



BUDDHA, THE HUMANIST

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University of Dacca

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Idealism and Progress

Idealism : A New Defense and a New Application
Philosophy of Vivekananda and the Future of Man
Aspirations of the Common Man

In Bengali :

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To

PROF. STANKO M. VUJICA

as a token of gratitude

Preface

In my odd efforts to visualize a better world and evolve a Philosophy of life that can help grow it, I have almost always stumbled on Buddha for inspiration. "Buddha, the Humanist" is the cumulative effect of brooding on Buddha for more than a decade from this human perspective.

I have very little interest in the supernatural and the superhuman in Buddha. It is the natural and the human in him that concerns me most. Buddha and his message I have reviewed as best as I could from this angle and found him out as a humanist whose prime concern is human welfare.

I do not think Buddha really departed from the substance of religion and pronounced a message altogether unknown to the ancient world. His greatness, his distinction lies more in his approach, in its novelty and adaptation to a practical, scientific temper. As early as sixth century B.C., he spoke the tongue of a modern sceptic, and in a rational, human approach found not only an answer to his vacillations but also the key to the realisation of his aspirations. He is a great bridge between the old and the new, between the eternal spiritual wisdom of man and his secular yearnings and preferences.

I look upon Buddha as a cementing force that can bring together advocates of warring, opposite paths and make for a world-understanding on a durable basis. In this crisis of history when a wanton use of power might

as well efface the very existence of man, Buddha's cult of universal love and friendship will, I am sure, forge a bond of unity between materialists and spiritualists, secularists and their adversaries, advocates of spiritual values, free-thinkers and traditionalists and draw them closer together to ensure a better future for the common man.

The book was written in the spring semester of 1966-67 while I was a Visiting Fulbright Professor at Wilkes College, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. and I am really grateful to the management of the College for their ungrudging assistance in preparation of the manuscript.

I must not miss the opportunity to offer my grateful thanks to my esteemed friends Prof. Stanko M. Vujica, Chairman, Philosophy-Religion Department at Wilkes, Dr. Paul Nazarek and Very Rev. Herbart G. Nahas for their generous encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

Two things modern man holds dear, very dear perhaps : Rationalism and Humanism and he is prone to visualize his future in terms of them both. Whether this is right or wrong is a superfluous question. This is what history has made of him and he cannot possibly say "no" to it. To do the reverse is to attempt the impossible, to ask the sun, as it were, to rise in the west and set in the east.

Yet there is no direct link between the two, between a rationalism, which represents our waverings and vacillations, and a humanism, which represents our yearnings and aspirations, a rationalism which is primarily negative and humanism which is primarily positive in character.

This synthesis of opposites is and needs must be difficult to achieve. But for modern man it is not a question of option but of obligation, a 'must' in the literal sense of the word. It is really a question of existence or non-existence, "to be or not to be". To escape annihilation from a wanton use of immense destructive powers of his own make, modern man will and must achieve this synthesis. In spite of obstacles, insuperable obstacles perhaps, man will, I believe, be driven to this

philosophy of life under the pressure of his urge to live, the most powerful of his basic urges, the "Will to live" as Schopenhauer calls it, and make for a better world.

The most powerful factor shaping the destiny of man today, science, will not by itself help achieve this. Science has extended the frontiers of knowledge unimaginatively and is about to make excursions into the outer space. But scientific knowledge cannot save us from extinction as a species as it is unable to control the inner space, the mind of man.

As a tool of happiness, science is neutral. It can make or mar the future of man. The impetus to make the best use of science for human happiness must come from a source other than science. It must come from a mental make-up that makes for love and not hatred, for integration and not disintegration, for peace and not destruction. From this perspective, the history of science is a history of success as well as failure, conquest as well as defeat.

In spite of many good things it has done, traditional religion cannot contribute much to this synthesis. Its primary attitude is one of acceptance, almost unquestioning acceptance. Modern man's scientific temper goes against submission to any authority except the authority of human reason. Since Adam took the fruits of the forbidden tree, this submission and resignation has been challenged. But, with the advent of modern science, the spirit of submission to authority has been given up almost completely.

Modern man in this respect is more sensitive to what is called contra-suggestion in child psychology. An

obstinate child is asked to do something. He will almost invariably resist. So, the best course to have things done by him is to press him for the reverse. In that case, he will do the opposite of what is apparently asked for and thus be caught unawares in the trap of the old ethics of obedience.

To restore an element of faith in the sceptical modern mind, it might be helpful to ask it not to believe at all, but no doubt, to question without any limit and restriction. It has been said by a great advocate of criticism of our times, that in their extreme form, both dogmatism and scepticism are but two inseparable phases of the same temper, the same mood. Freudians perhaps rightly observe that extreme hatred is no other than disguised attachment.

The conflict of modern science and traditional religion is nevertheless highly revealing. It shows how superstitions and prejudices were cherished with considerable attachment by advocates of popular religion. The residue still persists, though in an environment dominated by science, it is fast disappearing.

It will, perhaps, be wrong to think that modern man is quite free from the clutch of superstitions and prejudices. Possibly man as man is not capable of this. Modern man has his pet prejudices though with a slightly different color. In the past, prejudices had sanction of traditional religion. Now, they have the sanction of so-called free thinking.

It will perhaps be wrong to presume that prejudices and superstitions, once associated with traditional religion, were really an important ingredient of religion. But,

somehow or other, undue importance was attached to them and any deviation from them was considered highly heretical and irreligious. The view of Copernicus and Galileo that the earth moves round the sun and the theory of evolution of Darwin, according to which man as a species is a remote descendant of the ape, are good examples. Religion at its best is primarily concerned with the spiritual growth of man, and these scientific theories, affirmed or denied, accepted or rejected, have very little to do with it.

What is extremely dangerous as well as shocking is that, although the main purpose of traditional religion was to unite man, to give him an abiding sense of unity, in actual practice, it has been a most divisive force. Not only different religions but factions inside them fought hard for spiritual supremacy. The history of religion from this aspect is painful reading. It seems difficult, therefore, to unite man and secure joy of life on a collective scale with traditional religion as its most potent instrument.

Not in science as such, not also in traditional religion left to itself, but somewhere else, in a rationalist humanism, we must strive hard to trace the future of man.

Reason itself is a much misunderstood word. The history of philosophy, ancient and medieval, is replete with examples of bad reasonings which serve no useful purpose but simply provide for the intellectual delight of the select few. Zeno, an early Greek philosopher of the fifth century B. C. takes pains to prove by the help of subtle logic that a moving arrow does not really

move. In other words, change itself is a creature of fancy, of distorted imagination. He asserts that, to move an arrow must touch all points that it travels and, to touch them all, it must take rest at every point. A distance, being a collection of points without break, movement must be an illusion, pure and simple. This shows palpably perhaps how the very role of reason has considerably been misunderstood not only by amateurs in logic but by some trained philosophers.

In modern scepticism, there is at times a destructive tendency. A rationalist often enough poses to be a man who does not accept anything. Our rationalism so far as it goes against prejudices and superstitions is a move in the right direction. But we must remember this is only the negative role of reason. If an age of reason simply means that we are expected to say "no" to every positive suggestion, we are then nowhere, neither in heavens up nor in the grass beneath our feet, not also in between them.

To be more consistent with our genuine aspirations and yearnings, reason must play a constructive, practical rule. It must help guide a human outlook and make a defence of human values in a real and an intense sense. It is in this way that we can make the future of man safe and secure and help grow a better world. In one word, rationalism is for us and must be a means to an end. It must be the guide to a humanist philosophy of life which will put a brake on the excesses of free thinking let loose.

Humanism, the counterpart of a human outlook and a human approach to human problems, has been much

misunderstood in the past. On the basis of subtle philosophical analysis, it has been established that a human view of truth and a human view of reality must suffer from human limitations and, as such, must be discarded. But here we must not forget to reckon with one significant fact. If there is no better way of looking at things other than our feeble and complicated organ of vision, we have to depend willy-nilly on it in seeing things. Much in the same manner, even though human outlook be defective, we have to depend on it. The super-human for us does not mean much. It is more or less a name. It is really human in a more intense sense. Even if we call it other-worldly, it will be a human picture of a human ideal unrealized here on earth and posited somewhere beyond by human imagination. At times, this is needed but it is nevertheless nothing more than a projection of human aspirations. The long and short of it is this: Humanism we cannot dispense with in an assessment of our aspirations and in the discovery of a philosophy of life which will be an impetus to their fulfilment.

The only effective safeguard that we could and should have against limitations of a human approach is that we must apply human aspirations to mankind as a whole, not to a cross section of it, out of emotional preferences which betray us in the long run. Not black and white, not east and west, not haves and have-nots and also various other categories that divide man into warring segments but man as a whole should be the target of our aspirations today. This is how we can best satisfy the quest for the universal man, a quest that baffled

philosophers as well as social reformers since man's history began.

In a nuclear age it will be found a most prudential, practical device. Enlightened common-sense will give to it unequivocal support. This is how man can afford to live in peace in an age in which groupism might with ease lead to a common grave. In a world made physically one by science, we can ignore the practical significance of this broad, human outlook based on human reason only at a great peril to man's future. The key to stable, collective progress lies the other way.

As the pioneer of a great historic religion, Buddha has a great spiritual message, no doubt. But behind, there is a wide human appeal, a defense of human values on a critical, rational approach. Judged from this perspective, in Buddha, the humanist we might find very reasonably, I believe, the elan of the unity of man, of a world united in an effort, however difficult it may be, to further human values on a world scale.

Not long after Alexander's military mission to hellenise the whole world failed, may be due to his premature death, we had a glimpse of it in the great Buddhist Emperor, Asoka who in his pacifism cum humanism found the way to durable peace and prosperity for a large mass of men in the ancient world.

We read in history of great kings like Solomon, Charlemagne and Akbar. Wisdom of the first has become proverbial, the second is considerably responsible for the spread of the civilizing influence of Christianity in Europe in the Middle Ages, particularly, among the Barbarians and the third played a great role in uniting

the warring factions in Medieval India and was himself the preacher of a broad-based humanism. Possibly Asoka stands earmarked from them all because, on the bed-rock of pacifism, he tried to build an ideal state. I do not purposely refer to the Hindu concept of Ram-Raj, ideal rule of the mythical King Rama, the great hero of the epic Ramayana, occasionally looked upon as the Iliad of Ancient India, since like Plato's ideal state, it is a creature of fancy and not a historical fact.

The story of Buddha as a humanist should not be fruitless from a practical angle but, I presume, will be of immense practical benefit to a world divided against itself not because of lack of power but, because of its inability to control it by love, and direct it for the welfare of man with genuine insight and wisdom.

CHAPTER ONE

BUDDHA, A PRODUCT OF HIS ENVIRONMENT AND A CHALLENGE

Like most other great men, Buddha is a product of his environment and a challenge to it, possibly much more the latter than the former. He is in fact the first to have introduced a bloodless revolution in Ancient India whose quiet influence was felt not long after his death over wide areas beyond the frontiers of the land of his birth. In intensity as well as extensity, his revolution has been more powerful and far-reaching than some political revolutions of modern history whose avowed objective was to relieve the burden of the heavily laden common man, not substantially different from Buddha's objective, in an age dominated quite unlike ours, by a keen sense of spiritual values.

Buddha's revolt was not spectacular like a bloody revolution, which in its attempt to sweep like a hurricane all that it considers bad leaves, its disastrous effects. A bloody revolution is a quick process. Quickly it comes and quickly it passes away. But a bloodless revolution, particularly the type Buddha represents, is a slow, slow process. Its aim is not to change the environment alone but the mind of man, his character, his general outlook and to make him feel the spark and push of a new philosophy of life hitherto unknown. Possibly, because

of this, Buddha's revolt of love remains to this day a wholesome force. In a very real sense, it represents the genuine aspirations of man but does not care to enforce them through a drastic method which glimmers for a while in darkness never to come back again.

For a correct assessment of Buddha and his message, his life-story should be studied from a double perspective, as a product of his environment and as a challenge to it.

Anecdotes of Buddha's life depicted by his devoted disciples are a fascinating mixture of facts as well as fictions, percepts as well as images. Fictions reveal his great character no less than facts. Being woven by dexterous hands closely in touch with the yearnings and aspirations of a supernaturalist age, from beginning till end, Buddha-story has been given a pre-eminently supernatural color. Buddha was no lover of miracles and does not seem to have performed any miracle except the miracle of character. Though he was a rationalist and an experimentalist in the precise modern sense, a huge mass of miracles have been superimposed on him out of a deep sense of reverence, to show very rightly, I presume, that his mission is not merely individual but universal, not primarily directed to his own freedom but to freedom of mankind.

Let alone these miracles. The life of Buddha, though an undisputed fact of history, is a bold romance and far out weighs in grandeur a thrilling fiction. As a fiction of the spirit of man in bondage ever eager to break his shackles, it has become part and parcel of the eternal spiritual wisdom of man.

Broad day-light facts of his life are these. He was

the son of a King, possibly not as big as a King of later history but the chieftain of a clan in Northern India near about its frontiers in Nepal who had considerable wealth as well as influence. He was the only son of his father born in old age and was the heir to the throne. He was a marvel of physical beauty as is indicated by the large mass of Buddha images and had from his childhood, besides martial vigor befitting his race, contemplative insight. He was precisely the type of student that Plato sought a bit later in his celebrated Republic for philosophic education. Plato considers physical beauty an additional qualification in case of a would-be philosopher in an unconscious but inoffensive defiance of the only philosopher he came in close contact with, Socrates who was not a specimen of physical beauty, possibly far from it. Be that as it may, Buddha was a man of vast erudition and early in life mastered all liberal arts including music and philosophy as far as they were known in his times.

It is generally conceded that he was born in 563 B.C. His father's name is Shuddhodana and mother's Maya. His own family name is Siddhartha Gautama, the latter being the name of the warrior clan of repute from which he springs.

He had an unconscious but early bereavement in the death of his mother, a week after his birth. But that was amply compensated by the care and affection of his step-mother, his mother's own sister, Gautami who was in fact his real mother as far as his upbringing was concerned.

From early life, he had a speculative bent and, even

in the midst of comforts of a prince, he was not oblivious of the dark side of life. Rather the idea of human miseries haunted him unawares 'as it were. As is usual, his parents thought marriage would take away his other-worldly bias and, at their behest, he married at the age of nineteen a woman, Yashodhara by name who was indeed a unique combination of physical beauty, learning and parts, a charming wife in the literal sense of the word.

Even after his marriage, his parents did not make light of his native detachment and tried hard to keep him off from the miseries of life. He was surrounded by a large number of charming, young female attendants and used to live in three beautiful palace-gardens improvised to suit the variations of summer, rains and winter, three main seasons of the year in Ancient India.

But even this was not too much to shut his eyes to limitations of life and, in spite of the extreme care and precautions of his parents, the spirit of detachment steadily grew in him and, not long after the birth of a son, at the age of twenty-nine, after the married felicity of a decade, one midnight he left the palace almost in cognito and became a mendicant beggar to unravel the mystery of life, more precisely to find a way out of the sufferings that perpetually baffle man.

His father tried hard to bring him back but this proved infructuous. In the initial phase of his spiritual career, he tried to reach his objective under the guidance of some wise men of his times but they could not satisfy his quest. And, at last, he stood on his own legs and went on with his own experiments with truth.

As was the practice in his days, his initial attempt

was to tear the veil of darkness through rigors of asceticism. In fact, in his efforts to get at the truth by torture of the flesh, he narrowly escaped death. As an experimentalist, he then revised his course of spiritual discipline and, by practice of moderation, gradually he was able to control his unconscious urges and to find the truth, to achieve freedom from desires and attain blessedness of Nirvana whose literal meaning is blowing away of the flame of desires that burns man.

After the attainment of enlightenment, for a time, he was very hesitant about preaching his gospel to the world. He could hardly believe anyone would care for wisdom in his sense. But he had a large heart and was solicitous of the welfare of others from the very beginning of his life and his compassion ultimately prevailed over his hesitancy and, his itinerary, a long and a most enlightened chapter in the history of missionary zeal, started. It lasted forty-five years till his death at the ripe old age of eighty.

With the passage of years, he gathered round him a large number of disciples, lay as well as monastic, men as well as women, and built a big brotherhood to preach and propagate his gospel. During rains, because of obvious physical handicaps, it was his practice to settle in one place with his disciples and give sermons to those who came to him. But the technique of preaching was different in other seasons during which he used to move about from door to door with his disciples so that his message may reach all and sundry. He was indeed very eager to send his disciples in small groups so that his gospel may reach a wider circle with ease.

In the extreme case, his directive was: Go alone and not even in a group of two. This was possibly honored more in the breach than in observance. But this shows how anxious he was to help all and to spare none.

Though the son of a King, he was not an aristocrat but just the reverse of it. He claims neither to be a divine incarnation nor a prophet but an ordinary man who struggled hard and got Nirvana, grew into his full spiritual stature. In that, and in no other prerogative, he claimed his distinction. But this was not his monopoly but is, rather, could be public property. By profession and practice, he tried hard to do this, to help man achieve this.

In Ancient India dominated by hereditary caste-system, of course not contaminated with untouchability, which appears to be a much later product, he revolted against the privilege of birth and pleaded with great force that one can become a Brahmin, a man of wisdom not by birth but by performance and character.

He opened the doors of spiritual wisdom to woman by admitting her within his fold against the usual practice, though he was no supporter of romance and companionship in a monastery, and its counterpart, nunnery.

He revolted against priestcraft which had a virtual monopoly of current spiritual wisdom in his times. Instead, he made spiritual knowledge available to all by preaching his gospel not in Sanscrit, the language of the select scholars and aristocrats but in Pali, the local dialect, the tongue of the common man among whom he moved.

Though he forsook his parents, wife and son for the sake of truth, after his enlightenment, he rushed to them to give them spiritual sustenance. Except his old father who died not long after, all of them became members of his fold.

He preached friendship for all living beings with a courage and conviction that was his own and revolted against sacrifice of animals for a religious purpose almost at the cost of life. He underlined and spotlighted the importance of universal friendship as a road to freedom and found in it the best and most potent prayer for salvation.

He was a real and a relentless helper of those who needed help and, just like Jesus, spared no efforts to help even women of ill fame provided they are repentant and sincerely eager to lead life spiritual.

Spiritual wisdom was to him the infallible mark of greatness and distinction and he never cared to raise up those at the lowest rung of the social ladder of his times, the so-called outcastes.

He was a great organizer and, both by precept and example, built a big religious order hitherto unknown in history, more particularly, Indian history. But his course was not very smooth either. As is always the case with a man of extra-ordinary greatness, he met with opposition from within as well as without. But he was able to overcome them with great fortitude and calmness.

The story of his death is indeed superlatively fascinating, a fact which surpasses a fiction. He died consciously, though not condemned to death like Socrates or crucified like Christ, and did not forget his mission

even at the moment of death. He breathed his last by saying with touching earnestness and unfailing fervor that, though his psycho-physical existence is mortal, his message is immortal and will give succor to man till doomsday.

This is a bird's eye-view of a historic, spiritual career spread over eighty years, 563-483 B.C. according to consensus of experts of which twenty-nine were spent in an adventure with the world, six in search of freedom and its attainment and the big remainder in preaching a gospel of moderation and friendship with a courage and vigor which has few parallels in human history.

We must now take a hurried view of the huge mass of miracles that have crept into his biography to find out the universal character of his mission and to explain the meaning and implication of his challenge.

His birth is associated with a dream his mother dreamt about an exalted spiritual personage descending from high heavens above and entering her womb for the sake of redemption of man.

About the same time, his father heard an ethereal voice declaring that the greatest of the enlightened ones is coming down from his exalted height in heaven to the earth as his son to help man get liberation from bondage. There are copious supernatural touches in his life-history. Some of them warn him not to forget his mission in the midst of vanities of life, others paint him explicitly as the great Savior of man.

Out of these myths and miracles emerge some great truths of considerable importance: his contemplative nature, his compassion for all living beings and his eager-

ness to renounce the world to enjoy eternal bliss and help others partake of the same.

He forsook the world one night in late hours leaving aside his beloved wife, dear son and affectionate parents while they were asleep. His parents were aware of the fact that he would renounce the world. That is why they tried to divert his attention by marriage that golden chain which in most cases neither softens nor breaks. He had argument with his father before he took to asceticism. His father found it hard to convince him, harder to dissuade and made a desperate bid to make light of his determination to renounce at a premature age.

But this known fact, this foregone conclusion has been given a supernatural touch just to make it assume an impressive, dramatic color. The ground of this was prepared at the time of his birth by astrologers, the traditional experts in deceptive forecasts, who cunningly enough said: Either he will be a great king or a great ascetic. Obviously he cannot afford to be both. This puzzling forecast, reminiscent of oracles in Ancient Greece, cut both ways and gave his parents an impetus to go against the stream and to unsettle the settled, to defy the inevitable.

Even this was not enough. His father tried hard to make him feel at his adolescence, the turning point of his career, that life is all sunshine and summer, no rains, no winter. He was eager to see the world out of the paradise of the palace he lived in and, under the strict vigilance of his father and his under-dogs, the streets of the capital were kept scrupulously out of the ugly.

But, here also, through the mysterious intervention of gods, who were ever solicitous of his human mission being made successful, he saw in three days in quick succession three disgusting, ugly sights: an old decrepit laden under the weight of years, a skeleton-like man suffering from a severe ailment, and, on the top of it, a corpse. And, last but not least, decidedly the most excellent sight of all sights, he saw an ascetic calm and serene on the fourth day. Dramatically enough, this showed him the road to salvation. But even that very night, a mendicant appeared from a supernatural, celestial sphere to advise him to renounce and not to be swayed by natural emotions.

The charm of it all is irresistible but, from a realistic standpoint, the picture is no doubt over-drawn. A man whose mother died seven days after his birth cannot possibly be ignorant of death and the miseries of life so common to man cannot suddenly disappear from his environment. But we must remember this is the assessment of an age which thought whatever is great must be supernatural, must be miraculous.

The same touch of the miraculous highlights the importance of the story of his death which is no less but possibly more charming than a fiction. They are all a sincere and an earnest attempt to paint his extraordinary greatness.

To show how deep was his concentration even in his boyhood, it has been shown, while in an excursion, his father left him in a particular spot. There for hours he was steeped in meditation. And to save him from the raging rays of the midday sun, the shades of trees

over his head remained stationary even though everything else acted according to ordinary laws of nature.

There are other revealing instances. His father who took him to the temple of the family deity to offer prayers was struck to find that the deity himself with his super-natural retinue came out of the temple to bow down in reverence and homage to the great Buddha then a boy, not at all known to world outside.

His birth, his enlightenment and his death, the great passing away as it is called, and, as a matter of fact, all important events of his great life including renunciation of the world took place, mysteriously enough, in the soothing light of the fullmoon night. As a religious leader, he is indeed very conspicuous in his stress on the aesthetic aspect of spiritual life. Possibly in line with this, all important acts of his life have been depicted as having taken place in the midst of the beauty of a fullmoon night. Is it a pre-established harmony as Leibniz would have us believe or the product of exalted imagination? We can't decide. The big time-gap stands in the way. We can only take note of what is recorded and cogitate.

Of all the miracles that have been thrust on Buddha out of profound reverence, the story of his conflict with Mara, counterpart of Satan in Christianity, younger brother of Ahriman, the bad god of the old Iranians is perhaps most instructive from a human perspective. Tradition has it that before enlightenment, Buddha had a hard fight with Mara and his regiment who did not like the idea that Buddha should get out of the grip of the flesh and show the world the way to it. The description is

indeed very graphic and thrilling. So desperate was his battle with the god of desires that at times gods from the heavens above, who were more interested in Buddha's mission than man, not only felt much perturbed but lost heart.

Most charming part of it is that, after the battle of arms failed, Mara tried to throw Buddha off his balance by a romantic device. His beautiful daughters appeared before Buddha with fascinating feminine charm only to acknowledge unqualified defeat. The distinguished writers of the Buddha-story anticipated Freud two millenniums back and gave Buddha's human struggle with human passions a super-human color. A wonderful method of making light of the dirt of human weakness and making it look bright.

Devotion does not hesitate either to exaggerate or understate. Mara episode is a brilliant example. More examples could be cited.

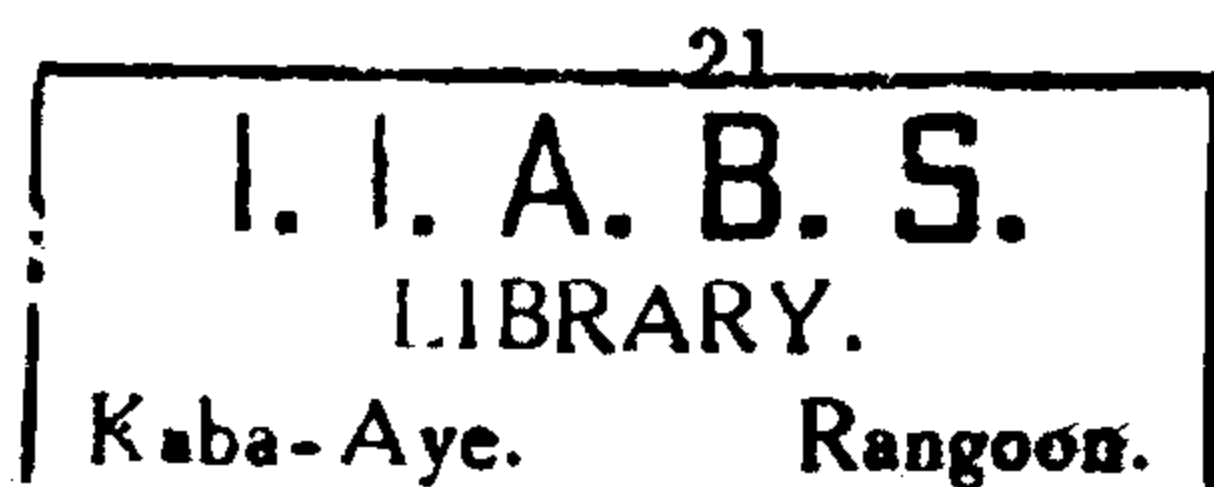
To show how careful his parents were to divert his attention from his ordained mission and how great was his own power to cut asunder the bond of worldly life, it has been said with obvious exaggeration that his father provided Buddha after his marriage with as many as one hundred and forty thousand young women attendants. An incredibly big round figure to accommodate in the palace or to trace in the capital of the Kingdom his father ruled over.

The statement is to be taken not in its literal, arithmetical sense but in its substance. It means a large number, far far smaller than the tall figure made use of. This was not an unknown practice in Ancient Indian

thought. To carry conviction with the multitude, abundant praise of what is good and abundant denunciation of what is bad is needed, philosophers of Ancient India frankly say.

Out of these various sorts of miracles, one significant fact emerges: he was very compassionate. In his boyhood for the sake of the life of a small duck pierced by the arrow of his cousin, Devadatta who, though a disciple later, played throughout the role of an enemy and even tried to kill him, a most complex character in the entire Buddhist literature, Buddha did not hesitate to displease. All of a sudden he found the duck in that sad plight, removed the arrow from its back and saved its life. In spite of resolute protests, he did not pass it on to Devadatta but pleaded that an animal does not belong to one who is eager to kill it but to one who saves it, a doctrine if adhered to in human relations would have saved much misdirected human labor and made the world around a much better place to live in.

The controversy did not end with Buddha's refusal to part with the duck. In his fury, Devadatta demanded confirmation from a higher authority and, to settle the dispute, both of them went to a wise teacher who luckily enough gave the verdict in favor of Buddha. These were the days when teaching was not a money-earning profession, a trick but a sort of dedication, though the English word "teaching" has in it, mysteriously enough and consistently with the fashion in our times, all the letters of "cheating". Naturally, teachers commanded great respect and Devadatta did not dare contradict though his animosity against Buddha persisted and grew in volume as



time went on.

Analysed from a modern angle, Buddha's life could be broken up into three consecutive stages: (1) his personal enjoyment (2) Renunciation and Release and (3) his long itinerary for human welfare or, in his own expressive phrase, for the welfare of all living beings.

He was an empiricist in a very real and an intense sense. He tasted the bright side of life as it stands, the buttered side of the bread as it is ordinarily called. But, like the vast multitude, he did not stop there. He could see through so-called enjoyment and fought hard to go beyond it. And actually he could break his shackles and assess through a positive approach the limitations of life as it stands. He knew its traps as well as temptations, its allurements and the fatigue that results from its pursuit. But he was not in the slough of despond. He got peace and did not repent having forsaken the world. In fact, his own experience goes far beyond. Even enjoyment of stable peace could not make him oblivious of his social obligations and he never spared himself to help others see light.

He has traditionally been treated as the incarnation of the great Sage, Kapila, the founder of Sankhya system of philosophy in Ancient India for whom people had great veneration and who was supposed to be so full of wisdom that tradition has it that his body was not made of flesh but of effulgent, spiritual light. Without doubt, this myth is nothing short of a respectful recognition of the great spiritual genius of Kapila who observes with candid insight that material joys of life we must pass through to realize finally that the spirit in us is

complete in itself and by itself and has no need of the things of the world. Material life of enjoyment is a means to an end and not an end in itself. After baffling us perpetually, it makes us realize the glory of our own self, perfect in its intrinsic nature: a theme possibly common between Kapila and Plato.

Buddha's life up to his enlightenment is a conspicuous example of the Sankhya philosophy of life. It shows palpably how physical enjoyment cannot satisfy us and leads inevitably to the search of the subjective delight of the spirit free from bondage of matter. There is of course an additional link in the refusal of both Kapila and Buddha to accommodate God of religion in their spiritual code. Thus far, Buddha is substantially the counterpart of Kapila. Tradition does not even hesitate to attach from this angle considerable significance to "Kapilavastu", Buddha's birth-place, which literally means the abode of Kapil. Prolific imagination indeed.

But, viewed rightly, Buddha is an enlarged and an augmented edition of Kapila. Sankhya wisdom does not leave much scope for an effort to help release others. It is a clean confession and an eulogy, unqualified eulogy perhaps of the glory of the spirit vis-a-vis matter. It puts the finger on individual liberation and leaves others' liberation to take care of itself. To the contrary, the nucleus of Buddha's philosophy lies in a broad appeal, in his eagerness to liberate others and not to rest content with his own liberation, not to leave others to taste the bitter fruit of life but to help them partake of the bliss of Nirvana. If Kapila glorifies knowledge, Buddha glorifies emotion. If Kapila glorifies the head, Buddha

glorifies the heart.

We must now pause to consider whether Buddha means a complete break with his environment, with the tradition in which he was born and brought up. The answer is both "Yes" and "No". In certain aspects at least, he is a product of his environment, in certain others not and, in yet others, he revolted against it no doubt. Considerable intellectual zeal is at times exhibited, possibly out of emotional preference, to show that Buddha is a product of Hinduism and, also alternatively, to show that he means a complete break with it. These are both extreme views and should be treated as exaggerations.

As to the word Hindu, at the time Buddha practised and preached, it was very little known. As to the much debated and much discussed word "Arya" rendered into English as "Aryan", whose Pali counterpart is "Ariya", Buddha makes use of it. But he never uses it to mean a group of people, far less a particular white group as has been the fashion in modern history. To him, "Arya" means either a perfect man or his verdict, eternal truth that can stand the test of time and clime.

He does not mean a complete break with the traditions of his time. Biographies of Buddha written by his devoted disciples which are replete with references to prevailing traditions, the prevailing myths and the prevailing gods confirm this view. There is no dearth of references to the gods and goddesses, to popular mythological stories of what is called Hinduism in the Standard Buddhist literature. Possibly to forge a deep link between prevalent tradition on its bright side and role of the would-be Buddha, the veteran sage, Asita,

who was a repository of Vedic wisdom, appeared spontaneously from his meditative solitude in the nearby forest to offer homage to child Buddha immediately after he was born.

If Buddha exclaimed just after experience of beatitude of Nirvana that he discovered the path traversed by his predecessors, the seers and sages of the past, he does not and cannot possibly mean a complete break with the spiritual heritage of old. As a matter of fact, he means no break with truth but with privilege.

Buddha's aim was immensely practical and, looked at from a human perspective, immensely humanitarian. Whatever was consistent in the existing tradition with this practical motive, he accepted, whatever was not, he rejected not always, of course, by profession but invariably by practice.

As a liberator of the spiritual interest of the common man, he was opposed to priest-craft and the sacrificial cult on which it thrived. He was opposed to class-conflicts and as such not amenable to priest-craft. Animal sacrifice he did not support because it goes against the central theme of his gospel, universal love and friendship, Metta as it called in Pali, counterpart of Sanscrit Maitri.

Just after he left the world, he was in the hermitage of a sage, Bhargava by name, who was a specialist in the sacrificial cult. After a short stay, he left him as he could not satisfy his spiritual quest. Not to get on with sacrificial fire but to extinguish the fire of desire is, as he said after enlightenment, his message.

He was, as has already been said, also opposed to casteism which divides man from man by birth and makes

light of his character and attainment.

By actual practice, he found extremism is bad and in the golden mean between excessive enjoyment and excessive physical rigors lies the road to perfection.

In his time there was the tendency to torture the body for attainment of peace. Its conspicuous example was an ascetic whose real name has been devoured by the nick name hurled on him by the populace, Ajitakesha-kambalin which means the possessor of a blanket made of human hair. A blanket like this becomes warm in summer and cold in winter and, as a mark of his so-called spiritual distinction, he used to wear it throughout the year. Buddha revolted against such misunderstood zeal and put spirit above flesh in his spiritual code.

Out of pragmatic considerations, he was no lover of the puzzles of metaphysics of which Ancient India was much too full. The dabblers in metaphysics were not all spiritualists but some of them at least were rank materialists. Recent researches have found out that, in preaching his gospel of universal love, Buddha had to come in conflict not merely with so-called spiritualists but a good number of materialists who had considerable following in the area of Northern India where Buddha lived and died, an area far from Northwestern frontiers of Ancient India where Vedic ritualism prevailed. Possibly to face squarely these two opposing tendencies, Buddha preached a gospel of collective welfare which could be fitted in with the substance of them both. If materialists and spiritualists are eager for human welfare in its widest perspective, as they should, in Buddha they will and must find a great guide.

His crusade against metaphysics shows he was a logical positivist in a very intense sense though not of the aimless, unpractical type we come across. His faith in the dignity of man, in the efficacy of persistent effort which kept him far off from the idea of sin often enough associated with traditional religion marks him out as an existentialist of a distinct type. He was an inveterate believer in the liberation of the common man, the masses and his gospel is in a very real sense universal. As such, his existentialism is not individualist but universalist. He is indeed a happy blend of a logical positivist with a practical bias and an existentialist with a universalist gospel committed to the liberation of the common man irrespective of sectional affiliations. No better combination of rationalism and humanism is conceivable perhaps. Though it may sound curious, man's future lies today in a practically inspired logical positivism blended with a universalism of an existentialist pattern.

This practical synthesis, Buddha achieved as a matter of fact in Ancient India near about the time when in an Ancient Greek Colony in Asia Minor, water-philosophy of Thales, a Greek myth whitewashed by the brush of logic began to agitate human mind. Of course, not long after, Buddha's philosophy in miniature came to the forefront, first in Sicily and then in the mainland of Greece and flickered there unsuccessfully for one or two decades. I have in mind Pythagoras as a social reformer with a bias for nonviolence which has something in common with Buddha it seems. Anyway, Buddha has a brother with a kindred spirit about the same time in the west.

CHAPTER TWO

RELIGION OF THE HEART : ITS SCIENTIFIC AND ETHICAL BASIS

The great puzzle of modern man is his inability to give his humanist outlook a scientific basis. Scientifically, he is a rational creature in the precisely Aristotelean sense and not prepared to accept anything that could possibly be doubted. So far so good. But for the sake of his rational outlook, modern man cannot forego his aspirations which are in our age basically humanist. Without realising his humanist aspirations, he cannot have joy of life. This is his great predicament. He finds no straight road from his head to his heart.

Science shows, and as rational beings we also find, what Buddha said ages before, that things around are all transitory, evanescent and what we call a thing is really a creature of imagination. There is nothing stable inside and outside. The world as it stands has aptly been called in Sanscrit, Jagat, which means that which passes away. This is why Buddha renounced the world, his near and dear ones, his covetable kingdom in search of something durable and dependable. But what about us? The more we repeat mechanically this doctrine, the more our attachment to things grows. Tragically enough, there is no way out.

There is a big gap in modern life between profession

and practice. This reminds us of the familiar story of the cat who all of a sudden determined to become a convert to the cult of nonviolence. With this laudable objective, he went to a sage and began solemnly to practise the philosophy of universal love under his valued guidance. But, unfortunately enough, he could practise this philosophy with one exception. He was unable to check his native ferocity in the presence of a poor mouse and did not hesitate to send it in no time to his elastic belly. Thus, the new vow failed and the cat remained cat far off from the grand, old ethics of nonviolence.

This shows unmistakably that our great need is not so much to clean our intellect as to drill our heart, not so much to train us in logic as to chasten our emotions. Here, I have no doubt, Buddha may be of immense help to modern man. Without any preconceived metaphysics, he preaches on the house top a religion of the heart. His critical attitude is in fact a passport for the practice of this religion of the heart whose base is as wide as the human race, more precisely, all that has spark of life.

“Do to others as you wish to be done by” is an old, old saying. This is the common point between a great religious leader like Jesus, a great philosopher like Confucius and a great political theorist like John Stuart Mill. They have all said : to be happy ourselves, we must make others happy.

Even faith in God has been invoked by various religions as an impetus to this cult of love. Universal love is binding on man, it has been said, because he has a common origin in God. This is how the moral significance of the story of Adam, the first man in the Old Testament,

is generally traced. Even deep metaphysical sanctions have at times been invoked for its execution in practice. It has been said by monists that, since the ultimate stuff of the world is one, all-pervasive, universal spirit, we must love each other, love our neighbor as ourself. But, notwithstanding these inspiring theoretic devices ice does not melt and man is indeed very far from this goal.

Herein lies the significance of the great role unconscious plays in our mental make-up, a theme to which Freud very rightly draws our attention in the recent past. It was brought into bold relief in Ancient India in a system of philosophy with a regular practical technique to control the mind, slowly but steadily, Yoga-philosophy as it is called, which has luckily enough exerted some influence of late on the western mind. The real barrier, the insuperable barrier which drags us away from our professions is the unconscious whose operations we cannot forecast but of which we are nevertheless the unfortunate victim. This explains an abrupt break-away from avowed idealism, an occasional somersault as it were from its high altitude. The unforeseen pressure of the unconscious turns out today's revolutionary into tomorrow's reactionary, today's visionary into tomorrow's self-conscious realist.

This is the long and short of reformist zeal throughout human history. This should not dishearten us, should not throw us off our optimism. "All great things are as rare as difficult to perform" as Spinoza rightly observes. But we must reckon with this disquieting fact and be every ready to face reverses never to be dissuaded from our goal. The moments of weakness we must look upon as moments of perching in the perpetual flight of a bird and

not as a permanent retreat from the ideal.

Very rightly, therefore, Buddha makes of the drilling of the heart a regular religion. His religion has no dogmas to start with, nothing to be taken for granted except that man needs peace and he should strive hard for peace individually as well as collectively. Even the very idea of God, the great fulcrum of traditional religion, has not been invoked straight away at least. So disproportionately heavy is the burden of evil in the world and so incapable we are to come to grips with it, that to account for good and evil in the world, at times two gods, one good and the other bad, fighting each other for supremacy has also been appealed to out of reformist zeal. The attempt to explain evils by an ingenious theological appeal persists to this day. To face the prevailing scepticism of our times, some philosophers would have us believe in a good God fighting hard with a bad universe. A wonderful attempt to divest God of his omnipotence and to stick hard to His perfection.

Only dogma that could perhaps be imposed on Buddha is his faith in a cycle of birth and death. But this was not for him a blind acceptance of a tradition but the inevitable corollary of his faith in the efficacy of human efforts. If we have made us by our past deeds what we are today, we should and must be able to make us tomorrow by our own efforts what we aspire to be today. No submission to sin, no dependence on grace, no elect but faith in the dignity of man and in the efficacy of his struggle for a better existence and a better world is the bed-rock of Buddha's message. Even minus the theory of the cycle of births and deaths, Buddha's appeal to

dignity of man and faith in the efficacy of human efforts should have considerable significance for modern man.

On its basis, he makes a prayer out of his religion of the heart. It is not desire for heavenly bliss, nor, its counterpart, fear for hell, not looking to high heavens for guidance in the hour of difficulty but to take life as it is and not to miss an opportunity to pray for the welfare of all. This prayer for the welfare of all living beings is in its meaning and implication much wider than humanism in our sense of the word but, as human beings, we can well afford to treat it as a human gospel for human welfare. No denying the fact that, notwithstanding the wider connotation of Buddha's message, its primary objective has always been human welfare.

It is indeed very significant that he who abandoned almost endless varieties of prayer to an almost equally endless variety of supernatural agencies prevailing in his time was extremely passionate about the prayer for collective welfare that he prescribes. In the schedule of Buddha's daily duties described by Buddhaghosh, the famous commentator of Buddha's long discourses, it is stated that, during the rains when Buddha did not move out for his itinerary, his day began with prolonged prayer for the collective welfare. In a general way, all through his life, more particularly from the moment of his enlightenment till his death, he lived literally a life for others. Therein lies the secret of his greatness, the elan of his great philosophy of life.

Very passionately and with great warmth as well, he describes his prayer for general welfare, a prayer not at all sectional, on the analogy of an affectionate mother in

an age when motherhood was considered the best that a woman could aspire after and companionship as a means to that end. Just like an affectionate mother ever solicitous of the welfare of her children, in the moment of prayer, we should extend our good will to all living beings east and west, north and south, beneath and above, none to be excluded. No better recipe for broadening the heart, no better antidote to the philosophy of hatred which drives as it were a wedge between east and west, black and white, haves and have-nots seems conceivable. Not in objective reform alone which is an almost endless process but in cultivation of good will lies the future of man.

This spirit of love and compassion was with him as it were a sort of gift, a nature's gift to adapt a familiar modern phrase and not much of an acquired character. This is what makes Devadatta his own cousin, a sworn, inveterate enemy who even, though he becomes a disciple, does not hesitate to disrupt his brotherhood, and what is worse, also to make an abortive attempt to kill him. Devadatta out of so-called chivalry of a warrior-prince one day pierced with a sharp arrow an innocent duck but it accidentally fell on Buddha who, in spite of great resistance from Devadatta, did not part with it but saved it with much care and attention. The child is father of the man, it has been well said. The seeds of Buddhahood, of the great philosophy of love Buddha represents and stands for, was there in him in a dormant form since his boyhood.

The same bent of mind revealed itself much more vividly and also, much more conspicuously, not long after

he renounced the world and was searching hither and thither for a guide to truth and peace. He was then living alone in a hermitage in Rajāgriha, in what is now called the province of Bihar in India, the domain of King Bimbisara who later on became a convert to Buddha's cult of nonkilling, a devoted disciple too.

One evening while Buddha was walking the streets of Rajagriha, he found a pretty big flock of sheep including a little lamb in a bleeding condition led by a group of persons. This caught his attention. On inquiry he learned that the entire flock is being driven to a temple to be slaughtered as part of a religious ceremony in the august presence of the King himself. He picked the bleeding lamb in his arms, went straight to the temple and pleaded with priests there that if it is possible to earn a little spiritual merit by the sacrifice of a lamb, it is indeed very reasonable to expect much greater spiritual merit from the sacrifice of a man. Herein lies his humanism, his unmistakable humanism I presume. But he was not a mere theorist who is satisfied with argument. In case of a practical man like him, argument is invariably followed by action. And to the great surprise of all concerned, he proceeded to put his own head on the alter of sacrifice so that it may be cut asunder by the sword. He was of course desisted forcibly. Bimbisara was visibly moved and proclaimed that henceforth slaughter of animals for a religious purpose would be a punishable offence in his kingdom. In those days of rigid monarchy, what a King said was law and prevailed. This was indeed Buddha's first act of social reform.

Some people even say that he was very much

opposed to the rigid, cruel criminal laws prevailing in his father's kingdom, not much unlike the brutal penal code of olden days.

Not only that he emphasized the philosophy of universal love but he also made it the *conditio sine qua non* of the highest ideal, freedom from slavery of desire, the peace of Nirvana. It is said that before the attainment of enlightenment, he used to direct currents of good will towards all living beings in all directions and visualized that the whole world has literally become one mass of love and hatred has disappeared altogether.

The same truth emerges from the familiar myth that the greatest of gods, Brahma, by solemn prayer dissuaded Buddha from his determination after enlightenment not to preach his gospel.

It is said when, after years of persistent experiments with truth, Buddha partook of the bliss of Nirvana, he remained steeped for days together in meditative silence and was reluctant to preach his gospel as he feared very few would pay heed to it. This disturbed not only the peace of man but of gods in heaven. And the greatest of them, Brahma came down to the earth to Buddha lost in beatitude, solemnly reminded him of his universal mission and besought him to preach. Whereupon Buddha opened his lips and exclaimed in compassion "Let the door of immortality open unto all" and his long itinerary began.

This Brahma-myth is indeed very consistent with the universalist version of Buddha's Nirvana which has much later been made the nucleus of a prominent Bud-

dhist sect, Mahayana. In its eagerness to emphasize Buddha's concern for others, Mahayana Buddhism contends that Buddha will not lose his distinctive existence in Nirvana till all living beings are liberated from bondage.

Buddha's interest in collective welfare has been the main reason of tagging almost every significant event of his life with a miracle. His enlightenment, for example, the most important event of his life, has traditionally been looked upon as a source of joy to all, men as well as gods, the inhabitants of ten thousand worlds as conceived in Buddhist Mythology, the only exception being Mara, the force of evil, the satan of Buddhism, who fought hard to defeat Buddha to find himself vanquished by his penances.

Buddha's early spiritual venture in his previous births, his success as well as failure as described in Jataka-stories, also lends support to this supposition. It has been said that in a previous birth long, long ago while Buddha was an ordinary human being, an earlier Buddha, another enlightened one was about to put his foot on a muddy road and our Buddha did not hesitate to fall straight in his front to save him from mud. The earlier Buddha was very much pleased with this and generously enough predicted that after a cycle of creation, a mythical period big enough to be measured by astronomical figures, this man, Buddha we are speaking of, will get enlightenment. No plausible attempt has been spared to give Buddha's mission a highly universal color.

By his own acts, big and small, Buddha himself shows the way. At the early stage of his brotherhood, there was no provision for nursing an ailing mendicant.

One day in the company of his favourite disciple, Ananda, he found a mendicant suffering from diarrhoea busy in cleaning soiled clothes. On inquiry, he learnt that none of the brotherhood took care of him. With Ananda, Buddha washed his clothes and introduced the nursing of patients in the schedule of the daily round of mendicants. Very feelingly indeed, he observed that, since a mendicant has no near relations to take care of him, he must be taken care of in the hour of need by brother mendicants. Buddha's life as well as his message has a double character throughout. By a logical approach to start with, he preaches a message of the heart. Assuredly, first is the means, second the end.

Buddha was himself neither a metaphysician nor a friend of metaphysical subtleties even, though ironically enough, in course of about a millennium after his death as many as eighteen philosophical systems avowed allegiance to him and each claimed to be the infallible exponent of his message.

The most important metaphysical trend in Buddha's time was the metaphysics of Vedanta according to which there is only one reality that pervades everything and all else is its appearance, a doctrine which draws its inspiration from the Upanishads, that highly inspiring spiritual literature of old. Unluckily enough, in Buddha's time its spiritual appeal was almost completely lost sight of and it was made a matter of abstract logical speculation, a rigorous intellectual gymnastic. Consistently with his philosophy of universal love, Buddha gave the doctrine a practical bias and invented a new, significant phrase for it. He substitutes the metaphysical concept

of Brahma, the ultimate reality by Brahma-Vihara which literally means an excursion into the realm of reality, a deep personal contact with the absolute. He pleaded that if all is one, then the best practical philosophy is to pray for the welfare of all. If we do this, the abstract Brahma-concept comes down from our brain, enters our heart and becomes a gospel of pervasive love.

This was no doubt the spirit of the Upanishads as is clearly visible in an inspiring dialogue between an old sage, Yajnavalkya, and his wife, Maitreyi in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad on the road to freedom and immortality where the former sums up the spiritual wisdom of the Upanishads as follows:

We love all things not for their own sake but for the pervasive reality that lies behind them. Verily, the husband loves the wife, not for the sake of the wife but for the sake of one pervasive truth that connects them both. The husband is no exception to the rule either. All love is consciously or unconsciously based on this timeless, eternal truth. Assuredly, Buddha has given an inspiring practical bias to the abstract philosophy of unity, made it concrete, made of it a message of the heart. Herein lies his great distinction as a practical philosopher unlike a theoretic metaphysician.

This lofty spiritual tone of Buddha's gospel of love might be beyond the comprehension of average modern man and modern woman too. But they can in their own durable interest take a commonsense view of it. They must realise that not mere cogitations of plain commonsense but a change of heart is what they need, badly need for their peace, security and, above all,

survival.

Buddha tried to give this appeal to heart an empirical as well as an ethical basis. He had a scientific temper and he was not only opposed to blind faith but highly critical of it. As an advocate of religion, he was not a theorist but an experimentalist and also an experientialist. We have the right to believe what we feel and not what we are asked to. Religious discipline is valid just like a scientific hypothesis and a scientific experiment provided it produces the desired effect. In this respect Buddha's religion is a science-religion and is indeed a rare phenomenon in the history of faith.

Much trouble with traditional religion lies in its dogmatic, uncritical allegiance to faith which is often enough the basis of soulless traditions. In Buddha's days there were people who used to preach that there is only one reality, the Brahma of the Upanishads, a spirit that pervades everything and with the help of subtle, abstract logic they tried to establish their thesis. Their skilled opponents tried to do just the reverse through the same method. Logic cuts both ways. Only one must specialize in the game of logic and make himself an expert in verbal duels. The whole history of philosophy on its theoretic aspect is a history of such arguments which finally leads us nowhere. Not in abstract logic but in an appeal to experience, Buddha finds the way out of the labyrinth.

Being inspired by a practical, scientific motive he does not hesitate to call the Brahma, the all-comprehensive absolute of the dialecticians, a confusing, puzzling trap, Brahma-Jhala.

Without entering into an abstract, subtle argument with the advocates of Brahma, the all-pervasive absolute, as an empiricist with a purely scientific frame of mind, he used to ask them:

“Have you seen the all-pervasive absolute?”

“No, sir” was the reply.

“Have your parents seen it?”

“Certainly not, sir.”

“Then some of your forefathers must have seen Brahma.”

“Alas, they did not.”

Then he said like an experientialist:

“You have no authority then to believe in this reality, far less to preach it to confuse others and to add to their difficulties,” “Believe only what you experience.”

To make a ready appeal, he brings in humor to bear on his topic, to help appear the absurdity of blind, uncritical faith as clear as broad daylight. He retorts :

“If you could afford to believe in an absolute without any experience of it, you could as well be compared to a man who falls unwittingly enough in love with a lady whom he does not know and whose very existence could reasonably be disputed.”

As if this much is not enough, he does not care to add to this striking similies:

“Are you eager to build a staircase for a palace without knowing where the palace is to be or do you think you could cross a river without a ferryboat by simply calling the other side to come to you?”

What a simple and forceful criticism of blind faith and an unqualified defense of experience by the pioneer

of a great, historic religion by which even to this day not less than one third population of the world swear.

That blind faith cannot be the substitute for religious experience which alone can give us peace, he used to explain with a familiar example. Very nice, delicious dishes are served in luncheons and dinner parties, he says, by the spoon, but, alas, the unfortunate spoon has no taste of the delicacies it serves with great care and precision. Without having experience, by merely citing dogmas and blindly adhering to traditions, religion cannot ensure peace, far less unite man.

In my younger years I was told an interesting story which comes back to my mind in this context. In the home of a conservative Hindu widow, whenever a religious ceremony was performed, to keep the sacramental food off from the gusto of a ferocious cat, he was tied down in open before the place of worship. As time rolled by, the disturbing cat went in the normal course to a place from where there is no return, feelably at least. But the old lady was obstinate and relentless. Whenever a religious ceremony was performed in her home, she insisted that a big cat must be procured someway or other and kept in check for display before the place of offering. Gradually, it became a familiar tradition, a matter of pride, family pride as it were and the old history of the curious practice was very naturally forgotten.

This is indeed a silly, ridiculous tradition which does not mean much. But, unfortunately enough, in organized religion, in certain phases of its history at least, the experience cum character-aspect of religion which is its essence was almost completely forgotten and it was

mistaken for soulless traditions. What is worse, this led to a spiritual pride which at times became a menace to peace of man.

To keep the purity of religion intact, Buddha not only made it a matter of experience like a scientist, more precisely a spiritual scientist, but like a pragmatist, he also gives it an ethical basis. Religious experience is difficult to get. It is the result of a hard, hard, long, long process of discipline. As such, there is the risk of any nonsense being claimed as a religious experience. Obviously, such a curious demand may have a degenerating influence on the individual as well as the group. To guard against this danger, Buddha maintains that to be religious, one must not believe in sin, which might be forgiven or in grace which is a short-cut to perfection but in personal effort inspired by the idea of goodness.

If religion is not treated as an experience, as something inspiring to be attained and achieved by personal effort, it ceases to be a matter of life and becomes reduced into verbal professions. This is not real religion. It may at most be its skeleton. True religion does not depend on hereditary transmission. My family religion may have an influence on me but, at most, this is only the raw material of religion out of which by my own effort, I must develop my own religion, my true religion, religion of private, personal experience. It is in this sense that the dictum: 'it is good to be born in a church but not to die in it' is significant.

A talented, modern writer has given a very fine definition of the owner of a cow. He maintains that the cow really belongs to one who eats its milk and not to one who

simply sells it. The same is true of religion perhaps. Without minimizing the legitimate importance of religious preaching and propaganda, it may be said that religion really lies in living the life, in being and becoming and not in merely professing it, far less in preaching it for others' consumption.

Not only religion has in actual practice been reduced to blind faith but even a slight deviation from its routine formalities have been visited often enough with grave consequences which at times amounted to loss of the head. This is why when modern science as a search of truth began to play its role, it came into conflict with official, organized religion. The whole history today has turned the other way. Now, the advocates of religion are busy trying to keep pace with science.

It has a very wholesome influence. No woman need fear today that she might be burnt alive on the suspicion of being a witch, no woman need also fear forcible death on the pyre of her husband, and, above all, no man need fear being burnt alive or being ceremonially excommunicated for departing from a set, religious tradition. What is extremely important, it has become really difficult to deprive the large mass of man of the joys of a material life on the excuse of heavenly bliss. Free thinking is no longer an offense but is a great virtue. For many, this is a triumph-card. The only difficulty is that, even though science has made man's life rich, immensely rich, it could not make him happy, could not ensure peace, and in the worst, may even wipe him off. To fill up this gap in science, we must have a religion, a drilling of the heart side by side with a rational outlook, on an empirical as well

as an ethical basis. This is what Buddha millenniums before did provide and in its earnest execution lies the secret of man's survival and peace.

Much intellectual blood is being spent these days on whether "God is Dead". Even religious preachers have become curiously enough converts to this fascinating creed which turns on a close analysis nothing short of a catchy slogan. Whether God exists or not is a matter of experience, not of a theoretic, verbal duel. If I have that experience, for me God exists; if I have not, however much I profess faith in God on the pulpit and the platform, God does not really exist for me. And in actual life, I am and I must be, whether I like it or not, an atheist.

But the most important thing from a human perspective is not necessarily whether God exists or not but human welfare on the widest possible scale. And Buddha gives the impetus, much-needed and much-desired impetus to advocates of faith as well as sceptics to work in full co-operation for human welfare and not to waste their energies in wordy warfare on whether God is alive or dead which does not really mean much.

The history of Buddhism in Medieval India has a lesson in this regard. When Buddha preached his gospel of universal welfare, it worked like a miracle in prevailing human relations in its own restricted area. But, soon enough, it came into conflict with vested interest, the priests in Ancient India who spared no pains to put the clock back by defying Buddha as much as they could. But, gradually as well as inevitably, after a long tussle between the advocates of Buddhist philosophy and the advocates of prevailing priest-craft, a new spirit of accommodation

and adjustment came to the forefront and Buddha became blended in various ways with liberal Hinduism. By some, he was made, with the full approval of a section of his own followers, a source of inspiration for the spiritualist power-cult in Hindu Tantra which treats the world as an expression of a universal divine energy. With profound homage, others added his name in the catalogue of divine incarnations fabricated in popular, Hindu Mythology. Above all, the most sober section among the Hindu philosophers began to treat him as well as his followers with great esteem and regard. They did not even hesitate to give his message the status ascribed to the Vedas by traditional Hinduism. Jayanta, a broad-minded logician-philosopher under the pale of Hinduism in the ninth century A.D. says very respectfully that Buddha's words are as sacred as the words of the Vedas which are treated by traditional Hinduism as revelation of God.

This spirit of accommodation and adjustment has a great lesson for modern man, advocates of faith as well as advocates of free-thinking. They can and should unite to build a better world on the inspiring example of the great Buddha.

Buddha's religion as a matter of fact begins with ethics and ends with the experience of Nirvana. The key-concept of his philosophy of life is goodness which means basically an attempt not to injure others but to cultivate good will for them. To this neither theists nor atheists can and should take exception and dig the grave of man.

While summing up his message to the first group of his disciples to whom he entrusts his mission Buddha says:

“My message is a message of love and well-being.

A sense of abiding welfare marks its beginning. It is in its middle and, without doubt, it is also its last word, mature fruit and fulfilment."

"The fragrance of Shila, good character is the sweetest. Good smell of nothing physical can compare with it," he says and he makes an unqualified and an unambiguous defense of it.

This philosophy of goodness is no other than what Socrates lived and died for in Ancient Greece, which Plato paints with the brush of his exalted metaphysical imagination in his celebrated Republic. In Buddha's philosophy of good life, individual and collective, we find a concrete fulfilment, partly at least, of Plato's aspirations.

What modern man really needs is to be good and help others being good. No better recipe of the evils he is surrounded with is conceivable. Buddha shows with X-raying insight essence of goodness lies in service, not in 'will to live', not also in 'will to power' but in a will to give, serve and dedicate.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION MADE IMPERSONAL

Buddha's religion is in the final analysis based not on persons but on principles, not on individuals but on ideas. By his impersonal approach to religion, he has made it quite consistent with a scientific outlook and a scientific temper that follows. Even the familiar word 'Buddhism' which has been imposed much later on Buddha's gospel does not refer to a particular Buddha, however great he may be. It is a common name, a class-concept for all enlightened persons of all ages who have been able to break the barrier of ignorance and see the effulgent light beyond the realm of sense. As old Pali Literature shows, Buddha used to call his religion 'Saddharma' which literally means religion of goodness. Good and peace are the two words on which he puts his finger almost invariably. For him, they are identical and stand for one truth and one basic attitude to problems of life and their solution. Consistently with this, the essentials of his faith he has described as 'Ariya Sachha', the Pali counterpart of Sanscrit 'Arya Satya' which means eternal truth, the truth known by one whose heart is pure. This shows if there are Buddhas in the past, as without doubt there were, there must be Buddhas in future too. And therein lies the future of man, in growing great man and not in perpetually devising fresh methods

of satisfying ever recurring desires.

Three basic articles of faith, in Buddha's religion are highly impersonal and have nothing of a sectarian color about them. The first of them is general respect for Buddhas, for enlightened ones. They are a class by themselves and not barred by limitations of time and clime, color and caste, sex and creed. Whoever has gone beyond the veil of darkness into the realm of light is an enlightened person and we must have unqualified regards for him. This is no submission to blind faith, or, its counterpart, unproved dogmas but an acceptance of a plain, simple fact, the experience of truth. The enlightened one has unravelled the mystery of life, the secret of peace and reverence for him is nothing short of acceptance of an experience which is scientific in character. Like a scientific hypothesis, it is verifiable. Buddha's religion is not a religion of dogmas but of experience, more precisely, of experience par excellence, the ineffable experience of peace.

Buddha's philosophy of life is generally looked upon as a religion among religions but it is really a defense of the basic religious attitude consistently with logic on the one hand and a keen sense of values on the other. Possibly in their essence, all historic religions represent an attitude of mind whose mature fruit is an ineffable experience. Faith in a particular religion at the exclusion of others is not real faith, however sincere and honest it may be. True faith must be faith in religion as such, in the religious attitude and, finally, in the religious experience. Leaving aside all personal labels, leaving aside all dogmas, all claim to personal distinction, Buddha lays very rightly

great stress on the impersonal and universal character of religion as an experience, shows that, though religion as an experience is personal, in its essence, it is impersonal, not the monopoly of select individuals but open to all who are eager to make an experiment with truth.

Buddha did this in the caste-ridden society of his times where almost all privileges of life were virtually monopolized by the priests and the warrior kings, often enough in conjunction though, thanks to human weakness, sometimes this was marked by mutual conflict. There is ample trace of this class-feud in the Medieval Indian myths.

Possibly being imbued with the universalism of Buddha, Vatsayana, the renowned commentator of the aphorisms of Nyaya-philosophy, a curious complex of logic, metaphysics and ethics, observes candidly in the early Christian era, in defiance of priest-craft and in conformity with the notion of unity in the Upanishads, that an enlightened man, Apta, i.e. whose desires are all fulfilled, has the same status and character irrespective of caste, creed, and color. Equalization of spiritual rights of man and woman, of all and sundry, is the great gift of Buddha in Ancient India. He contributed not to a small extent to the growth of later liberal Hinduism.

The second article of faith in Buddha's gospel is faith in goodness, in the eagerness to follow the right path. It has no doctrinal stamp on it. Its main theme is moderation in practice and inwardization of one's own self. Buddha himself said categorically and, with unequivocal emphasis, that the substance of his gospel is not to do bad things and to do good ones. The path is simple and leaves no

scope for mystery-mongering. If the advocates of religion tried hard not to increase their fold by adopting hasty, unsound methods of conversion and to keep the moral tone of their fold high, the history of religion would have been written very differently and religion would have been a powerful, wholesome force in uniting man, in making for his security and peace. Buddha's emphasis on good life, 'Dhamma' is a great balancing factor in religious life of the community. In short, good life is the means and Buddhahood, enlightenment, the goal of religion. All that is significant in religion must fall in these two categories. The rest is dross and not gold, appearance and not reality.

Unlike most other idealists, Buddha had great practical sense. He was a practical idealist in a very real and a very intense sense. Good life he knew is hard to practice and enlightenment very difficult to achieve. This is why for the first time in Ancient Indian history, and possibly in a considerable measure in the history of the world, he tried to combine forces of good against forces of evil by founding a great organization which has members, both lay and monastic, who make a collective effort to lead good life and attempt to reach enlightenment through a co-operative spiritual venture.

Samgha or organization has a disadvantage too. Due to inalienable human weakness, a collection of good people even, may lead to conflicts. Buddha himself had to face heavy odds in this regard. But it has been well said: We cannot take the cake and then have it. The best experiments in human welfare, individual and collective, depend on canalization of forces of good and the inevitable result is an organization. Some sort of companionship in spiritual

life is necessary, very necessary. The reverse of it is isolation which is fraught with much greater risks.

Thus, genuine respect for the enlightened, for the path that leads to it and the human organization, which, with its all its limitations, represents this inspiring ideal are the three essential ingredients of Buddha's religion. They are traditionally called three precious jewels of spiritual life, 'Triratna'. From Buddha's time to this day, the familiar spiritual slogan of a devout Buddhist is: (1) I take shelter in the enlightened, (2) I take shelter in an effort to lead good life and (3) I bow down in respect to that human organization which tries collectively to live good life and to help others live good life.

There is no monopolist claim here. Knock the door and knock it properly and it will open. Don't hesitate and don't also create factions. This is the sum and substance of the principles on which Buddha's religion stands.

The same idea lies behind that fascinating story of the young boy, Nachiketa, who did not hesitate to go to the god of death to unravel the mystery of life as depicted in an Upanishad with considerable poetic charm. The long and short of it is that, since the young boy was sincerely eager to sacrifice everything for the sake of truth, he knew the truth and got rid of miseries. In the concluding line of this philosophical myth lies something highly instructive and impersonal, much like what Buddha lived and preached. It says: Truth is not the monopoly of a particular earnest seeker like Nachiketa; all sincere seekers of truth who struggle hard will and must reach it and get out of the riddle of life.

This Upanishad must have been a bit earlier than

Buddha and, as such, the similarity in spirit is indeed very striking. This perhaps bears out the truth of what a mystic of our times has said a bit humorously indeed about the nature of mystical experience: just like the voice of a group of jackals howling together, the verdict of enlightened persons cannot be differentiated. They speak in the same strain though not with equal stress.

Buddha has in this respect given a concrete shape to Platonism much earlier than Plato. To an idealist like Plato, the ideal is much more important than the real and principles have much greater force than persons, however great they may be. Plato has however left his idealism at the imaginative level and could not bring it down from the realm of his fancy to the earth below. In his attempt to give a practical shape to the impersonal principles of religion, Buddha makes them as real as he could. Buddhism as a whole has tried to keep up the spirit of Plato by attaching in theory at least, if not always in practice, greater importance to principles than persons, in giving religion a universal and not a sectional color. Possibly because of this Professor Whitehead calls Buddhism, 'a most colossal example of applied metaphysics', of high impersonal ideas being applied to practice on a collective scale.

A most conspicuous and a most constructive example of Buddha's uncompromising revolt against emotional preference for persons to principles is perhaps furnished by his sharp rebuff to a favourite disciple, Sariputta, the great organizer of his brotherhood whom he looked upon as a great spiritual genius possessed of extraordinary practical abilities:

**"Type of the wise who soar but never roam,
True to be kindred points of heaven and home'
as the poet puts it.**

Sariputta who predeceased Buddha came with a frail body about to be broken into pieces to see him and pay him his heart's tribute. This was virtually his last meeting with the great master. Obviously, he was in an exalted emotional mood and did not hesitate to pour out his faith without any possible reserve and restraint. He said to Buddha:

"Great Sir, such faith I have in you, methinks you are the greatest of all enlightened persons, the Buddhas. There was none in the past nor is at present nor will there be any one in future who can equal you in the light of wisdom."

Not led away by the emotional outburst of a dedicated disciple, himself a great man, like a calm and dispassionate logician, Buddha began to cross examine him by the Socratic Method possibly to make him conscious of the superiority of principles over persons, however great they are.

"Well Sariputta, your assertion is indeed very grand and bold" he said.

"Yes sir, this is my earnest and sincere estimate of you from intimate personal contact of a whole life."

"Very good" was the reply. "But have you known all the Buddhas of the past?"

"No sir, I am terribly sorry."

He then dragged him one step further:

"Can I then take it that you have known all the Buddhas who will come in future?"

“Absurd, sir. How can I possibly know what is yet in store in future ?” said Sariputtā with a puzzled, troubled look.

“Then, Sariputta, I can at least take it that the present Buddha you know fully to be able to make an assessment of his wisdom.”

Very naturally, Sariputta felt all the more puzzled. He was literally nonplussed. He knew Buddha was far greater than what he appeared to the world outside, to his disciples.

“Great sir, here also I must confess my ignorance.”

Sariputta saw reason and pleaded guilty but added in all earnestness that this was his own personal estimate, the mature fruit of his dedication.

With X-raying insight, Buddha concluded: “Well, that’s your own personal faith. Don’t try to impose it on others and be dogmatic. See reason.”

Sariputta departed exorcised of the ghost that spares no efforts to reduce immortal ideas into flesh, to substitute persons for principles.

Other important episode that highlights principles above persons occurred just when the great master departed from the world at the ripe, old age of eighty after preaching for about five decades his gospel of universal love on house-tops with the skill of a logician, the vision of an idealist and practical wisdom of a realist, all rolled into one. A fascinating account of the great departure, his parting sermon is found in what is called ‘Mahaparinibbana-Sutta’, the story of the great passing away.

It can very well compare with two other historic departures: the death of Socrates in prison and the cruci-

fixion of Christ. Both of them are indeed martyrs in the literal sense of the word, one was forced to die by an irresponsible democracy, other by vested interest which was thrown off its balance by the influence and popularity of a great man, a great Savior. Buddha's case is slightly different. He was killed by none. Only an abortive attempt was made to kill him by his cousin and disciple, Devadatta in league with King Ajata-Shatru, the son of benign Brimbisara, his direct antithesis. Buddha is a martyr no doubt; martyr for a most exalted cause and his martyrdom is self-imposed.

It is indeed very remarkable that no attempt was made to kill Buddha by his major opponents the priests in spite of his open revolt to priest-craft and the rigors of caste-system with which it was closely linked. He was ridiculed and also bitterly criticized by priests but they never cared to kill him. This is partly due to the fact that an ascetic who renounced the world was considerably free to preach in Ancient India.

Another significant fact is that even though he was not an advocate of faith in God, there was not much opposition as is visible a few centuries after in the verbal duel between Buddhist philosophers who deny God outright and the custodians of Brahminic philosophy who never missed an opportunity to plead for God's existence like finished advocates. This must have been due to the fact that in Ancient India, greater emphasis was laid on the character of a man than on his theoretic professions. Any way, much notice was not taken of his indifference to theology when Buddha preached. The tussle between Hindu theism and Buddhist atheism is a much later product.

The prevailing social structure with its steel-frame was the great barrier. And Buddha was often enough criticized by the advocates of orthodoxy because, without being a Brahmin, he renounced the world against the prevailing tradition. A new word was coined to designate renegades of this type. They were called 'Shramana', a term of reproach, if not contempt as well, which means, one, who being over-zealous, makes a waste of spiritual labor. Of course, after the sweet as well as bitter experiences of a married life, there was provision for the practice of asceticism in old age, a preparation for death, as it were, for almost all. In exceptional cases, only Brahmins could break the general rule and rush straight away to the life of a mendicant, become a whole-timer in the school of spiritualism.

Similarly, Buddha had to face considerable opposition from the priests because of his hostility to animal sacrifice and the sacrificial cult itself. But in his own time, few cared whether he believed in God or not.

Possibly Buddha could preach his gospel with a sense of safety and without much effective opposition because of the liberalism of warrior-kings who were custodians of power in the social hierarchy of his times. He had also much support from the small commercial community. Compared to both of them, the priests, the Brahmins were much less powerful. This is why their opposition to Buddha did not hamper him much in preaching and propagating his gospel.

Buddha's great passing away, his conscious death with serene calmness has on it the indelible impress of a supernaturalist age, never oblivious of his universalist

mission. It is perhaps the most important and also the most inspiring pronouncement in Buddhist religious literature on the role of principles in Buddhism as a religion, as a collective venture to improve the spiritual lot of man.

The story is an inspiring piece of literature as inspiring as it possibly could be in an old atmosphere and an old environment innocent of the technicalities of modern fictions. After the long and strenuous career of a roving missionary, Buddha had a complete physical break-down and he disclosed to his favourite companion, Ananda, his desire to pass away. Ananda out of love tried to dissuade. He was rebuked. Buddha gave a long sermon on nature of things which come into being and pass away. The sermon fell on deaf ears. Ananda was not convinced. His heart got the better of his logic. Matter did not proceed any further then.

After walking miles on foot with Ananda, Buddha at last came to a beautiful forest grove and asked Ananda to spread his bed there. He disclosed again to Ananda his determination to die, and, being dissuaded by the latter, gave him a mild rebuke for the second time. The worst came to the worst. With the advent of the full moon, surrounded by his disciples and worshipped by gods and angels, the great master departed.

Ananda was sceptical about the future of Buddha's brotherhood and passionately inquired just before Buddha's death:

"Great sir, who will look after the brotherhood after your departure? None it seems." Without the least hesitancy, the dying Buddha replied:

"Don't worry. No person, however great he may be,

but my message, my gospel, my principles will be the eternal guide of the brotherhood, I have founded.”

All were silent, some perturbed, some calm and quiet. In that solemn atmosphere, mysteriously enough, all of a sudden, the forest grove grew flowers and they fell on Buddha.

Buddha pointed this to Ananda and said:

“Ananda, do you know who are showering these flowers on the enlightened one?” Without pausing for an answer he said:

“On the auspicious moment of the passing away of Buddha, gods and angels are paying him homage.”

He cautioned Ananda not to be led away by emotions and said:

“The true worship of Buddha does not consist in showering flowers on him but in living life, in living up to his message.”

For the last time he reminded the disciples not to think that they have no guide after his death, for the real guide is not the man but his message. He assured them categorically that his philosophy of life and the brotherhood based on it will be the eternal guide of man after his death.

No dependence on persons but principles. Platonism plain and simple brought down literally from high heavens to the good earth, made concrete in flesh and blood.

His celebrated dictum on guidance is:

“Be unto yourself your own light, the light of wisdom, take refuge in your ownself and not in anything besides. Live good life and it will emit light to you and that will be your real guide, let alone other guides.”

Possibly being imbued and inspired with this spirit of self-reliance, Buddha said to a Jaina devotee just after he began his itinerary that in his experiments with truth, in his spiritual struggle, he had no guide except his own self.

Possibly this is religion made impersonal and universal to vengeance. Very little scope for persons, sects and dogmas. There is the ideal, the unmistakable ideal and there is the path that leads to it. The rest is struggle, the courage to face reality in spite of reverses. No recognition of sin since all sins are errors and could be helped, if we will. Personal effort is everything, alpha and omega of religion. No grace, no remission of sins. To make up for the big gap between aspirations and frustrations of the common man in his spiritual life, myriads of births and deaths before Buddha attained enlightenment have been postulated. That is the familiar Jataka-stories, possibly an ingenious product of popular imagination tinged by a high moral bias.

The great German philosopher of the late eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant did the same in his own way. Though no believer in transmigration of the soul, as a pious Christian, he believes there is before man eternal life for a struggle to make him perfect, to get rid of his weaknesses and limitations and to fashion him in the pattern of his ideal.

The same view is shared by a Moslem poet-philosopher of Persia, Jalaluddin Rumi in the thirteenth century A.D. The big gap between man's death and the Day of Judgement makes it feasible for him, he contends, to get rid of his imperfections and attain his highest ideal.

Notwithstanding my admiration, unqualified admiration, for the impersonal philosophy of Buddha, I do not feel inclined to underwrite altogether the need of a personal appeal in religion. Man struggles hard and fails. This makes him lean on a redeemer, a living embodiment of mercy who is sometimes at least looked upon not only as a Savior but also God on earth. This is a psychological necessity and no logical appeal can undo it. Metaphysically principles are greater than persons, empirically persons greater than principles. Both are needed and their conflicting claims must be adjusted in practical work-a-day struggle for a better life.

In Buddhism as a philosophy of life, there was a big gap in this regard and, with the passage of time, the large mass of Buddha's followers filled it up by installing him in the place of God and by worshipping him. Let us remember principles but also not forget persons altogether.

But the real difficulty lies elsewhere. Too much emphasis on the person breeds evil. It gives a narrow color to religion and breaks it up into warring sects and subsects which fight for spiritual supremacy and each claim an exclusive monopoly of spiritual wisdom. Religion thus ceases to be an experience and becomes transformed into a philosophy of hatred and a fertile soil for the growth of prejudices and superstitions.

This was the position of popular religion when modern science embarked on its career as an emissary of knowledge and lent support to free thinking. It came into an open conflict with traditional religion and took away considerably from its prestige and importance.

But the great pity is that, though modern science has given us knowledge and has encouraged free thinking, it could not satisfy the cravings of our heart. The inevitable result is a big gap in the value—consciousness of modern man and woman. This can be filled up by a scientific religion with a humanist bias. This is what Buddha's synthesis of impersonalism and humanism can achieve for us. Herein lies its great significance.

I am sure, even though many might disappoint us, trained intellectuals with a spiritual vacuum in them will feel inclined to the impersonalism of Buddha and put a brake on sects and dogmas and make for the unity of man. Religion will thus cease to be a divisive force and contribute to the solidarity of man. This is why, even those who do not believe in traditional religion and are to the contrary very bitter about it, are drawn to Buddha and his humanism, his message of the heart. I may cite with profound respect T. H. Huxley and Bertrand Russell, separated by the time-gap of a century or so, as conspicuous examples.

No doubt, Buddha's emphasis on the impersonal character of the substance of religion will be an effective antidote to fanaticism, the tendency to hug prejudices and superstitions and to help grow vast social disorders. It will speedily make for a science-religion-merger and assure a bright future for the common man.

CHAPTER FOUR

APPEAL TO COMMON MAN

Notwithstanding the highly scientific character of his gospel, Buddha's appeal is throughout to the common man. Though the son of a king, a prince, he was no friend of the privileged aristocrats but tried in all possible ways to break the barrier that separates man from man, class from class. But for his pacifism and interest in the spiritual welfare of man, he could with ease and, perhaps with some justice, be confused with a revolutionary of the modern brand who has very little patience with his adversary and does not sometimes at least hesitate to wip him off by force.

In his own sphere, the sphere of religious rights of man, he was not only a great liberator but also a great equalizer. This is not realized often enough because his approach was constructive, because his revolt was not a revolt of the sword but of character. Though not palpable like a hurricane, it is a durable wholesome force.

In various different ways, he revolted against priestcraft in Ancient India associated with professional Brahmins, the highest in position in the prevailing social hierarchy. The very fact that, being the son of a warrior king, he could renounce the world as an ascetic and became a spiritual teacher in a rigid social system is itself a challenge, a great challenge. Of course, much of liberal

religious thoughts in Ancient India is associated with her warrior kings who revolted against the steel-frame of Brahminism. A remarkable example is Krishna, the preacher of the message of the Bhagavad-Gita, possibly the greatest ethical synthesis achieved in Hinduism. But Krishna, as depicted in the mythological literature of Hinduism, is perhaps more a myth than a fact of history. Notwithstanding the enormous load of miracles superimposed on Buddha, he is more a striking historic figure than a bundle of dexterously woven miracles. Herein lies the difference.

Buddha took up the challenge of professional Brahminism with great courage and made an unqualified defense of true Brahmanhood which represents not a hereditary caste but a pattern of character. In those inspiring and edifying sayings of Buddha called Dhammapada which forms part of Kudda-Nikaya, collection of small pieces of sermons, a particular section has been devoted to the elaboration of this momentous topic. Its name is Bahmana-Vagga, collections of sayings on the nature of a Brahmin. It emphasizes unequivocally that a Brahmin is one who has wisdom and does not care for the things of the world. To say the least, Brahmanahood is a matter of character and not of birth, of acquisition and not of hereditary transmission.

The idea was there in Hinduism pretty long before Buddha. This is corroborated by two very old Upanishads, a few centuries earlier than Buddha, Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka. In the latter, it has been said that a Brahmana (English equivalent is Brahmin) is one who is the direct antithesis of a miser, Kripa as he is called in

Sanscrit. Just like a miserable miser who accumulates and guards wealth with great care and attention but never knows how to enjoy it, ordinary man can never taste the joy of the infinite spirit within, their great heritage, but simply watch it day and night without even knowing that they have such an infinite possession to give them succor and sustenance. "He who knows the reality, the infinite behind him while alive is a true Brahmana and he who does not is a miserable miser, Kripana", it has been well said.

The same idea is conveyed in the inspiring story of Svetaketu in Chhandogya Upanishad who was refused initially an entrance into the spiritual lore because he did not know his parentage. Being advised by his preceptor, he came back to his mother to inquire about the matter. She candidly said that he happened to be the son of an unmarried woman who, during her youth, led a questionable moral life and was not quite sure of his parentage. Speaking plainly, he happens to be an illegitimate child of a peculiar character. But this did not throw him off balance. He rushed to his preceptor to tell him this unpleasant truth whereupon he accepted him as a disciple and observed:

"He who is capable of saying such a blunt truth without any equivocation is really a Brahmin."

In the Upanishads, there are other references which also indicate a shift of emphasis on character in assessment of Brahmanahood. Not to speak of the Upanishads, some Hindu myths systematized according to historians in early centuries of the Christian era in the Gupta Period, when there was a revival of Hinduism, lend support to

this thesis. The story of Parasurama who represents a class-conflict between the Brahmin priests and the warrior-kings which ultimately ended in the victory of the latter is a nice, good example. The same idea lurks behind the thrilling ventures of the ambitious warrior-king, Vishvamitra. Very eager to make himself a Brahmin, he passed through various odds and did not hesitate to perpetrate enormous cruelties on Brahmins. But this was not of much avail. At last, when he earned the virtues of a Brahmin, particularly self-control and forgiveness, he was recognized as such and given, as it were, a promotion in the social hierarchy.

The shift of emphasis on character in the Bhagavad-Gita is remarkable, no doubt. But this may be due to the influence of Buddha.

In his revolt against so-called Brahminism, Buddha plays possibly the double role of a revivalist as well as, an iconoclast. Possibly this sums up his basic attitude to the tradition in which he was born and brought up. He had to pay a heavy price nevertheless but hardly ever he cared for this. What mattered most with him was not his personal safety and comfort but the success of the great cause he represents.

On his conflict with professional Brahmins, host of stories, interesting as well as revealing, at times as thrilling as fictions, have been fabricated. But judged critically, they do not depart much from his basic attitude but are substantially true. Buddha moved among common man long forty-five years actively preaching his gospel in the native tongue of the people. Only brief interlude was the rains when it was difficult to move. But even that did not

mean a complete break. In rains, he settled down in one place where people could come and see him and take his counsel. It is very natural, that round such a vigorous and an earnest preacher, host of stories should have been invented. It is striking, very striking perhaps, that they do not as a rule miss the general color of his message. This is possibly due to the fact that he spoke the language of the masses, the multitude and did not shroud his gospel in subtleties of metaphysics that baffle common sense.

It will indeed be very good to state some of them briefly. Professional Brahmins were never sparing about him. On one occasion, he came, it is said, to the home of a Brahmin to beg. In an angry mood, the Brahmin retorted that, instead of begging from door to door, he should better do the job of a cultivator who tills the land as the Brahmin himself did. No need of a warrior-prince to become a begging mendicant, Shramana, and to compete with the Brahmins, to add to the number of beggars. Buddha was undaunted and unnerved and said with great wit:

“Brahmin, I am a cultivator, you do not know. Instead of tilling the land like you, I till my mind to get self-control which grows a crop that gives eternal peace.”

His words were a great force. There was an irresistible charm about them for which he was described by his opponents as a magician from whom one should better keep off. Discretion indeed is the better part of valor.

Brahmin was moved. He realized Buddha was an inspired preacher and fed him with respect.

On another occasion with the beggar's bowl, he came to a Brahmin engaged in keeping the flame of the sacrificial fire by pouring butter into it. Brahmin was thrown

off his balance by Buddha's presence and called him an outcaste as he did not do the duty of a warrior-prince. Buddha at once replied and contended that he was not an outcaste. He added: it is self-control that makes a Brahmin and not the accident of birth. Brahmin was startled with the reply emanating from a preacher of light and his sacrificial fire was set at naught by the effulgent light of Buddha's character.

There is a funny story about a Brahmin who used to move with a torch in hand to emit light, he said, to the large mass of man steeped in darkness. To rid him of his vanity, he was introduced to Buddha who said to him that physical light is not real light but spiritual light, the soothing light of wisdom and the proud Brahmin melted in modesty and gave up the crude practice he was long used to.

There is a fascinating account of a curious fellow in Hiuen Tsang's 'Travel-Diary' who used to bear a torch on his head and wear a belt around his belly. On being asked to explain the secret of his curious get-up, he said amazingly enough that to remove darkness around, he carries the torch over his head and to save his belly heavily laden under the weight of wisdom, he bears a belt round it. The first was in fact inspired by philanthropy, the second by the instinct of self-preservation. A highly revealing reply indeed. It may be that Hiuen Tsang's story is a further fabrication of the proud bearing of the Brahmin who initially revolted against Buddha finally to surrender to him.

Another story says that a Brahmin after finishing his daily sacrifice was in search of a holy man to whom he

could offer the remnant of his sacrifice. Very near, he saw a man cover his head and foot beneath a tree. He rushed to him. He was Buddha himself and he inquired about his caste on which Buddha gave the revealing reply:

“Why speak of the caste ? Better speak of character. It is not birth but character that makes a man what he is.”

Brahmin felt startled and offered him with profound respect the remnant of his sacred, sacrificial food.

A comparative study of the idea of Brahminhood as depicted in the Upanishads and as professed and preached by Buddha in his daily life, in his itinerary will, I am sure, throw a flood of light on the meaning and significance of Brahminhood as a spiritual concept and as a hereditary privilege and exhibit social life in Ancient India in its bright as well as dark aspects.

Buddha's reform was not confined to the Brahmins alone. His objective was to ensure social equilibrium in the spiritual sphere for all who were neglected. There were the large mass of common man, the Shudras as they were called and, painfully enough, women too. Notwithstanding exceptions, generally they were deprived of the right to religion, right to spiritual wisdom, the most important of all rights in India of bygone ages.

Even as late as eighth century A.D. in Shankara who tried hard to introduce a sense of spiritual unity in the medley of conflicting religious thoughts of his time by putting his finger on the old, forgotten message of unity in the Upanishads and as late as the tenth century A.D., in the devotional cult of Ramamuja, Shankara's great rival, who it is said in an inspired moment shouted to all and sundry at the top of his voice the message that

gave him peace, there is, regrettably enough, no religious freedom for Shudras and women. Their philosophies were directed against the spiritual rights of these two categories of human beings and they did not hesitate to utilize their scholastic talents in explaining away the liberalism of the Upanishads in this regard. This shows how scholastic Hindu philosophy departed in actual practice from the lofty, inspiring liberalism of the Upanishads. It is a painful fact of Medieval Indian history that, centuries after Buddha, an attempt was made by Hindu social reformers to undo the social reform that Buddha introduced more than a millennium before and to put the clock back.

Buddha never cared to disseminate spiritual wisdom to the common man. The spiritual liberty of the masses including women is writ large in his gospel. In his brotherhood, they have free excess.

The entrance of Upali, the barber of Kapila-Vastu, Buddha's birth place, is a remarkable phenomenon in a caste-conscious society. Three years after enlightenment, when Buddha came to see his old father and his foster-mother, this incident took place. His father knowing full well that his son, now an ascetic, will not live in the palace, arranged his residence in a nearby forest garden. There Buddha initiated into asceticism some of the princes of his paternal dynasty: Nanda, Ananda, his life long companion, Davadatta, his rebel cousin and some others. It is a practice in India to this day that, just before, one becomes an ascetic, he must shave his head and make it bare. Consistently with this tradition, the princes took the vow of asceticism after being shaven by the royal barber, Upali, who shed tears while he discharged his

rather unpleasant duty. This did not escape the notice of Buddha whose insight into human psychology is almost unparalleled. He realized that Upali is also eager to become an ascetic and, in no time, at Buddha's suggestion, he was made an ascetic. Shudra, a common man becomes a monk and gets the privileged position in Buddha's brotherhood with Brahmins and warrior-princes, so-called higher castes. What a great equalizer and leveller Buddha's message was.

But the matter did not stop there. Just after Upali became an ascetic, Buddha instructed all the princes, Ananda and others, the new monks, to touch in reverence the feet of Upali, possibly to take away from their caste-sense, conscious or unconscious. All except the troublesome Davadatta did as instructed.

Davadatta represents Iblis in the Koran-story about the creation of man. After creating first man, Adam, Allah directed the angels to lay prostrate in reverence before the first man. Angels acted forthwith as directed. There was only one exception, proud Iblis, the Satan. He did not obey the divine directive. Devadatta is in fact the veritable satan of the Buddha-story for whom Buddha had great compassion.

Upali's admission into Buddha's brotherhood is not a singular instance either. History repeats in the case of many others. By earnest performance of his unpleasant, social duty, Sunita, the sweeper, made an impression on Buddha of his potential, spiritual greatness and, in the twinkling of an eye, Buddha made him a monk. Not birth, not so-called social status but it is character that counts.

Rukkas, a low caste man, was made a disciple, virtu-

ally in the death bed of Buddha, indeed the last of those who shared that rare privilege. Humanly at least, his death could be attributed to his love and preference for common man. He faced death by eating poisoned, rotten meat of Chunna, the black-smith, who had, unfortunately enough, nothing better to offer him. He could with ease accept the hospitalities of the nearby Mallas, the warrior-kings of Kushinagara where he died and who after his death arranged for a gorgeous, pompous funeral befitting a great religious leader. He definitely instructed his disciples not to blame Chunna for his death and offend his sentiment. He literally died for common man, something unique for a great religious leader.

This is only one side of the picture. The way he gave religious rights to women, in defiance of the prevailing tradition, is really historic. It marks a new chapter in the religious history of Ancient India. In the Upanishads, we come across occasional reference to women's religious rights. The story of Maitreyi, seeking spiritual guidance from her old husband, Yajnavalkya about to retire into the solitude of the forest and young lady, Gargi entering into a duel with the same sage in the Court of King Janaka of Mithila in Northern India, both described in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, are no doubt very good examples. Even a bit earlier in the Vedas, there is reference to women preceptors of considerable spiritual distinction.

By the time Buddha made his appearance in history, that influence declined and, in a much larger scale than before, Buddha gave women her spiritual rights. Buddha's brotherhood is as much a brotherhood as a sisterhood. Monasteries and nunneries ran side by side as autono-

mous units and worked in complete independence. Some of the nuns, Shukla, Kundala-Keshi, Bhadra-Kapilani, and Dharmadatta and others were distinguished speakers and used to give sermons in congregations. A considerable portion of the Buddhist religious lore consists of the spiritual outpourings of the nuns, who were called 'Theri', the feminine of 'Thera' which means a man of stable wisdom, say, a senior, trained monk. Their sayings written generally in verse are called 'Therigatha', poems of nuns.

Thanks to the holy touch of Buddha, Ambapali, a paragon of beauty, who gave herself up to the vanities of the flesh and led a highly questionable moral life, became late in life a spiritual genius. Inspiring poems she composed have become part of recognized religious literature of Buddhism. Her accumulated wealth she spent in having built a high palace-garden for Buddha and his disciples where Buddha lived during rains several times.

Ambapali is not a solitary example either. A pretty good number of women, who made it their profession to satisfy rich men's cravings for the flesh in big cities where Buddha had his itinerary, came under his influence, gave up their evil ways and led a highly spiritual life. Special mention may be made of Ardha-Kashi who in Banares, the holy city of the Hindus, sold herself up to the vanities of the flesh to lead a so-called comfortable life and also of Sirima of Rajagriha who was notorious for her luxuries.

This shows indeed very pointedly Buddha's sympathy for the moral outcastes side by side with social outcastes, both, not to a small extent, unfortunate victims of their environment. Here Buddha resembles Christ who belongs to a later period of history. Buddha may as well be looked

upon as Ancient India's Christ, a Christ moving hither and thither with Christian love minus Christian theology.

There is an interesting episode, real or fictitious I do not know, probably exaggerated, about the entry of woman into Buddha's brotherhood, a landmark in the religious history of India.

After the death of Buddha's father, his foster-mother, Gautami, always referred in Buddhist literature not by her name but her appellation, Mahaprajabhati, meaning the protector of the great Buddha in his childhood, an invocation indicative of great homage, felt at sea. Being unable to regain her mental equipoise, she decided to renounce the world and become a nun. Her eagerness was communicated to Buddha by, his favourite companion, Ananda. Buddha is said to have refused and was hard to convince. But Ananda persisted and explained the difficulties of Gautami to move in her old groove, a desolate palace. The compassionate Buddha at last yielded and allowed the entry of woman into his fold with some safeguards, some rigid restrictions about exchange of ideas between monks and nuns.

The story is possibly more a fabrication than a fact. Buddha was a great advocate of rigid sexual control, Brahmacharyya as it is called in Sanscrit. He never put premium on romance and companionship, took it for what is worth, a virtue of necessity in the case of the multitude. It is therefore not inconceivable that he might be a little hesitant about the entry of woman into his fold which might, due to the dependence of the weaker sex on the stronger, lead to complications. We must remember, quite unlike ours, it was an age where there

was a wedge between man and woman and their mode of living was basically different.

But as a compassionate man interested in the welfare of not only man but of all living beings, Buddha could hardly bang the door of spiritual wisdom to woman. It seems more plausible therefore that, not under the pressure of somebody else, but, on due deliberations and on his own choice, he made the entry of woman into his brotherhood possible.

It is indeed very funny that there are extremists who did just the reverse of what Ananda-episode stands for. In their anxiety to make a religion out of sense-enjoyment, they did not hesitate to say that Buddha talked of renunciation to the ordinary folk who do not know the art of spiritualising sense-enjoyment. For those who knew that great art, he had an esoteric gospel of enjoyment which he explained and expressed secretly. Thus, an attempt has also been made to take away from Buddha's asceticism and to paint him as an advocate of idealised sense-enjoyment.

There has been much action as well as interaction of imagination in painting Buddha from various angles, even from an angle diametrically opposed to what he obviously stands for.

Tradition has it that, after reluctantly permitting his foster-mother to become a member of his fold, Buddha said this would curtail the life of his brotherhood by five hundred years. This is possibly an over-statement. Buddha was quite familiar with human weakness as well strength. This is the lesson to be learnt from the story of Buddha's spiritual ventures in his previous births, the

Jataka-stories, a myth, though a most significant myth no doubt. As such, it is more probable that Buddha would feel inclined not to discriminate between man and woman and give them equal, spiritual, right which he actually did. As a matter of fact, he was a lover of man, neither a misogynist nor a philogynist.

The period of history in which Buddha did this serves as a great contrast. Centuries after Buddha, in Ancient Greece and Rome, large mass of common man were slaves and sold like chattels. On ceremonious occasions, that marked mirth and merriment, they were however sold on a huge scale like fashionable goods. The treatment meted out to them is extremely shocking and shows to what extent man could treat man with contempt as well as indifference. While great Plato was dreaming of an ideal state ruled by the wise philosopher in his celebrated Republic, in Athens alone where he wrote his great book, out of a population of 250,000 more than 150,000 were slaves for whom he did not say one word. His great disciple, Aristotle possibly goes one step further and eulogises slavery as a useful institution with one interesting and revealing amendment however: not the Greeks but the Barbarians should be slaves. Indeed a keen caste-sense befitting a great philosopher. As to woman, Plato took pride in being a man and not a woman and Aristotle did not like at all to give woman education but to confine them solely to the kitchen in the service of man.

Plato did not even hesitate to say that, of the three classes of peoples that counted in the city-states of ancient Greece, scholars or philosophers, warriors or

soldiers, and the craftsman, the first is made of gold, the second of silver and the third of copper. What about the large mass of common man, the slaves. Alas, not one word of consolation. Possibly they are made of the mother earth and others should tread them under foot.

Plato reminds us of the myth of creation sponsored and popularized by Brahminism in Ancient and Medieval India. According to it, out of the mouth of Brahma, the creator, the Brahmins came into being, next best, the warriors, from his arms, a little worse, the tradesman, from below the waist and the large mass of neglected man, the fourth group, the Shudras, from the lowest limb of his body, his sacred feet. They are a means to an end and it is their proper vocation to serve others.

Being inspired by Buddha's sympathy for common man, Asvagosh, a renowned Buddhist poet of the first century A.D., retorts: Mysteries of creation apart, as human beings, all of us come out of the womb of our mother, have the same status, no higher or lower, no complicated hierarchy of origin.

In a by-gone age when common man had very little importance, far less a status, Buddha upheld the spiritual rights of the large mass of common man and of the woman folk as a whole with almost unparalleled courage. Even as late as the nineteenth century A.D., that great man, Abraham Lincoln laid down his precious life to put a stop to slavery in America, and, about two decade back in free India, Buddha's birth place, legislation has been introduced to treat untouchability, the late development of the caste-system, as a punishable offense. Legislation

had also to be introduced to give woman the rights to divorce and also to her paternal property. All these show how incomparably great Buddha was for his age, for his environment, and how significant is his message for modern man for whom, in theory at least, if not in practice as well, welfare of the common man is the infallible index of progress.

Buddha's unqualified emphasis on the rights of the common man is also indicated by his introduction of democracy in his brotherhood and of the popular dialect as the medium of religious education of the masses. With occasional and accidental variations, in a pre-eminently monarchical age, democracy was not possibly much known in Ancient India during the days of Buddha. In his monasteries, Buddha introduced the popular, democratic method of deciding vital issues by votes. Here also he is far ahead of his age and anticipates a future which was really far off.

His introduction of Pali, the popular dialect of Magadha, the portion of Northern India, the present Indian states of Bihar and Yukta-Pradesh, where Buddha's itinerary was mainly confined is a significant step in the religious history of Ancient India. It is a revolt against a spiritual aristocracy which, by keeping the prevailing religious lore within the bounds of Sanscrit, tried to keep the large mass of common man off from a direct contact with their own religious tradition to assess its worth. This made a quick transmission of spiritual wisdom possible and, with ease, helped release it on a wide scale hitherto unknown.

History repeats itself in the Christian Church two

millenniums after Buddha. The bones of the first man who translated the Bible into English was dug out of his grave for adequate punishment for heresy. He is Wycliffe, the English priest of the fourteenth century A.D., who keenly felt that religion should not be the exclusive monopoly of the select few. This perhaps turned the corner in favour of Protestantism which, because of its effort to popularize translations of the Bible into regional languages, became a growing force.

The same story is repeated about much the same time in the history of Medieval Bengal where a philosophy of divine love, Vaishnavism as it is called, was preached under the leadership of Chaitanya and, his able lieutenant, Nityananda through a double method, through abstruse philosophical treatises in Sanscrit and popular books in the local dialect, Bengali. The former had a limited appeal and could not touch the fringe of the society, the latter became a great popular force. In its use of the popular dialect as the medium of religious instruction and also in its trade against caste-system, which by the passage of time became hardened into untouchability, Chaitanya Movement in Medieval Bengal represents a revival of the spirit of Buddhism. This was not, to a small extend, due also to the liberal social structure of Islam which became a threat to Hindu Conservatism during Chaitanya's days.

What happened ages before in case of Plato also happened in case of Vaishnavism. It is said that Plato's abstruse philosophical writings for the select few are lost in oblivion but his popular dialogues for the masses has become part and parcel of the classics of world literature. Though the abstruse Sanscrit works of Chaitanya's learned

disciples are available, in popular appeal, they pale into insignificance before the large mass of popular literature that Chaitanyaism brought into existence. Under the patronage of the liberal Moslem rulers of Medieval Bengal like Hussain Shah and, his son, Nasrat Shah, they installed a new life into Medieval Bengali literature.

It is an irony of history that in their crusade against the Brahmins on the philosophical front, Buddha's own disciples lost sight of the importance of his popular appeal. To dispute the philosophy of Buddha, advocates of Brahminism wrote a considerable number of subtle treatises in Sanscrit. And, about a millennium after Buddha, his own disciples revolted against this and wrote a huge number of philosophical books in Sanscrit, which bear an eloquent testimony to their philosophical talents but take away from their wide popular appeal. Thus, in their eagerness to philosophize and to combat, Buddha's own disciples were caught in the trap of Brahminism and became the victim of a selected appeal. For a popular, liberal philosophy of life like Buddhism, this is indeed a great loss. Conservatism is a chronic disease and at times it is really difficult to trace its source.

Buddha's emphasis on popular dialect as a medium of instruction, both religious and secular, has been accepted in a general way in modern times. In developing countries of Southeast Asia, which attained their independence not long before, the need and importance of education through the dialect of the people is being keenly felt and fast being given a practical shape.

One thing should be taken into consideration however. When the whole world has, thanks to modern science,

become physically one, the importance of an international medium of communication, say English, should be realized side by side. Modern life has literally become centripetal as well as centrifugal and, as such, for internal consumption we need local dialects and, for international exchanges, we need a more pervasive medium of expression. In an age in which national interest is closely linked with international amity and understanding, a balanced adjustment of the claim of the local dialects and international languages is an imperative need.

In a very deep sense perhaps Buddha was an existentialist, an uncompromising advocate of individual liberty in an old world in which spiritual freedom was rightly or wrongly considered the most important concern of man. But unlike a modern existentialist, who never hesitates to fight for the freedom of a cross section, Buddha fought for all and sundry, for common man as such. He was an eloquent expression of the dumb spiritual aspirations of countless millions heavily laden under the inordinate burden of a class-ridden society. In one word, quite unlike an existentialist of the familiar brand, he was an existentialist with an unqualified and an unambiguous universalist bias. To be an effective force for human welfare, modern existentialism must come out of its narrow groove and be an impetus to the general welfare of man. Buddha shows the way.

Buddha could give this broad dimension to the aspirations of the common man, because in his heart of hearts, he was fully conscious of the dignity of man and always looked upon his perfection and enlightenment as the inevitable product of a struggle within the reach of

average man, however' difficult and exacting it may be. Though an enlightened man, he claimed to be as good a man as others are. Struggle and perfection are the only differentia. Therein lies his greatness, his unique individuality and not in any special privilege or prerogative.

At a most critical moment of his life, he gave vent to this idea. As a result of hard, rigorous physical practices, which marked the first phase of his experiment with truth, Buddha not only became emaciated but was on the point of death. He realized the futility of physical tortures as a road to perfection and was eager to take food to satisfy his hunger. While he was thinking of this, the daughter of a rich merchant, Sujata came to the forest where Buddha practised to offer a delicious dish to its presiding deity to propiciate him. In that super-natural age, she thought that, due to the mercy of the forest-god, she had been lucky enough to have a child. How radically different was the old environment where the idea of planned parenthood was beyond comprehension. Seeing the Buddha seated in meditation with light of self-control emanating from his face, calm and serene, she thought this was the god she was eager to propitiate. In no time, she placed the sweet, delicious dish before Buddha and said:

"Oh venerable god, through your grace I have been blest with a child and I would like to propitiate you by this humble offer. Accept it."

Forthwith Buddha replied: "Dear Madam, I am not a god but a human being, the son of a king who has renounced the world in search of peace. I am hungry and can partake of your dish if you would please agree."

She consented and Buddha partook of her dish and,

with fresh vigor, started his struggle for peace. It is said that result of the new experiment was not only quick but also favourable from a spiritual angle.

Buddha's claim that he was a human being struggling for peace and, not a god, unmistakably shows he had a keen sense of the dignity of man and was dedicated to human welfare. Indeed here he reveals himself as a humanist in our sense of the word. This is a great discovery for modern man.

CHAPTER FIVE

A RATIONALIST AND A PRAGMATIST

In his approach to religion, Buddha played the role of a rationalist and a pragmatist, a happy synthesis of both. He accepts nothing which is contrary to reason and he also exhibits no interest in things that are useless for life. In a remarkable manner, Buddha represents this dual attitude which marks him out from his great predecessors in by-gone ages. Unlike most of them, in theory, he is a rationalist who has very little patience for blind faith but, in practice, he is a pragmatist who persistently yearns for joy of life, for peace on a collective scale. The special significance of Buddha's message for modern man lies in his attempt to merge in a comprehensive philosophy of life a rationalism that denies and defies and a pragmatism that affirms and asserts.

A great German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, finding it difficult to fill up the big gap between modern man's intellectual weaverings and his practical aspirations, pleaded with great skill and earnestness for their autonomy, for their independent and separate operations. It is not however feasible to cut one man into two, the "Good Doctor Jeckyl" and the "Bad Mr. Hyde" as a great literary artist of our time puts it. If Immanuel Kant precisely states the problem of modern man in the late eighteenth century, Buddha gives an adequate answer to it more than two millenniums back.

Modern man is as much a combination of intellect, will and emotion as the primitive man was. As such, a mere satisfaction of his intellect leaves him in an unstable equilibrium. To have joy of life, he must, consistently with his rationalism, be able to satisfy his emotion and will. This he can find in a scientific religion and, its inevitable counterpart, scientific ethics. This is what Buddha provides for. Herein lies the great significance of his rationalist humanism or humanist rationalism. We may name it as we like. "Rose will smell as sweet by any other name" as Shakespeare puts it.

Buddha represents modern rationalism at its best. Modern man does not understand by reason, abstract logic which is no other than a game of words. Modern rationalism is primarily empirical or experimental. Its essence lies in analysis of experience. More than two millenniums before, Buddha exhibits remarkable love for analysis of experience. In Sutta-Pitaka, the Collection of Stories and Fables of Buddha made by his disciples, he says positively:

"I do not believe in theories. Believe what you experience," and by theories he means dogmas or unproved and unreasoned assumptions.

He was no believer in miracles except the miracle of character and he has very little attachment for authority, the bed-rock of traditional religion. His refusal to believe in miracles and dogmas prepares the way for an analysis of experience which indeed sums up his rationalism.

He applies his analytic approach to the idea of a permanent, immortal self, untouched by birth and death and

of a permanent object too. By a plain simple analysis of experience, which reminds us of a rigorous empiricist like David Hume in the eighteenth century, he tries to show that we have no right to believe in a permanent self or a permanent object, a doctrine which led to much philosophical controversies five centuries after his death. His position is very clear-cut. He observes candidly, that by an analysis of experience, we cannot find anything permanent. He has however no objection to believe in anything permanent if this is warranted by experience. This is what he said to the Brahmins who, without having an experience of Brahman, the stable, all-pervasive spirit of the Upanishads clinged to it simply on the basis of authority. His revolt, viewed rightly, was more a revolt against blind authority than against the stable as such. In the final analysis, his rejection of the permanent and stable is conditional as well as hypothetical. As experientialists, we have no right to believe in anything permanent. This is what he says like an acute analyst.

But his rationalism was not merely theoretic as is the case with many. Instead, he made a rational approach to the vital issues of life. For him, rationalism is more a way of life than an apple of discord. It has invariably a pragmatic element in it. It means that in our practical work-a-day life, we should and must be guided not by an allegiance to the super-natural but to the natural, not by an allegiance to dogmas and blind faith but by an appeal to experience, by a careful and cautious analysis of it.

He did this in such an admirable manner that it is hard to drive a wedge between his rationalism and pragmatism, far less to cut them asunder by a surgeon's

knife. It will be quite appropriate to explain this by some of his parables which show his penetrating insight into the crucial problems of life.

The first to come to my mind is the highly instructive and highly appealing story of Krisha (lean) Gautami, a young lady of Sravasti in Bihar who lost herself in grief at the death of her young, male child. She was so mad with grief that she thought, by the touch of a holy man, she will be able to bring back her baby to life. She heard of the great Buddha living very near. Puzzled and nonplussed, she rushed to him with her dead child on her arms and solemnly prayed to him to bring her baby back to life. As a great religious leader with extraordinary insight into the complex operations of human mind, Buddha did not give her a sermon on impermanence of things, his familiar topic as is generally done by an average doer of sermons. Instead, just to make her conscious of the fact that nothing unusual has happened in her case, he said to her without any the least hesitancy:

“My dear girl, bring me a few white mustard seeds from a nearby house and I will revive your son.”

A ray of confident smile was palpably visible on the face of the bereaved mother and she said:

“I will do it in no time.”

But Buddha like a subtle analyst attached another condition to his suggestion.

“But remember you must bring this from a house where none died before.”

In an emotional excitement, she took this condition very easy to fulfil. She could not see through it and said:

“Yes Sir, I will do it.”

With a heart full of love of an affectionate mother and with a face beaming with joy out of an expectation that she will soon get back her son alive, she moved from post to pillar and from pillar to post in Sravasti till evening to find that there is no home where none ever died. A strange experience for a bereaved mother and a great revelation, a great discovery.

Convinced of the inevitable that had fallen on her, calm and quiet, relieved of her agony, she went back to Buddha to offer him her homage. This was a turning point in her career. She became a nun, a member of Buddha's fold and lived and preached his gospel of spiritual light and wisdom.

This is what not theoretic but practical rationalism, a rationalism with an unerring insight into the basic needs of man means and stands for. How I wish the great multitude of logicians of the average modern brand could realize this to their own benefit and also to the benefit of those whose mouthpiece rightly or wrongly they claim to be.

Buddha's whole life is as a matter of fact a brilliant and a conspicuous example of rationalism being made practical, immensely practical. His practical rationalism lies in his discovery of the science of happiness through a scientific approach.

Here is a brilliant example of how he made his rationalism, an effective antidote to a fury of passion. In one of his daily rounds, he was rebuked a bit too severely by a house-holder for being a mendicant who lives upon begging. He was unconcerned and not thrown off his balance but began to cross-examine his bitter critic like an acute reasoner. Apparently to divert his attention, he

said:

“Very good, you are abusing me but may I ask you a question? If a house-holder places some food before a beggar and the beggar per chance refuses to accept it, to whom does the food go?”

“Very simple” answered the enraged man. “It goes back to its giver, the house-holder.”

To make his reply more pointed, Buddha changed the course of his argument and retorted:

“If I do not accept your reproaches, where will they go?” Passionate fellow could not reply but kept silent under the pressure of Buddha’s practical logic. Buddha concluded :

“The only gain that I get from your reproach is that I leave your home losing a friend. No loss to you perhaps but a great loss to me.”

Obviously if every act of rebuke, every blame is double-edged, if it is not a mere stimulus but a response too, without a response from within, then, a stimulus from outside loses its momentum and becomes ineffective.

His practical rationalism is a gospel of moderation as well as toleration. He never played the role of a bitter critic and bitter criticism he did not encourage either. He said to his disciples who had naturally enough passionate love for him and his gospel:

“If others speak against me or against my religion or against the order, that’s no reason why you should be angry, discontented and displeased.”

About unfair criticism he said: “It is like spitting at high heavens above which never reaches its avowed destination but falls on the spitter himself.” Love begets love,

hatred hatred.

So great was his spirit of toleration that when a Jaina disciple, Shila, became a Buddhist, he was required as before to give alms to Jaina monks who visited his house. Religious liberalism was the bone of his bones and the flesh of his flesh. Practical rationalism does not merely fight but understands, does not merely destroy but also fulfils.

Even before he became Buddha, this practical rationalism was an essential ingredient of his character. When after enjoying married life for a decade, he resolved to renounce, he went to his old father to seek his formal permission. When his father tried to dissuade him, he said: If there were no old age, no ailments and, above all, no death and, if physical beauty of the fairer sex were eternal, he would not have cared to become a mendicant in search of eternal peace. His renunciation, his asceticism itself has a practical, rational motive behind it. It is not reason let loose but controlled and directed, as it should be, by a practical purpose.

Our rationalism is primarily negative. It does not work in life because it is controlled by our unconscious urges as Freudians would have us believe. Our enlightened common sense, the mature product of a so-called rational outlook, cannot help us much in life and be an impetus to action in the right direction. In the moment of crisis and trial, it cannot hold its own against temptations but yields to them spontaneously as it were.

Polished, enlightened common sense aptly reminds us of the familiar she-deer of Aesop's Fables of old. Once a mother-deer was bragging and boasting of her valor to

her young child and painting her as the most valorous of all animals. While almost lost in self-praise, she saw a hare at a pretty long distance. Completely thrown off her balance, leaving her dialogue incomplete, she caught in her arms her young child tight and rushed gasping to a safe distance, not visible to the hare.

The deer-child could not understand what actually happened, why the impressive dialogue of valor was abruptly cut short. On being inquired, the mother-deer explained the apparent puzzle by a suprising amendment. She said to her baby that her valor is not unconditional but hypothetical. She is most valorous except in the disturbing presence of a hare.

The same is pretty much the position of modern rationalism and its, logical counterpart, enlightened common sense. It is indeed very enlightened, very clear in theory, at the dinner table, on the platform and the pulpit but, in practice, in crisis-situations it is indeed full of gloom and darkness. That is why we cannot make for a better world and every step forward literally puts the clock back.

Buddha's rationalism is practical, it can face life, because it has the sanction of a clean heart and the impetus of an unwavering will. This is the type of rationalism we need, not arm-chair philosophy, not mere logic-chopping, logomachy as it is sometimes called.

In Buddha's time, the Science of Medicine was pretty developed in India and, naturally enough, Buddha never hesitates to describe his practical mission as that of a physician who cures disease. Judged by Buddha's criterion, suffering is a disease, it has a cause and it can

be cured by systematic treatment. The diagnosis of the disease is called Nidana and the physician, Vesaja. Life a finished physician, Buddha diagnosed suffering as a disease and prescribes a remedy for it.

Inspired by the same motive possibly, Socrates calls himself a mid-wife. Just like his mother who helped get a child out of a woman's womb, Socrates observes, he tries, to bring out knowledge that is dormant in man. But, side by side, Socrates believed that knowledge makes us pure. Though his motive is practical, he gives his philosophy of life a highly intellectual garb. Buddha's approach is slightly different. In an atmosphere heavily laden with hair-splitting metaphysical debates, he gives a practical bias to his gospel and does not make it much too intellectual for practice.

Herein lies Buddha's pragmatism. In Socrates, it is a bit hidden, in Buddha, it is very explicit. Buddha's dialogue with an unsparing, young disciple, Malunkyaputta who was very much given to cogitations over puzzles of metaphysics brings this out into bold relief. Malunkyaputta almost persistently queried about such theoretic problems as: whether the world has a beginning or not, whether it will end some day or will remain forever what it is now, whether there is a Creator of the world, whether Buddha will retain his personality after death. He teased the Great Master off and on with such puzzles of traditional metaphysics. He was precisely the type of a student who would have been considered an acquisition to a school of philosophy in a modern university. But Buddha never cared to answer him. At last Malunkyaputta's patience reached the breaking point. He openly revolted under the impression

that Buddha's indifference is no other than an excuse for ignorance.

In an agitated, challenging mood, befitting a young, intellectual delinquent, one fine morning he burst forth and candidly said to Buddha."

"Great Sir, if you know the answers to these questions, tell them. If you do not know, don't hide. Better confess your ignorance. I will go elsewhere for an answer. But if you do not care to answer, I am terribly sorry I must leave your fold and say good-bye."

As usual with Buddha, he never cared to give a blow for a blow but responded to it with extraordinary calmness. Without directly answering his puzzles, he posed a counter-question just to give him light and to help him out of the metaphysical cloud that has deepened in him into a great gloom.

Buddha said: "Well Malunkyaputta, did you ever had a contract with me that on my answering such questions, you will be a member of my order? I fear if you be in my brotherhood till your death, you won't find answers to such puzzles. I'm sorry but I can't help."

"But could you answer a counter-question?" Malunkyaputta did not dare disoblige. His was an age of fight with the bow and the arrow and Buddha said accordingly :

"Well if you are hard hit by a poisoned arrow on your back and suffering acute pain, how will you try to get rid of it?"

"Most certainly, Sir, I would like to get it out with others' help."

"Supposing someone rushes on to you to remove the

poisoned arrow, will you then say:

“Don’t rush, wait a bit. I have certain questions for you to answer: Tell me your caste, your social status, where you come from, whether you are rich or poor. Also tell me how big is the arrow on my back? Tell me its exact measurement. What metal is it made of? Who is the man who did this cruel act?” Will you say to him: First satisfy my intellectual curiosity and then relieve my pain.”

“Simply absurd, sir,” said Malunkyaputta. “I will do just the reverse. I’d first get the poisoned arrow out and then ask questions, if at all.” He added, “Rather, sir, if the man wants me to answer such questions first and then to take away the poisoned arrow in my back, I’ll plead with him forthwith: No time for a discussion, for a tall symposium, I can’t bear the pain. First relieve me and then ask as many questions as you like and I would answer gladly.”

The Great One replied: “If that be your position, Malunkyaputta, instead of engaging yourself in frothy, useless theoretic discussions, you must try hard to get rid of the poisoned arrow of sufferings of which you are an unfortunate victim.”

“And this is what I am teaching, the cause of suffering and the way to end it. No use wasting our energies on theoretic puzzles which have nothing much to do with this important, practical question, the most important of all questions. Answers to puzzles vary and always mislead. Don’t be in the labyrinth.”

Malunkyaputta was silenced. He realized the folly of an eagerness to attempt to solve the insoluble puzzles of metaphysics and directed his attention as earnestly as he

could to attain peace.

Buddha is in fact the great logical positivist of Ancient India, unlike the familiar brand we come across, with a thorough-going practical outlook. He is indeed a unique combination of pragmatism and logical positivism.

His hostility to metaphysics may perhaps be traced to his history, to his specific environment. In his time, as he himself says, there were as many as sixty-two systems of philosophical thoughts in Ancient India engaged in an almost endless wordy warfare.

Most of these systems are lost in obscurity. An average historian of Indian philosophical thoughts today speaks of nine main systems, six of them claiming allegiance, at least, verbal allegiance to the Vedic tradition of Hinduism, and the other three departing from it, the philosophy of the Buddhists, of the advocates of Jainism and of materialists who however avowed no allegiance to religion. Incidentally, we come across references to interesting and revealing names like the philosophy of grammar and the philosophy of chemistry. In that welter of metaphysical theories, in a land where philosophy has been looked upon almost always as a way of life, by his clear and unambiguous revolt against theoretic metaphysics, Buddha revived the old tradition which is particularly visible in the Upanishadic thoughts.

Some people suspect Buddha's hostility to metaphysics is considerably due to his unwillingness to introduce God of religion in his philosophy of life. This, again, they contend has something to do with the wide influence of popular materialism in the region where Buddha lived and died. The influence of what is called

Aryan thoughts was mostly confined according to these critics to the frontiers of Ancient India in the North-west and did not spread so much where Buddha moved about for more than four decades as a compassionate, powerful preacher.

The assumption is perhaps not quite true. The Vedic influence so far as the sacrificial cult was concerned considerably spread in the area of Buddha's itinerary. His opposition to priest-craft proves this. But it is without doubt a fact that there were some materialist philosophers in this region who were eager to preach a materialist ethics and not merely the theory. Buddha also met some of them.

It is remarkable that some systems of Indian philosophy avowing allegiance to the Vedas do not believe in God. A conspicuous example is Shankhya philosophy whose pioneer is the great sage, Kapila of whom Buddha has been traditionally looked upon as a new incarnation. Maybe, the affinity of Buddha's gospel with Shankhya thoughts must have worked behind this myth.

Not only materialism but barren, metaphysical controversies of various, different types prevailing in Buddha's time must have been responsible for his antipathy to, if not indifference for, metaphysics. It would have been a very wholesome force if modern logical positivist could introduce Buddha's practical bias into philosophy and make it a potent, powerful instrument for human welfare. Instead, they are wasting their energies in adding to the subtleties of metaphysics which they are really eager to repudiate by introducing symbols into philosophy as a substitute for the ordinary language common man speaks.

So, the choice again is very restricted, either have subtle metaphysical theories of subtle symbolic phrases, whichever you like. Neither will cut much ice. Both ignore the practical import of philosophy and make it an intellectual pastime of the select few. Buddha is indeed very far from this. His aim is practical and he is eager to help the large mass of common man and does not care to cater to the so-called intellectual curiosity of a negligible cross-section.

Buddha's tirade against metaphysics reminds us of the attempt of Kant to prove that metaphysical knowledge, knowledge of reality beyond the world of sense is impossible, a misnomer. Kant attributes almost endless controversies of metaphysics to the misconception that we can know reality. Some of the questions that Malunkyaputta put before Buddha in a moment of intellectual frustration are found tackled by Kant in his celebrated Critique of Pure Reason in the section called antinomies, i.e., conflicts of logic.

Possibly a popular version of Kant's approach we find in the well-known parable of Jaina-philosophy on the futility of a group of blind men to decipher the shape of an elephant. Desparately eager to ascertain the precise shape of an elephant, they gave different verdicts of the different parts of the animal they touched and quarrelled bitterly among themselves. Much the same is the case of metaphysicians quarrelling aloud on the nature of reality since man's history began. No final answer but almost endless controversies, no way of escape from miseries but almost endless theoretic devices are what they provide for. The common man prays for peace, they give him

strife. He prays for food, they give him stone.

Buddha never encouraged such controversies from a purely practical angle. He says: These are a useless pursuit and we must keep us off from them carefully and scrupulously and confine to efforts for peace.

In this regard, Socrates, who appears in history more than two hundred years later, represents Buddha's spirit much better. Buddha's eagerness to pose counter-questions has something in common with celebrated Socratic Method whose main business is not to advance positive conclusions but examine the questioner step by step to lead him finally to truth. The enemies of Socrates, luckily or unluckily he had much too many of them, were very much afraid of this indirect method of persuasion and called it the "Socratic game."

Because of his open alliance to logic, Socrates is often enough looked upon as an expert debator. To the contrary, because of his alliance with religion which is primarily practical in character, Buddha is looked upon more as a great reformer than as an expert, logical analyst. Buddha's adversaries who were very much afraid of him, did not care much for his arguments, for his logic but were much perturbed over his personality. They did not call him a formidable debator but a magician who, with the magic of his magnetic personality, converted people with ease to his way of thinking. A Jaina religious leader warned people not to go to Buddha who appeared to him not a man of wisdom but a first-rate magician. Once caught in his spell, it was difficult to get out, he suspected. Magic of character is a magic no doubt, perhaps the greatest human ingenuity could invent.

Without meaning any disrespect for Socrates, it has to be conceded however that as a great religious leader, Buddha's influence was far greater. In antiquity at least, a religious leader was far more influential than a cogitating, wise philosopher. Buddha not only used logical analysis as a method to convince people of their folly, to correct their mistakes but in a popular tongue he preached his gospel with an enormous load of parables and fables which have a ready appeal to human mind. The whole of Sutta-Pitaka, one of the three great books of spiritual wisdom of Buddhism, relates such stories in hundreds, in its different sections, long, short and mediumsized. One of them is a collection of 2,300 Suttas which mean stories. In their scope, obviously they far outweigh the dialogues of Plato, our main source of knowledge of Socrates.

Possibly Buddha's dialogue, though much less known and much less publicized than Plato's, are far more inspiring. Socrates was a challenge to moral scepticism in Ancient Greece, primarily represented by a set of careerists who called themselves sophists which literally mean men of knowledge. As against them, Socrates claimed to be a philosopher, a lover of wisdom. He lived and died for the lofty, noble cause he represents. Primarily by a logical analysis, he makes a defense of a good and just life and places it on a universal foundation acceptable to human reason.

Buddha's query was far deeper. He tried to find out the secret of peace and happiness and the way to it. Its scope is far wider and its appeal far deeper. It is highly remarkable that Buddha accomplished this mission, the

mission of a great religious leader without a theological appeal and without resorting to the dogmas of theology and placed his philosophy of life on a logical cum ethical basis. Socrates resembles Buddha considerably in his approach to the problems of life and in his ethical emphasis. But Buddha's universal appeal for peace goes far beyond Socrates. If the ideal of Socrates was to turn out good citizens given to social harmony, Buddha's ideal was to turn out man dedicated to universal peace.

Naturally enough, Rhys Davids, the great Buddhist scholar said about Sutta-Pitaka as a whole:

"In depth of philosophic insight, in the method of Socratic questioning often adopted, in the earnest and elevated tone of the whole, in the evidence they afford of the most cultured thought of the day, these discourses constantly remind the reader of the dialogues of Plato . . . It is quite inevitable that as soon as it is properly translated and understood, this collection of the dialogues of Gautama will come to be placed, in our schools of philosophy and history, on a level with the dialogues of Plato."

No comments are needed. Let us look at Buddha as a humanist whose message is for all man, east and west, black and white, haves and have-nots, materialists as well as spiritualists, theists as well as atheists and the real significance of his message will emerge and it will help grow an equitable world-order given to peace and prosperity of the common man.

CHAPTER SIX

REALITY AS PROCESS

In the ancient world with its almost unqualified emphasis on the stable character of reality, Buddha is virtually an exception in holding that it is change or process that characterizes reality. Of course, about much the same time, Heracleitus in Asia Minor which was then under Greek control, formulates a more or less similar view. But we must remember he was a philosopher with a limited, intellectual appeal while Buddha was a great religious teacher with a very large following. Even as a philosopher, Heracleitus, has not been much appreciated. The name given to him by people around, Heracleitus, which means obscure, amply shows this.

In spite of differences on many vital issues, ancient philosophy is basically Platonic in its attitude. The watchword of Platonism is that reality is stable and change an appearance of it, half real and half unreal. A kindred note is visible in Vedanta in the East and has been given a highly subtle character in Shankara in the eighth century A.D. in Southern India. Much like Plato, he observes that ultimate reality is a stable, permanent stuff and the world we live in, the world of change is its appearance, a mysterious mixture of the real and the unreal, of existence and non-existence. This is basically Platonism and nothing else, though its roots could be traced much earlier in some old Upanishads.

In that atmosphere where heaven, the avowed goal of the pious, is characterized by permanence and perfection, as a matter of fact, these are convertible terms, Buddha, though a religious teacher, laid great emphasis on reality as a process and revolted against a metaphysics of permanence. This shows his intellectual boldness and marks him out as unique in the ancient world.

What is more remarkable and more striking is that in this he anticipates the prevailing philosophical trends of the present age. The emphasis on change as a basic stuff of reality took a definite shape in the empiricism of David Hume in the eighteenth century A.D. He demolishes in his 'Treaties of Human Nature' the supposition of a permanent self and reduces it into passing, transient mental states. He was not much fond of a stable, material world either which was in fact reduced into passing mental states by an earlier philosopher, his predecessor, Bishop Berkeley. The disintegration of a stable self and a stable material world reached its culmination in present day philosophy which is greatly influenced by the reduction of matter into energy and transformation of space into a four dimensional continuum with time as its fourth dimension in contemporary physics.

Modern philosophy no longer believes in objects, but in events, not in a permanent self either but in a series of mental states. It is remarkable that even Bergson, who does not believe in intellect as an organ of knowledge of reality but appeals to intuition, maintains that reality is change or process. There are today philosophers who even observe that the absolute of philosophy, the all-inclusive spirit is a process, not something stable as has

traditionally been conceived. Attempt has even been made at times to reduce God to an urge to perfection latent in the universe. Very naturally indeed, Buddha has a wide appeal in modern times not only in the ethical front but also in the metaphysical.

When Buddha says to his disciple, Kaccana like an acute analyst of experience that what we call real is neither characterized by 'to be' i.e., stable existence as conceived by large majority of the absolutists or 'not to be' or nothing as nihilists would have us believe but it is a mixture of 'to be' and 'not to be', existence and non-existence, becoming or process, it appears as if a modern empiricist with a scientific bias is propounding his scientific philosophy with unfailing vigor. This is nothing but philosophy of science, to pick up a new name for an old doctrine.

It is to be noted here that Buddha does not forget here also the middle course which is the burden of his philosophy of life and observes candidly: "Everything is: this is an extreme, oh Kaccana. Everything is not: is another extreme. The truth is the middle."

The permanent has been proved as the basic stuff of reality by the help of abstract logic or dialectic which has very little to do with our experience on the one hand and practical needs on the other. As a rationalist cum pragmatist, Buddha does not care much for such a game of logic divorced from experience as well as practice. The average argument on the basis of which the stable and permanent was treated as real and the world of change as unreal is this: If something is, it must always be. But, if something changes, it both is and is not. This

means it has a contradictory character. As such, it cannot be real in the true sense but can at most be an appearance of the truly real, the stable.

Virtually through this abstract approach, Zeno of old Greece tried to prove that a moving arrow does not move and if Achilles of Greek Mythology with his fabulous speed enters into a race with a slow-moving tortoise, after giving the latter the benefit of a prior, initial start, he cannot win the race but must face defeat.

Medieval Indian Philosophy exhibits in a remarkable manner this dialectical skill. Vedanta of Shankara and his followers, the Jaina logic of relativity and Shunyavada Buddhism of Nagarjuna and others which is much earlier than Shankara are very good examples of this preference for abstract logic.

Just like a modern philosopher, say Bertrand Russell or A. N. Whitehead, Buddha does not attach much importance to dialectic as a road to reality. Dialectic today is looked upon as an analytical process which simply expresses the meaning of certain words and does not give us any knowledge in the real sense. It can only explain and elaborate but it cannot add and increase. Buddha's approach to dialectic is more readily acceptable to plain, unsophisticated common sense. Without entering into subtleties of logic, he maintains that our reasonings must be based on experience and also practically fruitful. In this practical emphasis lies his great difference from the advocates of analysis in our times.

By an analysis of experience, Buddha tries to establish that there is nothing permanent either inside us or in the world outside. This is what has been called Buddha's

doctrine of the denial of the soul which is generally supposed to be permanent and durable, Nairatmavada to quote the precise, jaw-breaking Sanscrit phrase.

But both the denial of a permanent self within and the denial of a stable object without, Buddha utilizes for a practical, ethical purpose. In his very first sermon after enlightenment to those very disciples who deserted him at a critical hour, because he deviated, after a series of failures and frustrations, from physical rigors as a road to perfection, in the Dhama-Chakka Pabattana Sutta, starting of the dynamic wheel of righteousness as it has been called, Buddha lays an unqualified and an unambiguous practical emphasis on impermanence. While enunciating the celebrated, four eternal truths: (1) Life is replete with sufferings, (2) sufferings are not accidental but have a cause, (3) as such, with the removal of their cause, sufferings must vanish and disappear forever and (4) this cannot happen as a miracle but must be the result of a systematic discipline, which sum up his applied philosophy, Buddha makes an ethics, a highly inspiring ethics out of impermanence. Change is to him not a doctrine or a theory but it is a means to an end, the great clue to his ethics of detachment. In that first sermon, the first pronouncement of his philosophy of life, Buddha keeps him quite aloof from both metaphysics and abstract logic and, with touching earnestness, shows how impermanence and sufferings are inseparably linked.

Buddha says: we suffer because we are attached to things that are impermanent. Not only death is sorrow but birth also is sorrow. Not only separation from what we hold dear is sorrow, but union with it, is also sorrow

because it will not last long. We suffer because we consider what is temporary to be stable and cling to it as strongly as we could. The confusion of the temporary with the permanent is called in Buddhist philosophy Samudaya or aggregate. It implies that all things are series of changes and, out of attachment, we create artificial aggregates out of them and mistake them as stable.

The idea of impermanence dominates Buddha's philosophy of life from beginning till end. This is the sum and substance of his first sermon and also of the last, Mahaparinibban Sutta, the great passing away as it is called.

Just after he left the palace in search of durable peace at the dead of a fullmoon night, as tradition has it, his parting message to his friend Chhandaka who helped him get out is a feeling reference to impermanence of the things of the world, of near and dear ones. He makes a pathetic reference to his mother who died a week after his birth and requested Chhandaka to tell his old father that death will separate us all some day or other from all that we hold dear in life. An escape out of the network of impermanence cum miseries is the goal of his quest.

Unlike most modern philosophers who are primarily theorists, he looks upon change or process from a practical, ethical angle. He has made a subjective approach to it and discusses its nature in relation to us, how it affects us with reactions, pleasant and unpleasant. Modern philosophers take a surface-view of change. They do not pause to consider how the world-process reacts on us, how we are literally smashed by that all-devouring wheel of change. Buddha's approach is basically different.

It is not theoretic but practical. From a practical angle, he finds that our reaction to the world-process is conditioned not by knowledge but by ignorance.

Why do we cling to objects ? Because we can't help it. This is an instinct but instinct is a dignified, disguised name for an attachment arising from ignorance. In Buddha's scheme of causation, next in importance to ignorance, the basic cause of our deep-seated attachment for the changing, changing world-process is Tahna, the Pali equivalent of Sanscrit Trishana, hankering for objects.

Modern physics questions the idea of causal necessity since the effect cannot always be explained as solely due to an antecedent event. This is the logical implication of the Quantum Theory in Contemporary physics according to which certain changes in material bodies cannot be accounted for by antecedent events. There is a way out of this predicament in Buddha's philosophy of life. He finds the secret of causal necessity deep-rooted in the heart of man, in his ignorance of the nature of the world-process, in his instinctive clinging to it. Buddha's whole philosophy of life is directed to the removal of this universal ignorance and the consequent clinging to objects by disciplined efforts. Unlike many psychologists of our times, Buddha maintains that this instinctive urge could not only be brought under control but can also be crushed, not by magic, but by a drilling of the heart and discipline of the will. This constitutes the sum and substance of his ethics, nucleus of his philosophy of life.

The subjective-objective causal chain originating from ignorance and culminating in almost endless sufferings which works through attachment has been called by

Buddha, Patichha Samuppada, dependent origination. If ignorance is there, attachment will and must follow and the net result is sufferings, almost endless sufferings with interludes of small joys which finally contribute to greater pain as in the case of a sudden separation from a near and dear one.

Buddha's disciples attached such great importance to this discovery of the causal chain from a practical, ethical angle, that possibly out of exuberance of emotion, they did not hesitate to observe that Buddha realized this truth during the last quarter of the night of enlightenment, the blessed, thrice blessed, fullmoon night on which, traditionally at least, he was born, got enlightenment and also passed away. With spiritual insight, colored by poetic imagination, it has been said that Buddha's Nirvana occurred precisely in four stages in the four quarters of that auspicious night, calculated according to the prevailing, popular astronomy, the notion of dependent origination being its last and final phase. The logic behind this arithmetical fragmentation is difficult to understand, though its imaginative, emotional color readily appeals to heart.

In the very height of their exalted imagination, Buddha's disciples described this experience with a wealth of supernatural imageries which is not likely to appeal to modern, sceptical temper. But this shows unmistakably perhaps that knowledge of the necessary causal nexus has traditionally been looked upon as the most mature fruit of Buddha's enlightenment and in it lies the secret of his philosophy of life, of his experiment with truth.

It has been said that when this great truth was spoken out of fullness of the heart by Buddha in his first sermon to his disciples at Banaras, not very far from the place where he attained enlightenment, nature herself became highly propitious, and gods from heavens came down to the earth to hear this new gospel and, together with the great variety of super-natural creatures in whom ancient India had faith, showered flowers on him as a token of deep-felt appreciation of this great discovery. This emotional outburst underlines the importance of the practical character of Buddha's message in a world heavily laden under the burden of theoretic controversies of metaphysics, the rigors of a class-ridden society and the misdirected spiritual zeal of the advocates of excessive physical rigors.

Many have tried to trace the notion of causal dependence in earlier Indian philosophical thoughts but the attempt is not quite justified. Before Buddha, no great figure in Indian history has made an approach through life to this truth and did not lay such unambiguous stress on it. A theory like this may be there in germ but the vigor of a life's struggle and the clarity of an insight following from enlightenment was added to it by Buddha. What existed before as a skeleton, being endowed with flesh and blood, became a living reality through magic touch of Buddha's character.

Even four centuries after Buddha, in the Buddhist monk, Nagasena, who denies outright, possibly a bit more emphatically than Buddha himself, a permanent soul and reduces it to a series of passing states, a practical motive dominates. This view of self is found in the celebrated

'Questions of Menander', the Greek king who ruled in the Northwestern frontiers of India near about 200 B.C. to the Great Buddhist teacher, Nagasena. The Pali dialogue has been treated as a marvel of literary beauty. According to Rhys Davids, it is "the masterpiece of Indian prose, and indeed the best book of its class, from a literary point of view, that had been produced in any country".

Menander, perturbed over Nagasena's denial of a permanent self, came to his monastery in a chariot and entered into a dialogue with him on this vexed topic. He argued that if there was no permanent self designated by Nagasena, to whom the monks of the monastery bow down and who gives them guidance. Without answering the king directly, Nagasena posed a counter-question. He asked the king how he came to his monastery, on foot or in a chariot. Naturally enough, the king said in a chariot and forthwith Nagasena began to cross-examine him. He asked him to explain what a chariot is: 'Is the pole the chariot?' The king said 'No'. 'Is then axle the chariot?' Nagasena inquired. King again said 'No'. 'Are the other parts of the chariot really the chariot?' King repeated his negative reply.

Now Nagasena proceeded to sum up. He said to the puzzled king: just as though there is strictly nothing called chariot, which is really a combination of parts, and the so-called chariot exists only in name, there is no stable person but a series of passing mental states which people call by the name of Nagasena.

From this negative analysis of the nature of the soul, Nagasena passed on to an inspiring account of Nirvana in positive terms. The king went away convinc-

ed and exorcised of faith in the ghost of a stable, identical permanent self.

The intellectual encounter between Nagasena, the sage, and Menander, the king, approximately four centuries after Buddha, indicates that the idea of impermanence emphasized by Buddha, though made a bit too emphatic, retains its practical, ethical color.

With the passage of centuries, in course of the rapid development of Buddhism as a powerful philosophy, with as many as eighteen ramifications within, let alone its encounter with Brahminic philosophy, it considerably lost sight of the practical, spiritual significance of the Buddha's doctrine of impermanence and transformed it into a subtle, philosophical theory of momentariness, according to which all things pass into nothingness the moment they come into being and they are utterly devoid of durability.

Buddhist philosophers tried to make Buddha's doctrine of impermanence of things a bit too logical and made it a matter of theoretic controversy. When pressed by their opponents, the advocates of Brahminism, to say what impermanence of things really mean, they did not hesitate to eliminate totally the element of durability from things and invented the subtle doctrine of momentariness which leaves no time-gap between origination and destruction of things.

This divided Buddha's own followers into contending groups, into contending advocates of rival, metaphysical theories for which Buddha had little fascination, more precisely with which he had very little patience.

Some Buddhist philosophers took a surface view of

momentariness and maintained that Buddha's view of impermanence of things simply amounts to a denial of stable objects outside and a stable permanent self inside. Others went one step further and said that Buddha's view amounts to a denial of the world of objects altogether. The idea of change can be applied directly to the self as a series of mental states and not to the object which appears to be relatively permanent. So when Buddha pleads for impermanence, he really denies, they contend, the existence of the objects outside and maintains that the self as a process alone exists. That Buddha occasionally speaks about objects outside is a concession he made to human weakness, they presume. Without some sort of spiritual refinement, it is indeed difficult not to believe in objects for which we have great attachment. Thus, with a logical cum practical approach, a subjective idealism more or less of the Berkeleian pattern is introduced into Buddhism.

Another group of Buddhist philosophers who were subtle metaphysicians said there could be no existence without durability, and if things come and go without occupying a moment of existence, they do not really exist. This is applicable to both the world outside and inside. So what Buddha really means when he says that the world is impermanent is that the world does not really exist and, as such, attachment for it is highly unjustified. It is just like running after the delicious horse's egg, big in size but existing in imagination alone. Here also, side by side with a logical approach, there is a practical motive.

Even the critics of Buddhism, the advocates of

Brahminic philosophy, have occasionally testified to the spirit of detachment behind Buddhist logic and metaphysics. An uncompromising advocate of philosophy of Brahminic rituals like Kumariala observe that Buddhist denied the reality of objects with a practical motive, in order to get out of their clutch.

In their conflict with Brahminic philosophy of Medieval India and in their attempt to outwit its subtleties, admittedly with considerable success, Buddhist philosophers gave Buddha's doctrine of impermanence, which is really an ethical device, a primarily intellectual color and thus took away considerably from its practical meaning and significance.

This not only led to a conflict with Brahminic philosophy but, also, with a parallel branch of thought, Jainism whose ethics of non-killing far exceeds in rigor Buddhist ethics of non-violence. A regular crusade against Buddha's doctrine of momentariness, a logical construction out of an ethical doctrine, started and Buddhist philosophers themselves did not hesitate to face it boldly.

Two main objections, one theoretic and the other practical, were raised by the opponents of Buddhism. On the theoretic side, they said that, without a running durable self, it is not possible to explain memory of the past and also recognition. Vacaspati, a versatile Hindu philosopher of ninth century A.D. observes as against Buddhist doctrine of momentariness: I am the same self which experienced in childhood my affectionate parents and, now in old age, my equally affectionate great grand-children. There must therefore be a connecting link in our inner spiritual life.

The other objection is ethical and more important from a practical standpoint. This relates to the doctrine of Karma recognized equally by Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism whose burden is: as you sow, so you reap. We can make and unmake our fate but what we did already is there on our shoulder and we must try to get rid of it. The doctrine of Karma is not determinism or fate as it has often enough been made out to be. It is indeterminism or freedom deduced from the application of the cause-effect-relation to the mechanism of human will. If there is any determinism in it, it is a determinism of our make and it simply means that the bone swallowed must be digested first but it never says that, though a bit difficult to achieve, we do not have capacity to mould our future.

If there is no permanent self, the critics of Buddhist philosophy contend, then no human being can claim credit for his virtues and be held responsible for his vices. This will lead to chaos. A murderer might plead against the term of sentence imposed on him that the real killer is already dead and gone and the tribunal might also retort that the offender has no right to plead because those who actually pronounced the term of sentence had already disappeared. Thus, the argument seems to cut both ways and does not lead to a stable conclusion.

Possibly the critics of the doctrine as well as its advocates forget the fact that Buddha had little interest in such theoretical controversies. His main point is: there is suffering because we confuse the transitory as permanent and cling to it out of ignorance. If we can remove

our ignorance and attachment that follows by systematic discipline, we can reach our goal, i.e. durable peace. No sane man with sound common sense can, I believe, join issue with Buddha on this point. As a matter of fact, this is substantially the main burden of ancient philosophical wisdom according to which human miseries are primarily due to ignorance and attachment. Without being dragged into the puzzles of metaphysics, which could never be solved to the satisfaction of contending parties, Buddha devised a scientific method based on actual experience to get out of this predicament, the predicament of ignorance cum suffering.

Be that as it may, side by side with the philosophy of Buddha, a philosophy about him, with various ramifications within, grew, and, in assessing Buddhism as a philosophy of life, we must carefully draw a line of demarcation between the two.

In the best interest of modern man, Buddha's philosophy of impermanence and the ethics of moderation that follows should be approached from a modern perspective. Not only our philosophical thought but our practical work-a-day life is today dominated by motion and change. Our life itself has become as it were a veritable movie, we have lost faith in all primitive gods but invented a new god, the god of machine. Not scientific knowledge but, its application in technology, determines today our philosophy of life. The result is movement, aimless movement. This has made difficult things easy. We can not only move freely in our globe, but soon enough we might be in a position to move freely in outer space, make excursion to the moon. The moon so much

eulogised by poets and philosophers in the distant past may become not very late a favourable haunt for the honeymoon of our romantic, polished fashionable youths. We should not grudge them that. If grapes are sour for us, let it be sweet for others, the luckier ones.

But what does the process-philosophy really imply? It is the recognition of power as the infallible feature of reality. Without an ethical background, without a conscious effort to cultivate love as lived and preached by great men like Buddha, this power cult initially so tempting and thrilling may with ease finally lead to total extinction. It is not merely a preparation for enjoying life without the directive of a definite purpose but also a drift, conscious or unconscious, to destruction, a preparation for a collective funeral in which not too many will be able to participate. This is what that catchy word 'progress' really means. In fact, the process-philosophy has assumed today a most alarming proportion and, for the sake of our survival, we must carefully guard against it.

The power-cult has a long, long history and an instructive history as well. We can take advantage of it if we care to learn its great lesson, though we are indeed very far from it as yet.

Centuries from the bow and the arrow to the machine gun and from the machine gun to the rockets and missiles is a revealing story. In its earlier phases, it is a story of conquest, no doubt, but in its latest phase, it is more a story of frustration and defeat than of confidence and victory.

Nietzsche's cult of 'will to power', his concept of the 'superman' as the prophet of power-philosophy un-

bridled has no longer an appeal to sober man and woman. We have paid a heavy price for it, possibly the heaviest we could, holocausts of two great world wars. If Hitler is the philosophical child of Nietzsche, William Kaiser, his earlier edition, is no less inspired by an aggressive nationalism which draws from a power-philosophy of the same brood. However, cruel and ferocious, what is gone is gone. What is in store for us is our great concern, a big question and we cannot take it easy.

What is this predicament due to? It is our inability to control the enormous power that science has placed at our disposal. We are literally in the possession of that most useful, ferocious ghost of an old parable of the East. It has it, that a poor man found out that a sage has had in possession a ghost which could do in the twinkling of an eye whatever it was asked to. But on one condition, apparently simple but really difficult to fulfil. He has always to be kept busy. Otherwise he would kill his possessor in no time.

The poor man, unwittingly enough, thought that this was a golden opportunity for him to have his want satisfied and he went to the sage to pray for the ghost. The sage, who had better insight into human needs as well as weakness, refused. But the poor man persisted in his solemn prayer and, as an experimental measure, reluctantly indeed, the great sage agreed to part with the ghost.

Thereupon, the poor man took possession of the ghost and had all his wants removed, needs satisfied by that almost omnipotent ghost. But, alas, at last, he was at his wit's end to keep the ghost busy and the ghost

was about to devour him in his big jaw.

Afraid and nonplussed, he rushed to the sage quickly followed by the ghost. The sage, who could see through the joke, asked the poor man what had happened. On hearing the whole story, he directed the poor fellow to cut with a sword the curly tail of a nearby dog and pass it on to the ghost to make it straight. This being done, the ghost was under complete control. At long last, he found a job which could never be completed. The curly tail of a dog can never be made permanently straight.

Literally indeed, modern science has given us the most serviceable and at the same time the most ferocious ghost of the old parable, the almost omnipotent machine. It has satisfied our needs and it is out to kill us as a species because we are unable to keep it busy. How to keep it busy and escape death, collective death, is the great question, the question of questions. To live and live peacefully, we must find an adequate answer. In Buddha's gospel of universal friendship, and its counter-part, Christian love, which is no other than Buddha's gospel without the emotional touches of an inspiring theology, perhaps lies the answer. In a general way, this sums up the spiritual aspirations of mankind as depicted in all historic religions of the world.

There was a time when Buddha's philosophy of universal love and friendship, of "giving one who demands the coat the cloak as well" as Christ puts it, was looked upon as an idealist gospel out of touch with reality, with the hard facts of life. But the defeat of power-philosophy in actual practice has forced us to give a new look at it. Not only visionary idealists but sober scientists, politi-

cians and social reformers, ail the world over realize this and feel inclined to give a second look to this gospel of pervasive love.

Late Mr. Addlai Stevenson, for example, a politician of the front rank almost stumbled on it when he said :

“It took a scientific revolution to produce the nuclear weapon, it will take a political revolution to control it.” Yet, for this, a new philosophy of life is needed. The old coat of regional nationalism does not suit man. He must put in a new garment that suits his humanist aspirations which alone can put a brake on the destructive possibility of a wanton, nuclear conflict. In Buddha’s analysis of process, of power in a plain, scientific manner, with an ethical bias lies the elan of this new outlook.

Buddha, in fact, has prescribed a remedy in two ways. In individual life, one should cultivate detachment and he will gradually cease to be a slave of power. This needs enlightened common sense, not of the fashionable type we come across, which is unable to hold its own in the critical hour, but that enlightened common sense which is not disturbed by our unconscious urges. To have it, we must, according to Buddha, brood over impermanence of things and practise detachment, Upeksha as Buddha calls it. This remedy is confined however within one’s own self.

Man is primarily a social being and most of his conflicts of powers are social in their dimensions and he must put therefore an effective brake on power in human relations in their widest possible prospective. For this, Buddha prescribes practice of love for all, concern in the welfare of all living beings. This is what is called

by Buddha persistent meditation of friendship for all, Maitri-Bhabana as it is put in Sanscrit.

Much later than Buddha, Patanjali, the renowned author of aphorisms of Yoga philosophy, whose primary aim is control of mind, lays emphasis on this two-fold process of detachment and friendship as a method of concentration.

As a matter of fact, alternative emphasis on indifference and friendship led to a major division in Buddhist philosophy of life. The traditionalist in Buddhism, who represent the Hinayana cult, lay great emphasis on indifference and maintain that friendship is a means to an end. They therefore observe that Buddha dissolved himself during his great passing away because he has no attachment for anything. The reformists in Buddhism, represented by Mahayana cult, lays greater emphasis on friendship and maintain that Buddha will not lose his distinct individuality till all living beings attain Nirvana. His mission, they contend, is not individual but universal and, before universal liberation is achieved, his mission cannot be completed.

Mahayana concept of universal liberation became so forceful in course of time that a Vedantist named Appaya Dikshita, who maintains that this world is not real but an appearance of the absolute, does not hesitate to affirm that there could be no individual liberation before all living beings attain liberation. The spiritual destiny of man is not individual but collective.

The issue between Hinayana and Mahayana cults is difficult to decide, if not for anything else, at least because of the time-factor. It is not very easy to decide after two

millenniums what precisely the philosophy of Buddha was. Possibly in a happy synthesis and, not in a mutual conflict, lies what Buddha actually lived and died for.

Be that as it may, without doubt, in Buddha's ethical approach to the world-process, the never-ending causal chain, in the control of power by detachment in personal life and by love in the larger sphere of human relations, lies the future of man. This shows that Buddha's philosophy of life is not old-fashioned but is of superlative importance for modern man in his struggle for peace and prosperity.

Bertrand Russell echoes this general sentiment when he observes: "For my part I agree with Buddha as I have imagined him. But I do not know how to prove that he is right. . . . I dislike Nietzsche because he likes the contemplation of pain. . . . because the men who he most admires are conquerors whose glory is cleverness in causing men to die. . . . Nietzsche despises universal love; I feel it the motive power to all that I desire as regards the world. His followers have their innings, but we may hope that it is coming rapidly to an end."

The taste of the pudding lies in eating and, I am sure, a practical application of Buddha's philosophy of universal love will prove its soundness beyond doubt. Actual experiment is the best possible proof of a scientific hypothesis. Why should a philosophy of life of immense practical importance lean on a narrow, so-called logical appeal is difficult to understand. Let us rid ourselves of that familiar prejudice, prejudice of aimless free thinking, cease to see a halo round it, test all theories by their practical effects and we will be better off.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MIDDLE PATH, THE GREAT SAVIOR

The world is beset with evils. Naturally enough, reformist zeal is restless and visualizes the future of man almost invariably in a revolution. All the evils will, it is presumed, be swept over by a tornado, as it were, and the world will become a paradise. But this never happens. As the popular story has it, the curly tail of the dog never becomes straight. It is never in stable equilibrium. Our greatness, our distinction lies nevertheless in attempting to make it straight. All steady progress must be slow and gradual and cannot be achieved overnight.

In this dynamic age, we do not believe in any miracles except the miracle of the machine and we are indeed eager, very eager to achieve progress by pressing the familiar button. We clamor for root-and-branch reform through a revolution whose watchword is: first destroy and then build. Not through gradualism but, by leaps and jerks, we must go forward and push through.

But in most cases, this is no better than wishful thinking and cannot be taken as a dependable method of achieving stable, durable progress. A gigantic reformist force like the French Revolution, whose objective was highly laudable and which represented genuine aspirations of common man, could not be much effective possibly because it was a very quick process. Within fifteen years of the Revolution, Napoleon restored monarchy

and put the wheel back. Things were as quickly undone as they were done.

Such revolutions are something like a speedy transition from a thesis to an anti-thesis. In actual life, man does not proceed like a cool, deliberating logician, like the famous Ass of Buridan, the Medieval philosopher, which, under the influence of its great master, refused to choose between two bundles of grass, exactly alike in quality and quantity, placed before his mouth. So perturbed, the poor animal was by the tussle of a thesis and an anti-thesis of logic. It is rather surprising that not only a man but, even an animal, is known by the company it keeps. If modern man and woman are really eager not to be under the spell of philosophy, as I believe they are, they must scrupulously keep off from the contagion of philosophy and the philosopher.

There need not be much fear I suspect. In actual life, we are more led by emotions than by reason, more by the thrill of passions than by the plodding process of logic. This is why extremes generally lead to extremes, action to reaction. Too much pressure on one side leads inevitably to too much pressure from the opposite end. Revolution is not always the product of the revolutionary but, of the tyrant, who, by his excesses, prepares the way for it.

Process does not stop here. Sometimes at least, revolution results in a counter-revolution, a somersault and a coming-back, a rather familiar phenomenon in recent history.

As human weakness is a constant quantity, to be effective, a revolution must be an impetus to evolution.

Otherwise, it will and may lead to chaos, and, in spite of all good intentions to the contrary, we fail to make much headway. Some day, some reactionary force comes to the forefront and puts the wheel back, at times, much farther than where originally it was.

In the present age, the law of progress should and must be sought more in evolution than in revolution, more in gradual development than in a speedy overhauling, in an overnight turning-upside-down process. A sudden and sporadic shake-up might lead to a global conflict which will mean either large scale devastation or total extinction. Modern reformist zeal should and must proceed with cautious steps. Without being swayed by emotion, it must look at human interest as an indivisible whole and find the secret of progress in moderation and compromise.

This is perhaps not peculiar to the present age of tensions and conflicts about which a great revolutionary rightly observes : if one wants to live in peace, it would have been better for him not to be born in the twentieth century. But the difficulty is that the choice does not and cannot lie with us. In a general way, throughout human history, the best that has been done has been done through moderation and compromise, through a synthesis of opposites and not by violent convulsions and shake-ups.

Almost all truly great men of the world, the great religious leaders in particular, are advocates of a synthesis which could be achieved not through extremism but by traversing the middle path.

Socrates was condemned to death because he was

thought to be a revolutionary. But, as a matter of fact, he was on the surface a revolutionary but an advocate of synthesis beneath. His last word while his breath fell was a request to a friend to offer a cock, he could not as he promised, to a Greek god. This shows he did not simply defy traditions but was eager to introduce a spirit of reform into them.

Christ died on the cross because he revolted against vested interest. Nevertheless, his role as a reformer was much misunderstood. In the final analysis, his gospel was more constructive than negative. As he himself corroborates: "Think not I have come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil them."

Islam as a world-religion stands for a great synthesis. It is another name for the middle path between shunning the world straightaway and losing one's self in it. The life of the great Prophet, Muhammad, exhibits this compromise in a very remarkable way.

According to Shankara, the great advocate of Hinduism, the BhagavadGita, the most popular and the most respected scripture of the Hindus, is an attempt to achieve a measure of equilibrium between a denial of the world by the recluse and complete absorption into it as prescribed by the advocates of priestism. Duty should be done with a feeling of detachment, with best intentions and without much craving for the fruits of action. To be in the world but not to be of it sums up spiritual wisdom.

Buddha is an unerring advocate of the middle path. He finds the truth of the world not in the extremes of existence and non-existence but in between them in a

process, in becoming. Again, by an experiment with truth, he shows the futility of excessive enjoyment as well as excessive physical rigor, submission to the flesh and the torture of it and counsels moderation. So, in theory as well as practice, Buddha is an advocate of the middle course. Consistently with this perhaps, the most subtle as well as the most inspiring system of Buddhist philosophy has been named by its exponents, Madhyamika, which literally means an analysis of the middle path and its spiritual implications.

Nevertheless, *prima facie*, it may appear that in his efforts to renounce the world and to lead the life of a recluse, Buddha gave himself up to extremism. Such a reading is about as true as false. In his love of truth, Buddha was no doubt uncompromising but, in actual practice, his great motto is: to reach truth, we must practise moderation in all possible ways.

Though an ascetic of ascetics, a prince of them, he was a great lover of man, not only of man but of all living beings. Being influenced by this broad-based philosophy of love, the great Emperor Asoka provided side by side for treatment of man as well as animals. To give up the small for the great and to love all sums up Buddha's philosophy. Viewed rightly, this means moderation and compromise and not obstinacy and extremism as superficial admirers as well as critics of Buddha might be led to think.

Though an ascetic, he did not hesitate to see after enlightenment his old father, foster-mother, old friends and relations in the palace to impress on them that his renunciation was not a pressure on their love but an

inevitable step in the attainment of truth, a virtue of necessity. When he heard in the midst of an itinerary that his old father was in his death-bed, he cut it short and rushed to him without waiting for a call. He tried to inspire him with his spiritual message at that critical moment when neither kingdom nor wealth nor power is of any avail.

During his first sensational trip to his father after enlightenment, almost everybody concerned saw him and offered homage, the only exception was his beloved, aggrieved wife, Yashodhara, who herself led a hard life of self-control after Buddha separated from her in quest of truth and peace. On hearing this from his father, he went straight to the resort of his youthful romance to express his genuine love for the lady who suffered most because of his renunciation, paid the heaviest price to make him a Buddha.

This shows, though an uncompromising advocate of self-control, he was quite capable of spiritual love, love of the spirit for the spirit, Platonic love as it is called. For a monk who has renounced the world formally to express such human sympathy for old ties in Buddha's days was a remarkable feat of integrity as well as boldness.

It is not true to fact to say that, out of emotional exuberance, Buddha used to pay undue premium on formal renunciation or asceticism. A big merchant, Sudatta, who was called, because of his massive charities, Anatha-Pindada, which means dedicated to help of the helpless, played an important role in helping Buddha preach his message. The best monastery for the

Brotherhood was built by him where Buddha spent as many as twenty five rainy seasons, obviously one every year to escape the ravages of the whimsical monsoons in Ancient India. Sudatta was eager to ascertain from Buddha whether it will be good for him to renounce the world. Buddha protested and preached to him the gospel of detachment. Not inaction but detachment is the ideal and Buddha instructed Sudatta to get on with his philanthropic mission with unfailing vigor. And this the latter did as best as he could.

Significant in this context is Buddha's reply to a Jaina layman who suspected that his gospel is really a gospel of inaction. Consistently with his practical wit, Buddha retorted that he is a great supporter of inaction so far as bad deeds are concerned but, as to good deeds, he is ever eager to promote and encourage them as far as he could and without any possible limit.

He had, as a matter of fact, that uncommon commodity, common sense in a very high degree because he was not the slave of passions, because he was not thrown off his balance by unconscious urges as is the case with fashionable, enlightened people who dominate in the affairs of man today.

Notwithstanding his great love for renunciation, he did not permit soldiers to become ascetics. He felt that their duty lies not in the cave of the recluse but, elsewhere, not in a provocative conflict but in a legitimate defense if and when needed.

Once while he was busy disseminating his gospel, the news came that his own state of Kapilavastu and a neighboring state are preparing for a suicidal war over

distribution of the water of the river in between. He sent for leaders from both sides, impressed on them the dangers of a war and, with his personal influence, helped make an amicable settlement.

He was without doubt an advocate, more precisely, an uncompromising advocate of synthesis, of moderation and compromise. His only difference from most other religious leaders lies in the fact that he kept his middle path totally divorced from the complications of metaphysics as well as the dogmas of theology. With him, this is a product of experiment and experience and, not a matter of intellectual assent or dissent, not also of dogmatic acceptance or denial. In this regard, his middle path can perhaps best be described by the following inspiring saying of the New Testament:

“He that hath eyes, let him see, he that hath ears, let him hear.”

This scientific approach with a practical bias has a ready appeal for modern man who keeps him off from what his head discards but likes to be close to what his heart demands.

Buddha's middle path has been characterised by him as Astha-Shila, an eight-fold discipline. It consists of eight successive steps which could be broken into three consecutive stages: logical understanding, external practice and inner fulfilment. The first is a theoretic understanding of and insight into the nature of good life which generates a determination to be good and to do good. It may be called the right perspective and the right determination.

Then comes the second stage, the stage of external

practice. It again consists of three steps: right speech, right conduct and right livelihood. To lead an ideal life, we must learn at the initial stage how to talk. Here also we badly need the middle course. We must not say unpleasant things that will hurt others and throw us off our balance. But we must not say untruth either because in that case we will flatter people and lose strength of mind.

Buddha's right speech gives the essence of diplomacy of the right type which, without tormenting others' feelings and without swerving from truth either, can make for peace. This will give a new drilling to politics as a great practical force in modern life and add a new dimension, a new moral and spiritual meaning to it.

Right speech prepares the way for right conduct which consists in refraining from vicious acts like lying and stealing and such others. But this also is negative. The third step is right living which makes a strictly positive approach to good life. If we want to lead a good life, we cannot take to a profession which amounts to injury to others. This is nothing short of exploitation which leads to social conflict and imbalance. Right life is not merely personal and individual, it is also social and collective. Many think that good life is merely an internal matter and, to be good; we must not pay heed to our deeds. That's a wrong idea, a very wrong idea perhaps. The inside and the outside, the inward and the outward, must not only conflict but be in perfect harmony.

This prepares for the final stage, the third stage of good life which comprises three successive steps. We may do good things outwardly and may be vicious

internally. So, to eliminate bad thoughts, we must indulge in a regular spiritual exercise. This leads to constant remembrance of our ideal and, last but not least, rather the most important thing, is that constant remembrance of the ideal gradually matures into such steadfastness of mind that we will be unable to do bad things or to indulge in bad thoughts. Good life will thus become with us a habit, literally a second nature or to, quote a rather much-abused, familiar word, an instinct. Good life starts with an intellectual conviction followed by a determination to be good which exhibits itself in good conduct and good conduct supplemented by persistent good thoughts leads to moral perfection.

In tracing the middle path as a means to perfection, Buddha makes a compromise of the demands of will and intellect on the one hand and of will and emotion on the other. Mere intellectual insight into goodness does not mean much if not backed by actual practice and outward practices may degenerate into a soul-less observance of routine formalities if they have not the sanction of the heart and fail to chasten emotions. In his eight-fold path, Buddha makes a synthesis of intellect, will and emotion which is not only a road to perfection, Nirvana as he calls it, but is indispensable for success in any achievement of life worth its salt, secular or spiritual. It sums up a universal philosophy of education stripped off from the subtleties of metaphysics as well as rigidities of blind faith. It gives the substance of education as a scientific concept capable of application in all spheres of life, exhibits great insight into human limitations and offers the best possible method of overcoming them. It

has a logical basis and a pragmatic import. Judged from this angle, Buddha is possibly the pioneer philosopher as well as scientist of education in human history.

A psychological approach to a philosophy of education similar in spirit we come across in Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad in the parable of the Created Creator, Prajapati, the ancient Indian counterpart of Adam and the three groups of his children, with three distinct attitudes to life. As was the custom in Ancient India, they all led the self-controlled life of a student to learn the lesson of wisdom from their fore-father, the venerable teacher. The first group to approach him were the angels who are highly sensitive to spiritual values and Prajapati said to them: "Road to wisdom lies in self-control." They went away satisfied. The second group to approach him were human beings who had not the keen sense of spiritual values like the angels but have their weakness as well as strength and are equally sensitive to good and bad. Prajapati said to them: "Road to wisdom lies in charity, in giving to others what you hold dear and in sharing joys of life with them." This served the purpose of human beings and they also came back satisfied. The last to approach were the group of the demons who are far less developed than human beings, whose weakness far outweighs their strength. They are cruel in nature and, not at all eager to part with their possessions, rather bent on doing mischief and Prajapati prescribed for them neither self-control nor charity but soft-heartedness, pure and simple.

Stripped of its metaphysical color, the parable means that the select few among men who have a high spiritual

sense should lead a dedicated life, a life of self-control without caring much for the things of the world. They are in the words of Jesus "Salt of the Earth". The second group of men who are not capable of this but, are eager to enjoy life, should remember that they must share what they value in life with others. They must make for an even society, not given to exploitation by giving away for collective welfare a part of their wealth. I do not know whether the modern system of income-tax is based on this idea but I have no doubt it is a measure devised to make for social equity and justice. It is difficult voluntarily to part with one's wealth and very legitimately indeed it has been made obligatory by law.

The last in the social hierarchy is the group, possibly the worst, who neither care for self-control nor like the idea of parting with a portion of their possessions for public welfare. They are much too hard-hearted and, often enough, eager to torment others. Their precise, correct type Nietzsche possibly has in mind when he speaks with emotional excitement of the "superman". A great psychologist not known to subtle modern statistics, Prajapati prescribes for this hard-hearted, third group neither self-control nor charity but kindness, softness of the heart. Possibly this is how we can put a feasible brake on the aberrations of Nietzsche.

An equitable society, not given to oppression and exploitation, was conceived in the early Upanishads as a cooperative performance. It depends on the practice of self-control, charity and softness of the heart, according to the prevailing temper of a man which he cannot undo overnight.

If Buddha approached the middle path from a primarily personal angle, the Upanishad-story looks at it primarily from a collective angle. A close analysis reveals that both aim at adjustment and compromise and revolt against extremism which almost always fails as a measure of sound, social equilibrium.

In the discourse to Brahmin, Kutadanta, Buddha shortens for the large mass of men his eight-fold ethical code into five, Panchashila as it is called, which comprises abstinence from killing, stealing, lying, passions and intoxication and sums up traditionally accepted morality of common sense. In brief, good life for Buddha is moral life as it is commonly understood.

In the prevailing moral scepticism of ancient Greece, Plato tries to justify good life by tracing it to a metaphysics of absolute goodness according to which the highest reality is the idea of the good shining in its brilliance and grandeur in a world far off from the realm of sense we live in. And the moment one intuits it, he becomes wise, good in the literal sense, incapable of doing what is bad. This is what philosophical wisdom according to Plato means and stands for.

Buddha does just the reverse. He strips off good life from the subtleties of metaphysics and makes it the flesh and blood of a plain, common sense approach to peace, individual and collective.

The more closely we look at the problem of modern man, the more we are convinced of the efficacy of the middle path for a better world given to the prosperity of common man and to peace. Though its detailed structure is difficult to forecast, there need be no doubt, that,

in its general structure, it will and must be characterised not by an adherence to extremism but to the middle path, to a spirit of accommodation and understanding that can and should make for a harmonious world-society, for durable peace.

Modern man has rightly or wrongly ceased to have much glamour for heaven nor is he much perturbed over the torments of hell. Possibly he is also not much eager to achieve Nirvana, the lofty ideal of Buddha. Grapes are sour and we prefer to leave hereafter to take care of itself. Our only objective is to live here on earth with joy of life and peace. In an age which has not much faith in traditional religion and metaphysics, Buddha's middle path, his ethics of moderation and compromise may very reasonably be of great help in achieving what, in the absence of a better term, is called a secular ideal. In Buddha, there is the clue, the unmistakable clue, I believe. From our perspective and, in view of our needs, let us cross the 't's and dot the 'i's of his philosophy of moderation and we will stumble on what we really need.

The first step in achieving happiness in individual and collective life as far as humanly possible is to have a clear idea of this objective followed by a strong determination to work it out. This is in fact the type of enlightened common sense we badly need and not the familiar, polished, fashionable type which caters to the vanity of the privileged few, of an aristocracy which is fast fading and fast becoming unworkable in a world whose imperative need is to assure happiness to common man irrespective of sectional denominations.

We must evolve a necessary code of conduct for

this and practise it as best as we could. Neither by wanton speech nor by adoption of a means of living detrimental to this cause, we should impair our objective.

Not only this. A drilling of the heart is needed, perhaps needed most to become convinced of the imperative importance of this scheme of individual cum collective happiness. This will help remove the prejudices and superstitions that drag us to tempting gospels of sectional prosperity in a world which has physically become one but quite well be destroyed because of a lack of spiritual understanding, of adequate cohesion. Our scheme of education must be overhauled accordingly and fashioned to meet this imperative need. To meet the challenge of the atom, we need and must give a second look at post-Renaissance individualism and regionalist nationalism and base our educational experiments on a human philosophy with a human outlook, a philosophy inspired above all by human sympathy and a consciousness of human needs. If this is done, as it should be, I'm sure this will be done under an objective pressure, under the pressure of the urge to live, the strongest of all urges, we will evolve a world structure wedded to the middle path and far off from extremism of any type, ethical, religious, philosophical, reformist and political. An application of Buddha's middle path to our needs, will, I believe, be a great impetus to the achievement of this badly needed objective.

Let us have a peep into its general structure and leave the details to take care of themselves.

Family has been, since time immemorial, the most important forum of man's legitimate self-expression. Under the pressure of an ever-expanding industrialism,

the family of the traditional pattern has almost completely been shattered. Manual labour has been brought down to its irreducible minimum by the almost omnipotent machine. In making the tool and perpetually improving upon it, man himself has become a tool without much freedom and choice of his own. In human relations, it is mechanical formal courtesy and, not the freedom of the heart, that dominates today. We can say the familiar "thank you", not necessarily by the prosaic words of mouth, but by the colored, electric spark. We can afford to live in decent hotels, can have good, delicious food in the restaurant, social contact in the club. For sickness, we have good up-to-date hospitals where nice, fine young ladies take care of us as soon as we press the button and, for old age, we have well-equipped, convalescent homes. And, not to speak of the living alone, even for the dead, we have decent funeral homes with modernized amenities. But, even then, peace is lacking. There is a vacuum within, a lonesome feeling in the midst of plenty.

What is this due to? Possibly machines cannot do for us what man can do. The joy of human relations, of intimate personal contact cannot artificially be generated by the dexterous operations of the machine. Machine has done us great good by making our life richer, but, by giving a blow to family as an experiment in human love in various directions, it has done us a great injury. If once it was a great liberator, of late, it has become a liability.

The family of the old pattern, joint family as it is called in the East, will not serve our need. In a complex, mechanized environment, it is not possible for one to

earn and a host of idlers to depend on him for their sustenance. What was possible in a one-sided agrarian economy of the old is not possible in the diversified, mechanized economy of today.

But, possibly, for the sake of a better human approach to complex human needs of today, importance of family should be recognized more fully and a reasonable measure of compromise should be achieved between traditional family life with its varied responsibilities and, its pragmatic left-over, its shrinking, familiar skeleton we come across in developed, industrialized areas. The heavy burden of duties of reckless week-days is followed by the equally heavy burden of relaxations of a long week-end. This leaves no time to take care of even children, not to speak of informal, cordial contact with the larger life of the community. Time goes too fast and we cannot come out of our narrow groove to think of an ideal that can inspire and give us succor in the hour of despondancy. The net result is delinquency, Juvenile Court, Shelter, Psycho-Therapy, a complex set-up with a heterogenous mixture of things good, bad and indifferent. If we practise moderation, as we should, we could even in the complex modern mechanical environment of today realize a bit more the importance of family as a wholesome moral influence, as a sound experiment in human relations and put a brake on disintegration in human life to start just from the inception of adolescence. We are really paying a heavy price for it and we should and must guard against this error.

Not only, in the sphere of family, the same problem of adjustment is there in the larger social life of man.

It is being keenly felt that too much of physical comforts for a few and too little for the larger mass of men cannot afford to be a sound, workable gospel. Neither inside a country nor abroad in the wider sphere of human relations, such an economic philosophy works. Even, in most advanced countries, the need of a war against poverty is being emphasized.

Here also we have an experience of extremes with their bad consequences. In the nineteenth century economy, the prevailing economic concept was the concept of free enterprize. In competition between individuals and groups was sought the key to durable progress. With the spread of industrialism, it has become a most unworkable, economic gospel resulting in the miseries of the large mass of man, in the exploitation of the large majority by the select few who control industry.

This led to the other extreme, collectivism as it is called. It found in free enterprize a most efficient instrument of exploitation of the masses and challenged it outright. The exponents of this new economic philosophy made light of private property for which man has some preference since the very inception of his social life and looked upon it as a barrier of progress.

But, happily enough, we are being speedily dragged to a compromise, more unconsciously than consciously perhaps. Those, who talk of free enterprize as the panacea for all evils, are in actual practice trying to curb too much of individual freedom and introducing collective control on individual earning whenever it is necessary for the larger interest of the group. This is a wholesome, very wholesome drift in prevailing economic trends.

Curiously enough, where private property and private initiative was once very much decried, their importance in the social structure is today being keenly felt and not only provision has been made for private property within certain limits but even higher wage is being paid to skilled workers to ensure and encourage better economic output. This also is a wholesome trend whose meaning and significance should and must be highlighted as an indication of the future.

This shows that we are about to develop a new world-economy which is not necessarily tied to abstract economic theories but to exigencies of the time, to the basic needs of man in a world physically made one by science. I don't think that Buddha's middle path has roused much interest in modern man and woman in getting rid of the bond of desires and partaking of the bliss of Nirvana. But certainly, it is teaching them a better philosophy of life to live here on earth, to be able to have joy of life individually as well as collectively. Buddha modernized is indeed a great cohesive force for human welfare.

The need of middle course is being keenly felt in human relations in another important direction. Since the dawn of modern science, territorial nationalism, deriving its power from the new scientific technique, was looked upon as a great savior of man. As the influence of the church, as an experiment in internationalism in the spiritual plane, declined, in the scientific Europe nationalist monarchies grew. Again, as the West, primarily Europe, was the great citadel of this new development, this new philosophy of nationalism thrived there at the expense

of the large number of the colonies the European races had in Asia and Africa. They almost invariably supplied them raw materials at a cheap cost to get them back as finished goods at a much higher cost. This accounted for the increasing prosperity of the rulers of the colonies and increasing starvation of those over whom they ruled. Thus, what is sauce for the gander did not prove sauce for the goose. Nationalism so beneficial for independent races was indeed very harmful for those in political bondage.

But, curiously enough, through contact with their alien rulers, the colonies imbibed the idea that in nationalism with its nationalised economy lies their future. After political slavery of centuries, most of them have, by hard struggle, shaken off their political bondage and colonialism is fast becoming a dead institution, a bad relic of a bad past.

But nationalism derived its power considerably from the gun-shot. With the magic of the gun-powder was kept suppressed the desire for freedom of those in bondage. This also determined the mutual superiority of independent nations which often enough came into conflict in their desire to keep others in bondage and to exploit them effectively.

Side by side with the increasing disappearance of colonialism, holocausts of two great world wars, within the short span of a quarter of a century, exhibited very clearly the weakness as well as dangers of aggressive nationalism. This considerably took off the mask of prestige once it wore on its face.

In the meantime, the nuclear age with its dual

prospect, the prospect of collective prosperity and of total extinction, came to be. In peaceful use of atomic energy was found the secret of a paradise here on earth completely free from poverty. To the contrary, in the wanton use of the mighty engines of destruction, the nuclear age has placed at the disposal of man, has been detected side by side the possibility of doomsday being brought nearer.

This demands a new approach to the problem of man, a new political philosophy which will and must effect a compromise between the apparently conflicting claims of nationalism and internationalism. Nationalism is needed for regional prosperity but internationalism is needed equally, if not more, for the very existence of man which depends in this crisis of history in mutual co-operation and understanding.

In this synthesis lies the future of man and, out of deep-felt pragmatic considerations, man will be drawn to it and accept it as a virtue of necessity. But this can come to be only if he strives hard to cultivate scrupulously, as he should and must, the spirit of compromise, the great philosophy of adjustment which sums up Buddha's ethics.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NIRVANA, MEETING GROUND OF RELIGIONS

What bearing Nirvana, Buddha's highest spiritual attainment, has on the aspirations of modern man, it might very reasonably be asked. Needless to say very few these days will feel inclined to be drawn to Nirvana as extinction of desires. But, nevertheless, as a subjective approach to happiness, it has a great lesson for modern man, from whom, like ever-thirsty Tantalus of old Greek Mythology, water near at hand seems to recede perpetually. We are trying hard to find happiness in objects. But objects almost always fail us. They cannot and do not by themselves generate happiness. They are, after all, occasions for happiness which primarily consists in a subjective attitude.

Here also practical wisdom lies in the middle path, and not in extremism. In by-gone ages, large mass of common man were told that they should suffer in this life in anticipation of happiness in a world to come, in heaven, the abode of eternal bliss. The large number of slaves in ancient Rome became, it is said by historians, Christians being allured by the prospects of a very happy hereafter. Their lot on earth was so miserable that, even the prospects of a cup of sweet, delicious grape-juice in heaven had a great appeal for them. Not long before, Napoleon said about the suffering mass of France that they had a better prospect in heaven than a royal per-

sonage like him. Very good logic indeed. But this applies in a general way to religion as shaping the destiny of the large mass of common men.

Just the reverse of it is the modern attitude. Happiness is being sought here in this world in multiplying our needs as quickly as also providing for them. But, even then, we are not really happy. As a matter of fact, we do not enjoy the object but it is the object that enjoys us.

That happiness is more subjective than objective is admitted by all sound and sober men. Even John Stuart Mill, who is far from traditional religion, believes in the qualitative differences of pleasures, another name for the subjective estimate of them, and says: "It is better to be a Socrates dissatisfied than to be a human being satisfied." This shows that happiness is not really objective. The ordinary man is satisfied with objects. His attitude is primarily objective. But a Socrates is dissatisfied with objects as such and is unhappy. But, even then, spiritually he is in a better position because he represents a subjective challenge to objects and refuses to be dominated by them.

We fail to remember often enough that our responses will and must be conditioned by objects but they should not be dominated by them. If we know how to do this, we know the secret of happiness. Then, our attitude will be both subjective as well as objective, objective in its response to the stimulus from without but subjective in its refusal to be dominated by it.

From Buddha's Nirvana, we can afford to learn this great lesson. From a modern angle, Nirvana is nothing

short of the subjective attitude par excellence. Buddha's asceticism, his ardent desire to renounce the world for the attainment of durable peace represents this subjective attitude. His grim determination not to part with his contemplative effort till attainment of peace, even though his body crumbles into dust, as is corroborated by his biographers, possibly represents subjectivism at its highest.

Buddha's conflict with Mara, the evil force, the Satan of some of the great historic religions, who fought him hard before enlightenment, out of fear of losing his hold on man, is a popular representation of the conflict in Buddha's own mind between the subjective and the objective. Jesus faced similar temptations of the Satan according to the New Testament. Only difference is that the Mara-story describes the challenge much more vividly with all the imageries of a super-naturalist age which specialized in seeing a halo round the natural weakness of a great man.

Such a tearing away from the world and its temptations, however fascinating it may be, is beyond the reach of the average man. But, nevertheless, some of its important ingredients are essential, very essential for peace, individual as well as collective, and we can afford to look at them from the perspective of the common man.

Buddha, reached it is pretty known, the highest altitude of subjectivism through the middle path, through a compromise of the objective and the subjective, and, not by a mere denial of the latter.

His initial attempt to refuse food, to deny physical comforts to their utmost, which brought him near death but, not near his objective, durable peace, represents a

subjective attitude in the ordinary sense. He found it ineffective and, even at the risk of being misunderstood as well as deserted by his companions in his early spiritual struggle, not only he did not yield to this extremism but, adopted a more accommodating attitude. He took pretty good food for keeping physically fit and carried on his spiritual struggle unfettered which led him speedily to enlightenment. Not the rigors of the flesh but, a spirit of accommodation and adjustment inspired by a lofty ideal, gave him light.

The great lesson to be learnt from this is that in actual life, our attitude should not merely be objective, not also merely subjective, but subjective-objective. We must have things we need but we must not be dominated by them, far less run after them aimlessly till we breathe our last. That slavery of objects we must give up.

It is regrettable that in human society till this day, there is an imbalance in this regard. If in one phase of history, man was asked to rest content with as little material comforts as he could to cater to the needs of an uneven society, today, we have a right-about-turn in the opposite direction. The more objects of enjoyment we get, the more we desire and the process becomes almost endless. If our needs are supplied in an arithmetical progression, our wants are multiplied much more rapidly in the geometrical. There is no end of this struggle because our peace is solely conditioned by objects and, not at all by a subjective attitude, the frame of our mind. The result is conflicts and tensions, a ceaseless struggle for the loaves and fishes of life which are, to baffle man, both far too many and far too less.

It will perhaps be too much to expect the large mass of common man to imbibe this spirit of accommodation and adjustment in this machine-dominated age. But if our leaders, more precisely, a section of them, realize the grave consequences of this objective fallacy and care to practice moderation in enjoyment, it may not be very difficult to evolve a better world to live in. without indulging in the vagaries of Plato's philosophers, who have neither a family to call it their own, not also private, personal property. Consistently with Buddha's gospel of moderation, they might feel inclined to find their distinction not necessarily in money and power but in dedication and service. This is how, not the rule of the philosopher as Plato envisages, but practical, philosophical wisdom could be introduced as a sobering influence in human relations.

Looked at from a modern angle, there is another element in Buddha's concept of Nirvana which has considerable importance. It has been said that on the eve of his enlightenment, Buddha directed his good will in all directions to all living beings and this led him straight to Nirvana. It is thus the most mature fruit of an unselfish dedication, of universal love.

This feeling of universal love is a most ideal expression of a subjective attitude in social life. As a phenomenon of private, personal life, it has been recognized not only in popular religion but even in inspiring and ennobling fictions. A conspicuous example is beautiful, white Desdemona's love for the black Moor, Othello depicted graphically by master-artist Shakespeare in his tragedy which bears the same title. Lover's eye sees

Hellen's beauty in Ethiop's brow, it has been well said. Love is subjective and it can magnify as well as minimize according to its needs.

What does this subjective attitude of love mean? It takes away from the imperfection of things, gives them a new color hitherto unknown and makes life worth living in a real sense indeed. If Buddha's Nirvana coincided with his feeling of universal love, it means that he attained stable happiness, when he could look at all living beings with love and, through its magic touch, divest them of their disquieting limitation. Possibly being inspired by this spirit of love, the Vedas declare, that to a knower of truth, everything is beautiful, even a negligible dry speck of dust in the street is pervaded with bliss. Enlightenment makes the difference.

For durable human welfare, we need and need badly a subjective approach like this. It has been found by actual experience that in the complex modern set-up of today, it is almost impossible to be happy without making others happy, without making the environment around happy. But it is not always possible to introduce speedy, objective reforms. The more we do, the more remains to be done. But in one sense at least, our wishes could afford to be horses. If being conscious of our limitations, we spare no efforts to cultivate love for our neighbor, this may take away from the tigerish instinct in man and make human society more loveable as well as liveable. This healthy, subjective look at things means much in life.

We are indeed very eager to have an ideal, equitable social order in which all could afford to live with joy of

life and without much discontent. We think this could with ease be done with the scientific technique. But in practical, work-a-day life, this supposition turns out to be about as true as false. In the absence of the sanction of a good heart, good will, all objective reform might lead to conflicts. This is what, as a matter of fact, modern life, with its almost endless amenities, is. Frantically indeed, we are trying to be happy with objects, without the sanction of a good heart, without the incentive of a good will. The result is whatever is done out of a sense of pressing, objective necessity is undone by mutual hatred, and its practical counterpart, conflict and tension. Not much love is lost in human relations today either within the orbit of the family or outside, between advocates of religion of old or of tempting, modern political and economic philosophies.

We are not pleading, however, for a utopia, a visionary gospel to eliminate hatred, conflict and tension entirely from human history. That's not sensible, however theoretically desirable it may be. It could very reasonably be suggested that, in the best interest of man, systematic efforts should be made to bring down as far as possible the natural instinct of hatred and pugnacity.

One example could very legitimately be suggested perhaps. Just as, through education of a few centuries, a national sentiment has been roused in man, a similar attempt should be made to rouse the human sentiment in him. Notwithstanding deviations and departures, it will help grow a better world.

Boiled down to our needs, the close link between Buddha's Nirvana and universal love underlines the

importance of cultivation of human sentiments in the complex modern world of today which, thanks to the prevailing objective attitude of man, shows sign of a big crack.

Buddha's concept of Nirvana can from this angle forge a dependable link between science and religion. If in its application, science is primarily objective, in its essence at least, religion is subjective. Buddha's appeal to the subjective attitude of love side by side with a recognition of the objective attitude within its legitimate limits brings science and religion closer together and makes for their badly needed synthesis.

Above all, in Buddha's Nirvana could be found a defense of the essence of traditional religious attitude, which is no other than its partiality for something durable in a world of change. This is what, rightly understood, Nirvana is. On a close and careful analysis, it is found to be the last relic of the philosophy of permanence in Buddha's ethics. Recognizably at least, God has no place in it, neither a permanent soul, not also a relatively stable world. But, then, there is one and only one exception perhaps. It is Nirvana. Once achieved, it remains forever and does not part company with us.

Buddha almost persistently claims to have gone beyond death, to have attained immortality, Amritatva as it is called in Sanscrit. Virtually, the first word that he uttered after overcoming the hesitancy to preach his gospel at the solemn prayer of Brahma, the greatest of gods, is immortality. "Let the door of immortality open unto all," he exclaimed in compassion. That is the tradition and there must be some truth behind it. In his first

sermon, he advances the same claim. Even though he was very reluctant to discuss whether Buddha retains his existence after death, he never hesitates to say that he has gone beyond death and attained immortality. This is something really very significant.

His objective, he plainly admits, was to go beyond disease, old age and death and this he could not have achieved without attaining immortality. Yet it could hardly be denied that he said off and on, and, even on the occasion of his passing away, that death means dissolution of mind and body, both of which are aggregates of transient, passing states. These two pronouncements put together lead inevitably to the conclusion that, though no protagonist of dogmatic theology or subtleties of metaphysics, Buddha certainly believed that Nirvana once attained is a permanent possession and cannot be parted with.

Possibly because of this when Yamaka, a young member of the brotherhood said: according to Buddha, when a perfect mendicant dies, nothing of him remains, the great Sariputta, who had better knowledge of Buddha's philosophy of life, retorted: as Yamaka is not able to fathom the life and greatness of Buddha, he should not dare make such a bold guess about his views on complicated topics.

Silence is golden and most people, being inspired by Buddha's negativist attitude to metaphysics, maintain that Nirvana is merely negative, a mere extinction of desires and nothing else. But it should be remembered that a man with great spiritual insight like Sage, Nagasena, who made four centuries after Buddha an emphatic defense of his

denial of a stable, permanent self in his encounter with King Menander, did not hesitate to state that Nirvana is nothing but unalloyed bliss as deep as the ocean and as wide as the heavens. He painted the positive content of Nirvana with a host of other imageries. This emphasis on the positive character of Nirvana side by side with an unambiguous denial of a permanent self unmistakably shows that, long after Buddha died, Nagasena looked upon Nirvana as the attainment of eternal bliss.

Buddha's ideal as conceived by Sunyavada Buddhism, which has often enough been described, rightly or wrongly it is difficult to say, as the doctrine of the void cannot be negative either. It is not a big cipher, like the gigantic, delicious horses's egg, to quote a familiar phrase of Ancient Indian Philosophy, but something beyond the grasp of the categories of human intellect, its fixed patterns. These categories according to Ancient Indian speculation are four in number : existence, the opposite of it, non-existence, an undiluted mixture of them both and, last but not least, recognition of it as something curious. I am more than certain modern mind, interested in the hard facts of life, will not feel much inclined to these abstract patterns of thought. But one important fact seems to emerge from this labyrinth of traditional metaphysics which we cannot possibly ignore in our assessment of Buddha's Nirvana. It is this that Nirvana cannot be a void in the sense of nothing. As the aforesaid four categories including non-existence is not applicable to Nirvana, it must have been called a void not because it is negative but because it is indescribable. The unwillingness of Sunyavada to equate reality with nothing shows therefore that

Nirvana as attainment of reality is not negative.

In Mahaparinibban Sutta, the story of Buddha's departure, he says to Ananda and other disciples, that after his death nothing mortal, parthiba, will remain of him. This applies to his mind and body which are nothing but two successive series of changes rooted in ignorance but not to the immortal in him, the Nirvana-consciousness which is not barred by time and clime. This shows that Buddha denies immortality as a metaphysical concept but does not go against an acceptance of it as a moral achievement. When Buddha as an empirical individual is completely disintegrated and dissolved, this immortal, moral element can and should remain. I presume herein lies the secret of the positive element in Nirvana, of the concept of ethical immortality.

I do believe that Buddha's alleged utterance in Udana to his disciples that he is forced to believe in a permanent self without which transmigration from one body to another cannot be explained is spurious. It goes against his empirical analysis of the nature of the self which forms the nucleus of his revolt against the traditional metaphysics of permanence. Besides, he gives a logical cum ethical explanation of the cycle of birth and death in his analysis of the casual nexus. Being inspired primarily by a practical motive, he does not care much to give a purely logical account of transmigration. What is more important is that he recognizes Nirvana as a permanent achievement, a permanent possession. As he was not interested in metaphysics, rather scrupulously eager to avoid being caught in its trap, he never cared to deduce a metaphysics of permanence out of this ethical concept. Here also, his

rationalism, which is pragmatic in character, dominates.

Buddha's concept of Nirvana is more akin to immortality as an achievement than as an ever-accomplished, metaphysical fact. When man becomes free from the bondage of desire, there is in him a stable consciousness of peace and this is not and cannot be touched by death. Immortality as an achievement means this. The differences between Nirvana as enlightenment and Mahapari-Nirvana, death after enlightenment, possibly is this: even after enlightenment, while the body lasts as a physical process, there is a mind, a psychical process corresponding to it and there are ups and down in it. But this cannot throw the enlightened man off his balance, because, behind lies Nirvana, the ever-soothing consciousness of infinite, unalloyed bliss. But when the body falls, its counterpart, the psychical process also ceases and the only thing that remains is the consciousness of Nirvana. We cannot give it the name Buddha either. By Buddha, we mean a mind-body-complex of a particular type, the great struggler, the great seeker of truth, and the great benefactor of man while Nirvana precisely means the resulting achievement. This is what I presume Buddha means when he says that after his passing away, nothing temporal of him will remain. This cannot touch the eternal, ethical element that constitutes the essence of Nirvana.

Buddha's concept of ethical immortality seems to resemble the concept of Aristotle and, his devoted disciple, the great Moslem philosopher of eleventh century Spain, Ibn-Rushd, Averros as he is called in the west and also of God-intoxicated philosopher of seventeenth century Europe, Spinoza.

Aristotle maintains that only the rational and, not the sensitive, part of the human soul is immortal. As reason, according to him, is not concerned with the individual but the universal, immortal soul is not the individual soul but the universal, a basic stuff that pervades the whole world.

Averroes tried to popularize the idea in the Middle East among the Moslems. But due to the opposition of the orthodox elements, he failed and had to face persecution. His idea found a fertile soil later on in Christian countries of the neighborhood and became so popular in France that the Church branded it as irreligious and banned its publicity by an edict.

Without meaning any disrespect for Aristotle and Ibn-Rushd, both of whom were great intellectuals, it can be said that, with them, this concept of immortality was a logical guess, not a matter of inner spiritual experience. The case is very much different with Spinoza who was not only great as a philosopher but also as a spiritual genius. The idea of immortality was with him more a content of deep, spiritual insight than a logical construction.

Spinoza observes that passions are the inevitable product of a slavery of the object which again is the product of ignorance, another name for a limited, selective view of things. Here Spinozism is much similar to Buddha's great philosophy of life. When passions are brought to control by an adequate knowledge of things, the slavery of desire disappears, man gets peace, eternal peace and this is the essence of immortality. Spinoza very clearly says that which is perishable of the soul dis-

appears and that which is imperishable of it remains. It should be noted that, for Spinoza, just like Buddha, the body is a series of changes and the mind is no other than the corresponding psychical process.

Because of his dominating metaphysical attitude, Spinoza treats the immediate intuition of God, the totality of facts physical as well as mental, not touched by the vagaries of time and attainment of immortality as convertible terms, inseparable like the convex and the concave surfaces of the same coin. While due to his antipathy to and indifference for metaphysics, in Buddha, the concept of immortality remains an ethical achievement pure and simple and, out of a pre-eminently practical motive, Buddha does not even care to analyse its metaphysical implications. To the contrary, he discouraged such a theoretic approach and thought, for the novice at least, this may prove to be a departure from the road to peace and mean involvement in the tentacles of desires. We must remember in this context, Buddha's peculiar environment, his distinctive set-up where as many as sixty two philosophical systems were fighting a raging dialectical battle, quite forgetful of the ultimate objective of philosophy, which is no other than stable peace, the mature fruit of right knowledge. If Spinoza's preference for metaphysics is understandable, Buddha's contempt for it is equally, if not, more understandable.

Considerable intellectual blood has been spent on deciding the relation of God of religion and Buddha's Nirvana. Some say they are one, others they are not. But these are over-statements. Buddha's Nirvana, though not identical with God, does the function ascribed to Him in

traditional religion and philosophy in Ancient India. If we know God, we go beyond all miseries, beyond death, they say. Assuredly, Buddha's Nirvana does this. A talented writer has very aptly said that, if we are unable to catch hold of the monkey straight away, we must rest content with touching its tail because the tail also is a measure of the monkey. With due modification, Buddha's Nirvana does much the same. Leaving aside God as the creator of the world, it gives us what an immediate intuition of God can and must give us. Buddha's Nirvana has, therefore, in it the substance of God, may not be, His skeleton.

In Ancient India, Buddha is not alone among great thinkers and reformers in not believing in God. Sankhya-philosophy of Kapil does not believe in God. There are other examples. As a matter of fact, undue importance has not been ascribed in Ancient Indian speculation to God of theology. Possibly in Buddha's ethics, this tendency reaches its culmination, if not fulfilment.

Anyway, the recognition of Nirvana as a permanent achievement, though a bit hidden, brings Buddha close to religion as it is commonly understood. Though, obviously at least, and as corroborated by the large number of his philosopher-devotees, Buddha's religion is godless, there is in it the practical fulfilment of a religious outlook which is no other than the discovery and recognition of the imperishable and immutable in the world of the perishable and transient in which we live and move as the Upanishads aptly put it.

This apart, there is a close affinity of Buddha with historic religions in some important aspects. Analysed logically, Christianity is no other than Buddha's gospel

of universal love with all the exigencies of religion and theology added to it, Buddha's abstract universal love made more concrete and human by an appeal to the infinite mercy and forgiveness of God incarnate on earth, Jesus. Historically also, through ancient Egypt, which was once a citadel of Buddhist culture, Buddha's monasticism became mixed up with the gospel of Christ and made a contribution to its make-up.

Buddha was born and brought up in a spiritual atmosphere which, in the absence of a more precise term, is called Hinduism, a term little known in Buddha's time. His close relation with the best that culture represents cannot reasonably be disputed. During the time of Buddha, the best spiritual wisdom was conveyed by the Upanishads which believe in the basic unity of all that exists. Buddha gave this inspiring doctrine a practical color by linking it with his gospel of universal love. If all is one, we must love all and hate none, a doctrine from which in Buddha's time priestism departed and built as against it a rigid, inequitable social structure. Both by profession and practice, Buddha revolted against it and did not depart from the spirit and substance of the Upanishads, of its philosophy of the basic unity of the world, more precisely from its practical implications.

There is a close resemblance between the nucleus of Islam, its doctrine of equality and brotherhood, a great impetus to the growth and development of common man and Buddha's revolt against hereditary caste-system in Ancient India and his attempt to restore the spiritual right of the large mass of common man and woman.

One of the oldest religions of the world with a long

line of prophets, Judaism I have in mind, centers, in spite of its theological affiliations, round good life and spares no efforts to define it in terms of concrete laws and practices. To Buddha, religion is good life pure and simple. The difference lies in the distribution of emphasis, in the varied demands of the respective environments in which they prevail and Flourish. But in its emphasis on good life as the essence of religion, it is apparent that Judaism has considerable similarity with Buddha's philosophy of life.

Not only historic religions, even the atheists who deny the existence of God, and, out of emotional exuberance, declare that God is dead can draw inspiration from Buddha in their effort to make for a better world.

If the need of the hour is to unite man, and not to divide him, as I believe it is, Buddha's philosophy of life can play an important role in shaping the destiny of man. Judged in its true perspective, it could be a common forum for all the varied shades of modern life in their attempt to improve the lot of common man as such and assure for him a better life and a better living standard.

CHAPTER NINE

BUDDHA'S SILENCE AND REFUSAL

Buddha not only took very little interest in metaphysics but also refused to be dragged into its puzzles which often enough take away from our zeal for freedom from miseries. The following ten questions of metaphysics he refused to explain and elaborate, far less to answer : (1) Is the world eternal or (2) temporal ? i.e., whether the world has been created by somebody, say, God or it is always there in some form or other. (3) Is the world unlimited or (4) limited ? These four are the familiar puzzles of creation of the world and of its possible dissolution some day.

There are two puzzles of the relation of body and mind : (5) Is the body and the mind or spirit identical ? or (6) Are they different ? the puzzles that baffle materialists and spiritualists since the dawn of human history. The third and last group of puzzles relate to the status and individuality of an enlightened man after his death. There are actually two puzzles but they have been enlarged into four for the sake of dialectical precision. They are as follow :

(7) Will Buddha exist after his death or (8) he will not ? Ordinary man and woman will certainly exist after death. They are the slaves of ignorance which is the *raison detre* of the world-process in which they are caught. This accounts for the cycle of birth and death they pass

through. But what about an enlightened man like Buddha ? That is the question to be answered.

The advocates of abstract logic in Buddha's time spoke of a mixture of existence and non-existence, of being and non-being. In consonance with this, it has been asked whether Buddha exists as well as does not exist after his death. This brings the puzzle number (9) and, obviously, its denial will make the number 10.

As a matter of fact these are some of the basic problems of metaphysics : The problem of creation of the world, mind-body-relation and the status and individuality of a liberated man, one who is perfect and has highest knowledge. These are questions which have been debated and discussed in metaphysics since time immemorial and opinion on them is equally divided.

In his celebrated Critique of Pure Reason, his first Critique, Kant tries to expose the limitation of metaphysics as an organ of knowledge of the ultimate reality and prepares, in his second Critique, the Critique of Practical Reason, the passport for a transition to faith. Kant tackles the first two questions in the list given before and, in an answer to them, says that both of them are equally capable of logical demonstration. Obviously, both cannot be true just as my father cannot be both living as well as dead or a liquid stuff cannot be both milk and water simultaneously except in a deceptive dealer's shop. In its deal with the super-sensuous reality, dealer's shop. In its deal with the super-sentuous reality, human reason itself plays the role of a deceptive dealer according to Kant.

Let us consider the view of another great metaphysi-

cian of the world, Shankara, the renowned Hindu philosopher of the eighth century A.D. He observes specifically that reason invariably leads to alternative possibilities, opposites or contradictories, and, to get out of them, we must lean on religious experience beyond the grasp of logic as stated in authoritative, religious scriptures.

Centuries before Shankara and Kant, Buddha under-rates the importance of such controversies from a practical angle and treats them as unnecessary and superfluous. For him, the most important practical question is the question of facing practical, work-a-day life boldly and squarely. In other words, the most important question is not to answer the puzzles of metaphysics but to get rid of sorrow and attain happiness. A diversion of attention to such puzzles not only does not make us happy but rather retards our happiness. Buddha refused to discuss them and brands them as *Avyakrita*, matters not to be brought to the forum of intellectual intercourse.

Buddha's great follower, Nagarjuna, the renowned dialectician of the second century A.D. exhibits, however, a slightly different attitude. His doctrine that reality is indescribable has a negative as well as a positive aspect. Negatively, it is directed against the possible conjectures of metaphysics which he finds logically unacceptable. Positively, he shows that reality beyond the grasp of the conflicting categories of intellect can be apprehended in the ineffable, soothing experience of Nirvana, of the highest good. In this intuition, he finds the fulfilment of logic and philosophy.

Possibly six centuries after Buddha, the need of a logical approach side by side with the practical, was

naturally enough felt and that compromise we come across in Sunyavada of Nagarjuna who was not only a great philosopher but also a great ascetic, perhaps a man of intuition too.

This clean compromise is not evident in Nagasena who is earlier than Nagarjuna by three hundred years roughly, a great ascetic like Nagarjuna, but possibly not a great philosopher like him, though a capable logician as is evident from his sharp intellectual encounter with Menander who was originally an advocate of the doctrine of stable self of man.

Nagasena maintains that there are four different types of questions: (a) questions capable of one answer only (b) capable of two different answers at the same time (c) capable of being nullified by a counter-question and (d) questions which are futile to tackle and answer. Under the fourth come the traditional puzzles of metaphysics which Buddha did not like to tackle and on which Nagasena counsels much more faithfully than Nagarjuna silence and indifference. This shows that Nagasena represents Buddha's rejection of permanence on the basis of a plain and simple analysis of experience and his eagerness to discard the puzzles of metaphysics as an obstacle to freedom from bondage.

Buddha refused to discuss with his young disciple, Malunky-Putta, the ten puzzles of metaphysics on account of their practical futility. This is quite consistent with Buddha's rationalism dominated by his pragmatism, by a sense of practical utility and not at all a departure from the substance of his philosophy which is no other than a philosophy of life, a practical device to get out of nature's

complicated network of miseries that baffles almost all and spares very few.

This could hardly be equated with a confession of ignorance of truth, agnosticism as it is called in the polite phraseology of our times. It is pretty strange that even a sober scholar like Professor Keith maintains such a view. He observes that Buddha was a genuine agnostic who 'studies the various systems of idea prevalent in his days without deriving any satisfaction from them any one of us do from the study of modern systems and that he had no reasoned or other conviction on the matter.'

Buddha's persistent refusal to discuss metaphysical puzzles on practical considerations and his negative attitude towards a metaphysics of permanence led Professor Keith to hold this view. It is not true to fact to say that Buddha studied prevailing philosophical systems from a purely theoretical angle. His approach to them was primarily practical. From Alar Kalama, for example, he learned the mental discipline called Yoga, which exerted some influence on his gospel till its end, we must remember. Meditation on impermanence is an important ingredient of Buddha's spiritual discipline.

Buddha's attitude to life is not a hesitant one like that of an agnostic but of a confident, enlightened man who is never oblivious of his basic attitude to life, of what is to be done and what is not to be done. Such an unfailing confidence cannot be the substitute for the defeatism of an agnostic. Agnosticism represents no doubt a sort of intellectual conviction. But it can hardly be denied that in most cases agnosticism is due to our re-

fusal to go beyond the limitations of sense by a hard, spiritual discipline. This is a sort of annoyance as it were with reality which help makes us a determined effort not to know reality just like the child angered by her mother, eager to refuse her existence with eyes voluntarily closed. To know the reality, we must pay the price for it, a heavy price indeed, by persistent effort and cease to be attached to the world of sense. This is the road to reality. Otherway lies the halting attitude of the agnostic and, his younger brother, made militant by his youthful vigor, the sceptic, who closing his eyes, straight away denies the very existence of his mother sitting near in his presence.

Buddha could never be omniscient in the usual sense of the word. No human being, however perfect he may be, can afford to be all-knowing. Speaking plainly, omniscience means a clear and general understanding of life, its meaning and significance and, of the road to perfection in a world shot through and through with limitations. There is and there can be no denying the fact that Buddha had this insight into the nature of things and into the meaning of life and he attained perfection in the sense that he was not thrown off his balance by ups and down of life but exhibits a serenity that has not too many parallels in human history. I do not think the hesitancy of an agnostic can apply to this. If it can, I must accept it as a great ideal of life and brand almost all great men as agnostics, super-agnostics perhaps. I fear they are not and, perhaps they cannot afford to be, in the accepted sense of the word 'agnostic'. Life is a hard task-master and the half-measure of an agnostic can hardly afford to

be an adequate answer to the challenge of life.

Buddha had no doubt a halting attitude just after the attainment of enlightenment. He thought the mystery of Nirvana is so far above the grasp of the average man that it would be utterly futile to preach it to all and sundry. It would be as useless as putting water into a pot with pores beneath. Tradition has it that this was considered a great disaster for mankind by the greatest of the gods, Brahma who rushed to Buddha lost in the beatitude of Nirvana and, with solemn prayer, persuaded him to preach his message to man. This missionary zeal could hardly be the substitute for closed-eyed experiments of an agnostic with the super-sensuous.

Analysed from a logical as well as a practical angle, this Brahma-Myth gives the substance of Buddha's approach to metaphysics. After the attainment of Nirvana, by a searching analysis, he found it would practically be very useful to divest his message of the subtleties of metaphysics and to give it a thoroughly practical color for the benefit of man. This myth is in fact a clear and an unambiguous refutation of the assumption that Buddha did not know the truth and that he was an agnostic. To the contrary, it shows he knew the truth and made it as capable of a wide, popular practical appeal as it could be.

From the moment of his decision to preach his message till his death, Buddha never for a moment exhibited a loss of confidence in his message, in his own role as an enlightened person. In this sense, he was a great synthesis of opposites. While aware of the dignity of all man and while believing that Nirvana is quite

within the reach of human effort, Buddha never forgot his distinction as an enlightened man. In his first sermon which has very precisely been designated as setting in motion the wheel of righteousness, he exhibits that consciousness of spiritual superiority. Addressed by his familiar name, Gautam, by his disciples who foresook him in the midst of his troubles out of a misunderstanding, he solemnly instructed them not to address an enlightened man, a Buddha by name. He confidently asserted to them that he has gone beyond the limitations of life, known the secret of happiness and has come to them to preach his universal gospel. The same sense of assurance pervades the atmosphere around him till his demise.

When after enlightenment, he went to see his old parents at the old royal palace, the very next morning he did something really unusual and extraordinary for the son of a king, a prince. He began to beg food with his disciples from door to door, from the subjects of his king-father who was very much shocked over the indigent and retorted that, for a king's son to beg in the palace, is a great blow to the royal prestige. Without any the least hesitancy, Buddha told his father that he does not belong to the dynasty of a king, but to a long line of enlightened persons, the Buddha's whose vocation is to beg food in exchange of spiritual counselling and guidance, a long-standing tradition with monks in India.

He never claimed that he was the only Buddha, not even the last of them, Buddhahood is an ideal to be attained scientifically through a systematic discipline and as there were Buddha's in the past, there will be Buddha's in future too. They agree in being able to solve

the mystery of death having been able to cross it. If Buddha is an agnostic of a modern brand, the whole class of Buddha's must be put in a bracket and styled as agnostics. That I fear will be going too far and need not be considered seriously.

If Buddha were an agnostic and, not a man of knowledge, in the rich Buddhist tradition later on mixed up with Hinduism, there should have been some trace of it. He has almost always been described with high mythological colors. It has been said when he resolved to preach his gospel after the initial vacillation was over, instead of three world of popular Hindu mythology, ten thousand worlds have rejoiced in it. An oracle is said to have declared that neither the gods nor the Brahmins, the custodians of priestism, not also monks, Brahmin and non-Brahmin, not also Mara, the evil force, would be able to retard the spread of his message. When he preached his sermon, gods from heaven came down to hear it with human beings and, when he departed from the world, the same gods came to pay homage. In an atmosphere where high homage is paid to a man of knowledge, if Buddha were, even the least of an agnostic, even a fraction of these imagerise would not have been imposed on him and his mission could not have been painted with such exalted imagination and also with such high emotional color.

Even his critics among the priests did not say that he was an agnostic. Some of them have of course criticized him as a bad guide to Hindu philosophical thoughts but they did not say that he was ignorant of truth.

Buddha never claimed to be an ignorant man either

and he was not treated as great because he confessed like Socrates his ignorance and was conscious of it. Instead, he was considered great because he was a man of wisdom as well as a wise counsellor. If the Oracle of Delphi made Socrates discover his greatness in his ignorance, the Oracle in Ancient India found Buddha's greatness in the wide, practical significance of his message. Like Buddha, Socrates was not much fond of metaphysical theories and tried to prove their futility by a logical analysis. But while Socrates makes throughout a confession of his ignorance, Buddha always claims to be a man of enlightenment. Possibly the atmosphere of Ancient Greece dominated by secularism and of Ancient India dominated by popular religion has something to do with this basic difference of two great historic figures in their approach as well as attitude to life.

Of course in the Upanishads, there is on occasions a recognition of Socratic ignorance. The Kena-Upanishad, for example, gives expression to the significant paradox that those who claim to know reality do not really know it but they that confess their ignorance have an access to it. The case of Buddha is very much different. He refuses to discuss metaphysics not because of his ignorance but because of its practical futility. This shows how far he was from an average agnostic. Not only that he did not say after enlightenment that he was ignorant but he said, to the contrary, that he was a healer of patients who suffered from the disease of suffering. He gives them advice and prescribes them the most practical, useful remedy.

He said pointedly that he does not believe in

secrecy-complex. Secrecy, he said to his disciples, befits a woman, a priest and the advocates of false doctrines. The secrets of a woman's private, personal life were difficult to decipher. In Buddha's time, she was not used to competing with man on an equal footing as she is doing more and more these days. Her life was an almost closed secret to outsiders beyond the pale of her family. Priestcraft is based on secrecy because the priests mislead and exploit ordinary folk by giving them false promises. The advocates of false doctrines indulge in secrecy because an open examination of their doctrines will make them fall like a house of cards. Buddha claims to be very far from these secrecy-specialists.

In defiance of agnosticism, he openly admits he actually knows much more than what he preaches. This is not secrecy : this is selection determined by practical necessity. The following parable of Buddha deep with meaning and significance reveals the precise position beyond the least shadow of doubt :

"At one time the exalted one was staying at Kosambi in the Sinsapa grove. And the exalted one took a few leaves in his hand and said to his disciples : "What think ye, my disciples, which are the more, these few Sinsapa leaves which I have gathered in my hand or the other leaves yonder in the Sinsapa grove ?" "These few leaves, sir, which the exalted one holds in his hand are not many, but many more are those leaves in the yonder Sinsapa grove." "So also my disciples, is that much more, which I have learned and have not told you. And, wherefore, my disciples, have I not told you that ? Because my disciples it brings you no profit, it does not conduce to

progress in holiness, because it does not lead to turning from the earthly, to the subjection of all desire, to the cessation of the transitory, to peace, knowledge, to illumination, to Nirvana. Therefore have I not declared it unto you."

Buddha in fact is a mighty gigantic tree of knowledge, with its branches full of luxuriant leaves spread out in different directions. Only a few leaves are needed for the spiritual salvation of man, not all the leaves, the branches, far less the tree as a whole.

The same idea has been described very aptly by a mystic from a theological angle. He describes God as a big mountain made of sugar and human beings as small ants. These ants do not need the mountain but only a little grain of sugar.

Out of mercy for man, Buddha did not discuss much that he knows of reality and its relation to the world of ignorance we live in because that may more mislead than lead, more misguide than guide, more retard than push forward. In one word, Buddha is the reverse of a halting agnostic driven hither and thither under the pressure of his desires, far less a sceptic but an enlightened, confident practical, prudent dealer of truth.

Buddha said this very clearly and unambiguously when to escape enthusiasm of Malunky-Putta, that dabbler in metaphysics in his fold, he said: "Just as the water of the sea is invariably characterized by a salty taste, my message as a whole has an immensely practical character: its aim is to help man get freedom from miseries, attain happiness, durable and abiding.

Modern man and woman, who are by temperament

not much interested in Nirvana but, in a peaceful existence here and now, should also apply Buddha's practical method of selection and rejection and pick up the human elements from his inspiring gospel which, I have no doubt, is basically human and, if adhered to, will make for a better world before it is too late to mend.

CHAPTER TEN

A GREAT CEMENTING FORCE

Humanity today is fast assuming the look of a house divided against itself and, at the slightest stroke, it may fall and even collapse. With the advent of modern science, religion as an international force ceases to interest man and, side by side with nationalist states, nationalist churches also sprang up. As a result of this, importance of uncritical faith considerably diminished and the influence of traditional religion became much localized. There were sometimes at least a conflict of religion and science in which traditional religion had to yield.

This meant a break of religion with science. Science represents a rational outlook, religion an alliance to faith which is not bound to be logical and may even go against it. At most, science and religion are working in modern society as parallel forces with separate spheres of influence, though it cannot perhaps be gainsaid, that the influence of traditional religion except in the moment of weakness and frustration, does not compare today with the influence of science. The ferocious tiger of science seems to be a bit too eager to swallow the meek lamb of religion, if it can.

Some try to escape out of this predicament by avowing a conflicting, alternate allegiance to both science and religion, reason and faith. A classical example is the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant of eighteenth cen-

ture. He suggests, paradoxically enough, that, in theory, we should advocate reason; in practice, faith, a compromise which did not work well in his own case either. Both the rulers of Prussia and her priests joined hands in suppressing Kant's heresy. At the age of seventy, he had to submit to a prohibitory injunction from Government to publicize his thoughts. The priests were much more brave. They revolted against him by naming their pet dogs 'Immanuel Kant'. There is really nothing personal about the Kantian approach. It represents clearly the big gap between the materialist rush of the week-days and the quiet, sudden spiritualist outburst of the Sabbath that follows.

The inevitable and inescapable consequence of this disparity is almost endless conflicts and tensions, another name for modern civilized life which is not much known to harmony and peace. At every stage, we need an excitement which not only excites but also exhausts.

This is only one side of the picture. There is a conflict in modern life between science and politics as well, though often enough, we do not notice this. In its constructive aspect, science is basically human and not regional. But politics is almost always just the reverse of it. It is only of late, as a result of the holocausts of two great world wars, that politics has become a bit suspicious of aggressive nationalism. This led to the emergence of the United Nations as a world-organization to encourage international amity and understanding and settle disputes between nations through peaceful negotiations, and, not by war. But as an instrument of political self-expression of man, the United Nations is faced with great difficulties.

On a Nationalist basis, it is striving hard to find a cure for nationalist conflicts. In certain respects at least, we must transcend nationalism when it runs counter to internationalism. The United Nations is fighting hard to make a transition from the parts to the whole, though the better and also perhaps more dependable, course will be to reverse the process and to pass from the whole to the parts. Till this is done, United Nations will find it difficult to deliver the goods and at times may also be in a vicious circle.

In this welter of confusion, science which has made the modern world what it is today and is expected to make it what it is likely to be tomorrow has placed at the disposal of man a most destructive force which can with ease efface his very existence. There is the other possibility too. A peaceful use and application of the same power may change the shape of our globe and make it a veritable heaven of joys of life. But how to make the right choice, how to bell the cat as a popular story has it, is the question of questions.

Obviously enough, the answer, true answer perhaps lies in unity and understanding. This could be done only through a union, not a half-hearted union, but a happy marriage of science and religion. If religion could be given a scientific dimension, it will then be able to put a brake on science as a colossal destructive force and help release it as a most powerful instrument for human welfare in its broadest sense.

This will take away from regionalism in politics, from destructivism in science and dogmatism in traditional faith. Without this synthesis, man may not survive the

challenge of the Nuclear age, far less prosper and progress. This demands that we must above all develop a human outlook, broad human sympathies and look upon human interest as an indivisible whole. United we live, divided we perish.

Aesop's Fables account of the old tussle between the belly and the other limbs may repeat itself in human history today. The different groups of man claiming allegiance to apparently palatable ideologies and 'isms' are fighting one another with great zeal. The result is lopsided growth, the counterpart of a big belly, the alarm-signal of death according to medical experts.

To get out of this futility, we must tone down the claim of regionalism and nationalism by a broad-based, liberal humanism with a keen sense of human values and a keen desire to propogate them in human relations in its varied aspects. Buddha's philosophy of life can, I presume, afford to be a great impetus to the development of this philosophy of life in a pre-eminently skeptical age, suspicious of the dogmas of traditional religion. Herein lies its great significance.

We are indeed living in a very peculiar time. We have not only free-thinkers among men of science, among advocates of secularism and the large number of their followers, more led by emotion than reason, but among the advocates of traditional religion too. Quite a sizeable number of religious preachers in America are out to pronounce : "God is dead." They want to do away with God who is traditionally conceived as the source of all that exists. This shows whither the wind blows, how atheism has become a fashion in modern, progressive

thoughts. I am not much worried over this because professional faith which does not express itself in adequate action is no better than lack of faith, sometimes at least worse than it. But the difficulty is that this conflict will divide man and help grow discord which means danger, collective danger.

This is why we need badly indeed a common forum of action for the modern free-thinkers and the professional advocates of faith and also possibly for those who are watching matters from the fence. For this, we need a workable compromise of secularism and spiritualism, atheism and theism, of scientific skepticism and traditional faith. In the absence of a better term, we might call it materialism with a spiritual bias or, alternately, spiritualism with a materialist bias. This curious commodity modern man and woman need for their peace and prosperity, above all, for the survival of the species of man from a possible nuclear onslaught. The general outlines of this synthesis may be traced, I presume, in Buddha's philosophy of life detached from the glamour for Nirvana which is admittedly the concern of the select few.

Buddha's middle path gives us a workable gospel of material existence. We must not be for too much material comforts and we must not also run the risk of having too little of them. What else is decent and dignified materialism? The main trouble in modern life is that we are restless and there is no limit to our material needs. If we keep a reasonable workable limit to our material needs and realize collective economic aspirations accordingly, much of the ideological conflicts in the world today will vanish into thin air and harmony and order

will steadily be restored in human relations.

But this material security can become a reality only if we do not forget the need of our neighbor. This brings in the necessity of cultivating collective love. It cannot work much as a prudential gospel deriving all its strength from the philosophy of 'live and let live'. It will work better if it has a sanction of the heart. Buddha's concept of constant meditation on universal happiness and prayer for it may be understood in modern society in this light and may very usefully be worked out accordingly.

Many of us may not be in a mood to sit in deep contemplation of it because we are a bit too used to roaming about like the fickle monkey over the varied branches of the tree of desire. And when we sit down to meditate for a short while, image of the fruits of that tree almost invariably haunts us. But we can very reasonably cultivate a genuine regard for this ideal and, through popular media of education and publicity, emphasize its great need in modern life. This will, I am sure, clean the way for us and give us the mental make-up to pray systematically for collective welfare as Buddha prescribes. To control the unconscious urges is a difficult and, an almost impossible, job, but in the durable interest of man, we must gradually prepare ourselves for it. Without, this we cannot possibly develop leadership with genuine human sympathy and make man's future safe and secure.

This is, viewed rightly, the element of spiritualism in Buddha's philosophy of life. What is religion in its basic essence? Self-control and love and the first is possibly a means to the attainment of the second. If I am unable to control my desires when they are conflict with collec-

tive interest, I shall never be able to practice love for my neighbor. At this moment of history, when communication and contact between man and man has become so easy, the whole world has become my neighbor, next-door neighbor in a precise sense. Viewed in this light, Buddha can give us a materialist philosophy with a spiritual bias, the first for our material sustenance and the second for our collective security.

The other important point to consider is our attitude to reason and faith. We are generally hostile to religion because it goes against the spirit of science which dominates the outlook of modern man. But if religion is finally an experiment with truth and, an ineffable experience, the experience of Nirvana as Buddha calls it, scientific mind cannot and should not go against it. The last court of appeal of science is experience. In Buddha's approach to religion, we may find therefore a workable measure of compromise of reason and faith which is badly needed for peace in individual as well as collective life.

To ensure social equilibrium, this will, I believe, be the most workable arrangement. When the excesses of scientific scepticism will be toned down by the urge to live a good life, this may lead to a conception of reality, consistent with it, more precisely a philosophy of unity on which in the final analysis traditional religion is based. But, till then, good life by itself can afford to be acceptable by a consensus of opinion as the highest incentive to a stable, social order. Gradually, of course, if things go well as they should, the futility of reason as an organ or knowledge might be realized and we may feel inclined to think in an age of reckless skepticism that intellect

vis-a-vis reality is no better than a "lantern glimmering in a tunnel" as Bergson would have us believe.

Humanity at the moment is indeed far from that goal and Buddha's gospel, a bit diluted to suit our earthly needs, will, I am sure, be found the most powerful incentive to guide the destiny of a world in which science and religion, faith and reason, consciousness of facts and consciousness of values are moving fast in opposite directions.

This may work as a much better world-philosophy than either logical positivism or existentialism, the two prevailing trends in modern thoughts. The attitude of the former is negative and it has very little to offer man as positive guidance for peace and progress. The latter has a practical motive no doubt but it is primarily concerned with the individual and leaves the society to take care of itself in a complex modern environment where the future of the individual is very closely linked with that of the group.

Buddha took much interest in the common man, of course, from a spiritual angle. With the march of millenniums, that sense of values has changed and we are today almost solely interested in the material welfare of man. But it is not true to say that Buddha's mission was a success because of his alliance with the rich as has been sometimes suggested. To cite a few facts will suffice. The King Ajatashatru, the son of Bimbisara, Buddha's devoted disciple, made a conspiracy with Devadata, his rebel cousin and disciple, to kill him. Again, he refused to accept the invitation of a prince because of the prior invitation of a woman of ill fame who

was eager to make amends for her inglorious past. He hastened his death by accepting the invitation of a blacksmith, Chunna, who gave him rotten meat to eat. Even in his death bed, he gave spiritual counsel to Rukkas whose social status was by no means high. It is hardly true to say that Buddha was partial to the rich who helped spread his gospel. He was certainly more eager to help the poor, the down-cast and down-trodden and make for an equitable society. But we must remember Buddha belongs to an age which was prone to give almost exclusive emphasis on spiritual values and showed himself a great revolutionary by keeping the gate of spiritual wisdom open to common man including woman, a privilege they were refused by the prevailing priesthood.

This gives the outlines of the world philosophy of life that man needs at this crisis of history for his survival as well as sustenance. On the basis of this practical philosophy, he must make for a one-world, a phrase much praised during the last world war and now either made light of or viewed with a little suspicion. One-world really means nothing visionary and utopian. The whole world has physically become one and is virtually dominated by the same culture, a secular, scientific outlook. Over and above, nationalism of the sixteenth century pattern does not work well in this complex set-up. To cope with the basic need of man today, we must develop a world-outlook based on a world-philosophy of life and this is what one-world really means. It does not take away from the importance of national states but only tries to make their peaceful co-existence possible through mutual understanding. It does not and cannot also mean that, under

the pressure of an all-comprehensive governmental agency, local bodies of administration are to be abolished and regional states to be superseded and family be substituted by gigantic hotels with big marriage bureaus attached to them. To the contrary, one-world means a cultural understanding that leads to a fresh political adjustment commensurate with the new needs of man which merely national states cannot meet. Rightly viewed, humanism should dominate over nationalism, human interest over regional interest but it never proposes to take away from regional interest and regional freedom. Buddha as a humanist, as a great advocate of the dignity of man, may be of considerable help in the realisation of this much-needed ideal at a crisis when science and politics have virtually failed man and traditional religion has lost its appeal for him.

Attempts have occasionally been made in human history to unite man but, somehow or other, they did not succeed. Three centuries before Christ, Alexander the Great, had behind his military expedition a cultural mission, an ardent desire to hellenize the world. Much mixture and exchange of the cultures of Asia and Europe are admittedly the after-effect of Alexander's expedition. He could not realize his ambition because of his untimely death. What would have happened if he could live long enough is difficult to guess. Probably, through a military expedition, a sound and sober merger of varied cultures cannot be achieved. The sword stifles the head and the voice of the heart with both of whom culture is closely related.

Through their military expeditions, often enough

cruel, the rulers of Ancient Rome tried to spread her culture, Pax Romana, throughout their big empire and spared no efforts to romanize the world as far as they could in that age of limited communication. Ancient Rome neglected large mass of her common man, the appalling number of slaves made captives from her conquests, and, as such, splendor that was Rome could hardly be called humane.

In its outlook religion is no doubt international. Though its ideal was to unite man, unluckily enough, in actual practice it became a most divisive force in human history. This departure from the idea of unity is due to fanaticism, superstitions and prejudices that often enough characterize organized religion but certainly not the substance of religion.

Catholic Church tried to unite Christendom with the bond of an ideal and to make for a one-world for more than a millennium since the fall of the Roman Empire till the days of Renaissance and Reformation. Since then, due to a conflict with a rational, scientific outlook, this ideal has ceased to inspire many and popular, nationalist church grew as a new, spiritual force under the auspices of Protestantism.

From its early inception, Islam with its philosophy of alliance of religion and politics grew into a mighty force and, not long after the death of the Prophet, brought under its control a sizeable portion of Asia, Africa and Europe. But this practical idealism did not inspire the Moslem rulers for long and the ideal of the Quran, that the whole human race is one nation, did not matter much in actual practice.

On a cultural front, much earlier than Catholicism, Hinduism preached its philosophy of unity and Buddhism, its philosophy of universal love. Buddha's philosophy of life must have exerted some influence on Christianity and Hindu philosophical thoughts on Greek thinking in certain ages. But the Hindu society in Medieval India ran counter to its philosophy of unity and Buddhism considerably lost sight of Buddha's philosophy of love being entangled in a metaphysical duel with priestism, its great enemy in Ancient and Medieval India.

The world-understanding did not materialize as yet and remains to be achieved. Through an alliance of science and religion, through Buddha's philosophy of life viewed in the light of modern needs, this could be achieved only if there are men of good will all the world over, right leadership, inspired by humanism, a human view of things, a human assessment of strength as well as weakness of man.

What was difficult to achieve in by-gone ages has become much more feasible at the present moment. World is physically one today and represents basically one culture, scientific culture dominated by technology. This will and must lead to a spiritual understanding as its inevitable counter-part. The fear of total extinction will draw us close to it and inherent goodness of man, in spite of his obvious lapses, will also help achieve it.

Let us have an unerring vision of this goal, realize its practical utility and cultivate genuine love for it and the future of man will and must be bright. Nothing spectacular is really needed. As human beings, we must give a pre-eminently human color to all that concerns

us in life : Science, religion, philosophy, ethics, politics, economics and the rest.

The United Nations marks the beginning of the era of a world-understanding where humanism will dominate over nationalism, durable human interest over regional preferences. When the sanction of the heart will be brought to bear on United Nations side by side with the objective pressure that brought it into existence, it will represent in a real measure our humanist aspirations, help grow peace and steadily make for collective welfare of man.

In Buddha, modernized and understood and interpreted in the light of basic modern temper and needs, lies a great clue to the solution of our puzzle, a way out of our predicament. But I have no mind to dogmatize since, in a very real sense, all great men think alike. Man's future lies in amity and understanding, in adjustment and compromise, and, for this, he must have a comprehensive philosophy of life adequate to his needs. Buddha is a great transparent glass through which he can look at it and also look for it.

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