang K'ien in Central Asia, that commercial contact between India and China was constant in the second century B.C. and it flourished also in Central Asia. The Afghans, Turks and Mongols were also influenced by India, while in South East

Asia, the Mongs of Burma and South Siam, the Khemra of Cambodia and Chams of Champa and Indonesian peoples of Malaya, Sumatra, Java, Bali, Lambok, Borneo, Celebes and the Philippines were permeated by Indian culture. Dr. Chatterji states in the *Cultural Heritage of India* that the Empire which India built in these lands "was conquered by the piety and the spiritual energy of her sages and monks, and it was a *Dharmarajya*—a glorious empire of which the guiding principle was *Dharma*, or religious culture and righteousness." Bali still retains many Hindu customs and traditions.

Influence on China and South-East Asia.—Historians usually ascribe the introduction of Buddhism into China to the famous vision of Emperor Ming in 61 A.D. India was in those days what China was to Europe in the Middle Ages, a remote paradise for wisdom and wealth. Caravan trade between India and China had been conducted for centuries. About 60 A.D. there was a large amount of literature on Buddhism in selected Chinese circles. Emperor Ming sent a deputation of eighteen men in 63 A.D. and after many wanderings they reached Magadha, south of the Ganga. Magadha was then famous for its collection of Buddhist relics and literature, and the deputation managed to take back a part of this treasure. They returned to the capital Loyang in 67 A.D. A stream of Indian Buddhist monks now began from India into China and continued for nearly seven hundred years. The enduring work accomplished by Indian missionaries in many parts of China is acknowledged by modern Chinese scholars. It was through the efforts of these monks that Buddhism was nationally established in China.

Dr. George K. C. Yeh, Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy in London delivered a most interesting lecture on India and China in London on July 23, 1942, and stated, "The Indian monks who moved about in the first

temples in China, sat in cells and carefully copied out the sutras (verses) and went to their simple vegetarian meals and to their services, were deeply religious men, for whom absorption into the absolute was life's main task." The Chinese monks now began to travel in India to drink at the fountain-head and bring as many sacred writings and relics to China as possible. The visit of the great Indian monk, Bodhidharma in 520 A.D. was momentous, as he became China's first patriarch. The translations into Chinese of Sanskrit *sutras* by Indian and Chinese monks was carried on with fervour. The following quotation from Dr. Yeh's lecture will show the extent of the change, which India produced on the mind and heart of China. "When the first Indian monks came and the White Horse temple was built for the purpose of translating Sutras 36,000 men were employed in the so-called Court for the translation of Sutras, of which the White Horse temple was only a part." We still have the names of 800 Sanskrit scholars who worked on various translations. The influence of Indian translations of Buddhist scriptures on the Chinese language has been profound. It is calculated by Dr. Yeh that at least 10,000 phrases and usages in the Chinese language are traceable to Buddhist translations. Many of the Hindu and Buddhist customs are followed in China to the present day. This brief account shows how India became the spiritual mentor of China in the first century of the Christian era.

In Indo-China and adjacent territories Indian influence was profound. Buddhist *Jataka* stories constantly refer to merchant ships from Banaras and Champa (Bhagalpur) sailing down the Ganga into the open sea and steering into the countries situated to the east of Bengal. -- We learn from Chinese Imperial Annals that the queen of Fu Nan, which represented Southern Cambodia, submitted to Kaundinaya after a naval battle. Kaundinaya married the native queen and, "as she had no clothing, gave her clothes". One of the

monarchs of Southern Cambodia sent an Embassy to India and the ambassadors reached probably Pataliputra (modern Patna). When the Embassy returned with two Indian envoys in about 245 A.D. two Chinese envoys happened to be present at the court. Their account of what they heard about India from the envoys is deeply interesting. I reproduce it below.

“That is a country where the law of Buddha prospers. The people are straightforward and the land is very fertile. The capital has a double enclosure of ramparts, streams and sources of water-supply are divided into a large number of winding canals, which flow into the ditches under the walls of the city and thence into a great stream. The palaces are adorned with sculptures and engraved decorations. In the streets and the markets etc., one hears bells of joyous sound, sees rich dresses and smells fragrant flowers. The merchants come there by land and sea, and assemble in great number, and offer for sale jewels and all the objects of luxury which the heart can desire. To the right and left are the great kingdoms. Several kingdoms, even though situated at great distances from India, obey the king, as they consider this kingdom to be situated in the centre of the universe.”

We know from Sanskrit inscriptions, deciphered in 1931, that Vaishnavism as well as Buddhism flourished side by side with the cult of Siva, in Cambodia. According to the Chinese traveller, Itsing, who described the country at the end of the seventh century A.D., “the law of Buddha prospered and expanded (in Cambodia). But at present the wicked king has completely destroyed it, and there are no more monks”. The king belonged to the new dynasty which was Hindu in sentiment, and was a strong worshipper of Siva. The kingdom of Cambodia remained under Hindu influence for several centuries, and it was not till about 1,002 A.D. that a Buddhist king Suryavarmana, sat on the throne, though the official

creed continued to be practised as before. Chinese travellers speak in glowing terms of the fabulous wealth of Cambodia. The country seems to have been prosperous and fertile, but caught between two powerful kingdoms, Annam and Siam, Cambodia lost her glory and soon decayed. A number of inscriptions have also been found in Java and Sumatra.

It is possible, as suggested by a Dutch scholar, Dr. Stutterheim, that it was after the marriage of Tara, the daughter of King Dharampala of Bengal, with the Sailendra monarch who built the temple of Tara at Kalasan, that Mahayanism became popular in Java. It is possible, as the learned doctor opines, that the father-in-law was also the spiritual *guru* of the Sri Vijaya ruler. The decline of Hindu influence and culture was however rapid, as Islam won over Malaya and Java, and other parts and achieved astonishing success. In 1513 the Portuguese Viceroy, Albuquerque, mentions a Hindu King as the suzerain of Java. Soon, however, the Hindu kingdom was swept away, and it is only in Bali that Hinduism is still a living force.

India's spiritual primacy in Asia in the beginning of recorded history was acknowledged by the nations of the period, and she legitimately took her place in the hierarchy of civilisers of ancient times. Material progress is meaningless without moral purpose and enlightenment, and we are not justified in ignoring intellectual and spiritual culture, and regarding civilisation as synonymous with mechanisation. Absence of faith leads to loss of vitality, and the slow poison of materialism produces national and racial suicide. When this period of India's greatness ended, she became a prey to internecine quarrels, and was divided into numerous fragments. Class fought against class, cities with cities, and families with rival families. The discords and divisions which had been suspended for centuries by the magic of discipline and religion, were unloosened and all the elements of the population clashed together in persistent fury.

Alliances, pacts, and treaties are made and revolutions accomplished, until the ancient feuds of families and clans are crossed, recrossed and tangled in a web that is impossible to unravel. Through the medley of divided, subdivided and inter-twisted parties and factions, Muslims rode in their quest of conquest and established their ascendancy after centuries of desperate struggle. India after the eighth century seems to have lost all the elements of her organizing prudence and vitality, as she lacked a national leader of energy and initiative who could fuse her jarring elements into a unity.

A famous Chinese scholar, Lin Yutang, has asserted that "India produced too much religion, China too little". "A dribble of this religious spirit overflowed from India and inundated the whole Eastern Asia". He goes on to state that it is curious that Hindus have rejected Buddhism as the Jews have rejected Christianity. Buddha was opposed to the caste system and Buddhism represents a revolt against the Brahmans. Buddha preached directly to the people in their spoken tongue instead of the classical Sanskrit of that period. Yet in the end, Brahmanism succeeded in driving Buddhism out of India. The explanation of this paradox is to be found in the difference in racial consciousness. Buddhism did not appeal to the racial soul of the Hindus, probably because, it did not give due emphasis to the spiritual element in man. India's supremacy in the ancient world was due to her spiritual energy. In all religions, there are elements which need careful analysis. Every religion postulates organic growth, and in every religion there are arts which remain intact so long as that religion lasts. There are moreover certain parts which are left fluid to change as conditions might change. Buddhism appealed to the Chinese and Japanese mind, because, like Confucianism, it concerned itself mainly with the problems of ethics, and

not of metaphysics. Buddhism stresses the value of human relationships.

As Lin Yutang puts it, "From the Confucian point of view the little may be so much and the much may be so little. For Chinese Humanism in its essence is the study of human relations (*jerlun*) through a correct appreciation of human values by the psychology of human motives to the end that we may behave as reasonable human beings (*touojen*). The Confucian point of view is that politics must be subordinated to morals, that Government is a makeshift of temporization, law a superficial instrument of order, and police force a foolish invention for morally immature individuals."

Now contrast this with the Hindu definition of Culture which Sir John Woodroffe gives in his work, *Is India Civilised?* "Culture is an expression of the soul or subtle body, a mode of the manifested Self in which it is related either as religion and philosophy to the one Spiritual Principle of all—that aspect of culture in which it seeks to give explanation to the inner reality or in which it is related to the outer phenomenon, a manifestation of the Life Principle as Knowledge, as Will displayed in action, and as the Beauty of all perfect natural forms."

The emphasis on the spiritual will be regarded as incomprehensible and meaningless by a Chinese. The Chinese are suspicious of metaphysical subtleties in which Indian mind takes a peculiar delight. "So far as any systematic epistemology or metaphysics is concerned, China had to import it from India. The temperament for systematic philosophy simply wasn't there, and will not be there so long as the Chinese remain Chinese. They have too much sense for that . . . The very language of Chinese thought is the market slang of the plebeians." The Chinese knows only provisional opinions, momentary truths, and never sacrifices even a single word, sentence or idea to the architecture of the whole. "China's

peculiar contribution to philosophy is therefore the distrust of systematic philosophy."

I have given these quotations to show the profound influence which racial characteristics exercise on the growth and diffusion of a particular creed or religion. India's individuality, remarkable for salient genius and for self-conscious and deliberate choice of systematic philosophy, marked out the path along which her spiritual development was to proceed. Buddhism was ruled out, as Buddhism gave no clear reply to the problem of God and His relations with the universe. It is the eternal problem of schism of the state and spirit. Ancient India achieved the triumph of spirit over matter, yet while she erected a spiritual structure that is still a source of inspiration to the modern mind, she lost her political freedom but achieved her supremacy over her conquerors through her infinite power of assimilation. She never aspired to world dominion, for this would have involved a moral excuse and a boundless will for expansion and it would have had to be fortified with Faustian motives. India may well retort that by adhering to her national genius, and developing strenuously the spiritual element in her racial consciousness, she has achieved inner freedom, and spiritual security while the moral pressure under which tyrannical races like the Japanese and Germans, two peoples with an appalling mixture of medieval culture and modern torture, and other violent people, have lived since their conversion to the doctrine of *Welt Politik* has destroyed the moral foundations of the race, and made them in old Hobbes' words, "nasty, brutish, and hellish". India has the contempt of the spiritual mind for shells from which all moral life has departed.

Kierkegaard, a famous Danish philosopher, prophesied a hundred years ago that Christianity would one day be taken from Europe, to teach Europe its value. This is precisely what is happening in Europe at the present

time. India has not yet reached that last stage of materialism, and let us pray that she never will. For spiritual culture is her special pride, and she will never exchange it for a highly mechanised civilisation. I have tried to show how the national temperament of the Indian race has reflected the halting, and hesitating statements of Buddhism on the nature of the soul and God. It took India nearly 500 years to build up a powerful state under the Mughals and the Marathas, and to endow them with a new soul of constancy and determination. The medieval empire of India, the Mughal Empire, and other offshoots in the eighteenth century period show that the fine and delicate spirit of ancient India existed in quintessence among the great conquerors, administrators and philosophers of our race during the last ten centuries of chequered history. India paid a high price for the excess of her spiritual energy and ultra-religious spirit, but it may be said in reply that it is rare to find a nation possessed of all the virtues in an equal measure of perfection. To this it may be retorted that if India had devoted less time to metaphysical speculations and more to her material development, the marvellous Indian intelligence, which is India's pride, would have burnt brightly in a long series of glorious achievements in the democratisation of her institutions, the raising of her standard of living and the building up of a powerful state. These thoughts have been prompted by the study of some Buddhist works, which curiously enough, have not yet been popularised in India. We owe our knowledge of these masterpieces to the industry and devotion of a number of Chinese scholars, who have translated them from Sanskrit into Chinese.

THE LIGHT OF ASIA

Edwin Arnold's classic, *The Light of Asia*, is based on the life of Buddha by Asvaghosha, who is called the

St. Paul of Buddhism. He was born in Oudh, and lived at the end of the first century A.D. He was probably the greatest expounder of the *Mahayana* school of Buddhism. As St. Paul attacked circumcision, so Asvaghosha attacked the caste system in *Vajrashuscihy*. India never took to the *Mahayana* school of Buddhism, and at the time the great disciple was writing his life of Buddha, the Hinayana Buddhists too, were losing their hold on the Hindu mind, and Brahmanism was asserting its supremacy. I will quote only a few passages from this poem. Here is the account of Buddha's meditation after renunciation of his wife, throne, and all earthly splendour.

Lord Buddha sate the scorching summer through: Here
The driving rains, the chilly dawns and eves,
Wearing for all mens' sakes, the yellow robe,
Eating in beggar's guise the scanty meal,
Chance gathered from the Charitable; at night
Couched on the grass, homeless, alone; while yelped
The sleepless jackals round his cave or coughs
Of famished tiger from the thicket broke.
By day and night here dwelt the world-honoured,
Subduing that fair body born for bliss
With fast and frequent watch and search intense
Of silent meditation, so prolonged
That oft times while he mused as motionless
As the fixed rock on his seat, the squirrel leap'd
Upon his knee, the timid quail led forth
Her brood between his feet and blue doves pecked
The rice-grains from the bowl beside his hand."

Arnold then describes a moving scene in which Buddha espied a starving tigress with two cubs, whining with famine, mumbling "those milkless teats which render nought" and "roaring a savage thunder-peal of woe". Buddha's reaction on seeing the tigress in such a sad plight was characteristic.

Our Lord bethought! "There is no other way
 To help this murderess of the woods but one.
 By sunset these will die, having no meat ;
 There is no living heart will pity her,
 Bloody with ravin, lean for lack of blood.
 Lo! if I feed her, who shall lose but I,
 And how can love lose doing of its kind
 Even to the uttermost." So saying, Buddha
 Silently laid aside sandals and staff,
 His sacred thread, turban, and cloth and came
 Forth from behind the milk bush on the sand,
 Saying "Ho! mother, here is meat for thee!"
 Whereat the perishing beast yelped hoarse and shrill,
 Sprang from her cubs and hurling to the earth
 That willing victim, had her feast of him
 With all the crooked daggers of her claws,
 Rending his flesh and all her yellow fangs
 Bathed in his blood the great cat's burning breath
 Mixed with the last sigh of such fearless love.

Could any country give a nobler example of self-sacrifice
 and love? Here is another beautiful passage:—

But our Lord gaining breath, arose and asked
 Milk in the Shepherd's lota. "Ah, my Lord,
 I cannot give thee," quoth the lad, "thou seest
 I am a Sudra, and my touch defiles!"
 Then the world-honoured spake: "Pity and need
 Make all flesh kin. There is no caste in blood
 Which runneth of one hue, nor caste in tears,
 Which trickle salt and all ; neither comes man
 To birth with tilak-mark stamped on the brow,
 Nor sacred thread on neck. Who doth right deed,
 Is twice born, and who doth ill-deed, vile.
 Give me to drink, my brother ; when I come,
 Unto my quest it shall be good for thee."

The Sudra's heart overflowed with gratitude and he gave him milk. The following gives a lucid account of the basic conception of Buddhism.

In the third watch,
The earth being still, the hellish legions fled,
A soft air breathing from the sinking moon
Our Lord attained Samma-Sambuddh ; he saw,
By light which shines beyond our mortal ken,
The line of all his lives in all the worlds ;
Far back, and farther back, and farthest yet,
Five hundred lives and fifty. Even as one,
At rest upon a mountain-summit, marks,
His path wind up by precipice and crag,
Past thick-set woods shrunk to a patch through logs
Glittering false-green ; down hollows where he toiled
Breathless ; on dizzy ridges where his feet
Had well-nigh slipped ; beyond the sunny lawns,
The cataract, and the cavern and the pool,
Backward to those dim flats wherefrom he sprang
To reach the blue ; thus Buddha did behold
Life's upward steps long linked from levels low
Where breath is base, to higher slopes and higher
Wherein the ten great virtues wait to lead
The climber skyward. Also Buddha saw
How its march breaks off and how its march begins ;
Holding the gain and answering for the loss ;
And how in each life good begets more good,
Evil fresh evil ; Death but casting up
Debt or credit ; whereupon the account
By sure arithmetic where no tittle drops
Certain and just on some new springing life
Wherein are packed and scored past thoughts and deeds,
Strivings and triumphs, memories and marks
Of lives foregone.

With the fourth watch, came the secret of Sorrow
and Suffering.

But when the fourth watch came, the secret came
Of Sorrow, which with evil mars the law,
As damp and dross hold back the goldsmith's fire.
Then was the Dukha-Satya opened him
First of the "Noble Truths", how sorrow is
Shadow to life, moving where life doth move ;
Not to be laid aside until one lays
Living aside, with all its changing states,
Birth, growth, decay, love, hatred, pleasure, pain,
Being and doing. How that none strips off
These sad delights and pleasant griefs who lacks
Knowledge to know them snares ; but he who knows
Avidya-Delusion—sets those snares ;
Loves life no longer, but ensues escape.
The eyes of such a one are wide, he sees
Delusion breeds Sankhara, Tendency
Perverse ; Tendency Energy—Vidnnan
Whereby comes Namarupa, local Form
And name and Bodiment bringing the man
With senses naked to the sensible
A helpless mirror of all shows which pass
Across his heart ; and so Vedana grows—
'Sense life'—false in its gladness, false in sadness,
But sad or glad, the mother of Desire,
Trishna, that thirst which makes the living drink
Deeper and deeper of the false salt waves
Whereon they float, pleasures, ambitions, wealth,
Praise, fame or domination, conquest, love ;
Rich meats and robes, and fair abodes and pride
Of ancient lines and lust of days, and strife
To live, and sins that flow from strife, some sweet,
Some bitter. Thus Life's thirst quenches itself
With draughts which double thirst, but who is wise

Tears from his soul this Trishna, feeds his sense
No longer on false shows, fills his firm mind
To seek not, strive not, wrong not ; bearing meek
All ills which flow from foregone wrongfulness,
And so constraining passions that die
Famished ; till all the sum of ended life—
The 'Karma'—all that total of a soul
Which is the things it did, the thoughts it had,
The "self" it wove—with woof of viewless time,
Crossed on the warp invisible of acts—
The outcome of him on the Universe
Grows pure and sinless ; either never more
Needing to find a body and a place,
Or so informing what fresh frame it takes
In new existence that the new toils prove
Lighter and lighter not to be at all
Thus "finishing the Path" free from Earth's cheats ;
Released from all the Skandhas of the flesh
Broken from ties ; from Upadanas—saved
From whirling on the Wheel ; aroused and sane
As is a man wakened from hateful dreams.
Until—greater than Kings, than Gods more glad!
The aching craze to live ends, and life glides—
Lifeless to nameless quiet, nameless joy,
Blessed Nirvana, sinless, stirless rest,
That change which never changes!

The *Light of Asia* has exercised a profound influence in Europe and Asia. It gives the best poetic approach to Buddha's life, and describes the Indian scene with marvellous fidelity. Though it raises Buddha to cosmic heights, the human interest remains undiminished, and Buddha is not a shadowy figure, flitting through the Indian villages and cities in an aura of divinity, but a man, endowed with supernatural grace and power, and with a sense of humour,

employing his radiant gifts of character for a spiritual revolution in the land he loved best. Buddha's meditations which have been so beautifully described by Arnold, produced one of the most momentous crises in the history of civilisation. The reawakening belief in the dignity of man, the desire for beauty, for good deeds, and for a virtuous life received from Buddha their strongest and most vital impulse. In hundreds of Buddhist works, we can reconstruct the story of our country and our race. India emerges from these relics with grace, and purity in spite of Miss Mayo and Rudyard Kipling. Buddhism marks the rising of that great river of spiritual energy, which flowed northward to China and Japan, and southward to recover the culture of the Far East.

It may be objected by India's detractors that Buddhism and its doctrines, were too narrow to make a vivid appeal to the Indian spirit. Nowadays all that Buddhism asks for is happiness as it is interested only in human conduct and human government.

BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

Buddhism does not involve a systematic investigation into the nature of Ultimate Reality, but is simply a scheme of living. It does indeed give a sense of freedom of existence simplified and self-sufficient and beyond the reach of fate. This is based on the principle that as the drama of life has to be played, it is best to have a set of rules for human relationship and human values. Philosophy is reduced, therefore, to a hospital for the sick and puzzled souls, and it provides a foothold for man above the torrent of circumstances, an armour for the spirit which the shafts of fate could not pierce and which even death could not shatter. According to the Chinese scholar, Lin Yutang, the Chinese philosopher is like a swimmer who dives but must soon come up to the surface again, and is happy in his profundity.

Confucius says, "Be a good son, a good brother, and a good friend and if you have any energy left after attending to conduct, then study books." Buddhism disappeared from India mainly because it was out of harmony with the consciousness of this land. The philosophy of Confucius does not account for men of genius like Buddha, who move like vibros in a life-sustaining fluid, specially adapted to their needs, and embody the collective spirit of humanity proceeding in its evolution through successive phases, and making its advance from stage to stage by alternations of energy and repose. It is clear that in such cases there is complete harmony between the spirit of the age and the man in whom it is incarnated. This is clear in the case of Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius and others. The age in which they are born seems to be specially adapted for their message and there is a heritage of spiritual power prepared for them at their birth. The atmosphere which they breathe, and the age to which they belong, are so charged with mental vitality that their profound power of analysis and spiritual energy bring them into relation with forces which are mightier than the property of single natures. Had Buddhism been simply a philosophy of prudence and human relationship, which the Chinese scholars emphasise, it would not have given birth to men of mental or spiritual grandeur who are cast in a heroic mould. It is true, of course, that a man of genius is sometimes so dazzled by brilliant achievement that he fails to test it in the crucible of ethics. His outlook is wholly intellectual, and he refuses to bring moral considerations into his categories of power. It may be that intellect, after lying spell-bound during a long night, when thoughts are as dreams and movement is halting and shaky, may resume its activity in a man of exceptional character, interrogate nature, and enjoy the pleasures of unimpeded energy, without troubling itself about ethical implication of vigorous action. In this case the dross of

selfishness mingles with the pure gold of public interest, but there is lack both of moral simplicity and sublime unity, which Buddhist prudence inculcates. On the other hand, it may be replied that the net result of Buddhist philosophy would be a succession of grey mediocrities, regulating their rules of conduct by the strictest canons of drab and commonplace prudence inspired by systematic pedantry, and producing obedient, docile and "soft" devotees, without fire and energy, enthusiasm or earnestness. They will no doubt possess greater stability, and be stolid, industrious and law-abiding, and will be gifted with a deeper sense of their intellectual vocation. Such a spirit may be transmuted into humanism, the quality which Buddhism regards as supreme, but it will be an aggregate of individual inferiorities, and very few of them will have the desire to make their personality eternal in the minds of men by heroic action. This is contradicted in our daily experience by the heroic spirit and dauntless courage of the Mongols, the Chinese and the Japanese.

I am afraid I have discussed this point at unnecessary length, but I feel that it is necessary to distinguish between these two conceptions of Buddhism. I would like to make it clear that in dealing with the consequences of Buddhist philosophy, I have not implied that the effects which I have described have actually flowed from it. I developed the doctrine to its logical conclusion to show what would theoretically follow from its consistent pursuit. In actual practice, in the process of realisation and application, the races that profess it now have shown a capacity for self-sacrifice and political freedom of which few nations in Asia could give nobler examples. In fact, it may be said that the Buddhist and Confucian creeds are tolerant, humane and rational and have been singularly free from the virus of religious persecution. Religious beliefs have never been the targets of attacks by the Confucian state, unless of course,

they were used for purely political ends. On the other hand, countries which have developed vigorous metaphysical system, where religion is followed with passionate fervour, religious bigotry has been responsible for the massacre of millions of innocent lives. It must be admitted that the devotion of India to the problem of the eternal, and of modern India to concentrated religious experience have hindered her political growth, and obstructed the growth of renovating and revolutionary forces. Concentration on spiritual development prevented India from developing metaphysics into the instrument of collective action to improve the position of the common man, nor was it conducive to the growth of social forces able to mobilise the resources of the community for the emancipation of mankind from the tyranny of social discrimination. This was no doubt due to the general decay of values which was the inevitable consequence of her social and political disunity, and it can only be arrested by the return to the pristine purity of Indian culture.

Philosophical Basis of Buddhism.—Having dealt with the Buddhist ethics, let me now turn to a discussion of the philosophical basis of Buddhism. I have said above that Buddhism has no systematic metaphysical system. This statement is only partially true. It leaves out of account a series of works of the highest value from a philosophical point of view. *The Gospel of Buddhism* by Dr. Paul Carus (1894) explains its philosophic basis with great lucidity, and is regarded as a standard work, and the *Surangama Sutra* contains the clearest analysis of Buddhist metaphysics. It is written in a charming style, and the questions and answers between Buddha and Ananda, his favourite disciple, make most interesting reading. In it Buddha discusses the Ultimate Reality, and we are told that Ananda “broke into sobs” through utter bewilderment towards the end of this dialogue. The style has a sublime

unity and simplicity which make it one of the greatest works of all times. Again, *Surangama Sutra* represents the Mahayana system which has been comparatively ignored in India, and it is only recently that it has received adequate attention from scholars. This may have been due to the influence which Mr. T. W. Rhys-Davids exercised on the exposition of *Hinayana* system. The *Surangama Sutra* was written in Sanskrit about the first century A.D. and taken to China by Paramartha, an Indian Buddhist, about the close of the seventh century A.D. and translated by him with the help of a Chinese scholar. It will challenge comparison with some of the profoundest dialogues of Socrates, and the fact of its popularity may be attested by fifty-six commentaries and various elucidations that exist in Chinese.

ASSURANCE OF IMMORTALITY OF THE MIND

His Highness, King Prasenajit of Sravasti, who was in the assembly, stood up, and addressed the Lord Buddha, "How can I clearly understand and realise this state of non-death and non-rebirth?" The Lord addressed the King, saying, "Your Majesty, may I have the honour of asking you some questions about your present body? Is Your Majesty's body as permanent and enduring as steel and gold, or is it impermanent and destructible." His Highness: "When I was a boy, my skin was tender and smooth, in young manhood my blood and energy were in full supply. Now as I am getting old my strength is failing, my appearance is languid and dull, my brain is dull and uncertain, my hair has become grey and white, my face wrinkled. All these changes show that I cannot live much longer. How can I compare my present appearance with that of my youth?" The Lord Buddha replied kindly—"Your Majesty, do not be discouraged. Your appearance will not become decrepit quickly as all that. Though your face has become wrinkled, in the

THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA



BUDDHA PREACHING THE FIRST SERMON. ~~SARNAH~~

perception of the eyes there are no signs of age, no wrinkles. Then, wrinkles are the symbol of change, and the unwrinkled is the symbol of the unchanging. That which is changing must suffer destruction, of course, but the unchanging is naturally free from deaths and rebirths. How is it, Your Majesty, that the unchanging perception of mind still suffers the illusion of deaths and rebirths, and you are still clinging to the teaching of the heretic, who claimed that after death of the body, everyone was completely destroyed?"

Buddha's Account of the Mind :

Lord Buddha said: "My good faithful disciples! Why do you so easily forget this natural, wonderful, and enlightening Mind of perfect Purity—this mysterious Mind of radiant Brightness? Open space is nothing but invisible dimness; the invisible dimness of space is mingled with darkness to look like forms; sensations of forms are mingled into illusive and arbitrary conceptions of phenomena; and from these false conceptions of phenomena is developed the consciousness of body. So, within the mind, these jumbings of causes and conditions segregating into groups and coming into contact with the world's external objects, there is awakened desire of fear which divides the mind and causes it to sink into either indulgence or anger. All of you have been accepting this confusing conception of phenomena as being your nature of mind. As soon as you accepted it as your true mind, is it any wonder that you became bewildered and supposed it to be localised in your physical body, and that all the external things, mountains, rivers, the great open spaces and the whole world, were outside the body? Is it any wonder that you failed to realise that everything you have so falsely conceived has its only existence within your own wonderful enlightening Mind of True Essence? In likeness, you have abandoned, all the great, pure, calm oceans of water, and cling to one

bubble which you not only accept but which you regard as the whole body of water in all the hundreds and thousands of seas. In such bewilderment, you reveal yourselves as fools among fools. Though I move my fingers up or down, there is no change in the hand itself, but the world makes a distinction, and says that now it is upright, now it is reversed. Those who do so are greatly to be pitied."

The Lord Buddha continued—"Ananda! Since beginningless time, sentient beings have been led astray by mistaking the nature of mind to be the same as the nature of any other object. As they thus lose their true and essential Mind, their minds become bewildered by outer objects and the perception of their sights becomes changeable, to conform to the dimensions of its visual field and to become limited strictly according to outer conditions. But if you can learn to see things by your true and essential Mind, right away you will become a *Thatagata*, both your mind and your body will become perfectly enlightened and you will be in the same state of tranquillity and stillness as though you were sitting under the *Bodhi* tree. So perfectly universalised will your mind have become that even at the point of a single hair all the kingdom of the ten quarters of the universe will be seen."

The Lord Buddha went on, "Listen now, Ananda, to what I am going to teach you. When you are seeing light, it does not mean that the perception of sight belongs to light; and when you are seeing darkness, it does not mean that the perception of sight belongs to darkness. It is just the same when you see through clear space, or cannot see through impenetrable objects. Ananda, you should understand the significance of those four things, for when you are speaking of the perception of sight, you are not referring to the phenomena of seeing with the eyes but to the intrinsic perception of sight that transcends the experimental sight of the eyes, and is beyond its reach. Then how can you interpret this

transcendental perception of sight as being dependent upon causes and conditions, or nature or a synthesis of all of them? Ananda, are you, of all the *Arhats*, so limited in understanding that you cannot comprehend that this perception of sight is pure Reality itself? While it is the most profound of all teachings, it is the surest way to enlightenment.

“The reason why all sentient beings in this world have ever been bound to the cycle of deaths and rebirths is because of two reverses, discriminative and false perceptions of the eyes which spring up everywhere to bind us to this present life and keep us turning about in the cycle of deaths and rebirths of every kind of *Karma*. What are these two reverse perceptions of the eyes? One is the false perception of the eyes that is caused by individual and particular *Karma* of any single sentient being. The other is the false perception of eyes that is caused by the general *Karma* of many sentient beings. We must be careful to distinguish between the perception of our eyes and the intrinsic perception of sight by our enlightened Mind that is conscious of the fallible perception of the eyes.

“Ananda! If you can remain perfectly independent of these false perceptions and of all conformity and non-conformity to them, then you will have exterminated all the cases leading to deaths and rebirths and besides you will have attained a perfectly natural enlightenment that is of the nature of non-death and non-rebirth. This is the pure intrinsic Mind ever abiding Intuitive Essence.”

DHAMMAPADA

The *Dhammapada*, or words of the Doctrine, is one of the best known works on Buddhism, and is a masterpiece of all times. The author of the verses is unknown. Cast in a graceful literary form and informed with a high moral purpose, it has determined the taste and mental force of

a succession of Buddhists. Its teaching consists in a new and vital perception of human personality and human dignity, and it displays human nature in the plenitude of moral freedom. It attempts to find the point of unity for all that had been observed by Buddha within the mind restored to the freedom and energy of its own sovereign faculty. What Thomas A. Kempis' *Imitatis Christi* is to the Christian, the *Dhammapada* is to the Buddhist. It represents faithfully Buddha's own teachings, and one can clearly follow his sublime philosophy through this work. It inculcates the conquest of self, and shows how moral freedom accrues to one who has achieved self-mastery and self-discipline. Moral freedom must be attained without delay. Here is one of the teachings of the *Dhammapada*.

Earnest among the thoughtless, awake among the sleepers, the wise man advances like a racer leaving behind the hack.

The book is a great spiritual testament, but the form and colour, the material and texture, the warp of thought and the woof are modern. It preaches moral freedom through self-purification and mental discipline. I have followed Max Muller's translation published in 1870, in the quotations given below. Here is one of the verses:

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought ; it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.”

The following extracts clearly bring out the effects of a life of pleasure:—

“He who lives looking for pleasures only, his senses uncontrolled, immoderate in his food, idle, and weak, *Mara* will certainly overthrow him, as the wind throws down a weak tree. The virtuous man delights

in this world and in the next ; he delights in both. He delights and rejoices, when he sees the purity of his own work."

Again:

"From pleasure comes grief, from pleasure comes fear, he who is free from pleasure knows neither grief nor fear."

The humanity and clarity of Buddha are clear from the following verses:—

"If the occasion arises, friends are pleasant ; enjoyment is pleasant, whatever the cause ; a good work is pleasant in the hour of death ; the giving up of grief is pleasant. Pleasant in the world is the state of a mother ; pleasant the state of a father ; pleasant the state of a mother of a Sramana (ascetic).

Pleasant the state of a Brahmana.

Pleasant is virtue lasting to old age ; pleasant is a faith firmly rooted ; pleasant is attainment of intelligence, pleasant is avoiding of sin."

Again ;

"Good people are seen from afar, like the snowy mountains ; bad people are not seen, like arrows shot by . . . The gods envy him whose senses, like horses well broken in by the driver, have been subdued, who is free from pride and free from appetite ; such as one who does his duty is tolerant like the earth, like the threshold ; he is like a lake without mud ; no new births are in store for him."

Buddha enjoins upon his disciples the imperative need of inner freedom and security. Let me quote a beautiful verse on this subject:—

"By one's self the evil is done, by one's self one suffers ; by one's self evil is left undone, by one's self it is purified.

The pure and the impure stand and fall by themselves, no one can purify another."

Again:

"Like a well-guarded frontier fort, with defences within and without, so let a man guard himself. Nor a moment should escape, for only those who allow the right moment to pass, suffer pain when they are in hell. If a man holds himself dear, let him watch himself carefully; during one at least out of three watches a wise man should be watchful. Bad deeds and deeds hurtful to ourselves are easy to do; what is beneficial and good, that is very difficult to do. There is no fire like passion, there is no shark like hatred. There is no snare like folly, there is no torrent like greed."

Buddha's concept of the *Bhikshu* is well brought out in the extracts reproduced below:—

"Restraint in the eye is good, good is restraint in the ear; in the nose restraint is good, good is restraint in the tongue.

In the body restraint is good, good is restraint in all things. A *bhikshu* restrained in all things, is freed from all pain.

He who controls his hand, he who controls his feet, he who controls his speech, he who is well controlled, he who delights inwardly, who is collected, who is solitary and content, him they call a *bhikshu*. The *bhikshu* who behaves with kindness, who is happy in the doctrine of Buddha, will reach the quiet place (Nirvana) and will find happiness arising from the cessation of bodily existence.

He who, even as a young *bhikshu*, applies himself to the doctrine of Buddha, brightens up this world, like the moon when free from clouds."

The Conception of Nirvana :

The *Nirvana* has been the subject of deep study by a succession of scholars, but no clear conception of the doctrine has yet been successfully attempted. The *Suranayama Sutra* has analysed the process of religious enlightenment which consists in divesting oneself of the illusions of the sensual world and aiming consistently at reaching an ideal world, which may, in the Kantian terminology, be called *Noumenon*, or Thing-in-Itself. The finite discriminating Mind must give up the notion of the ego, before he can reach the unconditioned, infinite world. The *Mahayana* conception of *Nirvana* will be found in the *Lankavatara Sutra* which is exceedingly popular with the Chinese. It was translated into Chinese from Sanskrit in 420 A.D. and again in 443, 513 and 700 A.D. I have selected the following passages to explain the meaning of *Nirvana* from this treatise.

“Then said Mahamati to the Blessed One (Buddha): Pray tell us about Nirvana? The Blessed One replied:

The term Nirvana, is used with many different meanings, by different people, but these people may be divided into four groups. There are people who are suffering or who are afraid of suffering, and who think of Nirvana ; there are the philosophers who try to discriminate Nirvana ; there are the classes of disciples who think of Nirvana in relation to themselves and finally, there is the Nirvana of the Buddhas. Those who are suffering or fear suffering, think of *Nirvana*, as an escape and a recompense. They imagine that *Nirvana* consists in the future annihilation of the senses and sense-minds, they are not aware that Universal Mind and Nirvana are one. As to Nirvana discriminated by philosophers, there really are none. *Nirvana* does not consist in simple annihila-

tion and vacuity. Some see the eternality of things in the conception of *Nirvana* as the absorption of the finite soul in the Supreme Atman."

According to the *Lankavatara Sutra* Buddha dismisses the analysis of *Nirvana* attempted by prevailing different schools of philosophy. He also rejected the Brahmanic doctrine which teaches that all things are manifestations of the vital force of some Supreme Spirit to which all return. I will now resume Buddha's account of *Nirvana*. "The views severally advanced by philosophers with their various reasonings are not in accord with logic nor are they acceptable to the wise. Here is the account of the *Nirvana* of Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattvas' assurance comes with the unfolding insight that follows passion hindrances cleared away, knowledge hindrance purified, and egolessness clearly perceived and patiently accepted. As the mortal mind ceases to discriminate, there is no more thirst for life, no more sex-lust, no more thirst for learning, no more thirst for eternal life; with the disappearance of these fourfold lusts, there is no more accumulation of habit-energy. With no more accumulation of habit-energy, the defilements on the face of the Universal Mind clear away, and Bodhisattva attains self-realisation of the Noble Wisdom that is the heart's assurance of *Nirvana*. *Nirvana* is where the Bodhisattva's stages are passed one after another; is when the sustaining power of the Buddhas upholds the Bodhisattvas in the bliss of the Samadhis; is where compassion for others transcends all thoughts of self; is where *Tathagata* stage is realised.

"*Nirvana* is the realm of Dharmata-Buddha; it is where the manifestation of Noble Wisdom that is Buddhahood expresses itself in Perfect Love for all, it is where the Perfect Love that is Tathagatahood expresses itself in Noble Wisdom for the enlightenment of all—there indeed it is

Nirvana! There are two classes of those who may not enter the Nirvana of the Tathagata; there are those who have abandoned the Bodhisattva ideals, saying they are not in conformity with the *Sutras*, the codes of morality, nor with emancipation. Then there are the true Bodhisattvas, who on account of their original views made for the sake of all beings saying, "So long as they do not attain Nirvana, I will not attain it myself" voluntarily keep themselves out of *Nirvana*.

The death of a Buddha, the great *Parinirvana*, is neither destruction nor death, else would it be birth and continuation. If it were destruction, it would be an effect-producing deed, which it is not. Neither is it a vanishing nor an abandonment, neither is it attainment, nor is it of no attainment. Neither is it of one significance nor of no significance, for there is no *Nirvana* for the Buddhas."

BUDDHISM IN CHINA

The origin of Buddhism in China is wrapped in mystery. It is stated that in 121 B.C., during the reign of Emperor Wu the Brave of the Han dynasty, a general, who led his army into the deserts of Turkistan, saw huge golden images which these barbarians worshipped. He carried many of them back to the capital as a trophy. Some scholars think that they were Buddhist images, and they were the first indication to China of Buddha's message. We are on firmer ground when we deal with the later period. Chinese scholars relate a dream that came to Emperor Ming of the later Han period. Chinese chronicles relate, in a vein of piety, how the emperor saw in a dream a golden man whose body emitted streams of light, which flooded almost the palace hall. His ministers, when consulted, assured him that it was the Buddha. Inspired no doubt by this omen, the emperor sent a delegation to the western regions to bring

back the teachings of Buddha. The delegation obtained, it is said, forty-two chapters of Buddhist sacred texts, and a picture of Buddha. The sacred relics were carried on a white horse, and lodged in one of the palace buildings. Some Indian monks accompanied them, and they were set to work on the translation of Sanskrit *Sutras* into Chinese.

The first Buddhist monastery in China, the "White Horse Monastery" was built in honour of those monks and the propagation of Buddhist religion was placed on a systematic basis. After the disintegration of the Han dynasty, China split up into three Kingdoms, and Buddhism first became an authorised religion in this period. The Buddhist law was brought in China by an Indian monk, during the reign of Emperor FEI who ruled the WEI Kingdom, from 240 to 253 A.D. An imperial edict, issued in this period, compelled Chinese monks to conform to the Buddhist law, and the strongest tests were enforced on all novices. Buddhism was established on a firm basis in the period of the Six Dynasties. Some of the emperors followed Asoka's example, and became monks, and China was saturated with Buddhist doctrines. The rapidity with which China accepted Buddhism was due partly to the disturbed general condition of the period. The great Han Empire had disintegrated, and China broke up into a hundred fragments. Civil war, internecine strife, economic depression, the reign of terror in isolated parts of China, and her isolation from the rest of the world, compelled the Chinese to seek relief from the miseries of this world in the doctrine of the Pure Lands in which the souls of the faithful would find complete rest, and the masses no less than the scholars regarded this doctrine as a refuge of the spirit, which soared over temporal imperfections, into the blissful reign of perfect happiness. The conception of attaining *Nirvana* on earth was given up as in the existing conditions of Chinese society it was impracticable.

Buddhists were subjected to persecution by fanatical

Taoists from time to time. We hear, for instance, of Emperor, Tai Wu, who reigned in the years 424-451 A.D., promulgating an edict whereby all gods 'from foreign lands' were to be wiped out, and anyone who worshipped these gods or built images of clay or bronze, was to be put to death with all the members of his family. Moreover, all pictures of Buddha and Buddhist scriptures were to be destroyed. All monks, young or old, were to be buried alive.

There is no evidence to support that this ferocious decree was rigidly enforced, and it signally failed to achieve the desired object. For, about fifty years later, when the decree was withdrawn, there was an upsurge of Buddhism in China. Buddhist monks swarmed in the new capital of Loyang, which became the centre of Buddhist activity, and from every part of the city the chants of Buddhist monks were heard.

"A full third of the private houses were converted into temples. Not a street was without them, they crowded within the city walls and were even found adjoining the market, near the butchers' and wine shops. Chanting in Sanskrit and sounds of laughter echoed all along the lanes. Round the shrines of the holy image floated the smell of meat and speculation was drenched in passion. Desolators mingled with the true believers so that it was impossible to distinguish them." The number of Buddhist monks and nuns in this period amounted at one time to two millions, and there were said to be 30,000 Buddhist temples in the land.

About this period, Buddhism split into two schools. The greatest propagandist of Buddhist doctrine in this period, Emperor Wu of Liang (502-549) who imitated the piety of Buddha, took only one meal a day, never touched meat or garlic, forbade the killing of the animals at sacrifices, and even pardoned criminals condemned to death. It is not surprising to find that the merciful Emperor failed

to take adequate military precautions. The inevitable result of this other-worldliness was defeat of the weak Emperor, and death in captivity. It was in the reign of this devout ruler that the great Indian monk, Bodhidharma, arrived in China from India. His personality and teaching had a profound effect on the spiritual life of China, and the C H' A (Meditation) School of Buddhism, which originated in this period, claimed many votaries. Bodhidharma worked strenuously through a great part of China. Buddhism served a most useful purpose in the disturbed period of China's history by unifying all classes, as well as the North and South of China. The scholars no less than the illiterate imbibed the new religion, as it was a kind of unity among the many factions, and offered spiritual nourishment at a time when the country was seething under internecine strife, and her economy had been completely dislocated by two centuries of disorder.

The T'Ang rule in China, which lasted nearly three hundred years, witnessed an unparalleled development of Chinese civilisation. According to the Chinese scholar, Tsvi Chi, China enjoyed a fullness of creative and intellectual life unparalleled in her history, before or since. In spite of the vigorous opposition of Confucian scholars, Buddhism became the national religion of China. It was in this period that translation of Sanskrit *Sutras* into Chinese was started, and Buddhism became the national religion of China. The artistic instincts of a gifted race were expressed in the development of fine art. Chinese painting has claimed many enthusiastic disciples in the West, and it is recently the Chinese art has received recognition. Under the impulse of victorious Buddhism, all the important schools of paintings, which flourished under the beneficent auspices of the T'Ang dynasty, there were renowned painters, such as Wv Tao-Lzn, Li Ssu-Hsr and Wang Wei. These are household words in the realm of art. Special mention would be made here of the

Cuusum male skill which Wang Wei showed in black ink painting. This has become the most appropriate medium of the artistic instinct of the Chinese people. Chinese artists succeeded in their efforts and brought the original works of painting and sculpture to full blossom, exhausting the resources of the common inspiration of a long line of distinguished predecessors. A new power of portraying the very soul of a people had been manifested in painting. It was, however, in sculpture that Buddhism expressed a power unknown to the Chinese because it lay outside the sphere of their spiritual experience, and unknown to the Chinese of the modern age because Buddhism soon lost its pristine vigour under the Yuan dynasty. China is indebted to India for the representation of human form in sculpture. Chinese sculpture was due wholly to the inspiration which Buddhism imparted to the Chinese people. The Dragon Gates in the provinces of Shansi and Honan show the permanent influence which Buddhism exercised on the life and thought of China. Indian influence on the early Chinese sculpture was profound. Later on, just as Buddhism was adapted to conform with the Chinese environment, so did sculpture conform to the national genius of the people. The conventional representation of Buddha, which aimed at reflecting a spiritual idea, gave way to the representation of Buddha as a living being. Chinese art demanded incarnation of moral and spiritual qualities in carefully selected types of physical perfection. Just as Greek deities were limited to conditions of natural existence, and were represented as living beings, and their emotions were depicted by appropriate forms, so the Chinese developed sculpture in which physical qualities were represented in the special character of each divinity. The earlier sculpture of the Chinese had on the other hand made the moral and spiritual nature of Buddha essential, as it was intended to express the tranquillity of the soul, which had been separated from the flesh

and was destined to remain eternal. Beauty of nature, or strength of body, had no place in this school. Tea was introduced in this period and foundations were laid for the art of printing, shortly after the fall of the T'Ang dynasty.

I have dealt so far with the development of fine art. It was in the religious sphere that India made a unique contribution to Chinese civilisation. This was the time when the capital of the empire was the workshop of Buddhist erudition, and thousands of Indian monks were busy translating Sanskrit Sutras into Chinese. At one time, the number of Indian monks was estimated at 30,000. There were no doubt, thousands of these monks scattered over the length and breadth of that vast empire. The great Chinese traveller, Huan-Chuang, started on his famous travel to India in 629 A.D. and came to India *via* the Gobi Desert through mountains and deserts, and after passing through Tashkand and Samarkand, which at that time professed Zoroastrianism, he crossed the Oxus valley, and reached India, after a most adventurous journey. He brought back 650 texts, some of which were translated by his pupils into Chinese.

Unfortunately, Buddhism split up into numerous sects. This was in itself a sign of intellectual life, as in the Sung dynasty which succeeded T'ang dynasty, Buddhism permeated the life of the greatest intellectuals of the age, and was the theme of famous Chinese poets, metaphysicians and scholars. The Chinese adapted Indian Buddhism to their natural genius, and made substantial changes in their interpretation of the basic doctrines. Indian Buddhism could not remain immune from the dominant influence of the caste system, and in its later stages, it was reflected in the belief that some men were so inferior in their mental and moral fibre that they could never attain Buddha-hood. There were also various ways of attaining perfection and persons of inferior disposition had to pass through many

re-incarnations, and endure human sufferings on this earth in different incarnations before they could achieve *Nirvana*. A righteous person could, however, attain it in a single life. The Chinese, however, rejected this conception, as they believed in the equality, actual or potential, of all men. The conception of *Nirvana* also underwent a change. The Indian school of Buddhism considered it as a state of mind of permanent stillness. The Chinese rejected this interpretation of *Nirvana*, and they concluded that stillness was constant activity, in which the mind is ceaselessly occupied. There was another marked difference in the analysis of nature. The Indian conception regarded the present world as an illusion, and to those who have liberated themselves from Desire, it is unreal. However, pre-Buddhist Chinese doctrines were based on realism and they took for granted the existence of the world, which was reflected in the mind of the man. The Chinese monks assimilated Indian Buddhism by declaring that the present world is a reality, though they acknowledged that it does not embody ultimate reality. Their position was midway between Indian Buddhism and Confucianism.

Buddhism seems to have lost its influence on modern China. It decayed after the Sung dynasty, and it became more a cultural than a religious movement. Buddhist monasteries had in some cases been carved into inns and public houses, and the hold of Buddhism in young China is slight.

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