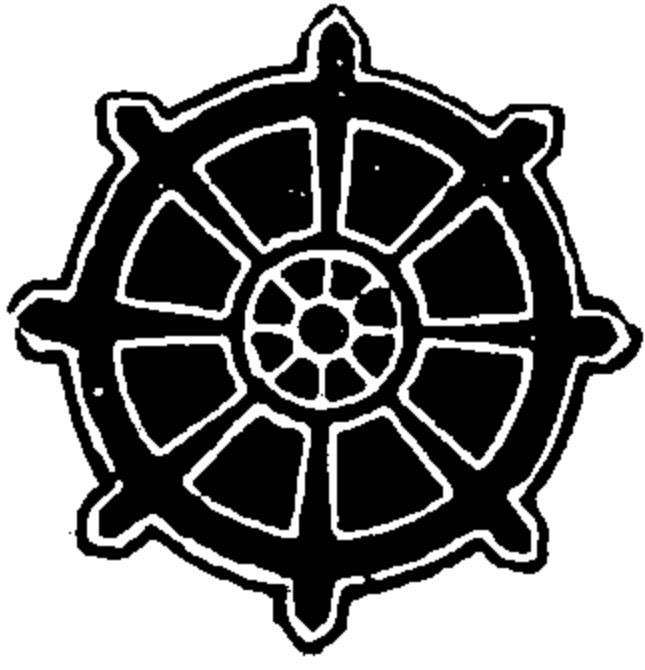




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ESCAPE TO REALITY

BUDDHIST ESSAYS

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ANANDA PEREIRA

ESCAPE TO REALITY

Buddhist Essays

By

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LIFE OR DEATH ?

By his own deeds the fool is consumed, as by a fire.

DHAMMAPADA.

IN an address delivered at Oslo, when he was awarded the Noble Prize for Peace, that great humanitarian, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, spoke for all humanity when he said, "Let us face the facts. Man has become a superman. Not only has he innate physical forces at his command but, thanks to science and to technical advancement, he controls the latent forces of Nature. But this superman suffers from a fatal imperfection. He has not raised himself to that superhuman level of reason which should correspond to the possession of superhuman strength."

This is the Great Show-down. The latent forces of Nature, which man now controls, will destroy man as readily as they will serve him. They are mindless and efficient, like a razor. It is for man to decide whether to shave, or cut his throat. The razor does not care. It waits, supremely indifferent.

Can we raise ourselves to that superhuman level of reason necessary for our survival on this planet? Are we mature enough to realise that we cannot destroy each other any longer without destroying ourselves? A lot depends on the answers to these questions. They will make all the difference between a common home and a common cemetery.

We cannot help feeling that the scientists, with their technical advances, have thrust this problem on humanity too soon. The big decisions are not in the hands of the most mature, as they should be. Great

wisdom, or what Dr. Schweitzer calls a “superhuman level”, is not manifest in the public utterances of those who wield political power. At times the thinking man is aghast at the childish things the leaders say. Some of them still seem to think in terms of cavalry charges, fortresses and waving banners when they speak of war. They still talk of war as a way of “making the world safe” for this, that or the other ideology. They seem to forget that if there is another war, on a big scale, such survivors as are left will not have time to bother with ideologies. It will be a big, dead, poisoned world, and men will have more pressing things to think about.

“All worldlings are mad,” said the Buddha, and we may well accept this as the simple truth. If we ever doubt it, we need only open a newspaper or switch on the radio. In whatever country the newspaper is printed, from whatever country the broadcast comes, the proof is as convincing. Nice bold type, nice clear voices, telling us in unmistakeable terms that we human beings are doing everything except think. But now we *must* think. It is easy to turn away from this problem, of the survival of humanity, and seek refuge in some mental or physical dope. But this is no solution. We *must* face the facts. Humanity must grow up or perish. It must grow up fast, or perish fast. There is not much time. We must scrap all ideologies that call for the liquidation of those who do not agree with us. We must abandon the sort of nationalism that regards with distrust and hatred the people of other nations. We must think of ourselves henceforth as human beings, sharing one world. We must begin *now*, or it will be too late.

How can we attain this maturity of mind? The Buddha taught the way, 2500 years ago. He spoke to individuals, to thinking individuals, but His Message holds good for all humanity. He said, "All things are subject to change. Do not grasp. Let go—and be free."

There has never been a war but arose from greed—greed for land, greed for trade, greed for power, greed for all the transient phenomena of life, leading inevitably to strife. Let go, and strife ceases. Think of the other fellow as a human being, with nothing to gain except your common weal, and strife ceases. Help him, and you help yourself. It does not matter what language he speaks, what political opinions he holds. You share the same planet, breathe the same air, need the same food. You cannot destroy him and survive. Your fate is linked with his.

ARE YOU GROWN-UP ?

If, by renouncing some slight happiness, one may behold a larger one, let the wise man renounce the smaller, considering the greater.

DHAMMAPADA.

THE capacity to renounce a small, immediate happiness in order to secure some greater, more distant happiness is a mark of maturity. Few children have it, and those who do are really more mature than many adults. It means clear vision, sound judgment, and self-control, all of which are signs of a truly adult mind.

Many people go through life without ever growing up. They find it impossible to resist the temptation of immediate pleasures. Under the wise guidance and control of some mentally older person, they may forego such pleasures and pursue a line of action which yields greater happiness in the long run. But it is not of their own independent choice. Given the necessary opportunity and freedom to decide for themselves, they will fritter away their time and energy in the pursuit of the moment's pleasures, letting the future look after itself.

For such people, a theistic religion is a great help. It serves as a steadying and guiding influence. They are like children who need a wise parent, a parent who rewards virtue and punishes vice, who encourages honest endeavour and discourages laziness.

But, as Ingersoll once said, in Nature are no rewards or punishments. There are only consequences. A man who plants a fruit tree, tends it carefully and waits

patiently, is not “rewarded” when at last it bears fruit. He may die before that happens, or the fruit may be indigestible for him because of some change in his personal chemistry. But the fruit appear all the same, not in order to reward him but because that is the way of Nature. It is the same when a man trains a puppy badly and it grows up into a surly dog. The dog may or may not bite him, and if it does happen, it will not be a “punishment”. It will merely be a consequence of bad training.

To the Buddhist, *all* phenomena are consequences, including all personal phenomena. However pleasant or painful they may be, he does not regard them as the rewards or punishments dispensed by some Supreme Being. He accepts them as the results of his own *kamma*, his own past actions and thoughts. He stands on his own feet and moulds his own destiny, in this and in future lives. It is a religion for adults. For this very reason, it does not appeal to those who lack mental maturity. It is too free, too unsheltered. But, to the mature, it is the only reasonable and acceptable way of life.

Accepting this doctrine of personal responsibility, the Buddhist faces life fairly and squarely. He can pursue the slight happiness offered by the world of the senses, or, if he has clear vision, sound judgment, and self-control, he can forego such happiness and seek something infinitely higher. What is this “something”? It is mental progress, clearer and ever clearer vision, sounder and ever sounder judgment, greater and ever greater mastery over self, until at last, as an Arahāt, he reaches the very zenith of mental evolution and attains *Nibbana*. This is the Way taught by all the Buddhas.

It is not an easy road or a short one. Most of us have far to go. But we must all go on that road sometime, and the sooner we start, the sooner we will reach the Goal. Let us not wait for many more lifetimes before we start. Let us not fool ourselves that if we wait patiently, trusting in some Supreme Being, our reward will be eternal bliss. Let us not hang about, like grubby children, expecting a parent or governess to wash us, undress us, and tuck us safely into bed. If we do, we shall wait indefinitely.

THE READY ONES

You yourselves must make an effort. The Tathagatas are only teachers. The meditative ones who enter the Way are delivered from the bonds of Mara.

DHAMMAPADA.

IN our last essay we said that Buddhism is a religion for mental adults. It does not sugar-coat the bitter pills of life or pretend that death is the gateway to everlasting happiness. It does not promise easy salvation in exchange for unquestioning faith in some supreme deity. It teaches self-reliance and a sense of personal responsibility.

No teacher, however wise and kind, can help those who refuse to learn. By fulfilling the ten *Parami*, or Perfections, a being who aspires to be a Buddha develops the qualities necessary to become an unrivalled teacher of gods and men. He is not "atoning" thereby for the wickedness and folly of others, although he sacrifices life itself, again and again, during this period

of preparation. Nobody, however noble-minded, can atone for the faults of others. One can only improve oneself. In the case of a being striving for Buddhahood, this process of self-improvement goes far beyond the level sufficient for purely personal salvation. He wishes to help others as well. But he can only do so by teaching them how to help themselves. There is no salvation by proxy.

This may sound a hard teaching, but it is a reasonable one and it fits into the pattern of life as we know it. One cannot eat for another or learn swimming for another or keep healthy for another. Nor can one "atone" for the wickedness and folly of another. Each must pay his own debts and shape his own destiny. Even Buddhas can only show the way.

A Buddha, also called a Tathagata, is a teacher in the truest and highest sense of the word. One cannot place a limit to the value of such a teacher. Life after life, through countless aeons, beings live in darkness. They cling to this false belief and to that. They live, die and live again, on and on, now in states of pleasure, now in states of pain. But they do not know how to win free from it all. Then, like the dawning of a glorious day, a Buddha appears. He teaches the Way of Freedom. Some leap to this Teaching and profit by it immediately. They are the ready ones, like the great Arahantas of the Buddha's day. For such as they, a single stanza, a phrase, a word, may be sufficient. Others take longer to learn. Still others do not learn at all. They are as unprepared for the Buddha Dhamma as a kindergarten child is unprepared for the Theory of Relativity.

Who are those ready ones who profit immediately by the appearance of a Buddha? According to the Buddha Himself, they are those who are meditative. Already, on their own, perhaps in many past lives, they have trained themselves to think clearly. They have developed their minds. To them, the “effort” of following the Buddha’s Teaching is a glad one. They do not yearn after the so-called prizes of life, the wealth, the power, the worldly advancement that others find so alluring. They see much greater worth in such things as peace of mind, contentment and freedom. They take easily to the Way and are delivered from the bonds of Mara, the bonds of desire, ill-will and ignorance. They win free.

GREATNESS

*Higher than lordship over all earth,
Higher than sojourning in heavens supreme,
Higher than empire over all the worlds,
Is Fruit of Entrance to the Dhamma Stream.*

DHAMMAPADA

We worldlings see greatness in worldly success. To us a reigning sovereign is great, a millionaire is great, a famous actor, surgeon, lawyer or painter is great. We measure greatness by the yardstick of worldly power or fame.

To the Buddha, greatness was something entirely different. He saw beings dying and getting reborn according to their *Kamma*. He knew that an emperor can be reborn as a termite. He saw that, in this world

of everlasting change, there is no security in worldly power, no stability in worldly fame. Death comes to the powerful and the famous just as surely as it comes to the weak and unknown. And with death there is a shedding of worldly power, wealth, fame. Again and again it happens.

Seen against the background of eternal change, there is nothing real in worldly greatness. Even we worldlings can see things in this way if we take the Buddha's Teaching to heart and use our intelligence. But few of us do so. That is why the Buddha said, "Blind is this world. Few are they who truly see."

If, seeing things as they truly are, we refuse to grant that greatness is an attribute of worldly power, fame or success, must we conclude, that there is no such thing as greatness? The Buddha's answer was to point to the Stream-Winner, the *Sotapanna*, the being who has attained the first stage of Sainthood, as that term is understood in Buddhism. "There" said the Buddha, "is one who is greater than any reigning sovereign, than any celestial being, be he even a *Brahma*." And, be it remembered, there are three higher stages of Sainthood, culminating in the attainment of Final Emancipation as an *Arahanta*.

Why is this ? A *Sotapanna* may well be a poor man, unhonoured and unknown. By worldly standards he may be a person of no account at all. In what lies his greatness ?

His greatness lies in the security of having taken a step upward from which there can be no falling back. Never again will he have the "Soul" delusion. Never again will he have doubts as to the true road. Never

again will he believe in mere rites and ceremonies. Never again will he break a single one of the Five Cardinal Precepts of Virtue. Never again will he be born in a plane lower than the human. He can be reborn at most, only seven times more before he attains *Nibbana*. He is like one who, having traversed a terrible desert, sees before him the end of the journey. The sand still burns his feet, the sun still blazes down on his head, he is tired and thirsty. But there, within sight, lie the shady trees, the cool ponds of crystal-clear water. He presses on gladly, knowing that soon he will reach his journey's end. Not for anything in the world would such a man change places with one who is wandering, hopelessly lost, in the desert. That other may be a wealthy man, richly-dressed, with a large following. But he is to be pitied. He is a long, long way off from "Journey's End."

POWER AND FREEDOM

*Higher than lordship over all the earth,
Higher than sojourning in heavens supreme,
Higher than empire over all the world
Is Fruit of Entrance to the Dhamma Stream.*

DHAMMAPADA.

Time and time again in the beginningless succession of existences which is our life in *Samsara* we worldlings have sought power, for its own sake. There is something terribly fascinating about the idea of power. We wish to be "big" men. We wish to do "big" things.

We wish to exercise control over our environment. Hardly any of us wishes, or attempts, to exercise control over himself.

If a wise man were asked, "What would you do if you were offered dictatorship over all the earth" he would answer, "Refuse it of course." For the wise do not seek power, nor are they impressed by it. And yet, how many of us are wise? We seek power, imagining that it is the key to happiness. We strive for power, and if we happen to get it, we generally abuse it.

The wise seek dominance only over themselves, realizing that therein lies the key to freedom. "Fruit of Entrance to the Dhamma Stream" is the first stage of Sanctity, as taught by the Buddha. It is the threshold of freedom. The Streamwinner (*Sotapanna*) is beyond the reach of worldly ambition. He has done, once and for all, with the desire for worldly power.

Politicians, every one of whom is at heart a power-seeker, sometimes talk of "freedom" as though it were a commodity that can be bought with votes or won in the bloody gamble of a revolution. But there is no such thing as mass-deliverance into freedom, and there never will be, whatever politicians may tell us. Humanity in the mass is fit only for what it already has, and just at present that looks like the brink of hell. Humanity in the mass may, and very likely will, plunge over the brink and suffer consequences, for a while. It has happened before and can happen again, for that is the endless story of human stupidity.

But, for the individual, there is always the opportunity to seek freedom. That was the glorious Truth taught by the Buddha, and it still holds good. Freedom

is not the fruit of worldly power. It is the fruit of Virtue and Concentration, leading to Insight.

On this road of deliverance, power too comes as a by-product, strange new power such as worldlings never dream of. But that is not the goal. It is merely a sign of progress made, an encouragement to further effort. Freedom is the one and only goal. The Buddha had such power in incalculable measure, and so too did many of the *arahantas*. They used it wisely and kindly, to help others, never to exercise dominance over them.

GENEROSITY

They are not perished among the dead who, like good comrades travelling on the jungle roads, share scanty store. Lo ! here's an ancient truth.

SAMYUTTA NIKAYA.

Generosity is something more than giving. It is in the heart that one is generous. It springs from a feeling of comradeship, and it manifests itself in countless different ways. It is a bigness of mind.

Patronage is not generosity. In generosity there is no condescension on the part of the giver or servility on the part of the receiver. It is clean and wholesome, and it leaves both parties free.

Springing as it does from a feeling of comradeship, generosity goes hand in hand with sympathy. The generous person is tactful. When he hears someone tell a good story in convivial company, he does not try

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to cap it with a better one immediately and thereby rob the other fellow of his due share of attention. Even in giving, he is tactful. If a poor friend gives his son a cheap camera, he does not immediately buy the boy an expensive camera which will probably eclipse the earlier gift.

It is not only with material possessions that we can be generous. We can be generous with our knowledge, our skill, our energy, our time. We can also be generous in the things we think and say about others. It is easy enough to be generous in the opinions we express about those whose interests do not clash with ours and who are not in competition with us. Thus, a lawyer will readily praise a good architect or doctor or sculptor. but, as a rule, he will be much more cautious and reserved in his praise of another lawyer.

We can be generous also in our attitude towards malicious gossip. There are people who count themselves generous but who are ready to believe all the nasty things they hear about others, even their friends. They pounce eagerly on every bit of malicious gossip and pass it on, adding to it in the process. Such people cannot be truly generous. Deep down in their hearts they are mean and small. Their acts of so-called generosity are nothing more than investments, to secure the goodwill and help of others in this life and rich dividends in future lives.

When a truly generous person gives something to another, be it material help or time or information, there are no strings attached to the gift. He does not even expect gratitude in return. He has given, and that is the end of the matter so far as he is concerned. So he is never bitter when people, as sometimes

happens, take his gifts for granted. He goes on giving. People may think that this sort of thing can be one-sided and unfair to the giver, but that would be a wrong view. The giver is going his own road, growing stronger and freer with each gift. If others selfishly exploit his generosity, they too are going their own road, growing weaker and less free with each act of exploitation. It is because of past deeds, of one sort or the other, that some people are born to wealth and freedom while others are born to poverty and slavery. We lose nothing by being generous. We gain nothing by selfishly exploiting the generosity of others.

The world would be a dark and bleak place indeed if nobody were generous. There would be no Buddha Dhamma, for the Buddha Dhamma is the highest manifestation of generosity, the Buddha's gift to all humanity, the gift of Truth, of Light, of Freedom.

PRAISE AND BLAME

*As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind ;
Even so the wise are not ruffled by praise or blame.*

DHAMMAPADA.

These words apply in their fullest sense to Arahantas but to a certain extent they are true of all wise people. Such people are not easily influenced by the praise or blame of the world. They think for themselves and go their own road.

It may be laid down as a general rule that one is seldom praised or blamed by the world for the intrinsic

nature of one's actions. Take the case of a lawyer. The world at large is unable to form any opinion of his ability except by the results he produces. He may be intelligent and industrious, but, if he is unlucky enough to lose a few cases in succession, the world is apt to take a poor view of his capacity. On the other hand, if he wins a few cases that catch the public eye, his stock rises appreciably. It is the same in most fields of human endeavour.

The weak-charactered tend to accept this state of affairs without question, and to act accordingly. They crave worldly success and they work to achieve it. They know that the world cares little for genuine worth. So they buy their success with counterfeit currency as it were. They pretend to be interested in what the world at large finds interesting. They pretend to like people who can help them. They are seen at the right places, wearing the right clothes, doing the right things. And it works. The counterfeit currency is seldom examined closely or challenged. But such people never rise to be leaders, even in the sphere of worldly activities. They do not have what it takes. To be a leader, one must have the strength to walk alone at times. One must have a mind of one's own.

Of course, obstinacy is not strength. One can prevent an obstinate person from doing almost anything by *commanding* him to do it. The strong do not respond to such tactics. They do not care whether others think them strong and independent or weak and docile, so they always do exactly as they choose, even when curtly ordered to do it! There is freedom in such strength.

Most of us are influenced far too much by what we think other people will think of us. We judge others by our own standards. If we are impressed by certain qualities, such as smartness, a sense of humour, or courage, we assume that others too are impressed by those qualities. So we pretend to have them. Pretence means strain, because we dare not relax and be natural for fear of being exposed for what we really are. We strain to resemble some ideal, instead of admitting frankly that it is an ideal and that we are far below it, and that we are working towards it.

The wise have a basic honesty which scorns all pretence. Therein lies their strength, and their ability to remain comparatively unmoved by praise or blame. They have ideals too, but instead of pretending to be the personification of those ideals, they work towards them with faith and patience. If the world happens to praise them, they are not unduly elated. If the world happens to blame them, they are not unduly depressed. They assess such praise or blame calmly and intelligently, questioning the competence of those who pass judgment, accepting nothing at face value. Having so assessed and questioned, they see their way clearly. Sometimes praise or blame is well-deserved and can be a useful guide. But this is not always the case. If praise or blame is undeserved, it should be ignored, just as a sane man ignores the compliments or insults of a lunatic.

ANGER

*Whoso, his anger, arisen like an uncontrolled
chariot, checks,—Him indeed I call a charioteer.
Rein-holders are other folk.*

DHAMMAPADA

All of us can recall occasions when we were angry. It is an emotion which we share with the rest of the animal kingdom, except perhaps animals like jelly-fish, slugs and worms, and for all we know even they may be furious on occasion. The world we live in is far from perfect. Things happen which, we feel, would not happen if others only were a little more intelligent and considerate, a little less greedy and selfish. When such things happen, the horse of anger takes charge of the chariot of personality, and we are well set for a period of sub-human behaviour.

It is easy to give one's anger a loose rein and let it gallop. It is easy to make it gallop faster and faster with flicks from the whip of self-righteousness. If the mad career does not end in a smash, the runaway horse tires and slows down after a while, the chariot resumes its normal rate of progress, and the charioteer feels a bit foolish. There has been, perhaps, nothing worse than an exhibition of bad manners.

But, all too often, such mad careers do end in smashes. In Lanka, land of the Buddha Dhamma, a depressingly large number of people are killed in quarrels every year. A striking feature of these offences is that, in most cases, the motive seems ridiculously inadequate. A fancied slight at a wedding party, a delay in the repayment of a small debt, a dispute over

the ownership of a tree or even a fruit—such things as these have sufficed as the motive for brutal murders. Why is this?

Clearly, it is not the gravity of the motive that matters, but the character of the person concerned. If a man is childish, if he lacks a sense of humour and sense of proportion, which are really the same thing, any minor annoyance can send him along the road that ends on the gallows. The Buddha Dhamma offers people a peerless method for the building of a strong, wise, kindly character. Why is it that so many people in Buddhist lands do not have that sort of character? It must be that they have not understood the Buddha's Teaching. They call themselves Buddhists. They take part in religious ceremonies. They listen to the *Dhamma* upon occasion. But that *Dhamma* has not soaked into them and permeated them with its coolness and sanity. They are like children, happy, generous and truly lovable at times, but horrible little brutes whenever something sends them into a tantrum. In such black moments they behave as though the Buddha had never lived, never given to humanity His message of love and understanding.

We who are mere worldlings cannot pretend to that mastery over self which was characteristic of the Buddha and the *Arahantas*. To us, anger is a problem. But there are things we can do. There are ways of thinking which make the control of anger less difficult. To begin with, we should understand that the failure to control anger is always a sign of weakness, *never a sign of strength*. We all like to be considered strong and masterful. Anger, when it takes charge of us, does make us feel stronger and more masterful than

we do normally. But this a mere delusion, misleading and dangerous. In truth, we are, at such times, weaker and less efficient than normal. A clever boxer, if he knows that his opponent has a quick temper, will do his best to provoke a fit of temper, *because it makes his opponent more vulnerable*. Whenever we get angry we should realize that the strength we feel is not the strength of the charioteer in us. It is the strength of the runaway horse. We should immediately try to put the charioteer back in control. If we can do this, we are masters. If we cannot, we are slaves.

It is also important to reflect that nothing ever matters half so much as we think it does. There are people who take themselves so seriously that they seem to be in a state of *rigor mortis* while still alive. Such people should realize that their occasional exhibitions of bad temper are not nearly as impressive as they imagine. A man in a temper looks ugly and may even be dangerous, But he is too funny to be impressive. The wise man learns to laugh at himself at times. If he cannot, others will.

E Ä T I N G

What is the one ?

All beings are dependent on food.

This is the first of the ten sets of questions and answers which every *Samanera* (novice monk) has to learn. It is the basic truth about all living beings. From the greatest to the smallest, the highest to the lowest, all beings depend on nourishment. Stripped to its bare essence, life is a process of eating and of avoiding being eaten.

If a drop of water from any wayside ditch is examined under a powerful microscope, the truth becomes evident. One sees beings, amazingly tiny beings, each an individual, each preoccupied and actively engaged in the business of keeping alive. And what is that business? Eating and avoiding being eaten. In such an examination one may see a fight as fierce and as startling as between a shark and an octopus. One of these infinitesimally tiny beings seizes another. The other struggles to escape. There is a furious commotion, a wriggling and squirling, pauses for rest and resumptions of violence until, inevitably, the weaker is overcome and eaten by the stronger.

This process goes on continually, in every drop of water that is not sterile, in every cubic millimetre of soil that harbours animal life. Higher up the scale of life, in the visible world, the struggle goes on with unabated violence. On the land, in the water, in the air, living beings are eating and being eaten every minute, every second.

In this picture such things as kindness and gentleness are so rare as to be virtually non-existent. When the business of living, of keeping alive, lies entirely in eating and avoiding being eaten, kindness and gentleness are suicidal qualities. A gentle amoeba will not survive very long, except as the pleasant memory of a less gentle amoeba. The same thing is true of a tiger or a shark. *Tanha* (Craving) is the dominant quality of all living beings. It means, basically, a good appetite. The greedy ones eat more and grow bigger and stronger than the poor eaters. As the risk of being eaten diminishes with the individual's size and strength, the hearty eaters stand a better chance of surviving and breeding, than the poor eaters.

This is true of human life as well, though in human life the phenomenon is more complex. In primitive society a big eater has to hunt for his food. He thus has a strong incentive to be a good hunter, and more often than not becomes one. He is generally a good fighter as well and is likely to acquire more wives and breed more children than his weaker brethren. But as society evolves and grows more complex, other qualities come into the picture. Thus a poor eater may have some specialized skill, such as the ability to make things, which gives him a greater earning capacity than a hunter. But in him too the same law operates, and he stands a better chance of survival and reproduction than less capable folk.

In human life as lived in highly organized societies, the big eater is replaced by the go-getter, the man who knows what he wants and is smart enough to get it. This too is a sort of eating. Power and fame take the place of food. Such people grow powerful and

are held in respect by their fellows. The game of “eat and avoid being eaten” still goes on, but in a wider sense. Instead of food, men crave power, position, wealth and what are called “good things of life.” They fight for these things.

In direct contrast to all this comes Buddha’s Teaching of a process of *letting go* which leads to freedom. He taught the basic truth about all life, that is dependent on food, on eating and avoiding being eaten. But He also taught people the way to win free from this obscene activity, this horrible round of birth, decay, old age and death and the recurrent struggle to grab what one needs and hold what one has grabbed. Put very simply, His Teaching is one that stresses *Freedom* as the one goal to which the intelligent people should aspire. *All things*, He said, are impermanent, undesirable, certain to pass away utterly, to be got rid of. Cling to nothing whatsoever in this world!

R I T U A L

Not in mere rites and ceremonies, nor in much learning, nor in the gain of concentration, nor in lonely abode, nor in thinking, ‘I enjoy the bliss of renunciation resorted to by the non-worldling,’ should you, O Bhikkhu, rest content, without accomplishing the annihilation of ferments.

DHAMMAPADA

Those who do not understand the Buddha Dhamma are sometimes misled by the religious practices of the Buddhist worldling. The offering of flowers at Buddhist shrines, the recurrent “taking” of the Five

Precepts by the Buddhist layman, the chanting of *pirith* (recitations of protection), and the salutation of *Bhikkhus* (monks) these and many other practices are pointed to as evidence of a highly ritualistic content in Buddhism.

This is due to lack of understanding. The Buddha has said that, just as there is one taste which permeates every drop of water in the sea, the taste of salt, so there is but one taste which permeates the entirety of His Teaching, the taste of Deliverance. In the stanza quoted above the Buddha has expressly pointed out that rites and ceremonies do not constitute the be-all and end-all of the way of life taught by him. The 'ferments' to be annihilated are the four *Asavas*—longing for sense pleasures, longing for continual existence, false views, and ignorance. When these are annihilated a being wins free from the round of rebirth. On this road, when a being attains the very first stage of Sainthood, he loses all faith in rites and ceremonies. So it will be seen that by no stretch of imagination can Buddhism be called a religion which values ritual for its own sake.

But there is no doubt that for one who is still a worldling, one who has not attained the first stage of Sainthood, rites and ceremonies have a value. Religious ritual is a means to an end. In time of stress it can be an anchor. In time of grief it can be a solace. In time of temptation it can be a reminder that there are higher things in life than the physical appetites.

So the Buddhist offers flowers at the foot of a sacred *Bo* tree or before an image of the Buddha. While doing so he reflects on the perfections of the Incompa-

rable One. He reflects, too, on the impermanence of the flowers he offers. With such thought, his mind grows calm and steadfast. He 'takes' the Five Precepts recurrently, day after day, because he wishes to remind himself of these voluntary observances. He chants, and listens to, *pirith* because it is the Truth, enshrined in the words of the Buddha Himself. He salutes Bhikkhus because they and the yellow robe they wear, represent the highest way of life possible for a human being. These are rituals, if one chooses to call them that. But they are not meaningless rituals. They are very definitely a means to an end. Only a superficial and unthinking observer would see a man sharpening an axe and conclude that he does so because he believes there is some ultimate good in the process.

Of course, as with many other helpful things, ritual can assume an undue importance in foolish minds. This must be guarded, or else one will be mistaking the means for the end. But, as indicated by the Buddha, this observation applies not only to ritual but also to vast learning, the attainment of concentration, the solitary life and the bliss of renunciation. None of these is the end. All these are like rafts that carry one across a river, they are like the timbers of one single raft. When the river is crossed the raft is left behind.

F E A R

*Beings who see fear in the non-fearsome,
And no fear in the fearsome,
Embrace false views and go to a woeful state.*

DHAMMAPADA

According to the Buddha there is only one thing of which we need to be afraid, and of this, unfortunately, most worldlings are *not* afraid. It is the doing of evil. Unskilful action (*akusala kamma*), of any kind is fearsome. By unskilful action the Buddha meant such action as tends to increase greed, hatred, and ignorance, because it is by such action that we prolong and intensify our suffering, life after life, in this treacherous sea of *Samsāra*. The wise fear such action and do their best to avoid it, but, to the foolish, such action often seems harmless, pleasurable, and even praiseworthy. Thus do foolish parents teach their children to “get on in the world” at all costs, ignorant of the dreadful price those children will have to pay for that temporary and utterly meaningless advance.

On the other hand, worldlings are afraid of a number of things which, to a Buddha, are non-fearsome. They fear physical danger, financial loss, sickness, unpopularity and a host of other ills which are merely part of the environment in which life is lived. According to the Buddha, such fears are stupid. “Wherever fear arises,” He said, “it arises in the fool, not in the wise.” He was speaking here of those beings who see fear in the non-fearsome.

A certain Brahmin once asked the Buddha whether those who resort to the lonely depths of the forest for meditation, while yet unattained to concentration, are not seized with fear. The Buddha’s reply was illuminating. He said, “Thou has said it, Brahmin, thou

has said it !” He then went on to explain that those ascetics who, for one reason or another, are unprepared for the lonely forest life, *are* seized with fear. Before He attained Enlightenment, the Bodhisatta deliberately sought those “places of horror and affright” and spent lonely vigils there in order to experience and overcome that very fear. Being already a yogi of perfect purity and high mental attainment, He met and mastered the fear, soaring at last to those heights which only Buddhas attain. But He recognized the fear, saw its basis, and saw too that to the average worldling, of frail virtue and irresolute mind, it can be a very real thing.

It is true, as the Buddha said, that fear arises only in the fool. But then it is equally true that we worldlings *are* fools. That is why we are still worldlings. We crave for things, cling to things, hate each other for these very qualities, and are steeped in ignorance. So we experience fear. If, on occasion, we are brave, it almost invariably is for the wrong reason. For instance, the “brave” hunter, armed with the latest thing in sporting rifles, does not fear the elephant. In arming himself against a meaningless fear in the non-fearsome, he sees no fear in the truly fearsome, that is, the doing of evil. His folly is doubled.

There is only one way to get rid of fear, the way shown by the Buddha. Until that End is achieved, and Final Deliverance won, we will experience fear. But let us at least have the intelligence to recognize it for what it is—the unpleasant fruit of our own greed, our own ill-will, our own delusion.

FREEDOM FROM FEAR

*All tremble at punishment,
All fear death.
Comparing others with oneself,
One should neither kill nor cause to kill.*

DHAMMAPADA

The virtuous person, by reason of his virtue, gives peace of mind to those about him. He is not a menace. He will not kill others, or rob them, or corrupt them, or slander them, or get drunk and make a nuisance of himself. A person who observes the Five Precepts of Virtue is a wholesome and pleasant neighbour.

There are those who seek to belittle these Precepts by calling them "negative". They take no thought of the positive good the virtuous precept-observer does by making his environment a happy and peaceful one for others. We sometime forget that what most people want is not active assistance but freedom from interference. They can get along quite well on their own, and only ask to be left alone. Some over-enthusiastic social workers would do well to remember this. A happy, calm environment is a precious thing in this world of strife and worry. Those who, by their lives, help create and maintain such an environment do a great service to humanity.

Ascetics carry no weapons when they retire to lonely places to meditate. And yet one rarely, if ever, hears of an ascetic being harmed by wild beasts. It is because wild beasts too are sensitive to a good environment. They sense, and react favourably to, an atmosphere of peace and goodwill. Indeed, there is

reason to think that wild beasts are better than humans in this respect. It is not likely that wild beasts would have harmed Jesus, or Giordano Bruno.

To the Buddhists it is axiomatic that no good is ever achieved by harming one's fellow-beings. That is why the pages of Buddhist history do not stink with the blood of innocent victims, killed or tortured in the name of religion. The Buddha Dhamma is a free and noble way of life, appealing only to the best in human nature. We do not seek to force this way of life upon others, for compulsion is the very antithesis of freedom. Nor do we claim, as certain other religionists do, that immediate conversion to Buddhism is necessary for Final Deliverance. There is time, plenty of time. There is all eternity. Those who do not accept this teaching now will do so some day. We need not worry about them, or see ourselves in the heroic role of Saviours. Those others will save themselves, though not with the speed, nor by the means, that they now believe in.

The Buddhist might well ask what his attitude should be towards the follower of some other religion who tries to convert *him*. The Buddhist attitude should be one of understanding kindness and long-suffering patience. After all, the attempt is motivated by a friendly impulse, however misguided. And the Buddhist might well return kindness for kindness by telling the would-be converter something of Buddhism.

NATIONALISM

*Neither in the sky, nor in the mid-ocean,
nor by entering a mountain cave,
is found that place on earth,
where abiding, one will not be overcome by death.*

DHAMMAPADA.

The Buddha spoke to all men and for all time. He was born a Sakyan, in Northern India. But it is not as a Sakyan, nor as an Indian, that one thinks of Him. He was too big for that.

To a follower of the Buddha, there can be no meaning in 'nationalism'. How can one sing 'Rule Britannia' with any degree of fervour or conviction when, according to the Buddha, one will presently die, and may be reborn as a Chinaman? Nationalism is good enough for those unenlightened and short-sighted folk who cannot see the possibilities of rebirth. What is more, it is rooted in mistaken ideas of 'me' and 'mine'.

The Buddha taught that there is nothing permanent or stable in any living being. There is nothing of which one can say, 'This am I. This is mine.' How then can a sincere Buddhist say 'This is my country', or, 'These are my people'? If we really accept the Buddha's Teaching, we cannot think of ourselves as the nationals of any particular country. We cannot, strictly speaking, think of ourselves even as human beings, because even that state of affairs is transitory. We can only regard ourselves as beings, that is, as mind and body fluxes, ever changing, subject to birth, decay and death.

In many parts of the world today, the spirit of narrow nationalism seems to be growing stronger. People tend more and more to think of themselves as members of some nation rather than as intelligent living beings. Like a dreadful cancer, this spirit of nationalism is eating into everything that is noble and generous in human nature, replacing reason, love and honesty with its own evil substance. There are some feeble-minded people who regard this as a wholesome change. But no genuine follower of the Buddha can be misled by them.

While we live this life, as humans, let us at least have the bigness of mind to see ourselves as human beings rather than as Sinhalas, Americans, Burmans, Russians and so on, as the case may be. Let us not be so petty about our own particular national language, national dress, national customs, rites, ceremonies and background.

The Buddha was like the sun, and, like sunlight, His Dhamma is for all men, whatever language they speak, whatever clothes they wear, whatever country they call 'home'. The Buddha's language was Truth. He was clothed in Truth, and the whole world was His home, for Truth is everywhere and for all time.

WORDS

*Better than a discourse of thousand words, imbued
with worthlessness,
is one significant sentence which, being heard,
calms one.*

DHAMMAPADA

They pour in upon us, every time we open a newspaper, every time we switch on the radio — words, words, words. Who speaks them? Who writes them? All too often we do not even bother to find out. We have no time. But quietly, subtly, insidiously. the words we read and hear are influencing us all the time. That is why people pay so highly for advertisement space in the newspapers and time on radio commercial programmes. They know that words matter a great deal, cunningly selected words, skilfully strung together so as to work on the imagination. They know that suggestive words, repeated again and again, come to be accepted as true.

And who are these people who exploit words with such care and persistence? Invariable they are people who want to sell something, be it a patent medicine or an insurance policy or a political ideology. They are all trying to put something across, and they do it in words—frightening words, inflammatory words, words that appeal to the appetites and the emotions. Rarely, if ever, do they appeal to reason and intelligence.

By appealing to reason and intelligence one encourages people to think for themselves, and that is a very dangerous thing if one has something to sell. One is on much safer ground with the emotions and appetites, and they are so many and varied that there

is plenty of scope. A critical study of newspaper advertisements can be both instructive and entertaining. One is informed that So-and-so's shirts are worn by the "Best People". One is not told why, nor is one encouraged to ask. The mere information that some nebulous class of people called the "Best" habitually wear So-and-so's shirt is considered sufficient inducement for other people to wear them. And the funniest part of the business is that So-and-so is absolutely right in his estimate of human nature. His sales prove it very satisfactorily.

Then there is the appeal to fear. Insurance companies exploit it shamelessly. One is urged to insure against all sorts of calamities. One is not told why the insurance company is so willing to give such insurance, and the question is not encouraged. The share-holders know the answer, because it appears regularly in the dividends. The majority of people who insure themselves do not need insurance. If they did, the insurance companies would be ruined.

It is the same in the realm of politics. Here too it is a question of selling something by an appeal to appetite and emotion rather than intelligence. Words are used, thousands and thousands of suggestive words that tend to deaden the critical faculty. They are repeated again and again, on public platforms, in print and over the radio, and men come to accept them as true. It is done deliberately. It is difficult to think clearly and coherently under a barrage of propaganda, and politicians know this. It is not their business to encourage clear, coherent thought.

But, as individuals, it is our business to think thus. It is our duty, if we value our sanity. In all the thousands of words poured on us by the sellers of

things, there is not one that brings peace of mind. They are words which tend to make us want things, to want the things that are for sale.

But peace of mind is not for sale. It is a gift which we give ourselves—if we are wise. It is a gift which the wise have given themselves, since the beginning of time. If we can shut out from our minds the clamour of those who are trying to sell us worthless things, we may hear one significant sentence that brings calm, a sentence such as the Buddha spoke when He said, “Whoso in the world controls this stupid, unruly craving, from him sorrows fall away, like water-drops from a lotus-leaf.”

IGNORANCE—THE GREATEST TAIN.

Misconduct is a taint in a woman, niggardliness is a taint in a benefactor. All taints are evil indeed, in this world and the next. A worse taint than such as these is Ignorance, the greatest taint. Abandoning this taint, be perfect, O Bhikkhus.

DHAMMAPADA.

A Buddhist is sometimes asked why the Buddha did not tell people about certain things that are known today but were not known to His contemporaries. If He was omniscient, they argue, He must surely have known all about the Solar System, the Galaxy and so on. Then why did He not correct the current false notions about these and other matters?

The question is reasonable enough, provided the questioner is rather smug about what we know today, and chooses to ignore the whole purpose of the Buddha's life. To underline the smugness first, can we really presume to be dogmatic about our present views, or are they subject to revision in the light of further data? For all we know, we may be as far from the truth today as were the men of the Stone-Age. A thousand years hence, if nuclear weapons have not made a dead planet of this Earth, people may consider our present ideas as more or less on a level with pre-Copernican views of the geocentric structure of the universe. And, to a Buddha-mind, the ideas that will be in vogue a thousand years hence may be as fantastically and obviously untenable.

But, more important than this is the question of what the Buddha *wanted* to tell people, because it was vitally necessary for their deliverance. Once, in a forest, He compared a few leaves in His hand with the foliage around him, as illustrative of what He had taught, when compared with what He knew. And yet, what He taught was sufficient for man's deliverance from suffering. Nothing that needed to be said was left unsaid by that Supreme Teacher.

It would surely be naive to assume that such a Being would bother to correct people's wrong ideas on such matters as the structure of the physical world. Just as a parent sees no harm in his child's happy belief in Santa Claus, so the Buddha saw no harm in existing ideas about the structure of the world. It did not matter to Him whether people thought that the Sun moved round the Earth or the Earth round the Sun. Nor will it ever matter to anybody who values the world of mind rather than the material world as relevant to human progress. A man may be good and wise, though he believes that if one travels far enough

one will come to the edge of the world. Many men, much better and wiser than we are, held that belief.

The Buddha was not concerned with knowledge as an end in itself. What then is that Ignorance which He condemned as being the greatest taint? It is the Ignorance that stands in the way of a being's progress to deliverance from suffering, the Ignorance that feeds the fires of greed and hate, the Ignorance that keeps us wandering, life after life, in *Samsara*.

We are all steeped in this Ignorance, however smart and knowledgeable we may think we are. We have not realized that *all* phenomena are transient, not worth clinging to, ever passing to destruction, to be got rid of. So we cling and crave and hope and plan, sowing the seeds of further existence in this sorrow-laden world of fleeting shadows. Of what advantage, in this context, is the knowledge that the Earth moves round the Sun? All the discoveries of science have not helped humanity a hair's breadth forward on the road to happiness. Indeed, human folly is so great that the more we learn about the material world, the smaller and meaner we seem to become. Today humanity has become so mean that it finds difficulty in seeing any alternative to suicide, like a scorpion stinging itself to death with its own venom. If this is the result of knowledge, it is better to know less. Perhaps the Buddha foresaw this when He withheld from the world so much of what He knew. He came to teach Wisdom, not to impart useless and possibly dangerous knowledge.

THE POWER OF TRUTH

*In the world there surely is virtue, goodness,
Truth, cleansing, improvement,—
By this fact I make a supreme Act (assertion) of Truth.*
JATAKA.

The East has long believed that there is power in the assertion of truth. There are many instances in the Buddhist Scriptures of the use of this truth-power for various purposes, such as healing the sick. It is effective when the assertion is made by one in whom the truth relied on is manifest, as when a virtuous and good person says or thinks, "By the power of the truth that there is virtue and goodness in the world may so-and-so be cured of his illness". Such a person, quite understandably, would make the assertion with more confidence than would a person whose own virtue and goodness are questionable, and his mind therefore serves as a better conductor of the truth-power. There is no doubt that faith, or confidence, is necessary.

There was a time when it was considered fashionable and "modern" to scoff at anything so intangible as thought-force. But today even the materialistic West is awakening to the fact that the mind has certain capacities which defy all attempts at explanation on modern scientific lines. Matter itself has ceased to be the dependable thing it was a few years ago, and has betrayed the materialist by turning out to be nothing more than a manifestation of energy. What is energy? Nobody knows. One can only call it by various other names and cite examples of its manifestation, such as electricity, magnetism, gravitation, heat and light. Is it not reasonable to suppose that thought also is a form of energy, and that such energy can and does affect the so-called material world?

Of course, it is not everybody who can split rocks by thinking, or, for the matter of that, generate enough thought-force even to lift a feather off the ground. But then, how many people know how to generate enough electrical energy to split a rock or even lift a feather? In comparison with the world's population, very very few. And yet, nobody will deny that electricity is a real and potent force.

The vital difference between electricity and thought-force is that whereas, in the modern world, the former has become the servant of any fool who knows how to pull a switch or press a button, the latter must still be generated and applied by each individual unaided by others, save for such advice as they may be able to give. Each individual must build his own mental dynamo and learn how to use it. Each must be a skilled technician and operator.

In the East there has been no lack of teachers, and today the methods taught by many of them are to be found in books. Supreme among such teachers was the Buddha. He understood the nature of thought-force as nobody else has understood it, and He knew that one way, *a relatively easy way*, in which such force may be generated and applied is by the Act (or assertion) of Truth (*Saccakiriya*). It must be understood, though, that the sole purpose of His life was to teach people how to win free from the suffering inherent in all existence, and not merely to teach them how to develop thought-force. That was incidental, and He did not value power for its own sake.

But there is no denying that we worldlings sometimes need the power to help our fellow beings in various ways. The Act of Truth, properly used, does give us this power. But we must be qualified to use it. We must, in our own conduct, manifest the Truth we

seek to use. The laws of Nature do not permit a libertine to exploit the truth of virtue, nor a miser the truth of generosity. If we are qualified to use it, the Act of Truth is an unfailing source of power. With it we can draw our fellows from sickness towards health, from madness towards sanity, from despair towards hope, from hate towards love.

Today, from the point of view of any kindly person who does not wish to see this earth turned into a shambles, such power is *urgently* needed. This essay is written in the hope that all such people, whatever their religion, will use it for the good of humanity.

THE HAPPY ROAD

He who, discarding human bonds and transcending celestial ties, is completely delivered of all bonds,—him I call a Brahmana.

DHAMMAPADA

The Buddha taught the way to absolute freedom from all bonds, human and celestial. To the worldling, enmeshed in human bonds such as the desire to win fame and wealth here in this life, it is hardly necessary to speak of celestial ties. Such a man does not begin to know the meaning of freedom before death overtakes him. He lives shackled to his worldly ambitions and dies with them. If those ambitions are still unfulfilled at the moment of death, as usually happens, because there is no such thing as “enough” for such a man, the chances of a happy rebirth are very slim.

But there are people who have the understanding to renounce worldly ambition in this gross sense for some-

thing higher. They know that death must come, and that it will mean leaving behind all such things as wealth and fame and worldly authority. So they live with one eye on the next life as it were, thinking of future rather than present success. Such people may get the reputation of being "unworldly", but really, they are more far-seeing than unworldly, just as a shrewd fellow who invests his money is more far-seeing than the man who spends it as soon as he gets it, but may be just as worldly.

Such foresight has its rewards, both in this life and the next, and we have the Buddha's word for it. Intelligence always pays, and the stupid have no cause to feel superior to the intelligent in that they have taken no thought for the morrow. And, when tomorrow comes, the stupid will have no justification to grumble at their bad luck, though they will certainly do so.

But, as we pointed out earlier, the intelligent person who invests in the next life is not really unworldly. He will reap the rewards of his foresight, but they will be worldly rewards, even if he is reborn in a celestial plane. He will still be in bondage and, even celestial beings are mortal. In due course, after the lapse of a long, long time, such a person will die in that celestial plane and be reborn according to the balance of his *kamma* at that death moment. He may be reborn as a human once again, or as a being in some lower plane. And so the story of life goes on. It is never done until one attains *Nibbana*. All living is in world, and all desire for happy and safe living is worldly, if it goes no further.

The great danger is that mind is unstable. The man who lives wisely and well, storing up good *Kamma*,

may not live so wisely and well when, as a result of that very good *kamma*, he is reborn in a celestial plane. The steady, plodding human caterpillar of this life may turn into the light-headed celestial butterfly of the next. And, if such a man is reborn as a human, with no memory of the past, he will not even know why he is wealthy and fortunate. He may become a play-boy and libertine.

So, the Buddha advised us to get rid of *all* bonds, human and celestial, and win final deliverance. Investment in future lives is good, but it is not enough. Such investment must be made only with a view to progress on the road to *Nibbana*. Future happiness and security must be the means to an end, the end being Freedom.

A L O O F N E S S

*Seek no intimacy with the beloved, and
never with the unbeloved.*

*Not seeing the beloved, and the sight of
the unbeloved, are both painful.*

DHAMMAPADA.

Thoughts of "me" and "mine" are at the root of all our loves and hates. We may think highly of one person for his good qualities, and think poorly of another for his bad qualities, but we cannot love the one or hate the other unless there has been some personal contact. When parted from those whom we love, we feel a sense of personal loss. When forced to associate with those whom we hate, we feel a personal irritation. Both feelings are painful.

The Buddha saw that these feelings spring from the delusion of self, and are stimulated by personal contacts. The notion of self is a constant factor, and will remain so until we see things as they really are. It would be useless to pretend that we have eliminated it at the very beginning of our search for Enlightenment. So we are obliged to tackle the problem on the level of personal contacts, by making such contacts as light as possible.

Intimate association with the beloved and the unbeloved are both potentially painful. Aloofness, on the other hand, tends to lessen the intensity of such emotions and the pain they can engender. Such is the teaching of the Buddha, clear and uncompromising. Each of us is free to choose his own way of life. There may be those who will call this teaching cold and inhuman. They may say, "It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all".

They are at liberty to love and lose as many times as they please, in this life and in future lives, until they realise that they are making fools of themselves. There may be others who pride themselves on being good haters. They too are free to go their own road until repeated suffering teaches them that the hater harms himself far more than he harms the object of his hate.

There are a few people, extremely few, to whom the teaching of aloofness has a strong appeal. They are the mature ones, the old campaigners of Samsara, who have had their fill of loving and hating. They are beginning to feel instinctively that freedom lies in letting go. It is to such people really that the Buddha spoke. The rest merely happened to be present, and to hear with their ears but not with their hearts.

Can such a teaching be called selfish? Surely not, when it leads to the elimination of the concept of self. Intimate association with people is *not* unselfish behaviour. It is the manure upon which the tree of Self grows and thrives, bearing in abundance its fruit of suffering. Aloofness is just the opposite of such behaviour. It is the manure upon which the tree of Wisdom grows and thrives, bearing at last the fruit of Insight.

Let us not delude ourselves. The world we live in is built upon the very notion of self which the Buddha sought to eradicate. All its activities, all its vested interests, are bound up with this basic idea. Any departure from the accepted standards of conduct will inevitably be branded as anti-social. Aloofness is such a departure, and is bound to be resented by those who love the world and its ways. Need that deter the wise?

STILLNESS

*As in ocean mid-deeps
No wave arises,—but all is still,—
So be still, unmoved ;
Pride let the Bhikkhu nowhere entertain.*

TUVATAKA SUTTA, SUTTA NIPATA.

Deep down in the sea, where the sea is really deep, half a mile, a mile, two miles below the surface, all is still. Here there are no tempests, no storms. There is none of the fuss and bother that beset surface waters and shallows.

So it is with people who have attained Ultimate Deliverance. So it was with the Buddha and the Arahantas. They had reached the Final Peace. Never again, for them, the flurry and turmoil, the longing and anxiety, the feverish, meaningless activity of the worldling.

The Buddha, in the stanza quoted above, advised *all* Bhikkhus to be like that. The advice holds good for lay folk as well. Although the worldling has not attained that Final Peace, he can, by a sedulous cultivation of calm, experience as it were a shadow of that stillness.

Why should he cultivate calm? The answer is simple. When one is in motion, it is difficult to judge motion in one's environment. Travelling in a moving vehicle, another vehicle, moving at the same speed in the same direction, seems to be still. An object that is actually still, like a tree, seems to be moving. One's impressions of one's environment are conditioned by one's own movement. It is so with the mind. When the mind is restless and flurried, it is difficult to realize

the deep, eternal Truths. Things that are actually changing are accepted as constant. Things that are actually constant, such as the Truths of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta* (impermanence, suffering and soul-lessness) are not perceived at all. The mind keeps rushing with changing phenomena, so busy and occupied that it is unable to see clearly or deeply or truly.

So the Buddha advised stillness. The whole system of *Samatha bhavana* (meditation for calm), as taught by the Buddha, has this one object in view. The mind, when purified of all sensual thoughts and concentrated on a *Kammatthana* (subject of concentration) becomes utterly still. It also grows very powerful, so powerful that such feats as levitation, clairvoyance, clair-audience, thought-reading, remembrance of past lives, and so on, become possible. But these are merely by-products of *Samatha Bhavana*. The one and only object of such meditation is stillness – stillness which leads to clear, deep, true vision.

Lay people, in their daily lives, are badly handicapped when it comes to meditation. It is not so much the actual duties of the layman that interfere, though these do take up a large proportion of the layman's life. But the worst handicap is worry. We tend to worry about what we have done, are doing and intend to do, about what has happened, is happening and is likely to happen. This worry, says the Buddha, is useless and foolish. How can one stop it? Illustrations help. In times of worry and flurry one can think of the Buddha's own illustration—the mid-deeps of the ocean, where all is still. So thinking, one can become less excited about the fussy little things that cause worry.

Z E A L

*Look now, O Bhikkhus, I urge you ;
Transient innately are all compounds ;
With zeal work out your aim.*

MAHA PARINIBBANA SUTTA

These were the last words of the dying Buddha. They were plain, simple, direct words, going straight to the heart of things. For countless aeons He had perfected Himself in order that He might teach living beings the way to end suffering, once and for all. In his final existence, as a Buddha, He bent all His tremendous power to that one end, never sparing Himself, never postponing for tomorrow that which could be done today. And at last, when that glorious life was at its end, these were the words He spoke. They crystalize the very essence of His teaching, and may well serve as a motto for all Buddhists.

We Buddhists of today are feeble specimens indeed, in comparison with the Buddha and the mighty Arahants. We most of us, regard life as desirable on the whole. We mouth the Buddha's words and profess to follow His teaching, but our actions are sadly lacking in that zeal, that wholehearted endeavour, which is necessary for success. We are like people who have queued up and are patiently waiting at a motor 'bus halting-place. The Gotama Buddha 'bus has not yet arrived. So we are waiting, kicking our heels and whiling away the time in silly gossip about motor 'buses and the service they do for the public. We are waiting to pay our few miserable cents for a ticket to Nibbana and to be carried there in comfort by Metteyya Buddha, without the slightest exertion on our part. Nothing on earth will induce us to *walk*.

But, alas, the dispensation of a Buddha is not a motor 'bus nor any other kind of conveyance in which people are carried to Nibbana. Buddhas are only teachers, though in the highest sense of the word. They teach the Way of Deliverance. Gotama Buddha's teaching still exists in the world, and if we are unable to profit by it and begin to work for Deliverance now it is futile to expect that we will achieve that end when we hear the identical teaching from Metteyya Buddha. The teaching is clear enough and cannot possibly be made clearer. If anything is lacking it is lacking in ourselves.

What then should we do? First of all we must get rid of the halting-place mentality. We must realise that Nibbana is to be attained by our own personal endeavour and that it is not a paradise to which we can be carried by a Buddha. Buddha's are powerful, more powerful by far than any other living beings. But this is something that even Buddha's cannot do, Each being must work out his own salvation.

Having once realized this, we must get going here and now, following the Buddhas teaching and making a sincere effort to live the sort of life that leads to Nibbana. "With zeal work out your aim" said the Buddha. Let us take that to heart. *With zeal* let us observe the precepts of virtue. *With zeal* let us practise the perfections. *With zeal* let us endeavour to purify and calm our minds, following the methods that he taught. Let us use the opportunities we have here and now.

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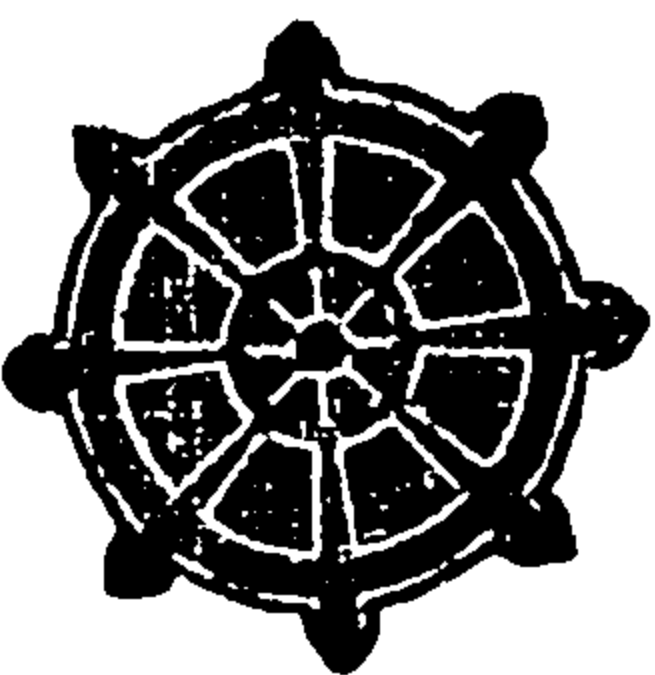
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Introduction

Quite contradictory views have been expressed in Western literature on the attitude of Buddhism towards the concept of God and Gods. Hence it was considered useful to gather within the covers of one slender booklet some source material on the subject. Our collection contains quotations from the Discourses of the Buddha as preserved in the Pāli Canon, followed by extracts from Mahāyāna literature.

From these texts it will be seen that the idea of a *personal deity*, a Creator god, conceived to be eternal and omnipotent, is incompatible with the Buddha's teachings. On the other hand, conceptions of an *impersonal godhead* of any description (World-soul, etc.) are excluded by the Buddha's teaching on Anattā (Not-self, unsubstantiality), with which several publications in this series have dealt and will further deal.*

In Buddhist literature, the belief in a Creator god (*issaranimāna-vāda*) is frequently mentioned, and rejected, along with other causes wrongly adduced to explain the origin of the world, as for instance, World-soul (*pradhāna*), Time, Nature, etc. God-belief, however, is not placed in the same category as the wrong views which deny moral efficacy of actions, which assume a fortuitous origin of man and nature, or teach absolute determinism; these views are said to be altogether pernicious, having definite bad results (*niyata-micchādiṭṭhi*) due to their effect on ethical conduct.

* See "The Wheel" No. 2 "Vedānta and Buddhism"; No. 11, "Anattā and Nibbāna"; No. 20 "The Three Signata".

II

Theism, however, is regarded as a kind of Karma-teaching (*kammavāda*), in so far as it upholds the moral efficacy of actions. Hence, a Theist, if he leads a moral life, may (like anyone else doing so) expect a favourable rebirth, and possibly one in a heavenly world that resembles his own conceptions of it, though it will not be of eternal duration as he may have expected. If, however, fanaticism induces him to persecute those who do not share his beliefs, this will, of course, have grave consequences for his future destiny. God-belief, though not excluding favourable rebirth, is, as a variety of Eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*), an obstacle to final Deliverance. It is an expression of the Craving for continued Existence (*bhava-taṇhā*), the Will to Live; and among the Fetters (*samyojana*) that bind to existence, theism is, in particular, subject to those of Personality-belief, Attachment to Rites and Rituals and Desire for Fine-material Existence (or for a “Heaven of the Sense sphere”, as the case may be).

As an attempt at explaining the universe, its origin, and man’s situation in his world, the God idea has been found entirely unconvincing by the Buddhist thinkers of old. Some of their arguments will be found in the last sections of this brochure, and it should be of interest to compare these with the ways in which Western philosophers have refuted the theological proofs of the existence of God.

* * *

But for an earnest believer, the God idea is more than a mere device for explaining external facts like the origin of the world, etc. It is for him, or is supposed to be, an inner experience that can bestow a strong feeling of certainty not only as to God’s existence “somewhere out there”, but as

to God's consoling presence and closeness to the devotee. But this "feeling of certainty" requires close scrutiny. Such scrutiny will reveal that in most cases the God-experience is only the devotee's projection of his Ideal (a more or less noble one), and of his fervent wish and deeply felt need to believe. To these projections is given a strong emotional emphasis and they receive "life" through man's powerful capacity of imagination, in the sense of image-forming, visualization, myth-creation, etc. These projections are largely conditioned by the influence of childhood impressions, education, tradition, social environment, etc., and are identified with the images and concepts of whatever religion the devotee follows. In the case of very many of the most sincere believers, a searching self-analysis would show that their "God-experience" has no more specific content than this.

Yet the range and significance of God-belief and God-experience are not fully exhausted by the preceding remarks. The lives and writings of the mystics of all great religions bear witness to religious experiences of great intensity, in which considerable changes are effected in the quality of consciousness. Resulting from profound absorption in prayer or meditation, there is a deepening and widening, a brightening and intensifying of consciousness, mostly accompanied by a transporting feeling of rapture and bliss. The contrast between these states and the norms of conscious awareness is so great that it is understandable if such experiences are believed to be manifestations of the divine. Such experiences are also characterized by a marked reduction or temporary exclusion of the multiplicity of sense perceptions and restless thoughts; and this relative unification of mind is then interpreted as a union or communion with the One God. All these deeply moving

impressions and the first spontaneous interpretations are then identified by the mystic with his particular theology. It is interesting to note, however, that the attempts of most of the great Western mystics to relate their experiences on the mystical level with the official dogmas of their respective Churches often resulted in teachings which were looked upon askance by the orthodox, if not considered downright heretical.

The psychological facts underlying those religious experiences are accepted by the Buddhist, and well known to him: but he distinguishes them carefully from the theological interpretations tacked on to those facts. After rising from deep meditative absorption (*jhāna*), the Buddhist meditator is advised to view the physical and mental factors constituting his experience, in the light of the three characteristics of all conditioned existence: impermanency, liability to suffering, and absence of an abiding ego or eternal substance. This is primarily done in order to utilize the meditative purity and strength of consciousness for the highest purpose: liberating Insight. But this procedure has also a very important side-effect which concerns us here: the meditator will not be overwhelmed by any uncontrolled emotions and thoughts evoked by his singular experience, and will thus be able to avoid interpretations of that experience which are not warranted by the facts.

Hence a Buddhist meditator while benefiting by the refinement of consciousness he has achieved, will be able to see these meditative experiences as what they are: and he will further know that they are without any abiding substance which could be attributed to a deity manifesting itself in the meditator's mind. Therefore, the Buddhist's conclusion

must be that also the highest mystic states do not provide evidence for the existence of a personal God or impersonal Godhead.

* * *

Buddhism has sometimes been called an “atheistic teaching”, either in an approving sense (by freethinkers, rationalists, etc.), but more often meant to be disparaging, in the same way as the word “godless” is used as a “smear-word”.

Only in one way may Buddhism be described as atheistic, namely in so far as it denies the existence of an eternal, omnipotent God or Godhead who is the creator and ordainer of the world. The word “atheism”, however, frequently carries a number of disparaging overtones or implications, which in no way apply to the Buddha’s teaching.

Those who use the word “atheism”, often associate it with a materialist doctrine that knows nothing higher than this world of the senses and the slight happiness it can bestow. Buddhism is nothing of that sort. In this respect it agrees with other religions that true and lasting happiness cannot be found in this world; nor, as the Buddha adds, on any higher, but still impermanent, plane of existence to which the name of heavenly or divine world is given. However, while the spiritual values advocated by Buddhism are orientated to a state transcending the world, Nibbāna, they do not make a separation between the “Beyond” and the here and now. They have firm roots in the world itself, for they aim at the highest realization in this present existence. Along with such spiritual aspirations Buddhism encourages earnest endeavour to make this world a better place to live in.

superior beings gods, deities, devas or angels is of little importance, since it is improbable that these beings call themselves by any of those names. They are inhabitants of this universe, fellow-wanderers in this round of existence. Further, it need not be denied that such worlds and such beings may have their Lord and Ruler who, as also human rulers do, might, in some cases, be inclined to misjudge his own status and power, until a Greater One comes and points out to him his error, as our texts report of the Buddha.*

These, however, are largely matters beyond the range and concern of average human experience. They have been mentioned here chiefly for the purpose of defining the Buddhist position, and not to serve as a topic of speculation and argument, which can only divert attention and effort from what ought to be their principal object: the overcoming of Greed, Hatred and Delusion where they are found in the Here and Now.

An ancient verse ascribed to the Buddha in the "Questions of Milinda", says:

"Not far from here you need to look!
Highest existence—what can it avail?
Here in this present aggregate,
In your own body overcome the world!"

Nyanaponika Thera

* More on this subject of the deities' place in the Buddhist conception of the universe, may be found in an essay by Francis Story, "Of Gods and Men" ('Bodhi Leaves', No. B. 4. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy).

Origin of the belief in a Creator god

Now there comes a time, brethren, when, sooner or later, after the lapse of a long long period, this world-system passes away. And when this happens beings have mostly been reborn in the World of Radiance, and there they dwell made of mind, feeding on joy, radiating light from themselves, traversing the air, continuing in glory; and thus they remain for a long long period of time.

Now there comes a time, brethren, when, sooner or later, this world-system begins to re-evolve. When this happens the Palace of Brahma appears, but it is empty. And some being or other, either because his span of years has passed or his merit is exhausted, falls from the World of Radiance, and comes to life in the Palace of Brahma. And there also he lives made of mind, feeding on joy, radiating light from himself, traversing the air, continuing in glory; and thus does he remain for a long long period of time.

Now there arises in him, from his dwelling there so long alone, a dissatisfaction and a longing: "O! would that other beings might come to join me in this place!" And just then, either because their span of years had passed or their merit was exhausted, other beings fall from the World of Radiance, and appear in the Palace of Brahma as companions to him, and in all respects like him.

On this brethren, the one who was first reborn thinks thus to himself: "I am Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Supreme One, the Mighty, the All-seeing, the Ruler, the

Lord of all, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief of all, appointing to each his place, the Ancient of days, the Father of all that are and are to be. These other beings are of my creation. And why is that so? A while ago I thought, 'Would that they might come !' And on my mental aspiration, behold the beings came".

And those beings themselves, too, think thus: "This must be Brahma, the Supreme, the Mighty, the All-seeing, the Ruler, the Lord of all, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief of all, appointing to each his place, the Ancient of days, the Father of all that are and are to be. And we must have been created by him. And why? Because, as we see it was he who was here first, and we came after that."

On this, brethren, the one who first came into existence there is of longer life, and more glorious, and more powerful than those who appeared after him. And it might well be, brethren, that some being on his falling from that state, should come hither. And having come hither he might go forth from the household life into the homeless state. And having thus become a recluse he, by reason of ardour, of exertion, of application, of earnestness, of careful thought, reaches up to such rapture of heart that, rapt in heart, he calls to mind his last dwelling-place, but not the previous ones. He says to himself: "That illustrious Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Supreme One, the Mighty, the All-seeing, the Ruler, the Lord of all, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief of all, appointing to each his place, the Ancient of days, the Father of all that are and are to be, he by whom we were created, he is steadfast, immutable, eternal, of a nature that knows no change, and he will remain so for ever and ever. But we who were created by him have come hither as being impermanent, mutable, limited in duration of life.

This, brethren, is the first state of things on account of which, starting out from which, some recluses and Brahmans, being Eternalists as to some things, and Non-eternalists as to others, maintain that the soul and the world are partly eternal and partly not.

*Dīgha-Nikāya, Discourse No. 1;
Brahmajāla—Sutta.*

Transl. by Prof. Rhys Davids.

The Inexplicable God

“Well then, Udāyi, what is your own teacher’s doctrine?”

“Our own teacher’s doctrine, venerable sir, says thus: ‘This is the highest splendour! This is the highest splendour!’”—

“But what is that highest splendour, Udāyi, of which your teacher’s doctrine speaks?”—

“It is, venerable sir, a splendour greater and loftier than which there is none. That is the Highest Splendour.”

“But, Udāyi, what is that splendour greater and loftier than which there is none?”—

“It is, venerable sir, that Highest Splendour greater and loftier than which there is none.”—

“For a long time, Udāyi, you can continue in this way, saying, ‘A splendour greater and loftier than which there is none, that is the Highest Splendour’. But still you will not have explained that splendour.

Suppose a man were to say: 'I love and desire the most beautiful woman in this land', and then he is asked: 'Good man, that most beautiful woman whom you love and desire, do you know whether she is a lady from nobility or from a Brahman family or from the trader class or Sudra?' and he replied 'no'.—'Then, good man, do you know her name and that of her clan? Or whether she is tall, short or of middle height, whether she is dark, brunette or golden-skinned, or in what village or town or city she dwells?' and he replied 'no'. And then he is asked: 'Hence, good man, you love and desire what you neither know nor see?', and he answers 'yes'.—What do you think, Udāyi, that being so, would not that man's talk amount to nonsense?"—

"Certainly, venerable sir, that being so, that man's talk would amount to nonsense."—

"But in the same way, you, Udāyi, say, 'A splendour greater and loftier than which there is none, that is the Highest Splendour', and yet you have not explained that splendour."

From *Majjhima - Nikāya No. 79:*
Cūḷa - Sakuludāyi Sutta.

Blind Faith

"Is there, Vāsettha, a single one of the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas who has ever seen Brahma face to face?"

"No, indeed, Gotama."

"Or is there then, Vāsettha, a single one of the teachers of the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas, who has seen Brahma face to face?"

“No, indeed, Gotama.”

“Or is there then, Vāsettha, a single one of the pupils of the teachers of the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas who has seen Brahma face to face?”

“No, indeed, Gotama.”

“Or is there then, Vāsettha, a single one of the Brahmans up to the seventh generation who has seen Brahma face to face?”

“No, indeed, Gotama.”

“Well then, Vāsettha, those ancient Rishis of the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas, the authors of the verses, the utterers of the verses, whose ancient form of words so chanted, uttered or composed, the Brahmans of to-day chant over again and repeat; intoning or reciting exactly as has been intoned or recited—to wit, Aṭṭhaka . . . and Bhāgu, did even they speak thus, saying: “We know it, we have seen it, where Brahma is, whence Brahma is, whither Brahma is?”

“Not so, Gotama.”

“Then you say, Vāsettha, that none of the Brahmans, or of their teachers, or of their pupils, even up to the seventh generation, has ever seen Brahma face to face. And that even the Rishis of old, the authors and utterers of the verses, of the ancient form of words which the Brahmans of to-day so carefully intone and recite precisely as they have been handed down—even they did not pretend to know or to have seen where or whence or whither Brahma is. So the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas have forsooth said thus: ‘What we know not, what we have not

seen, to a state of union with that we can show the way, and can say: 'This is the straight path, this the direct way that makes for salvation, and leads him who acts according to it, into a state of union with Brahma.'

"Now what think you, Vāsettha? Does it not follow, this being so, that the talk of the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas, turns out to be foolish talk?"

"In sooth, Gotama, that being so, it follows that the talk of the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas is foolish talk."

The string of blind men

"Verily, Vāsettha, that Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas should be able to show the way to a state of union with that which they do not know, neither have seen—such a condition of things can in no wise be!

"Just, Vāsettha, as when a string of blind men are clinging one to the other, neither can the foremost see, nor can the middle one see, nor can the hindmost see—just even so, methinks, Vāsettha, is the talk of the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas but blind talk: the first sees not, the middle one sees not, nor can the latest see. The talk then of these Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas turns out to be ridiculous, mere words, a vain and empty thing!

The staircase to nowhere

... "Just, Vāsettha, as if a man should make a staircase in the place where four roads cross, to mount up into a mansion. And people should say to him, 'Well, good friend, this mansion, to mount up into which you are

making this staircase, do you know whether it is in the east, or in the south, or in the west, or in the north? whether it is high or low or of middle size?

“And when so asked he should answer: No.—And people should say to him, ‘But then, good friend, you are making a staircase to mount up into something—taking it for a mansion—which, all the while, you know not, neither have seen.’”

Praying for the Beyond

“Again, Vāsettha, if this river Aciravati were full of water even to the brim, and overflowing. And a man with business on the other side, bound for the other side, making for the other side, should come up, and want to cross over. And he, standing on this bank, should invoke the further bank, and say, ‘Come hither, O further bank! come over to this side!’

“Now what think you, Vāsettha? Would the further bank of the river Aciravati, by reason of that man’s invoking and praying and hoping and praising, come over to this side?—

“Certainly not, Gotama.”

“In just the same way, Vāsettha, do the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas—omitting the practice of those qualities which really make man a Brahman, and adopting the practice of those qualities which really make men non-Brahmans—say thus: ‘Indra we call upon, Soma we call upon, Varuna, Isāna, Pajāpati, Brahma, Mahiddhi, Yama we call upon.’

“Verily, Vāsetṭha, that those Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas—omitting the practice of those qualities which really make man a Brahman, adopting the practice of those qualities which really make men non-Brahmans—may, by reason of their invoking and praying and hoping and praising, after the breaking up of the body, after death, attain to union with Brahma, such a condition of things can in no wise be.”

From *Dīgha-Nikāya No. 13: Tevijjā Sutta*
 (“Three Vedas”)

Transl. by Prof. Rhys Davids.

Revealed Religion

.....Again, Sandaka, here some teacher depends on hearsay, takes hearsay for truth, he teaches his doctrine (relying on) legendary lore and scripture. But when, Sandaka, a teacher depends on hearsay, takes hearsay for truth, this he will have heard well and that he will have heard badly, this will be thus and that will be otherwise.

Herein a wise man will consider: ‘This good teacher depends on hearsay, takes hearsay for truth, he teaches his doctrine (relying on) legendary lore and scripture. But when a teacher depends on hearsay, takes hearsay for truth, this he will have heard well and that he will have heard badly, this will be thus and that will be otherwise.’

So when he finds that this kind of religious life is unsatisfactory, he becomes disappointed and leaves it.

This, Sandaka, is the second unsatisfactory religious life declared by the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is the

Arahat, fully enlightened, wherein a wise man certainly would not lead the religious life, or, when leading it, would miss the true path-teaching that is profitable.

From *Majjhima-Nikāya* No. 76: *Sandaka Sutta*.

The Buddhist Saint (Arahant) and the God Idea

Also a monk who is a Saint (Arahant), canker-free, who has lived the life, accomplished his task, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, who has destroyed what fetters to existence and is liberated through right final knowledge—he, too, has full knowledge of the gods as gods¹; and knowing them as such, he does not imagine (anything) about the gods², he does not imagine himself among the gods³, he does not imagine himself as (originating) from a god⁴, he does not imagine “Mine are the gods”⁵, and he does not find delight in the gods. And why not? Because this has been comprehended by him; and because he is freed from greed through greed’s extinction, freed from hate through hate’s extinction, freed from delusion through delusion’s extinction.

Also a monk who is a Saint, canker-free . . . , he, too, has full knowledge of the Lord of Creatures⁶, as Lord of Creatures; and knowing him as such, he does not imagine (anything) about the Lord of Creatures, he does not imagine (about the qualities) in the Lord of Creatures⁷, he does not imagine himself as (originated) from the Lord of Creatures⁸, he does not imagine “Mine is the Lord of Creatures”⁹, and he does not find delight in the Lord of Creatures. And why not? Because this has been comprehended by him; and because he is freed from greed through

greed's extinction, freed from hate through hate's extinction, freed from delusion through delusion's extinction.

Also a monk who is a Saint (Arahant), canker-free, who has lived the life, accomplished his task, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, who has destroyed what fetters to existence and is liberated through right final knowledge—he, too, has full knowledge of Brahma as Brahma¹⁰; and knowing him as such, he does not imagine (anything) about Brahma¹⁰, he does not imagine (about the qualities) in Brahma¹¹, he does not imagine himself as (originated) from Brahma¹², he does not imagine “Mine is Brahma”¹³, and he does not find delight in Brahma.¹⁴ And why not? Because this has been comprehended by him; and because he is freed from greed through greed's extinction, freed from hate through hate's extinction, freed from delusion through delusion's extinction.

From the Discourse on “Root-cause Exposition”
(*Mūla-pariyāya Sutta*), *Majjhima-Nikāya No. 1*.

1. *deve devato abhijānāti*. In earlier sections of this Discourse, a similar formulation occurs, referring to other terms. In the context, the Commentary to our Discourse explains (and this applies also to our passage): “Without ignoring (the respective term; here: gods, Lord of Creatures, etc.), he knows it distinctly (*abhijānāti*) as impermanent, liable to suffering, void of self and substance.”

2. *deve na maññati*. According to the Commentary, the ‘imagination’ (*maññanā*) which he avoids, appears in three forms, as Craving, Conceit and Wrong Views. These three pertain also to most of the other types of ‘imaginings’

in this para and in the following ones, with exceptions mentioned in the Comy., where only one or two apply, which space does not permit to specify here.

3. *devesu na maññati.*

4. *devato na maññati.*

5. Here we may think, for instance, of tribal deities; the possessiveness exhibited by fetish worshippers, but also by devotees of higher religions.

6. In the Commentary, the Lord of Creatures (*prajāpati*) is identified with Māra who, in Buddhist cosmology, is the ruler over the Paranimmita-vasavatti Gods, "those who wield power over the creations of others".

7. Namely his permanence, immutability; that in him there is no evil, etc. (Comy.)

8. By creation or emanation (Comy.).

9. Thinking, "He is my Lord and Master" (Comy.). The statement of the text may also be applied to the belief that a god-concept adhered to individually or by one's own religion, can claim exclusive validity or superiority.

10. See Notes 1 & 2, respectively.

11. *Brahmasmimi maññati.* The Commentary restricts its explanation to imaginings about the qualities or attributes found "in Brahma" (see Note 5). But it appears possible to render the Locative case of the Pali term *Brahmasmimi* as literally as the Commentary does with other terms of the Discourse, and to translate by "he imagines himself in Brahma". This, then, would refer to a mystic union with the deity.

12. *Brahmato maññati*. Here, too, the Commentary explains the Ablative case only in the sense of originating from Brahma by way of creation or emanation (see Note 6). But when explaining the parallel phrase applied to other terms, the Commentary mentions an alternative interpretation of the Ablative case, as signifying "different from". The rendering here would then be: "He imagines himself different from Brahma"; and this would refer to a strict dualism of God and Man. One will also be reminded here of those Christian theologians who emphasize the deep gulf between the Creator and creature.

13. See Note 7.

14. Comy. says that he delights (in Brahma) by way of craving (*taṇhā*) and wrong views (*diṭṭhi*), which may be exemplified by the "yearnings for the delights of divine love" and by indulging in theological speculations.

God Belief and Fatalism

There are ascetics and Brahmans who maintain and believe that whatever a man experiences, be it pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, all that is caused by God's act of creation. I went to them and questioned them 'whether they held such a view), and when they affirmed it, I said: "If that is so, venerable sirs, then people commit murder, theft and unchaste deeds due to God's act of creation; they indulge in lying, slanderous, harsh and idle talk due to God's act of creation; they are covetous, full of hate and hold wrong views due to God's act of creation."

Those who fall back on God's act of creation as the decisive factor, will lack the impulse and effort for doing this and not doing that. Since for them, in truth and fact, (a necessity for) action or inaction does not obtain, the designation "ascetic" does not fit them who live without mindfulness and self-control.

Aṅguttara-Nikāya, Tika-nipāta
(*The Threes*), No. 62

If God is the cause of all that happens, what is the use of man's striving?

Asvaghosa, Buddha-carita 9,53

The Transient Deity

As far as suns and moons revolve and the sky's directions brilliantly shine, so far reaches a Thousand-fold World-system. In that Thousand-fold World-system, there are a thousand moons, a thousand suns, a thousand Sinerus, the kings of the mountains, a thousand of the four continents, a thousand of the four oceans, a thousand of the heavenly worlds of the sense plane, and a thousand Brahma-worlds. As far as this Thousand-fold World-system reaches, so far is the Great Brahma deemed the highest there.

But even in that Great Brahma, O monks, there is transformation, there is change. Seeing this, O monks, a well-instructed disciple feels disgust even with that. Being disgusted with it, his attachment even to the highest fades away, how much more to what is low!

Aṅguttara-Nikāya, Dasaka-Nipāta
(*The Tens*), No. 29

The Disillusionment of the Gods

Now there arises in the world the Blessed One, who is holy, fully enlightened, endowed with knowledge and pure conduct, sublime, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men in need of guidance, the teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed.

He thus teaches Dhamma: "This is personality; this the origination of personality; this the cessation of personality; this is the way leading to the cessation of personality".

And those gods who are long-lived, resplendent in beauty, who dwell full of happiness and for a long time in lofty heavenly mansions, even they, having heard the Perfect One teaching Dhamma, are mostly beset by fear, agitation and trembling:

"Alas, we who, in fact, are impermanent, believed that we were permanent! We who, in fact, are evanescent, believed that we were ever-lasting! We who, in fact, are non-eternal, believed that we were eternal! But, truly, we are impermanent, evanescent, non-eternal, engrossed in personality!"

Aṅguttara-Nikāya, Catukka-nipāta
(The Fours), No. 33

Brahma Admits his Transiency

One there is¹ who thought of posing
 The Divinity² this question
 In Sudhamma Hall in Heaven:
 'Is there still in thee existing,
 'Friend, the view that once existed?
 'Is the radiance of Heaven
 'Clearly seen by thee as passing?'

The Divinity gave answer
 Truly to my question's order:
 'There exists in me no longer,
 'Sir, the view that once existed;
 'All the radiance of Heaven
 'I now clearly see as passing;
 'I condemn my erstwhile claiming
 'To be permanent, eternal,.

Majjhima-Nikāya No. 50

God's Responsibility

If there exists some Lord all-powerful to fulfil
 In every creature bliss or woe, and action good or ill,
 That Lord is stained with sin. Man does but work his will.

Mahā-Bodhi Jātaka (No. 528)
(Jātaka Stories, vol. V, p. 122)

-
1. Mahā-Moggallāna Thera, a chief disciple of the Buddha
 2. Brahma

He who has eyes can see the sickening sight;
 Why does not Brahma set his creatures right?
 If his wide power no limit can restrain,
 Why is his hand so rarely spread to bless?
 Why are his creatures all condemned to pain?
 Why does he not to all give happiness?
 Why do fraud, lies, and ignorance prevail?
 Why triumphs falsehood,—truth and justice fail?
 I count your Brahma one th'unjust among,
 Who made a world in which to shelter wrong.

Bhūridatta Jātaka (No. 543)
(Jātaka Stories, Vol. VI, p. 110)

Creation and Cause

The assumption that a God (*īśvara*) is the cause, etc. (of the world), rests upon the false belief in an eternal self; but that belief has to be abandoned, if one has clearly understood that everything is (impermanent, and therefore) subject to suffering.

Vasubandhu, Abhidharmakośa, 5, 8 (vol. IV, p. 19);
Sphuṭārtha p. 445, 26.

A certain School holds that there is a Mahesvara God who is absolute, omnipresent, and eternal; and that he is the creator of all Dharmas (i. e. phenomena).

Refutation

This theory is illogical. And why?

- (a) That which creates is not eternal; that which is not eternal is not omnipresent; that which is not omnipresent is not absolute.
- (b) Since he is eternal and omnipresent, and complete with all kinds of capacities; he should, in all times and at all places, produce all of a sudden all Dharmas (phenomena).
- (c) (If they say) that his creation depends upon desire and conditions, then they contradict their own doctrine of "unique cause". Alternatively, we may say that desire and conditions should also all arise of a sudden, since the cause (which produces them) is there always.

Vi jñaptimātratā Siddhi Sastra

(A Standard Work of the Buddhist Idealistic School)

(Translated from the Chinese version

by Wong Mow Lam

(“The Chinese Buddhist”, Vol. II, No. 2; Shanghai 1932)

Śāntideva

The creative nature of one who is incomprehensible must likewise be incomprehensible. Why then talk about it?

“Bodhicaryāvatāra” IX, 123

If the cause (God) has no beginning, how can the effect (God's creation) have a beginning?

ib. IX, 123

Why did (God) not produce always?¹ There is no other person or thing he need consider. For there is no other person or thing he has not created. Why, then, should he thus consider?

ib., IX, 124

If he has to consider the completeness of conditions, then God is not the cause (of the world). For he is then not free² to refrain from creating when that completeness of conditions is present; nor is he free to create when it is absent.

ib., IX, 125

If God acts without wishing it, he creates in dependence upon something else; but if he has the wish, then he will be dependent upon that wish. Hence where is the creator's sovereignty?³

ib., X, 126

1. that is: produce the whole creation all at once.

2. lit.: the master, the Lord (*īśā*)

3. These arguments and those in the preceding section from the *Vijñaptimātratā* are elaborated in the following extracts from the *Tattva-Sangraha*.

Sāntaraksita

Extracts from the
Tattva-Sangraha, The “Compendium of Truth”
With the Commentary of *Kamalasīla*

From Chapter II: Doctrine of God

1. The One and the Many (Paley’s “Watchmaker” argument)

The existence of a Being who is eternal, one, and the substratum of eternal all-embracing consciousness,—can never be proved . . . (*Text 72*)

. . . for the simple reason that any Corroborative Instance that might be cited in the form of the Jar and such things, would be lacking in the element of similarity¹ that is essential (the maker of the jar not having all the character that is predicated of God). (*Commentary to 72*)

For instance, all such products as houses, steps, gateways, towers and the like are definitely known to have been fashioned by makers who have been many, and with fleeting ideas. (*Text 73*)

2. The Eternal cannot be productive

Eternal things cannot produce any effects, because ‘consecutive’ action and ‘concurrent’ action are mutually contradictory; and if objects are consecutive, there must be the same consecutiveness in their cognitions also. (*Text 76*)

. . . . Only non-eternal things can be productive causes; as it is these alone which go on unceasingly changing their sequential character—of being present now and past at the next moment. Thus it is proved that an Intelligent Maker must be evanescent and many. (*Commentary to 76*)

God's cognitions must be consecutive, because they are related to consecutive cognizable things (*Text 77*)

. . . If God's cognition manifesting itself, is produced by objects which are consecutive, then it becomes proved that it must be consecutive;—if it is not so produced, then, as there would be no proximate contact (with the object and the cognition), God could not cognize the object at all (*Commentary to 77*)

3. An unobstructed Divine Cause requires simultaneous creation

God cannot be the Cause of Born Things, because he is himself devoid of Birth, like the 'Sky-lotus'. Otherwise all things would come into existence simultaneously. (*Text 81*)

. . . If the Cause were one whose efficiency is never obstructed, then all things would come into existence simultaneously : . .

. . . The absurdity (involved in the Theist's position) is to be shown in this manner:—When the Cause is present in its complete form, then the effect must appear as a matter of course; just as it is found in the case of the sprout which appears as soon as the final stage has been

reached by the causal conditions conducive to it. Now under the doctrine of the Theist, as God, the cause of all things, would always be there and free from defects, all things, the whole world, should come into existence at once.

The following argument might be urged:—"God is not the only cause (of all things); in fact, what he does he does through the help of such auxiliary causes as Merit and the rest,—God himself being only the Efficient (Controlling) Cause. So that so long as Merit and the rest are not there, the 'Cause' of things cannot be said to be present there in its efficient form."

This is not valid. If there is help that has got to be rendered to God by the Auxiliary Causes, then he must be regarded as dependent upon their aid. As a matter of fact however, God is (said to be) eternal and as nothing can introduce into him any efficiency that is not there already, there can be no help that he should receive from the auxiliary causes. Why then, should he need such auxiliaries as are of no use to him?

Uddyotakara has argued as follows:—"Though the cause of things named 'God' is eternal and perfect and always present, yet the producing of things is not simultaneous, because God always acts intelligently and purposley. If God has produced things by his mere presence, without intelligence (and purpose), then the objection urged would have applied to our doctrine. As a matter of fact however, God acts intelligently; hence the objection is not applicable; specially as God operates towards Products solely by his own wish. Thus our reason is not 'inconclusive'."

This is not valid. The activity and inactivity of things are not dependent upon the wish of the Cause; only if it were so, the appearance of all Effects would not be possible even in the constant presence of the untrammelled Cause in the shape of God, simply on account of his wish being absent. The fact of the matter is that the appearance and non-appearance of things are dependent upon the presence and absence of due efficiency in the Cause. For instance, even though a man may have the wish, things do not appear, if he has not the efficiency or power to produce them; and when the Cause in the form of seeds has the efficiency or faculty to produce the sprout, the sprout does appear,—even though the seed has no wish at all. If then the Cause called ‘God’ is always there fully endowed with the due untrammelled efficiency,—as he is at the time of the producing of a particular thing—then why should things stand in need of his wish, which can serve no purpose at all? And the result of this should be that all things should appear simultaneously, at the same time as the appearance of any one thing.—Thus alone could the untrammelled causal efficiency of God be shown, if things were produced simultaneously. Nor can God, who cannot be helped by other things, stand in need of anything, for which he would need his wish.

Further, in the absence of Intelligence, there can be no desire for anything else,—and the Intelligence of God you hold to be eternally uniform; so that, even if God acted intelligently, why should not there be a simultaneous production of things? Because like God himself, his intelligence is always there.—If then, his Intelligence be regarded as evanescent, even so it must co-exist

with God, and its presence must be as constant as God himself; so that the objection on that score remains in force.

. . . And yet the production of things is not found to be simultaneous; hence the conclusion must be contrary to that desired by the Theist.

The argument may be formulated as follows:—
 ‘When a certain thing is not found to be produced at a certain time, it must be taken to be one whose Cause at that time is not untrammelled in its efficiency,—as it is found in the case of the sprout not appearing while the seed is still in the granary; it is found that at the appearance of one thing the whole world is not produced. Hence what has been stated (by the Opponent) as a universal proposition is not found to be true.
(Commenary to 87)

From Chapter VI
Doctrine of the ‘Purusha’ (Spirit, Personality)
as Cause of the World

Others, however, postulate the *Purusha* (Spirit) — similar in character to ‘God’—as the cause of the world . . . (*Text 155*).— The refutation of this also is to be set forth in the same manner as that of ‘God’: For what purpose does this ‘Spirit’ perform such an act (as the creating, etc., of the world)? (*Text 155*)

If he does it because he is prompted by another being, then he cannot be self-sufficient (independent). If he does it through compassion, then he should make the world absolutely happy. When he is found to have

created people beset with misery, poverty, sorrow and other troubles,—where can his compassion be perceived? (*Texts 156 - 157*)

Further, inasmuch as, prior to creation, the objects of compassion would not be there,—there could not be even that compassion through the presence of which the Ordainer is assumed. (*Text 158*)

Nor should he bring about the dissolution of those beings who would be always prosperous. If in so doing, he be regarded as dependent upon the 'Unseen Force' (of Destiny), then his 'Self-sufficiency' ceases. (*Text 159*)

It might be argued that — "He makes people happy or unhappy in accordance with their Destiny, in the shape of Merit and Demerit." — That cannot be right; as in that case his self-sufficiency — which has been postulated — would cease. One who is himself endowed with power does not depend upon anything else; if he is wanting in power, then the creation of the world itself might be attributed to that on which he is dependent; and in that case he would cease to be the Cause. (*Commentary to 159*)

Then again, why should he make himself dependent upon that Destiny, which is conducive to suffering and pain? In fact, full of mercy as he is, the right course for him would be to ignore that Destiny. (*Text 160*)

Merciful persons do not seek for such causes as bring about suffering: because the sole motive behind their actions consists in the desire to remove the suffering of others. (*Commentary to 160*)

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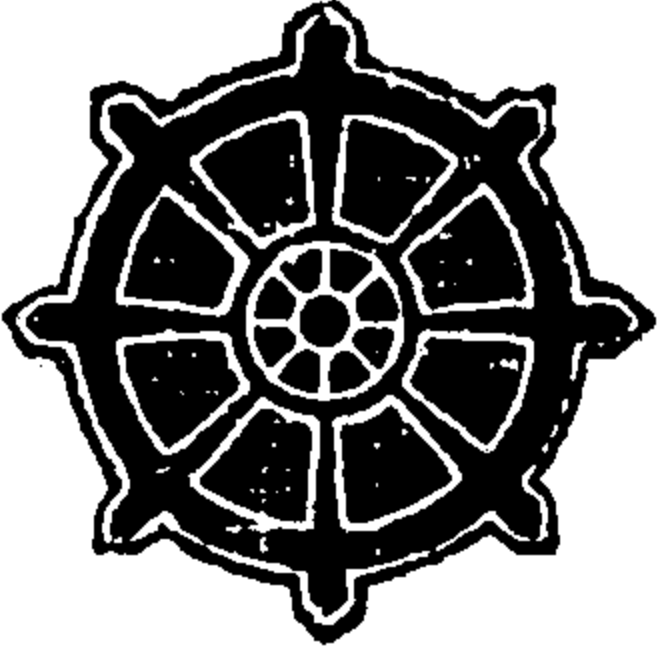
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The Discourse
on the

SNAKE SIMILE

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Translated by
Nyanaponika Thera

**The Discourse on the
SNAKE SIMILE**

Alagaddūpama Sutta

With Introduction and Notes

Translated by

NYANAPONIKA THERA

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PREFACE

A NEW and fully commented translation of one of the most important Discourses of the Buddha, “The Simile of the Snake” (*Alagaddūpama-Sutta*), is here offered to the reader. It is one of those texts that will reveal its deep-reaching and wide-ranging import only if repeatedly and carefully studied and meditated upon. Hence it is suggested that, at the first reading, the Introduction and the Notes are omitted, and only the Discourse is read and considered, as a whole. In further readings, the Introduction and the Notes may be included and greater attention be given to the details in the several sections of the Discourse and in the Notes, as well as to the inner connection between the sections of the text. The Introduction aims to give some aid in the understanding of the details and of the coherent structure of the Discourse.

*Forest Hermitage,
Kandy, Ceylon,
July, 1962.*

NYANAPONIKA THERA.

INTRODUCTION

THE Discourse of the Buddha on the Snake Simile (*Alagaddūpama Sutta*) that is presented here, together with copious explanatory notes taken mostly from the commentarial literature, is the 22nd text in the “ Collection of Discourses of Medium Length ” (*Majjhima-Nikāya*).

It is a text rich of contents and graced by many similes. At the very beginning there is a sequence of ten pithy similes on sense desire ; it follows the one from which our text derives its name, the simile of the right and wrong grasp of the snake ; further, and still better known, the Parable of the Raft ; and finally the simile of the vegetation of the Jeta Grove. The evocative power of these similes will strengthen the impact of the Sutta’s message, in him who ponders on them deeply and repeatedly.

The main concern of this Discourse is to warn against misconceptions, misrepresentations and dilution of the Teaching.

While the Buddha repeatedly stressed that His Teaching should be accepted only after due investigation, and uninfluenced by tradition or external authority ; while he also advised His monks to make light of praise and blame of the Teaching uttered by outsiders (*see here sec. 38f*) the Master was quite firm, and even stern, when misrepresentations of the Teaching occurred on the part of His monks, that is by those who had accepted the Teaching and had chosen a life devoted to its realisation. Our Discourse is not the only one where the Buddha had voiced a stern rebuke of monks who misinterpreted essential parts of the Teaching (*see, e.g., M. 38*). What moved the Buddha to do so was his deep concern that the efficacy of His unique Path of Deliver-

ance should not be impaired, His Teaching not be undermined from within, and the purity of conduct and wisdom not be tarnished. If that were to be, the Raft of the Teaching of which the Discourse speaks, would be rendered incapable of carrying those across who have placed their confidence in it. The Raft would for ever be chained to the Hither Shore by those very fetters from which it is intended to bring release.

Our Discourse deals with two chief obstacles which will impede the Raft's progress : the affirmation of sense-gratification and the affirmation of ego-belief. If, by misrepresenting the Teaching, these are admitted entrance in it, in whatever guise and whatever degree of dilution, they will necessarily nullify the effort for final liberation.

It should be noted that it is the *affirmation*, the approval of, those two tendencies that constitutes misrepresentation of the Teaching. These two tendencies themselves, *i.e.*, sensuality and ego-belief, are deeply ingrained in human nature as we find it. They are, in fact, the two tap-roots from which existence and, with it, suffering spring : Craving (*taṇhā*) and Ignorance (*avijjā*). To weaken them first and finally eradicate them is the difficult task before us which, however, we can face courageously if guided by the methods of the Dhamma which are realistic as well as radical. But if what ought to be overcome is actually affirmed and approved : if hidden or open reservations with regard to either of these two tendencies are maintained, there is obviously no chance for achieving mind's final deliverance from that bondage to Craving and Ignorance.

The attitude towards dispassion (*virāga*, Skr. : *vairāgya*) and towards the doctrine of egolessness (*anattā*) is, in fact, a crucial test how far the core of the Teaching has been

preserved or impaired or entirely abandoned in those presentations of the Dhamma that appeared after the Master passed away ; and some of these developments obviously do not stand the test.

Considering all this, we shall understand and appreciate the grave warning and the firm repudiation expressed in our Discourse by the Master wishing for the welfare and progress of those who had confidence in his guidance.

The first section of the Discourse deals with the rejection of the views held by the monk Arittha. His views are not merely a misconception of the Teaching but a direct challenge of some of the Buddha's statements. Arittha expressly denies that what the Buddha taught as obstructive is an obstruction by necessity. He does not specify the obstructions he means, but from the monks' reply, referring to sense-desires (*kāma*), it is evident that they were well aware of Arittha's intention : the condoning of sex indulgence for a monk.

It need hardly be stressed that the Buddha's firm rejection of such condonation was meant for monks only. Of his lay followers he did not expect sexual abstinence. To them he advised restraint and mindfulness, and avoidance of giving excessive nourishment to sex desire. Here, if anywhere, a middle path between unrestrained indulgence and enforced repression was apt. But the Buddha made it clear that full deliverance required full detachment from desire. The gradual progress towards it, however, was left to the degree of insight and self-control possessed and developed by the individual lay follower.

For the monk, however, it was expected that the ardour of his quest for the final goal, the serenity of mind and

emotional satisfaction derived from meditation, and his relative freedom from external sense titillation—that all this and other factors should enable him to keep the sex urge well in check and his mind tranquil enough for allowing further progress (or at least effort) on the road to radical detachment. He who could not attain to that degree of self-mastery, was free to leave the Order, and no stigma was attached ; and he was also free to return whenever he wanted. But inside the Sangha no compromise could be admitted unless the Buddha was to invite disintegration from within and disrepute from without.

(Secs. 10-12). The instance of Arittha's wrong view is now used by the Buddha as an opportunity to warn against any other wrong approach to the Teaching, and the misuse of it. He gives here the simile of the wrong grasp of a snake to illustrate the harm and the danger of misconceiving the Dhamma.

The harm done is to the individual's character and his progress on the Path ; and the danger is the likelihood of his falling into lower forms of existence, or at the least a rebirth unfavourable to the understanding and practising of the Dhamma. That such results may follow, can be easily understood in the case of Arittha's views which are an outright reversal and corruption of the Teaching. It may, however, at first sight be surprising to the reader that, in the section now under consideration, the misuse of the Teaching for the verbal wrangles of disputation is likewise regarded as a dangerously wrong grasp of the Dhamma.

Here the danger and harm have more subtle but no less real, roots. The danger in contentiousness is chiefly two-fold. It provides one of the many evasions by which the

mind shirks from devoting itself earnestly to the actual practice of the Dhamma. Secondly, under the respectable guise of the advocacy of the Dhamma the attachment to “ I ” and “ Mine ” finds an easy outlet. In disputations the ego gets the chance to indulge in self-assertion, superiority feeling, self-righteousness and opinionatedness. Furthermore, the ego may attach itself to the Dhamma in an attitude of possessiveness which sometimes may even resemble the behaviour of a dog jealously and angrily defending a morsel of food without having himself the inclination to eat it. We see here the danger that an excessive concern with an argumentative advocacy of the Dhamma may strengthen subconsciously the deeply engrained egotistic impulses. It may even become one of the “ Grounds (or starting-points) for false views ” as described by the Buddha (in sec. 15).^{*} Finally, from indulging in wordy warfare will also spring feelings of partisanship, intolerance, fanaticism and hostility. Truly, we have here a formidable catalogue of detrimental qualities of mind, and from this we can now better understand why the Buddha applied here, too, the metaphor of the dangerously wrong way of grasping a snake.

(Secs. 13-14). He who is so much preoccupied with doctrinal controversy, furnishes, indeed, a fitting illustration of one who carries the Raft of the Dhamma on his head or shoulders ; and, in his case, this will be not *after* the crossing but before he has done, or even seriously tried, the fording of the stream. In fact, this famous Parable of the Raft will in most cases apply to those who, in the words of the

^{*}This may result from the unwillingness to give up a wrong view advocated in the argument. It may also come under the heading “What is encountered, this he also considers thus: This is mine....”; that is, he identifies himself with a given situation (here the disputation) and with his own stand taken in it.

Dhammapada (v. 85), “run up and down the river’s bank ” on this side of the stream, without daring or wishing to cross. We find them using the raft for a variety of purposes : they will adorn it and adore it, discuss it, compare it—indeed anything other than use it.

There are, on the other hand, those who wrongly believe that this Parable justifies them in jettisoning the Raft *before* they have used it, and that it invites them to let go the good teachings along with the false ones, even before they have benefited by the former and fully discarded the latter.

As we see, there are, indeed, many more ways of “grasping wrongly ” than of grasping rightly; hence the strong emphasis laid in the last two sections (secs. 10-12, 13-14) on examining wisely the true meaning and purpose of the Dhamma. And there should be frequent re-examination—lest we forget.

(Śecs. 15-17). This section on the “Grounds for false views” connects with the mention of “false teachings ” in the preceding paragraph (14).

Here, and in almost all the following sections, up to sec. 41, it is the gravest of all wrong views, the belief in a Self, in an abiding ego-entity, that is dealt with from different angles. Our Discourse is one of the most important texts concerned with the Anattā-doctrine, the teaching on Not-self. This teaching is the core of the Buddhist doctrine and a singular feature of it. It is of a truly revolutionary nature, and hence it is not easily absorbed by the human mind which, for an unfathomable past, has been habituated to think, and to induce action, in terms of “ I ” and “ Mine”. But this bias towards egocentricity has to be broken on the intellectual, emotional and ethical level, if Deliverance from Suffering is ever to be won. In this task, the repeated and careful con-

templation of our Discourse can become a valuable aid.

In Sec. 15, the Buddha speaks of the sources from which the notion of a self is derived and formed. It is, in the first instance, the identification with any or all of the five Aggregates (*Khandha*) constituting what is conventionally called the personality. Identification with the *body* (or corporeality) is the “ground” or standpoint for materialism (naive or philosophical). *Feeling* is seen as the core of Being, in the hedonist’s attitude to life, or when, in mystical teachings, the soul is regarded as pure Divine Bliss or Divine Love. The self is identified with *Perception* when being is equated with perceiving (*esse est percipi*), when the personality is regarded as “nothing but” a bundle of sensations (Ernst Mach). The *Mental Formations* contribute to ego-belief when, e.g., the will is regarded as the ultimate essence of self and world ; or when any other function of the mind receives an excessive emotional or intellectual emphasis. The Aggregate of *Consciousness* is circumscribed, in the Discourses, by terms denoting the content of consciousness, indicating hereby that the self is here believed to be the totality of mind or consciousness. Included in this view are the conceptions of a Super-or Cosmic Consciousness¹, or any notion of an “Over-self” (*mahātmā*, *paramātmā*), imagined to exist “beyond the five Aggregates”.²

The view that the self is the unity of all five Aggregates is found, for instance, in those religions which believe in a final resurrection of a (re-animated) body or in other forms of

1. See sec. 27: “Whatever consciousness....gross or subtle”

2. This, too, falls under the fifth of the “Grounds”, being a mental construction (sec. 15: “what is thought”), and something “sought after and pursued in mind”, due to human yearning for permanence.

survival of the whole personality, body and mind, be it in an eternal heaven or an eternal hell.

The first five “ Grounds for false views ” can be summarized by the following succinct statement of the Buddha : “ Those ascetics and brahmans, O monks, who conceive a self in many ways, all those conceive it as the five Aggregates or as one of them ”. (Samy. XXII, No. 47).*

As to the sixth “ Ground for false views ”, it should be noted that it does not consist in the eternalist view itself (which is covered by the foregoing), but in the strong *attachment* to that view, up to the degree of full identification with it, as part and parcel of one’s individuality : “ This (view) is mine, this I am, this is my self ”. Such a tenacious clinging to the soul belief has its roots firstly in the deep urge for self-assertion and self-perpetuation ; and secondly in the “ conditioning ” forces of education, environment and tradition. Like the other more common types of “ self-defence ”, this identification with the belief in a self can assume quite a passionate character, with hostility or contempt for those who do not share it.

The persistence of the soul belief is demonstrated by the fact that from the earliest time of the Teaching up to the present day there have been not only individuals (like Sāti in Majjh. 38), but also groups and sects within the Buddhist fold who believed in a self though they usually relegate it to a realm beyond the five Aggregates.

In the next section (Sec. 18ff.), it is shown that the belief in “ I ” and “ Mine ”, instead of giving a feeling of security, is, in fact, a cause of anxiety, fear and worry. And even

* See “The Wheel” no. 11: Anattā and Nibbāna by Nyānaponika Thera p. 18.

when the faith in an immortal soul breaks down, its after-effect is still so strong that the assumption of a self that can be destroyed, still persists, and, through the fear of annihilation, becomes a source of despair. This belief in “I” and “Mine”, and the passionate attachment to it, is at the root of the existentialist philosopher’s “anguish” as well as of the anxiety neuroses that haunt modern man. The belief in unrealities, even if a temporary solace, must ultimately end in disappointment and despair.

Hence the Buddha took great care to question and re-question His monks on this crucial point of Soul and Self, in order to remove any doubt in this respect. The thorough manner of His inquiry is exemplified in the Secs. 22 to 25 which leave no room for ambiguity on this issue. In Secs. 26-27 all the possible constituents of an alleged self, *i.e.*, the five Aggregates, are examined and found to be evanescent, liable to suffering and without a self or any other underlying substance. It should be noted that the statement of the text extends also to the most sublime manifestations of consciousness, be they conceived as internal (“in oneself”) or external.

Though the analysis of “the individual and its property” as given in the preceding sections is placed here in the context of refuting wrong views, this is in no way its intrinsic value and purpose, which rather consists in opening the gateway to liberation. To indicate this, the Secs. 28-29 speak of the attainment of final deliverance in Sainthood (*arahatta*), brought about by Insight that leads to alienation and detachment from all that is transient and void of substance. In the following (Secs. 30-36), there is an impressive metaphorical description of the Saint (*Arahant*), concluding with the solemn declaration of the “untraceable”, *i.e.*, ineffable, nature of

one who has uprooted all craving and ignorance. With express reference to that solemn utterance, the Buddha now rejects emphatically the imputation that a denial of self and soul makes him a nihilist (Sec. 37) and he summarizes His teaching in those words of wide renown :

“Now as before I teach, O monks, suffering and the cessation of suffering.”

In the section on “ Praise and Blame ” (Secs. 38-39), we have a practical application of the Anattā-doctrine : it frees the mind from elation and pride in the case of praise, and from dejection and anger in the case of blame. The Buddha asks His disciples to emulate Him in this respect. To be unshaken in the serene detachment of one’s mind by any approval or disapproval of others, this is another benefit bestowed by the deep realization of the truth of Anattā. Pointing out this additional benefit the Master makes another earnest appeal to the monks to give up attachment to “ what is not yours ” : the five Aggregates constituting the so-called personality (Secs. 40-41). Indeed, if viewed in the single-minded and passion-free detachment of Insight-meditation (*vipassanā*), these physical and mental processes, so long regarded as “ I ” and “ Mine ”, will be seen to be as alien as the vegetation of the Jeta Grove to which the Buddha’s finger may have pointed while He spoke.

The symphonic rhythm of this great Discourse approaches now its *finale*. It is the majestic voice of uncompromising Truth that speaks here in grave tones of crystal-clear penetrative power, without any gentler softening and soothing notes. The teaching as here conveyed, “ plain and open, explicit and consistent ”, was and is a bold challenge of “ public opinion ”. It goes counter to the two mighty

currents of sense desire and self-affirmation which make up the "common stream" of mankind. In this Discourse, the Buddha rejects repeatedly (in the former case) and excludes carefully (in the latter case) any attempt at compromise in these two respects. Furthermore the Buddha voices here a grave warning that a wrong grasp and misuse of the Dhamma may bring much harm and suffering. All escape routes for circumventing the true purpose and for avoiding the salient truths of the Doctrine were thus envisaged and carefully closed.

In this brief recapitulation, our Discourse appears indeed as a rather formidable assemblage of stern messages. Yet, for him who is familiar with the Buddha Word, this will be softened by the fact that in numerous Discourses the Buddha spoke of His Teaching as one that offers "gradual training, gradual progress". It is here that the Buddha's gentleness and compassion appears, His forbearance with human frailties, and His wise and patient guidance of men. Our Discourse, too, ends on an encouraging note of assurance. Having earlier evoked the inspiring image of the Saint (see Sec. 30 ff.), the Master now speaks of the fruits and results that await him who follows the Teaching : from the highest summit, the final deliverance in Saintship, preceded by the three Noble Paths leading to it, to the access stage of mind's growing maturity for enlightenment, down to those aspirants who, in the indubitable confrontation with the Truth by way of Insight-meditation, have won deep faith in the Master and sublime love for him. Of them our Discourse says that they are assured of those superhuman realms which are usually called "heaven". But it may well be as the Ancients explain, that it is "the Heaven on Earth" which is meant here : the superhuman bliss experienced when for the first time, and still imperfect, the Insight dawns

on the meditator that phenomena, being evanescent and coreless throughout, do not and cannot enforce bondage unless we ourselves forge the chains of craving and delusion.

“ A bhikkhu who in solitude
has mind’s tranquillity obtained,
enjoys a superhuman bliss,
if insight in the Teaching dawns.

Whenever in the Aggregates
their rise and fall he clearly notes,
to joy and rapture he attains.
To those who know—
this is the Deathless State.”

Dhammapada, vv. 373-374.

THUS WILL A VISION STERN
CHANGE INTO FREEDOM’S SMILE . . .

Nyanaponika Thera.

THE SNAKE SIMILE

1. Thus have I heard. Once the Blessed One lived at Sāvattthī, in Jeta's Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

Ariṭṭha's Wrong View.

2. Now on that occasion a monk called Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers, had conceived this pernicious view : “There are things called “obstructions”¹ by the Blessed One. As I understand His teaching, those things are not necessarily obstructive for one who pursues them”.

3. Several monks, hearing (about it), went to the monk Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers, and asked him : “Is it true, friend Ariṭṭha, that you have conceived this pernicious view : “There are things called “obstructions” by the Blessed One. As I understand His teaching, those things are not necessarily obstructive for one who pursues them’ ?”

“Yes, indeed, friends. (I do hold that view)”.

Then those monks wishing to dissuade Ariṭṭha from that pernicious view, urged, admonished, questioned and exhorted him thus : “Do not say so, friend Ariṭṭha, do not say so ! Do not misrepresent the Blessed One ! It is not right to misrepresent Him. Never would the Blessed One speak like that. For in many ways, indeed, has the Blessed One said of those obstructive things that they are obstructions, indeed, and that they necessarily obstruct him who pursues them. Sense desires, so He has said, bring little enjoyment and much suffering and disappointment. The perils in them are greater. Sense desires are like bare bones, has the Blessed One said ; they are like a lump of flesh, like a torch of straw, like a pit of burning coals, like a dream, like boi-

rowed goods, like a fruit-bearing tree, like a slaughter house, like a stake of swords, like a snake's head, are sense desires, has the Blessed One said.² They bring little enjoyment, and much suffering and disappointment. The perils in them are greater.”

Yet, though the monk Ariṭṭha was thus urged, admonished, questioned and exhorted by those monks, he still clung tenaciously and obstinately to his pernicious view, saying : ‘ There are things called ‘ obstructions ’ by the Blessed One. As I understand His teaching, those things are not necessarily obstructive for one who pursues them ’.

4. When those monks could not dissuade the monk Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers, from his pernicious view, they went to the Blessed One, and after respectfully saluting Him, they sat down at one side. Being seated they told the Blessed One (all that had happened), and they said : “ Since, O Lord, we could not dissuade the monk Ariṭṭha from his pernicious view, we have now reported this matter to the Blessed One ”.

5. Then the Blessed One addressed a certain monk thus : “ Go, O monk, and tell the monk Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers, that the Master calls him ”.—“ Yes, Lord ”, replied the monk. He went to the monk Ariṭṭha and spoke to him : “ The Master calls you, friend Ariṭṭha ”.—“ Yes, friend ”, replied Ariṭṭha and he went to meet the Blessed One. Having arrived, he saluted the Blessed One respectfully and sat down at one side. When he was seated the Blessed One addressed him thus :

“ Is it true, Ariṭṭha, that you have conceived this pernicious view : ‘ There are things called ‘ obstructions ’ by the Blessed One. As I understand His teaching, those things

are not necessarily obstructive for him who pursues them ' ? ”
“ Yes, indeed, Lord, I understand the teaching of the Blessed One in this way that those things called ‘ obstructions ’ by the Blessed One, are not necessarily obstructive for him who pursues them ”.

6. “ Of whom do you know, foolish man, that I have taught to him the teaching in that manner ? Did I not, foolish man, speak in many ways of those obstructive things that they are obstructions indeed, and that they necessarily obstruct him who pursues them ? Sense desires, so I have said, bring little enjoyment, and much suffering and disappointment. The perils in them are greater. Sense desires are like bare bones, have I said ; they are like a lump of flesh . . . they are like a snake’s head, have I said. They bring much suffering and disappointment. The perils in them are greater. But you, O foolish man, have misrepresented us by what you personally have wrongly grasped. You have undermined your own (future) and have created much demerit. This, foolish man, will bring you much harm and suffering for a long time.”³

7. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks thus :
“ What do you think, O monks : has that monk Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers, produced any spark (of understanding) in this teaching and discipline ? ”⁴—“ How should that be, Lord ? Certainly not, O Lord ”.

After these words the monk Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers, sat silent, confused, with his shoulders drooping and his head bent, brooding and incapable of making a rejoinder.

Then the Blessed One, knowing (his condition), spoke to him : “ You will be known, foolish man, by what is your

own pernicious view. I shall now question the monks about this”.

8. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks : “ Do you, O monks, also understand the teaching proclaimed by me, in the same manner as this monk Ariṭṭha does, who misrepresents us by what he personally has wrongly grasped ; who has undermined his own (future) and created much demerit ? ”

“ Certainly not, Lord. For in many ways has the Blessed One told us of those obstructive things that they are obstructions indeed, and that they necessarily obstruct him who pursues them . . . ”

“ Good, monks. It is good that you thus understand the teaching proclaimed by me.⁵ For in many ways have I spoken of those obstructive things that they are obstructions, indeed, and that they necessarily obstruct him who pursues them. Sense desires, so have I said, bring little enjoyment, and much suffering and disappointment. The perils in them are greater. Sense desires are like bare bones, have I said ; they are like a lump of flesh, like a torch of straw, like a pit of burning coals, like a dream, like borrowed goods, like a fruit-bearing tree, like a slaughter-house, like a stake of swords ; like a snake’s head are sense desires, have I said. They bring much suffering and disappointment. The perils in them are greater. But this monk Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers, misrepresents us by what he personally has wrongly grasped ; he undermines his own (future) and creates much demerit. This will bring to this foolish man much harm and suffering for a long time.

9. “ Monks, it is impossible indeed, that one can pursue sense gratification⁶ without sensual desire,⁷ without perceptions of sensual desire, without thoughts of sensual desire.

The Snake.

10. ⁸There are here, O monks, some foolish men who study the Teaching ;⁹ having studied it, they do not wisely examine the purpose of those teachings. To those who do not wisely examine the purpose, these teachings will not yield insight.¹⁰ They study the Teaching only to use it for criticizing or for refuting others in disputation. They do not experience the (true) purpose¹¹ for which they¹² (ought to) study the Teaching. To them these teachings wrongly grasped will bring harm and suffering for a long time. And why ? Because of their wrong grasp of the teachings.

Suppose, monks, a man wants a snake, looks for a snake, goes in search of a snake. He then sees a large snake, and when he is grasping its body or its tail, the snake turns back on him and bites his hand or arm or some other limb of his. And because of that he suffers death or deadly pain. And why ? Because of his wrong grasp of the snake.

Similarly, O monks, there are here some foolish men who study the Teaching ; having studied it, they do not wisely examine the purpose of those teachings. To those who do not wisely examine the purpose, these teachings will not yield insight. They study the Teaching only to use it for criticizing or for refuting others in disputation. They do not experience the (true) purpose for which they (ought to) study the Teaching. To them these teachings wrongly grasped, will bring harm and suffering for a long time. And why ? Because of their wrong grasp of the teachings.

11. But there are here, O monks, some noble sons who study the Teaching ;¹³ and having studied it, they examine wisely the purpose of those teachings. To those who wisely examine the purpose, these teachings will yield insight.

They do not study the Teaching for the sake of critisizing nor for refuting others in disputation. They experience the purpose for which they study the Teaching ; and to them these teachings being rightly grasped, will bring welfare and happiness for a long time. And why ? Because of their right grasp of the teachings.

Suppose, monks, a man wants a snake, looks for a snake, goes in search of a snake. He then sees a large snake, and with a forked stick he holds it firmly down. Having done so he catches it firmly by the neck. Then although the snake might entwine with (the coils of) its body that man's hand or arm or some other limb of his, still he does not on that account suffer death or deadly pain. And why not ? Because of his right grasp of the snake.

Similarly, O monks, there are here some noble sons who study the Teaching ; and having learned it, they examine wisely the purpose of those teachings. To those who wisely examine the purpose, these teachings will yield insight. They do not study the Teaching for the sake of critisizing nor for refuting others in disputation. They experience the purpose for which they study the Teaching ; and to them these teachings being rightly grasped, will bring welfare and happiness for a long time. And why ? Because of their right grasp of the teachings.

12. Therefore, O monks, if you know the purpose of what I have said, you should keep it in mind accordingly. But if you do not know the purpose of what I have said, you should question me about it, or else (ask) those monks who are wise.

The Raft.

13. I shall show you, monks, the Teaching's similitude to a raft : as having the purpose of crossing over, not the purpose of being clung to. Listen, monks, and heed well what I shall say.— “ Yes, Lord ”, replied the monks and the Blessed One spoke thus :

Suppose, monks, there is a man journeying on a road and he sees a vast expanse of water of which this shore is, perilous and fearful while the other shore is safe and free from danger. But there is no boat for crossing nor is there a bridge for going over from this side to the other. So the man thinks : “ This is a vast expanse of water ; and this shore is perilous and fearful, but the other shore is safe and free from danger. There is, however, no boat here for crossing, nor a bridge for going over from this side to the other. How, if I gather reeds, sticks, branches and foliage, and bind them into a raft ? ” Now that man collects reeds, sticks, branches and foliage, and binds them into a raft. Carried by that raft, labouring with hands and feet, he safely crosses over to the other shore. Having crossed and arrived at the other shore, he thinks : “ This raft, indeed, has been very helpful to me. Carried by it, and labouring with hands and feet, I got safely across to the other shore. Should I not lift this raft on my head or put it on my shoulders, and go where I like ? ”

What do you think about it, O monks ? Will this man by acting thus, do what should be done with a raft ?—“ No, Lord ”.—How then, monks, would he be doing what ought to be done with a raft ? Here, monks, having got across and arrived at the other shore, the man thinks : “ This raft, indeed, has been very helpful to me. Carried by it, and labouring with hands and feet, I got safely across to

the other shore. Should I not pull it up now to the dry land or let it float in the water, and then go as I please ? ” By acting thus, monks, would that man do what should be done with a raft.

In the same way, monks, have I shown to you the Teaching’s similitude to a raft : as having the purpose of crossing over, not the purpose of being clung to.

14. You, O monks, who understand the Teaching’s similitude to a raft, you should let go even (good) teachings,¹⁴ how much more false ones !

Grounds for Views.

15. There are, monks, these six grounds for false views.¹⁵ What are the six ? There is here, monks, an uninstructed worldling who has no regard for Noble Ones, who is ignorant of their teaching and untrained in it ; who has no regard for men of worth, who is ignorant of their teaching and untrained in it : he considers *corporeality* thus : “ This is mine, this I am, this is my self ” ;¹⁶ he considers *feeling* . . . *perception* . . . *mental formations* thus : “ This is mine, this I am, this is my self ” ; and what is seen, heard, sensed and thought,¹⁷ what is encountered, sought, pursued in mind,¹⁸ this also he considers thus : ‘ This is mine, this I am, this is my self ’ ; and also this ground for views (holding) : ‘ The universe is the Self.¹⁹ That I shall be after death ;²⁰ permanent, stable, eternal, immutable ; eternally the same²¹ shall I abide in that very condition ’—that (view), too, he considers thus : ‘ This is mine, this I am, this is my self ’.”²²

16. But, monks, there is here a well instructed noble disciple who has regard for Noble Ones, who knows their teaching and is well trained in it ; who has regard for men of worth, who knows their teaching and is well trained in

it : he does not consider corporeality in this way : “This is mine, this I am, this is my self”; he does not consider feeling . . . perception . . . mental formations in this way: “This is mine, this I am, this is my self”; and what is seen, heard, sensed and thought, what is encountered, sought, pursued in mind, this also he does not consider in this way: “This is mine, this I am, this is my self”; and also this ground for views (holding) : “The Universe is the Self That I shall be after death; permanent, stable, eternal immutable, eternally the same shall I abide in that very condition”—that (view), too, he does not consider thus: “This is mine, this I am, this is my self”.

17. Considering thus, he is not anxious about unrealities.²³

Anxiety About Unrealities.

18. When this was said, a certain monk asked the Blessed One :

“Lord, can there be anxiety about unrealities, in the external?”²⁴

“There can be, O monk,” said the Blessed One. “In that case, monk, someone thinks : “Oh, I had it ! That, alas, I have no longer ! Oh, may I have it again ! But, alas, I do not get it !” Hence he grieves, is depressed and laments ; beating his breast, he weeps and dejection befalls him. Thus, monk, is there anxiety about unrealities, in the external”.

19. “But, Lord, can there be absence of anxiety about unrealities, in the external ?”

“There can be, O monk,” said the Blessed One. “In that case, monk, someone does not think thus : “Oh, I had it!

That, alas, I have no longer ! `Oh, may I have it again ! But, alas, I do not get it !” Hence he does not grieve, is not depressed, does not lament ; he does not beat his breast nor does he weep, and no dejection befalls him. Thus, monk, is there absence of anxiety about unrealities, in the external ”.

20. “ Lord, can there be anxiety about unrealities, in the internal ? ”

“ There can be, monk,” said the Blessed One. “ In that case, monk, someone has this view : “ The Universe is the Self. That I shall be after death ; permanent, stable, eternal, immutable ; eternally the same shall I abide in that very condition ”. He then hears a Perfect One expounding the Teaching for the removal of all Grounds for Views, of all prejudices, obsessions, dogmas and biases ; for the stilling of all (*Kamma*-) processes, for the relinquishing of all substrata (of existence), for the extirpation of craving, for dispassion, cessation, *Nibbāna*. He then thinks : “ I shall be annihilated, I shall be destroyed ! No longer shall I exist ! ” Hence he grieves, is depressed and laments ; beating his breast, he weeps and dejection befalls him. Thus, monks, is there anxiety about realities, in the internal ”.

21. “ But, Lord, can there be absence of anxiety about unrealities, in the internal ? ”

“ There can be, monk,” said the Blessed One. “ In that case, monk, someone does not have this view : “ The Universe is the Self . . . eternally the same shall I abide in that very condition ”. He then hears a Perfect One expounding the Teaching for the removal of all Grounds for Views, of all prejudices, obsessions, dogmas and biases ; for the stilling of all (*Kamma*-) processes, for the relinquishing of all substrata (of existence), for the extirpation of craving, for dispassion,

cessation, *Nibbāna*. He then does not think : “ I shall be annihilated, I shall be destroyed ! No longer shall I exist ! ” Hence he does not grieve, is not depressed, does not lament ; he does not beat his breast nor does he weep, and no dejection befalls him. Thus, monk, is there absence of anxiety about unrealities, in the internal ”.²⁵

Impermanence and Not-self.

22. “ You may well take hold of a possession,²⁶ O monks, that is permanent, stable, eternal, immutable, that abides eternally the same in its very condition. (But) do you see, monks, any such possession ? ”

“ No, Lord.”

“ Well, monks, I, too, do not see any such possession that is permanent, stable, eternal, immutable, that abides eternally the same in its very condition.”

23. “ You may well accept, monks, the assumption of a self-theory²⁷ from the acceptance of which there would not arise sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair. (But) do you see, monks, any such assumption of a self-theory ? ”

“ No, Lord.”

“ Well, monks, I, too, do not see any such assumption of a self-theory from the acceptance of which there would not arise sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair.”

24. “ You may well rely, monks, on any supporting (argument) for views²⁸ from the reliance on which there would not arise sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair. (But) do you see, monks, any such supporting (argument) for views ? ”

“ No, Lord.”

“ Well, monks, I, too, do not see any such supporting (argument) for views from the reliance on which there would not arise sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair.”²⁹

25. “ If there were a self, monks, would there be my self’s property ? ”

“ So it is, Lord.”

“ Or if there is a self’s property, would there be my self ? ”

“ So, it is, Lord.”

“ Since in truth and, in fact, self and self’s property do not obtain, O monks, then this ground for views, “ The Universe is the Self. That I shall be after death ; permanent, stable eternal, immutable ; eternally the same shall I abide, in that very condition ”—is it not, monks, an entirely and perfectly foolish idea ? ”

“ What else should it be, Lord ? It is an entirely and perfectly foolish idea.”³⁰

The Three Characteristics.

26. “ What do you think, monks : is corporeality permanent or impermanent ? ”

“ Impermanent, Lord.”

“ And what is impermanent, is it painful or pleasant ? ”

“ Painful, Lord.”

“ And what is impermanent, painful, subject to change, is it fit to be considered thus : ‘ This is mine, this I am, this is my self ’ ? ”

“ Certainly not, Lord.”

“ What do you think, monks :

Is feeling ;
is perception ;
are mental formations ;
is consciousness ;

permanent or impermanent ? ”

“ Impermanent, Lord.”

“ And what is impermanent, is it painful or pleasant ? ”

“ Painful, Lord.”

“ And what is impermanent, painful, subject to change, is it fit to be considered thus : ‘ This is mine, this I am, this my self ’ ? ”

“ Certainly not, Lord.”

27. “ Therefore, monks, whatever corporeality, whether past, future or present, in oneself or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near,—all corporeality should, with right wisdom, thus be seen as it is : “ This is not mine, this I am not, this not my self. ”

“ Whatever feeling ;
whatever perception ;
whatever mental formations ;
whatever consciousness ;

whether past, future or present, in oneself or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all . . . consciousness should, with right wisdom, thus be seen as it is :
“ This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self ”.

28. Seeing this, monks, the well-instructed noble disciple becomes disgusted ³¹with corporeality, becomes disgusted with feeling, with perception, with mental formations, with consciousness.

29. Through his being disgusted, his passion fades away.³² His passion having faded, he is freed.³³ In him 'who is freed there is the knowledge of freedom:³⁴ "Ceased has rebirth, fulfilled is the holy life, the task is done, there is no more of this to come", thus he knows.

*The Arahant.*³⁵

30. This monk is called one who has removed the cross-bar, has filled the moat, has broken the pillar, has unbolted (his mind) ; a Noble One who has taken down the flag, put down the burden, become unfettered.

31. And how, monks, is that monk one who has removed the cross-bar ? Herein the monk has abandoned ignorance, has cut it off at the root, removed it from its soil like a palmyrah tree, brought it to utter extinction, incapable of arising again. Thus has he removed the cross-bar.

32. And how, monks, is that monk one who has filled the moat ? Herein the monk has abandoned the round of rebirths, leading to renewed existence ; he has cut it off at the root, removed it from its soil like a palmyrah tree, brought it to utter extinction, incapable of arising again.

33. And how has he broken the pillar ? He has abandoned craving, has cut it off at the root, removed it from its soil like a palmyrah tree, brought it to utter extinction, incapable of arising again.

34. And how has he unbolted (his mind) ? He has abandoned the five lower fetters, has cut them off at the

root, removed them from their soil like a palmyrah tree, brought them to utter extinction, incapable of arising again.

35. And how is the monk a Noble One who has taken down the flag, put down the burden, become unfettered ? He has abandoned the conceit of self, has cut it off at the root, removed it from its soil like a palmyrah tree, brought it to utter extinction, incapable of arising again. Thus is the monk a Noble One who has taken down the flag, put down the burden, become unfettered.

36. When a monk's mind is thus freed, O monks, neither the gods with Indra, nor the gods with Brahma, nor the gods with the Lord of Creatures (Pajāpati), when searching will find³⁶ on what the consciousness of one thus gone (*tathā-gata*) is based. Why is that ? One who has thus gone is no longer traceable here and now, so I say.³⁷

Misrepresentation.

37. So teaching, so proclaiming, O monks, I have been baselessly, vainly, falsely and wrongly accused by some ascetics and brahmanas: "A nihilist³⁸ is the ascetic Gotama ; He teaches the annihilation, the destruction, the non-being of an existing individual ".³⁹

As I am not and as I do not teach, so have I been baselessly, vainly, falsely and wrongly accused by some ascetics and brahmanas thus : " A nihilist is the ascetic Gotama ; He teaches the annihilation, the destruction, the non-being of an existing individual ".

What I teach now as before, O monks, is suffering and the cessation of suffering.

Praise and Blame.

38. If for that⁴⁰ others revile, abuse, scold and insult the Perfect One, on that account, O monks, the Perfect One will not feel annoyance, nor dejection, nor displeasure in His heart. And if for that others respect, revere, honour and venerate the Perfect One, on that account the Perfect One will not feel delight, nor joy, nor elation in His heart. If for that others respect, revere, honour and venerate the Perfect One, He will think : “ It is towards this (mind-body aggregate) which was formerly⁴¹ fully comprehended, that they perform such acts.”⁴²

39. Therefore, O monks, if you, too, are reviled, abused, scolded and insulted by others, you should on that account not entertain annoyance, nor dejection, nor displeasure in your hearts. And if others respect, revere, honour and venerate you, on that account you should not entertain delight nor joy nor elation in your hearts. If others respect, revere honour and venerate you you should think : “ It is towards this (mind-body aggregate) which was formerly comprehended, that they perform such acts ”.⁴³

*Not Yours.*⁴⁴

40. Therefore, monks, give up whatever is not yours.⁴⁵ Your giving it up will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness. What is it that is not yours ? *Corporeality* is not yours. Give it up ! Your giving it up will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness. *Feeling* is not yours. Give it up ! Your giving it up will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness. *Perception* is not yours. Give it up ! Your giving it up will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness. *Mental formations* are not yours. Give them up ! Your giving them up will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness. *Consciousness* is not yours.

Give it up ! Your giving it up will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness.⁴⁶

41. What do you think, monks : if people were to carry away the grass, sticks, branches and leaves in this Jeta Grove, or burnt them or did with them what they pleased, would you think : These people carry us away, or burn us, or do with us what they please ?"— ' No, Lord. Why not ? Because, Lord, that is neither ourself nor the property of our self'.—So, too, monks, give up what is not yours ! Your giving it up will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness. What is it that is not yours ? Corporeality . . . feeling . . . perception . . . mental formations . . . consciousness are not yours. Give them up ! Your giving them up will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness.

The Explicit Teaching and Its Fruit.

42. Monks, this Teaching⁴⁷ so well proclaimed by me, is plain, open, explicit, free of patchwork.⁴⁸ In this Teaching that is so well proclaimed by me and is plain, open, explicit and free of patchwork,—for those who are Arahants, free of taints, who have accomplished and completed their task, have laid down the burden, achieved their aim, severed the fetters binding to existence, who are liberated by full knowledge, there is no (future) round of existence that can be ascribed to them.

43. Monks, in this Teaching that is so well proclaimed by me and is plain, open, explicit and free of patchwork, those monks who have abandoned the five lower fetters will all be reborn spontaneously (in the Pure Abodes) and there will pass away finally, no more returning from that world.

44. Monks, in this Teaching that is so well proclaimed by me and is plain, open, explicit and free of patchwork,

those monks who have abandoned three fetters and have reduced greed, hatred and delusion, are all Once-returners, and, returning only once to this world, will then make an end of suffering.

45. Monks, in this Teaching that is so well proclaimed by me and is plain, open, explicit and free of patchwork, those monks who have abandoned three fetters, are all Stream-enterers, no more liable to downfall, assured, and headed for full Enlightenment.

46. Monks, in this Teaching that is so well proclaimed by me and is plain, open, explicit and free of patchwork, those monks who are mature in *Dhamma*, mature in Faith,⁴⁹ are all headed for full Enlightenment.

47. Monks, in this Teaching that was so well proclaimed by me and is plain, open, explicit and free of patchwork, those who have simply faith in me, simply love for me,⁵⁰ are all destined for heaven.

48. This said the Blessed One. Satisfied, the monks rejoiced in the words of the Blessed One.

NOTES

Abbreviations :—Cy. : Commentary (*Papañca-sūdanī*) ; Sub-Cy. : Sub-commentary (*Majjhima-ṭīka*) ; D. : *Dīgha-Nikāya* ; M. : *Majjhima-Nikāya* ; S. : *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* ; VisM. : *Visuddhi Magga* ; PTS. : Pali Text Society's edition.

1. *Things called “obstructions” (antarāyikā dhammā).*—Cy. gives here a list of ideas and actions that obstruct either heavenly rebirth or final deliverance or both. Ariṭṭha, so says Cy. being a learned exponent of the Teaching, was quite familiar with most of those “obstructions” ; but, being unfamiliar with the Code of Discipline (*Vinaya*), he conceived the view that sex indulgence was not necessarily an obstruction for a monk. Ariṭṭha is said to have used a rather sophistic argument, saying, “If some of the five sense enjoyments are permissible even for lay adherents who are Stream-enterers (*sotāpanna*), etc., why is an exception made as to the visible shape, voice, touch, etc., of women ?” According to Cy., Ariṭṭha goes so far as to charge the Buddha of exaggerating the importance of the first Grave Offence (*Pārājikā*) for a monk (*i.e.*, sexual intercourse), saying that the emphasis given to it is like the effort of one who tries to chain the ocean.

The similes about sense-desires, given in the following section of the Discourse, seem to support the commentarial reference to sexual intercourse.

THE SIMILES ABOUT SENSE-DESIRES.

2. Of the ten similes, the first seven were explained by the Buddha in the (*Potaliya Sutta*, M., 54). A summary of these explanations follows here ; and after each of these, and also for the remaining three similes, an expansion is given of the one-word explanation found in the Cy. to our present text :—

(1) *Bare bones*, fleshless, blood-smeared, are thrown to a

starving dog but cannot satisfy the animal's hunger. Similarly, sense-desires give no lasting satisfaction (Cy: *appasādaṭṭhena*).

- (2) *A lump of flesh* for which birds of prey fight each other; if the bird that has seized the lump of flesh, does not yield it, it may meet death or deadly pain from the beaks and claws of the other birds. Similarly, the sense-desires are common to many (*bahusādhāraṇa*), i.e., the same sense objects may be claimed by many and may become the cause of deadly conflict.
- (3) *A torch of straw* carried against the wind may cause severe burns to the careless man if not quickly discarded. Similarly, sense-desires will severely burn (*anudahana*), i.e., greatly harm him who thoughtlessly, and unaware of the great danger, partakes of them in the belief that they will bring light and joy to his life.
- (4) *A pit of burning coals* towards which a man is dragged by others ; if he cannot free himself from the grip, he will be thrown into the fire and consumed by it. Similarly, sense-desires are like a vast conflagration (*mahā-bhitāpa*) into which the victim is dragged by bad company, or by his own deeds causing his rebirth in miserable states of woe.
- (5) *A dream* of a beautiful landscape that vanishes on awakening. Similarly, sense-desires are a brief illusion (*ittara-paccupaṭṭhāna*) like a dream, and disappointing after one awakens to reality from infatuation.
- (6) *Borrowed goods* on which the borrower foolishly prides himself in public ; but which are withdrawn by the owners when they see the boastful man. Similarly,

sense-desires are temporary (*tāvakālika*) and not a true and lasting possession of him who enjoys them, filled with vainglory.

- (7) *A fruit tree* climbed by one who craves for the fruits ; but another man, likewise greedy for them but unable to climb, chooses another method and fells the tree ; and unless the first man quickly descends, he will break his limbs. Similarly, in the blind pursuit of sense pleasures one may “ break all one’s limbs ” (*sabhaṅga paccanga bhañjana*), may suffer severe injury of body and mind.— The SubCy. refers also to punishment and torture incurred by reckless deeds to which people are driven by sense infatuation.
- (8) *A slaughter house* (or place of execution) : because sense-desires are like a butcher’s (or executioner’s) block (*adhikuṭṭana*). This may mean that sense-desires kill much that is noble in man and cut off his higher development.
- (9) *A stake of swords* : sense-desires are piercing (*vinivij-jhana*), penetrating deep within, causing wounds where there had been none. Unfulfilled or frustrated desire, or the pains of jealousy, are, indeed, like that ancient torture of the stake of swords.
- (10) *A snake’s head* : sense-desires are a grave risk and peril (*sāsanka-sappaṭibhaya*) for present and future welfare, if one walks unwarily.

3. This first part of the Ariṭṭha episode occurs twice in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. In the *Cūḷa Vagga* (*Kammakkhandha*) it is followed by announcing the Sangha act of suspension (*ukkhepaniya-kamma*) against Ariṭṭha as he did not give up

his wrong views. In the *Pācittiya* section of the *Vinaya*, Ariṭṭha's refusal to renounce his wrong view is defined as the monastic offence called "*Pācittiya*".

4. . . . *produced any spark (of understanding) in this teaching and discipline (usmīkato pi imasmiṃ dhammavinaye)*. This is stock phrase in similar contexts, e.g., in M. 38 where Sāti's misconceptions are rejected. Our rendering follows Cy. : "This refers to one who has (not) produced the "warmth of understanding" (*ñāṇ'usmā*) that can bring the "seed of wisdom" (*paññā-bījā* ; SubCy.) to the maturity required for attaining to the Paths and Fruitions of sanctity".

5. Cy. says that by questioning the other monks the Master wanted to clarify the opinion held by the community of monks ; and, on the other hand, leave no doubt in Ariṭṭha that through obstinately clinging to his views, he had separated himself from the community.

6. *Can pursue sense gratification (kāme paṭisevissati)*. *Kāma* is here *vatthukāma*, the objective aspect of *kāma*, "sensuality", the sense experience.—Cy. adds : *methuna-samācāraṃ samācarissati* 'It is impossible, that he can commit the sexual act (without perceptions and thoughts of sense-desire)". SubCy. says that also other physical acts expressive of sexual desire, are to be included, as embracing, stroking, etc.

7. *Aññatra kāmehi* : this refers to *kilesa-kāma*, "sensuality as a defilement of mind", i.e., sense desire, the subjective aspect of *kāma*.

8. Cy. : After the Master had pointed out Ariṭṭha's wrong views, he continues now by showing the grievous fault that lies in a wrong grasp of what has been learned (i.e., the serious

danger inherent in misconceiving and misinterpreting the Teaching).

9. The text inserts here the ninefold division of the codified teaching : “ Discourses, mixed prose and verse, prose expositions, verses, solemn utterances, sayings, birth stories, marvels, and replies to questions ”. Since this enumeration interrupts the flow of the sentence, it has been shifted from the text to the Notes.

10. *Dhammā na nijjhānam khamanti.* Cy. : The teachings do not become clear, do not come into the range (of understanding) ; so that one cannot discern whether in the respective place of the exposition, morality is spoken of, or concentration, insight, the Paths, the Fruits, the Round of Existence or its ending.—Sub-Cy. : “ That is, one cannot understand that the purpose of morality is the attaining of concentration, the purpose of concentration the winning of insight, etc. ”.

Nijjhāna has here the meaning of “ insight ” or “ comprehension ” (Sub-Cy.: *nijjhāna-paññā-kkhamā'na honti*). This phrase appears with the same meaning and in the same context, in the *Kītāgiri Sutta* (M. 70) and the *Caṅkī Sutta* (M. 95), that is, likewise preceded by an “ examination of Purpose (or meaning) ”. Also S. XXV, 1, confirms our rendering : *Yassa kho bhikkhave ime dhammā evaṃ paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti ayaṃ vuccati dhammānusārī*.

11. Cy.: That is, the attainment of the Paths and Fruitions of Sanctitude.

12. Cy. refers this to “ the noble sons ” mentioned in Sec. 11.

13. THE THREE WAYS OF STUDYING THE TEACHING.

Cy. : “ They, the noble sons, study the Teaching for the sake of crossing (the ocean of Samsaric suffering). There are, to wit, three manners of studying the Teaching: studying it in the manner of the Snake-simile (*alagadda-pariyatti*) ; studying it for the sake of crossing over (*niṭṭharana-pariyatti*) ; and studying in a treasurer’s (or store-keeper’s) position (*bhandā-gārika-pariyatti*). —

- (1) He who studies the Buddha’s word for getting robes and other requisites, or for becoming widely known ; that is, he who learns for the sake of fame and gain, his study is that of the Snake-simile (*i.e.*, the wrong grasp) ; but better than such a study would be for him to sleep and not to study at all.
- (2) But there is one who studies the Buddha’s word, and when morality is the subject, he fulfills morality ; when concentration is the subject, he lets it take deep root ; when insight is the subject, he establishes himself well in insight ; when the Paths and Fruitions are the subject, he studies with the intention, “ I shall develop the Path, I shall realize the Fruition ”. Only the studying of such a one is “ studying for the sake of crossing over ” (as expressed in the simile of the Raft ; Sec. 13).
- (3) But the studying by one who (as an Arahant, a Saint) has extinguished the taints (*khīṇāsavo*), is “ studying in the Treasurer’s position ”. For him, indeed, there remains nothing unpenetrated, nothing unrelinquished, nothing undeveloped and nothing unrealized.*. He is

* This refers to the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 3rd Truths, respectively.

one who has penetrated the Aggregates of Existence (*khandha*), who has relinquished the defilements, developed the Path and realized the Fruition. Hence, in studying the Buddha's Word, he studies it as a keeper of the scriptures, as a guardian of the tradition, as a preserver of the continuity. Thus his study is like (the activity of) a treasurer or storekeeper).

“Now, when those proficient in the books cannot live at one place, being afraid of starvation, etc., if (in such a situation) there is one who, while himself going the alms round with very great fatigue, as an unliberating worldling takes up studies with the thought : “Lest the exceedingly sweet Buddha-word may perish, I shall keep the scriptures (in mind), shall preserve the continuity and guard the tradition”, in that case, is his study of the Treasurer's type or is it not ?—It is not. And why not ? Because his study is not applied to his own situation (*na attano ñhāne ñhatvā pariyāpunattā* ; Sub-Cy. : that of (having to) cross over). An unliberated worldling's* study will either be of the type of the Snake-simile, or for the sake of crossing over ; while for the seven (noble persons ; *ariya-puggala*) who have entered the Higher Training (*sekha*), the study is only for the sake of crossing over ; for the Saint (*Arahat*) it is only of the Treasurer's type”.

14. Cy. : “The teachings' (*dhammā*) are Tranquillity (*samatha*) and Insight (*vipassanā*). The Blessed One, indeed, enjoins us to abandon desire and attachment (*chanda-rāga*) concerning Tranquillity and Insight. Where, then, has he enjoined the abandonment of desire and attachment in the case of Tranquillity ? He did so in the following saying : “Thus, Udāyi, do I teach the abandoning even of the Sphere

* Be he a monk or a lay follower.

of Neither-perception-nor-Non-perception. Do you see Udāyi, any fetter fine or coarse, that I did not tell you to discard ? ” (M. 66). And in the case of Insight, the abandoning was enjoined by him as follows “ And to that view thus purified and cleansed, you should not be attached, should not be enamoured of it, should not treasure it ”. But here, in this present text, he enjoined the abandoning of desire and attachment concerning both (Tranquillity and Insight), by saying : “ You should let go even (good) teachings, how much more false ones ! ”—The meaning is this : “ I teach, O monks, the abandoning of desire and attachment even for such peaceful and sublime states (as Tranquillity and Insight) : how much more so in regard to that ignoble, low, contemptible, coarse and impure thing in which this foolish Ariṭṭha does not see any harm, saying that desire and attachment for the five sense-objects is not necessarily an obstruction ! But you, O monks, unlike that Ariṭṭha, should not fling mud and refuse into my dispensation ! ” In this way, the Blessed One again rebuked Ariṭṭha by this admonition.

GROUND S FOR FALSE VIEWS (*diṭṭhi-tṭhāna*).

15. Cy. : By the words “ There are, monks, these six grounds for false views ”, the Master wishes to show this : “ He who takes the five Aggregates of Existence as ‘ I ’ and ‘ Mine ’, by way of a threefold wrong grasp (*tividha-gāha*), he flings mud and refuse into my dispensation, like this Ariṭṭha ”.

Cy. and SubCy. : False views themselves are “ grounds ” (or bases, starting-points) for subsequently arising false views, like personality belief, eternalism, etc. (Cy. : *diṭṭhīpi diṭṭhi-tṭhānaṃ*). Further, the “ grounds ” are the subject-matter (*ārammaṇa*, “ object ”) of the views, *i.e.*, the five Aggregates,

the visual objects, etc. Finally, they are also the conditioning factors (*paccaya*) of the false views, e.g., ignorance, sense-impression (*phassa*), (faulty) perceptions and thoughts, unwisely directed attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), bad company, others' speech, etc.*

16. “*He considers corporeality thus : ‘ This is mine ’.*”
Cy. : This is wrong grasp (or wrong approach) induced by craving (*taṇhā-gāha*).—“*This I am*” : this is wrong grasp induced by conceit (*māna-gāha*).—“*This is my self*” : this is wrong grasp induced by false views (*diṭṭhi-gāha*). Here, reference is to Craving, Conceit, False Views, which have corporeality as object : but corporeality cannot be said to be a self. The same holds true for feeling, perception and mental formations.

17. “*What is seen*” ; Cy. : the visual sense-object base (*rūpāyatana*) : “*heard*” : the sound-base ; “*sensed*” (*mutam*) : the sense-object bases of smell, taste, touch sensations : “*what is thought*” : the remaining seven bases, i.e., the mind-object base (*dhammāyatana*) and the six sense-organ bases.

18. “*Encountered*” ; Cy. : after having been sought for, or not sought for : “*sought*” : encountered or not encountered (before) : “*mentally pursued*” (*anuvicaritam manasā*) : resorted to by consciousness : (*cittena anusāṇcaritam*) : what was encountered or not encountered without being sought for.

The terms “*thought, encountered*”, etc., refer to the fifth Aggregate, i.e., Consciousness (*viññāṇakkandha*), which was not mentioned in the first part of Sec. 15.

* These, with the Aggregates as the first, are the eight “*Grounds for false views*”, as mentioned in the *Paṭisambhidā Magga* (*Diṭṭhi-kathā*).—The term *diṭṭhi-ṭṭhāna* also occurs in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (D. 1) and in the commentary to it.

19. “ *The Universe is the Self*”, lit. : “ This (is) the world, this (is) the self ” (*so loko so attā*). That, in fact, an identification of the two terms is intended here, will be shown in the following comments.—The best explanation of the passage is furnished in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (D. 1) where a similar phraseology is used : “ There are, monks, some ascetics and brahmans who are eternalists and who proclaim self and world to be eternal ” (*sassatavādā sassataṃ attañca lokañca paññapenti*) ; subsequently the theorist is introduced as stating his view in similar terms : “ Eternal are self and world . . . they exist as eternally the same ” (*sassato attā ca loko ca . . . atthi iva sassatisamaṃ*). The last term appears likewise in our text ; see Note 21.—From this we may safely conclude that it is the identity, or unity, of the Self (or soul) ; *mahātman*, *paramātman*) with the universe (or the Universal Spirit, Brahman) which is conveyed by our text.

In the Commentary specific to our text, this eternalistic view is rendered and classified in the terminology of the *Dhamma*. The Commentary says :

“ This statement (‘ The Universe is the Self ’) refers to the (wrong) view ‘ He considers corporeality, etc., as the self ’ (*rūpaṃ attato samanupassatī’ ti ādinā nayena*). ”

The canonical quotation (e.g., in M. 44), included here in the Commentary, has two implications which are of importance for understanding the reason why it was cited in this context :—

- (1) As very often in the commentaries (e.g., to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), the term “ world ” (*loko*) is hereby explained as truly referring to the five Aggregates (*khandha* ; i.e., corporeality, feeling, etc.), singly or *in toto*.

(2) This quotation is the formula for the first of the twenty types of Personality-belief (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi* ; e.g., in M. 44). In the first five of these twenty, the self is said to be identical with each of the five Aggregates (as in the earlier part of Sec. 15 of our text). Hence the application of this quote to our textual passage signifies that the theorist conceives the “ world ” (i.e., corporeality, feeling, etc.) as *identical* with the self.

The double “ *So (loko) so (attā)* ” in our text, should, therefore, be taken as standing for “ *yo (loko) so (attā)* ”. lit. : *what is the world that is the self*. In the Cy. to M. 44 we find a similar phrase : “ Someone considers corporeality as self : what is corporeality that is “ I ” ; what is “ I ” that is corporeality. Thus he considers corporeality and self as non-dual ” (. . . *yaṃ rūpaṃ so ahaṃ, yo ahaṃ taṃ rūpaṃ'ti rūpaṇca attānaṇca advayaṃ samanupassati*). According to this interpretation the phrase has been translated here by “ **This Universe is the Self** ”.

Mostly, the first five types of Personality-belief are explained as referring to the wrong view of Annihilationism (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*).* But their being quoted in our context, shows that they may also apply to Eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*). We have come to this conclusion since it is improbable that, in our textual passage two mutually exclusive views should have been combined in a single statement formulating the sixth “ ground for false views ” : that is, in the first part of that statement, *annihilationism*, and in the second, *eternalism*.

20. “ *That I shall be after death . . .* ” (*so pecca bhavissāmi*). Cy. explains by “ *so ahaṃ* ”, a Pāli idiom, meaning literally

* See, e.g., *Paṭisambhidā-Magga*, *Diṭṭhikathā*, *Ucchedadiṭṭhi-niddesa*; further Cy. to M. 44.

“ this I ”.—“ *Pecca* ”, lit. : having gone, *i.e.*, to the other world.

21. “ *Eternally the same* ” (*sassati-samam*) : an Upanishadic term ; see Bṛhadaraṇyaka-Upaniṣad, 5, 10 : *śāśvatīḥ samāḥ*.

This entire statement of the sixth “ ground for views ” may well have been the original creed of an eternalistic doctrine. The phrasing appears rather vague in the first part, and in general it is rather loosely worded (*so for so aham*). To contemporaries, however, the meaning may have been quite clear since it was perhaps the stock formula for teachings that were well known. Hence, in this translation, we have left the first part of the statement in its rather cryptic and ambiguous original form, while giving the interpretations in the notes only.

22. He identifies himself entirely (Sub-Cy. : *attānam viya gaṇhāti*) with that eternalistic misconception (*gāha*), induced by craving (for self-perpetuation), by false views (tenaciously maintained) and by conceit (deeply ingrained ego-centricity).—Here one view serves as subject-matter for another view (Cy., Sub-Cy.).

23. “ *He is not anxious about unrealities* ” (*asati na paritassati*) ; or “ about the non-existing ” (“ I ” and “ Mine ”). The verb *paritassati* has, according to Cy. the twofold connotation of “ fear ” (*bhaya*) and “ craving ” (*taṇhā*). Hence this passage may also be rendered : “ he has no fears nor cravings concerning the non-existent ”.—Cy. and Sub-Cy. to the *Brahmājāla Sutta* have a long disquisition about the corresponding noun *paritassana*, occurring also in M. 138 ; Saṃy. XXII, Nos. 7 ; 8 ; 53 ; 55.

Cy. : “ By showing herewith the taint-free saint who has no anxiety at the destruction of his own (lit. : internal) Aggregates, the Blessed One concludes His exposition.

24. “ *In the external* ” (*bahiddhā*) : concerning external property which includes also animate possessions, like wife and child, friends, etc.

25. This section deals, according to Cy., with a “ four-fold voidness ” (*catukoṭṭikā suññatā*), *i.e.*, absence of self and mine, referring to one who, at the destruction of his own Aggregates (*i.e.*, his personality), (1) feels anguish, (2) feels none ; and to one who, at the destruction of external property, (3) feels anguish, (4) feels none.—For another classification of the “ four-fold voidness ”, see *Visuddhi Magga* (transl. by Ñāṇamoli), p. 762 f ; and Samy. 22, No. 5, where likewise reference to “ anxiety ” or “ anguish ” (*tāso*) is made.

26. *Pariggaham pariggaṇheyyātha*. This links up with Sec. 19 : the anxiety about external possessions.

27. *Attavādupādānam upadiyetha*. While in most translations the term *upādāna* has been rendered by “ clinging ”, we have followed here a suggestion of the late Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli* rendering it by “ assumption ”. In this context, the word “ assumption ” should be understood : (1) in the sense of a supposition, (2) in the literal sense of its Latin source : *adsumere*, “ to take up ”, which closely parallels the derivation of our Pāli term : *upa-ādāna*, “ taking up strongly ”. In this sense we have used it when translating the derivative verb *upadiyetha* by “ you may accept ”.—*Attavādupādāna* is one of the four types of Clinging (see Nyanatiloka’s “ Bud-

* See “ The Wheel ”, No. 17 : *Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha*, p. 19 (Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy).

dhist Dictionary”), conditioned by Craving (*taṇhā*). This term comprises, according to Cy., the twenty types of Personality Belief (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*).

Quoting this passage of our text, the Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula remarks : “ If there had been any soul-theory which the Buddha had accepted, he would certainly have explained it here, because he asked the monks to accept that soul-theory which did not produce suffering. But in the Buddha’s view, there is no such soul-theory . . . ” (*What the Buddha Taught*, London, 1959, p 58).

28. *Diṭṭhinissayaṃ nissayetha*.—*Nissaya*, lit. : support, basis.—Cy. explains this phrase as the 62 false views headed by Personality-belief (see D. 1 : *Brahmajāla Sutta*). They form the theoretical or ideological basis, or support, for the various creeds and speculative doctrines derived from them.—Sub-Cy.: “The view itself is a support for views; because for one with incorrect conceptions, the view will serve as a prop for his firm adherence to, and the propagation of his ideas ”.—Alternative renderings : You may well place reliance on a view, or may derive conviction from it.

See *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* where, in explanation of *anissito*, the Cy. mentions *taṇhānissaya* and *diṭṭhi-nissaya*, “dependence on craving and views ”.

29. In this section, according to Cy., a “three-fold voidness is shown”, i.e., referring to external possessions, self-theory and reliance on speculative views.

30. The two supplementary statements in this section suggest the following implications : The concepts of “I” and “Mine” are inseparably linked ; so also, in philosophical terms, are substance and attribute. If there is personality-

belief or self-theory, there will be necessarily acquisitiveness or possessiveness in some form or other ; at least these views themselves will be held with strong tenacity and be regarded as an “inalienable property” (see Note 22). There is no pure, abstract self or substance without its determination, property or attribute. On the other hand, acquisitiveness and possessiveness even if of a quite unphilosophical character, cannot be without at least a tacit assumption of a proprietary self ; this applies also to materialistic doctrines (annihilationism). Since in truth and fact neither an abiding property (or attribute) can be established nor an abiding self (or substance), either of these terms is left without its essential referent. Hence the conception of individual immortality as formulated in the sixth Ground for Views, is found to be devoid of any basis and is, therefore, rejected by the Buddha as a fool’s doctrine, being outside of serious consideration.

Cy. : Here a “two-fold voidness” is shown, that of self (*attā*), and of property (or properties) belonging to a self (*attaniya*).

31. “*He becomes disgusted*” (*nibbindati*) ; Cy. : he is dissatisfied, repelled. This disgust (or “turning away”, revulsion ; *nibbidā*) signifies the stage of Insight leading to Emergence” (*vuṭṭhānagāmini vipassanā* ; *Vis. M.*, p. 772 f), which is the culmination of Insight, immediately preceding the attainment of the supramundane Path (of Stream-entry, etc.).

32. “*His passion fades away*” (*virajjati*). This signifies, according to Cy., the attainment of the supramundane Path (*magga*) ; that is the single “moment of entering into one of the four stages of Holiness produced by intuitional insight (*vipassanā*) into the impermanency, misery and impersonality

of existence, flashing forth and for ever transforming one's life and nature" (Nyanatiloka, B. Diet.). It is at that moment that the Fetters are finally eliminated.

33. " *He is freed*" (*vimuccati*). This points to the attainment of the supramundane Fruition (*phala*), that is "those moments of consciousness which follow immediately after the Path-moment as its result, and which under given circumstances may repeat for innumerable times during a life-time" (B. Diet.).

34. " *Knowledge of freedom*" refers to the stage of Reviewing (*paccavekkhaṇa*) the preceding experience of Path and Fruition, the defilements abandoned, etc.—See *Vis. M.*, p. 789.

35. This section appears also in the *Anguttara-Nikāya*. The Fives, No. 71 and 72 (PTS III, 84). Cy. explains the metaphorical expressions as follows :

" There are two cities : one is a city of brigands, the other a city of peace. Now to a great warrior of the city of peace (*i.e.*, a meditator) the following thought occurs : ' As long as this city of brigands (the self-delusion) exists, we shall never be free from danger '. So he dons his armour (of virtue) and goes to the city of brigands. With his sword (of wisdom) he breaks the gate pillar (of craving) together with the door wings, he removes the bolt (of the five lower fetters), lifts the cross-bar (of ignorance), fills in the moat (of Saṃsāra), and lowers the (enemy's) flag (of self-conceit). Such a saint (a Noble One) has put down for good the burden of the five Aggregates (*khandha*), of *kamma*-producing volitions (*kammābhisankhāra*) and of the defilements (*kilesa*) : he has fully liberated himself from the round of existence."

36. “ *When searching will (not) find out* ” (*anvesam̐ nādhigacchanti*). The same phrase is used in the *Godhika Sutta* (4. Samy., No. 23 ; PTS I, 122) by Māra : *anvesam̐ nādhigacchāmi*, “ Searching I cannot find ”, *i.e.*, the consciousness of the monk, Godhika, who, at the moment of committing suicide, had attained Sainthood (*arahatta*). About him the Buddha declares that he “ has passed away finally with a consciousness that no longer gives a footing ” (for a rebirth ; *apatiṭṭhena viññāṇena parinibbuto*).

37. “ *Diṭṭh’ev’āham̐ bhikkhave dhamme Tathagatam̐ ananuvejjo’ti vadāmi.* ”

Cy. : The term *tathagato* (lit. : “ thus-gone ”) may refer either to a being (*satto*) or to the greatest man (*uttamo puriso* ; the Buddha) and a taint-free saint (*khīṇāsavo*).—*Ananuvejjo* means either “ non-existing ” (*asamvijjamāno*) or “ not traceable ” (*avindeyyo*). If *tathāgato* is taken as “ a being ” (in the sense of an abiding personality), the meaning “ non-existing ” applies ; if in the sense of a taint-free saint, the meaning “ not traceable ” is apt. The intention implied in the first case, is : “ O bhikkhus, even of a taint-free saint during his life-time, here and now, I do not declare that he is “ a being, a personality ” (in the sense of an abiding entity) ; how, then, should I declare it of a taint-free saint who has finally passed away, without any future rebirth ? One “ thus-gone is untraceable : because in the ultimate sense (*paramatthato*), there is no such thing as “ a being ” (*satto*). Searching for the basis of consciousness of such a non-existing (being) how can they find it, how can they obtain it ? —In the case of the second explanation, the intention is this : “ I say that Indra and other gods cannot trace a taint-free Saint by way of consciousness (*viññāṇavasena*). For the gods who are with Indra and other deities, even if they make

a search, cannot know about the consciousness of Insight* or that of the supramundane Path or Fruition (of Sainthood ; *arahatta*) that “ it proceeds based on such or such an object.” How, then, could they know it in the case of one who has finally passed away (*parinibbuto*), and has not been born again ? ”

38. “ *A nihilist* ” (*venayiko*). Cy. : *satta-vināsako*, “ destroyer of a being(’s personality) ” ; a denier of individuality.

39. “ *The annihilation of an existing creature* ” (*sato sattassa ucchedam*). Sub-Cy. : “ One who speaks of doing away with a being that has existence in the ultimate sense (*paramatthato*), would actually be one who teaches the destruction of a being. But I am speaking of what does not exist in the ultimate sense. I am using that (term ‘ being ’) only in the conventional sense as done in common parlance (*yathā loke voharati*). ”

40. “ *For that,* ” i.e., for proclaiming the Four Truths (Cy.).

41. Cy. : “ *Formerly*, that is when still in the environ of the Bodhi tree before turning the Wheel of the Dhamma ; and also from the time of turning the Wheel when teaching Dhamma, it was only the Four Truths that I proclaimed ”. In our sentence, the term *Suffering* includes also its roots, the origination ; and the term *Cessation* also the Path that leads to the cessation ”.

Sub-Cy. : “ There is no teaching of the Master that is unrelated to the Four Truths. By saying, ‘ What I teach

* Sub-Cy. : “ The consciousness of Insight (*vipassanā-citta*) that aims at the attainment of the Highest Fruition (i.e., *arahatta*) leaps forward to the Unconditioned Element (*Nibbāna*) in the thought:- “ Non-origination is safety. Non-origination is safety ! ” ”

now as before, is suffering and the cessation of suffering ', the Blessed One indicates this : ' Never do I teach a self that is annihilated or destroyed, nor do I teach that there is any kind of self '."

42. *Evarūpā kārā karīyanti*. Some Burmese texts and the paraphrase in Cy. have *sakkārā* ; then to be translated : " that they pay such respect ".

43. In the ultimate sense, praise and blame do not refer to a self or ego, but to that five-fold Aggregate (*pañcakkhandham*) which was comprehended by the Buddha as an evanescent combination of material and mental processes, void of an ego-entity. Hence there is no reason for elation or dejection.—A passage similar to Sections 38, 39 is found at the beginning of D. 1.

44. " *Not yours* " (*na tumhākam*) is also the title of a section of Suttas in the *Samyutta-Nikāya* (Khandha Samy., No. 33 ff.).

45. Cy. stresses that it is the *attachment* to the five Aggregates, the desire for them (*chanda-rāga*) which should be given up ; it is not so that the five Aggregates themselves should be, as it were, " torn to pieces or pulled out " (*na uppāṭetvā luñcivā vā*).

46. Sub-Cy. : " Only Corporeality, Feeling and the other Aggregates are the basis for the wrong concept of a self, since apart from them there is nothing else to be craved for ".

47. " *This Teaching* " : these words refer, according to Cy., to the entire exposition beginning with sec. 26.

48. " *Free of patchwork* " (*chinna-pilotika*) ; lit. : devoid of the nature of a patched cloth. Cy. : *Pilotika* is torn rag

cloth patched up with stitches and knots which are similar to hypocrisy and other deceptions, (Sub-Cy.) : substituting assumed attitudes (*iriyapatha-santhapana*) for an actually, in that individual, non-existing practice of meditation and insight. *Pilotika* means also “ refuse ”, referring to false and unworthy monks who do not have any footing in the Buddha’s dispensation.

This phrase *chinna-pilotika* seems, however, to point to the inner consistency of the Teaching which, like a new cloth (Cy. : *ahata-sātaka*), is of one piece and is not in need of patching up contradictions, by artificial attempts of reconciling inconsistencies. Hence the term may freely be rendered by the single word “ consistent ”.

49. *Dhammānusārino saddhānusārino*. These two terms refer to those whose minds are in the process of ripening towards Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), either by way of strengthening the Wisdom-faculty (*paññindriya*) through the contemplation of No-self (in the case of the *dhammānusāri*) ; or by way of strengthening the Faith-faculty (*saddhindriya*) through the contemplation of impermanence (in the case of the *Saddhānusāri*). When they actually reach the Path of Stream-entry (*sotāpattimagga*), they are called “ Mature in Dhamma ” and “ Mature in Faith ”.

50. *Those who have simply faith in me*. Cy. : This refers to persons devoted to the practice of Insight-meditation (*vipassaka-puggalā*). When monks are seated after having got a firm footing in Insight-meditation, there arises in them a unique and fully absorbing faith in, and love for, the Master of the Ten Powers (*i.e.*, the Buddha), (Sub-Cy. : because in pursuance of their Insight-meditation they have received proof that “ the *Dhamma* is well-proclaimed ”). Through

that faith and love they are as if taken by the hand and transported to heaven. They are said to be of assured destiny, (*niyatagatika*) i.e., of the final attainment of . . . *Nibbāna*. The Elder Monks of old say that such Bhikkhus are Lesser Stream-enterers (*cūḷa-* or *bāla-sotāpanna* ; *Vis. M.* 703).

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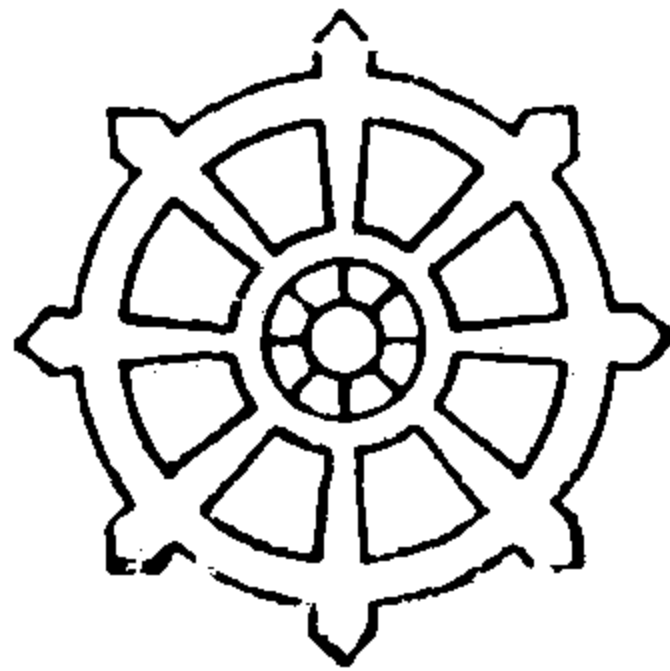
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KNOWLEDGE AND CONDUCT

*Buddhist Contributions
to Philosophy and Ethics*



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PREFACE

THE Buddhist Publication Society, which is completing five full years of unremitted service in the worthy cause of the propagation of the Dhamma, deserves the commendation of all seekers of the Truth for the publication of this volume of Buddhist essays as an enlarged issue of the fiftieth number of their "WHEEL" Series. The Society's publications are well known in every part of the world and there is no doubt that this volume will help a large number of readers to probe deeper into the Buddhist attitude to problems of *knowledge* and *conduct*—the two essentials of the religion (*Sāsana*) traditionally known as *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*, comprehension and practice of the Dhamma.

This number includes two essays dealing with Buddhist thought : the one by Prof. Burtt attempts to outline the four basic ideas which are important for the assessment of Buddhist philosophy, and the other by Dr. Jayatilleke is devoted to a discussion of the Buddhist method of comprehending Truth. The third presents an examination of the moral problems that arise in the practice of the Dhamma. Thus the reader will be fortunate to have within the compass of this single volume a critical treatment of the basic principles and essentials of Buddhist thought and Buddhist conduct.

A compendium of this nature has been a long-felt need and the Buddhist Publication Society must be congratulated on the initiative shown in bringing out this handy volume to satisfy both the critical student of the subject and the average reader.

O. H. DE A. WIJESEKERA.

*University of Ceylon,
Peradeniya, Ceylon,
February, 1963.*

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BUDDHIST ETHICS

PROF. O. H. DE A. WIJESEKERA

IT WILL BE realised by careful students of Buddhism, particularly in its earliest form as preserved in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, *Sutta Nipāta*, etc., that most of the dialogues are entirely devoted to ethical discussions. This will be found to be especially the case with the *Majjhima Nikāya*, as well as the *Mahāvagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, while a good many of the Suttas in the *Dīgha Nikāya* are also ethical in character. Thus it will be seen that an exhaustive examination of all the data is necessary for a complete study of this important subject, and this has to be said in spite of the useful treatise *The Ethics of Buddhism* by Dr. Tachibana of Tokyo, for, as it was pointed out in the Introduction to the Colombo edition of that work, he has only classified the moral categories of Buddhism without entering upon any discussion of the main problems of ethics in relation to the Buddhist view. It is hoped that the present discussion will, at least, to some extent, indicate the lines along which such a study must be conducted, and lead students of the subject to a critical appreciation of its main problems.

It is universally recognised that Buddhism can claim to be the most ethical of religio-philosophical systems of the world. No less an authority than Professor Radhakrishnan himself calls it “Ethical Idealism” and says that the Buddha gave an “ethical twist” to the thought of his time. “We find in the early teaching of Buddhism”, he remarks, “three marked characteristics, an ethical earnestness, an absence of any theo-

logical tendency and an aversion to metaphysical speculation".¹ Even Albert Schweitzer, a leading Western philosopher and one of the most astute critics of Indian thought has not grudged the Buddha the honour of being "the creator of the ethic of inner perfection". He writes : "In this sphere he gave expression to truths of everlasting value and advanced the ethics not of India alone but of humanity. He was one of the greatest ethical men of genius ever bestowed upon the world".² Professor T. W. Rhys Davids who spent a life-time in the study of Buddhism has admirably brought out in his *American Lectures* the importance of the study of Buddhist ethics in modern life and thought : "The point I stand here to submit to your consideration is that the study of ethics and especially the study of ethical theory in the West has hitherto resulted in a deplorable failure through irreconcilable logomachies and the barrenness of speculation cut off from actual fact. The only true method of ethical inquiry is surely the historical method . . . and I cannot be wrong in maintaining that the study of Buddhism should be considered a necessary part of any ethical course and should not be dismissed in a page or two but receive its due proportion in the historical perspective of ethical evolution".³ Oswald Spengler who perhaps ranks as the greatest philosophical student of world culture believes that Buddhism, which for him expresses "the basic feeling of Indian civilisation", "rejects all speculation about God and the cosmic problems ; only self and the conduct of actual life are important to it".⁴

1. Indian Philosophy, Vol. 1 p. 358

2. Indian Thought and its Development, p. 117

3. Buddhism, pp. 185, 186

4. Decline of the West, Pt. I, p. 356

Such statements as these emphasising the ethical importance of the Buddha's teaching can be quoted from numerous other authorities. But to any unbiassed and careful student of religion or philosophy it would be needless to stress this importance too much, for, as we shall attempt to show in this paper, Early Buddhism—by which term we generally refer to the doctrines as found in the dialogues of the major Nikāyas—presents a unique synthesis of ethics and philosophy, of morality and knowledge, of action and thought.

To estimate correctly the greatness and the universality of the Buddha's ethics one has to obtain a mental picture of the moral ferment and the spiritual unrest that prevailed in India just before the appearance of the Buddha. Traditional religion as professed by the theologians and the metaphysicians of the Upanishads was being undermined by the constant and vehement attacks of materialists and sceptics. Therefore, before we turn to the actual ethical system of Early Buddhism it is essential to discuss as briefly as possible the development of the moral consciousness during the time of the pre-Buddhistic Upanishads as well as the attitude to the moral problem of the various heretical philosophical schools such as those promulgated by the numerous "titthiyas" and "ājīvakas".

There were some Upanishadic thinkers who had discovered and formulated the main principles of moral behaviour in conformity with their respective views of life. Earlier, Brahmanism had established a rigid and dreadfully static morality by its insistence on the universality of the ritual act (*karma*=*yajña*). Hence the actual

morality inculcated did not go beyond what was practically necessary in the conduct and successful performance of the sacrifice. Thus evolved a conception of “ dharma ”, originally “ ritualistic duty ”, and its ethical correlates such as “ śraddhā ” the faith needed in bestowing gifts (*dakṣinā*) and alms (*dāna*) to the priesthood who were the mediators between man and his gods. Such was the moral code of the ritualistic religion. The earliest Upanishads carry out these very moral tendencies and thus it cannot be said that they had completely transcended the ethical externalism of the Brahmanic religion. When Sākalya in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad (3.9) asked Yajñavalkya : “ And on what is sacrifice based ? ” “ On gifts to the priests ”, replied Yajñavalkya. “ And on what are the gifts to the priests based ? ” “ On faith (*śraddhā*), for when one has faith one gives gifts to the priests. Verily, on faith are gifts to the priests based ”. Similarly, Chāndogya Upanishad (2.23) enumerates three branches of duty : “ Sacrifice, study of the Vedas, alms-giving,—that is the first ; austerity, indeed, is the second ; a student of sacred knowledge (*brahmacārin*) dwelling in the house of a teacher is the third ”. Though Upanishadic ethics start with such compromises to ritualism, an attempt is progressively made to conceive a higher kind of morality. For example, the Upanishadic thinkers attribute the highest power to truth (*satya*) in contrast to untruth (*anṛta*). Speakers of falsehood were put to the test by the ordeal of the heated axe. Says the Chāndogya Upanishad (6.16) : “ Speaking untruth he covers himself with untruth ; he seizes hold of the heated axe and is burned. Speaking truth he covers himself with truth ; he seizes hold of the heated axe and is not burned ”. It is important to observe here

that what is true is held to be in conformity with the natural order of things, the cosmic law (*ṛta*), and that what was untrue was what went against that order (*anṛta*). It is to the credit of Indian culture that at a very early period in its history from the cosmological conception of world-order (*ṛta*) they had derived a notion of an ethical order in man. Thus the gradual development of a practical code of ethics is seen in these Upanishads. Quarrelsomeness, tale-bearing (*piśunā*), slander (*upavāda*) are regarded as evil traits tending to make people small (*alpāḥ*) of character. The three-fold offspring of Prajāpati, gods, men, and asuras are respectively taught by him (Bṛh. Up., 5.2) that to restrain (*damyata*), to give (*datta*), and to be compassionate (*dayadhvam*) are the three greatest virtues. There was also a certain conception of social ethics as is implied in the declaration of Aśvapati Kaikeya :

“ Within my realm there is no thief,
no miser, nor a drinking man,
none altarless, none ignorant,
no man unchaste, no wife unchaste.”

—(*Ch. Up.*, 5.11).

It is important to students of Buddhist ethics to find the Chāndogya Upanishad (8.4,5) condemning to rebirth in the form of small creatures those who commit theft, drink liquor, invade the teacher's bed, kill brahmins, as well as those who consort with them. “ Brahmacharya ” which generally means “ the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge ” is extolled and its goal is set forth as the Brahma-world. In the very next paragraph this life of abstinent religious duty (*brahmacharya*) is said to include all other forms of moral be-

haviour such as sacrifice, silent asceticism, fasting, and hermit life in the forest.

There are many passages in the Upanishads establishing as the highest moral ideal or goal of the spiritual life the Brahma-world which is identified with immortality (*amṛtam*). It is also necessary to point out that the *raison d'être* of ethics in the Upanishads is derived from metaphysics : “ Verily, O Gargi, at the command of that Imperishable (*akśarasya praśāsane*) men praise those who give, the gods are desirous of a sacrificer, and the fathers (are desirous) of the Manes-sacrifice ” (*Bṛh. Up.*, 3.8). Further, according to the Upanishads the criterion of moral judgment is merely *conventional*, being nothing other than the practice of elderly and learned brahmins : “ Now if you should have doubt concerning an act, or doubt concerning conduct, if there should be these brāhmaṇas, competent to judge, apt, devoted, not harsh, lovers of virtue (*dharma*)—as they may behave themselves in such a case, so should you behave yourself in such a case (*Tait. Up.*, 1, 11).

In the last phase of the development of Upanishadic thought morality dwindles into insignificance. This results from the static conception of spiritual life as is inevitable from the identity of the human soul *as it is* with the highest ideal, Brahman, sometimes referred to as the highest Self (*Ātman*). This metaphysical abstraction naturally removes all urgency and necessity for any ethic, for, if man *as he is*, is already one with his ideal, what would be the need for spiritual effort, why worry about a moral life at all ! “ Whoso were to know me (*Ātman*) ”, teaches the *Kauśītaki Upanishad* (3.2), “ not by any action of his can the world be injured,

not by murdering his mother or his father, not by stealing or by killing the embryo . . .” This over-emphasis of the *Ātman*-knowledge and the consequent disregard of the moral life discloses the inner weakness of the absolutist pantheism of the Upanishads. Two of the most critical Hindu students of Upanishadic thought, Ranade and Belvalkar, regard this as the worst trait of the philosophy of absolutism : “ Here, indeed, is touched what may be called the danger line of Upanishadic ethics. To say that the *ātman* dies not is legitimate. To say that weapons cannot cut him nor fire burn him is also a legitimate varying of the phrase. But to argue that, therefore, the murderer is no murderer, and there is nobody really responsible for his action is to carry this “ *śāśvatā* ” or “ *akriyā* ” doctrine to a point which, if seriously preached, would be subversive of all established social institutions and religious sacraments ”. ¹

These considerations not only indicate to us that the absolutism of the Upanishads inevitably ended in a kind of amorality but also that there could be a dangerous side to religious and spiritual conservatism. It was as a reaction against such dogmatism in philosophy and ethics that there arose several heterodox philosophies which not only denied the authority of the conservative ethics of the Upanishads but even went to the extent of declaring moral scepticism, moral nihilism and moral anarchism. It is significant that our earliest sources for the study of these doctrines are the Buddhist Nikāyas themselves. There was a strong school of philosophical opinion which encouraged a downright ethical nihilism (*natthikavāda*). “ There is

1. History of Indian Philosophy, II, p. 399

no such thing as alms, sacrifice or oblation ; good and bad actions bear no fruit or consequence ; there is no (distinction between) this world and the next ; there is no (moral obligation towards) father or mother : there are no beings of spontaneous generation, and there are no recluses and brahmins in this world of virtuous conduct who with insight (*abhiññā*) have realised and proclaimed (the true nature of) this world and the next". This moral nihilism was based on a crass materialism in philosophy : " Man as he is is constituted out of the four elements : when he dies earth combines with earth, water with water, heat with heat and air with air : the sense functions are merged in the ether and all that is left of him are his greyish bones after the cremation ; the value of the alms-giving is merely in the imagination of the giver and to affirm the moral consequences of the act is a hollow assertion ; both the foolish and the wise are annihilated and completely cut off at death ".¹ This was the doctrine that Ajita Kesakambali, among others, is reported to have professed. Then there were others who denied moral causation (*ahetuvādins*). Their main thesis was as follows : " There is no cause or reason for the depravity of beings : they become depraved without cause or reason ; they become pure without cause or reason ; there is no such thing as self-agency or the agency of another or human effort ; there is no such thing as power or energy or human strength or human endeavour ; all animals, all creatures, all beings and all living things are without initiative, without power and strength of their own ; they just evolve by fate, necessity and fortuitous concatenation of events ; and it is

1. Majjhima Nikāya, I. 515

according to their peculiar nature as belonging to one of the six classes that they experience ease or pain, and it is only at the end of the appointed period—after one has passed through the 84,00,000 periods of wandering in *saṃsāra*—that there shall be an end of pain ; thus there is no such thing as that one should experience the result of *kamma* and thereby put an end to it either through virtuous conduct or precept, asceticism or “ *brahmacarya* ” ; consequently there is neither spiritual growth nor decline, neither depravation nor exaltation, inasmuch as in *saṃsāra* pain and pleasure are determined and circumscribed. As automatically as a ball of thread thrown up rolls along unreeling itself, so do both the foolish and the wise reach their salvation at the termination of their appointed course in *saṃsāra*”.¹ The foremost leader of this school was Makkhali Gosāla, and from the importance attached to the refutation of his theories in the early Buddhist books we may infer that he had a large following. He roundly denied all *initiative* and *choice* in man, being rigidly deterministic. The only redeeming feature of this philosophy was its belief in some form of moral ideal, however wrongly the process of its accomplishment was conceived. Therefore, the Buddhist books disparagingly call this “the purity through *saṃsāra*” (*saṃsāra suddhi*), because the theory postulated that purity occurred just by saṃsāric evolution over which man had no control. This was further condemned as “ *akiriyaṇvāda* ” or “ theory of non-action ”. Another teacher, Pūrana Kassapa, held the opinion that the act had no moral consequences, that merit (*puñña*) did not result from good action and demerit (*pāpa*) from bad

1. Dīgha Nikāya, I. 54

action ; “ giving, generosity, restraint, self-control, and truth-speaking did not conduce to merit ”.¹ This doctrine, too, is condemned as “ *akiriyāvāda* ” or a denial of the efficacy of the act. Another school professed a fatalistic pluralism and the most prominent teacher of this doctrine was Pakudha Kaccāyana : “ The following seven things are neither made nor commanded to be created ; they are barren (and so nothing is produced out of them), steadfast as a mountain-peak, as a pillar firmly fixed. They move not, neither do they vary, they trench not one upon the other, nor avail aught as to ease or pain or both. And what are the seven ? The four elements—earth, water, fire, air — and pleasure and pain and the soul as the seventh. So there is neither slayer nor causer of slaying, hearer or speaker, knower or explainer. When one with a sharp sword cleaves a head in twain, no one thereby deprives anyone of life : a sword has merely penetrated into the space between seven elementary substances ”.² As this doctrine is obviously based on the Upanishadic concept of the indestructibility and the unchangeability of the “ *ātman* ” it has been called “ *sassatavāda* ” or eternalism. In ethics it also leads to an “ *akiriyāvāda* ” or amorality like the previous philosophies. Then there was the ethical scepticism of the agnostic philosopher, Sañjaya Belaṭṭiputta, who refused to pass final judgment on any such metaphysical problem as the existence of a future world or on any ethical question. When questioned about the moral consequences of good and bad acts he would resort to the four-membered formula of prevarication and refuse to set down a definite

1. Dīgha Nikāya, p. 52

2. Majjhima Nikāya, I. 517

opinion¹. The doctrines of these rival teachers not only led to clashes with the dogmatism and orthodoxy of the Upanishadic moralists but also resulted in interminable conflicts among themselves, thus creating that state of moral ferment to which we referred earlier and which characterised Indian religion just before the advent of the Buddha. It was a critical epoch in the history of Indian religion and the Buddha with His principle of the golden mean (*majjhimāpaṭipadā*) brought sanity and a sense of poise to a society harassed by ideological disturbances and shaken about by heated metaphysical wranglings and ethical disputations. Apart from these doctrines which led to a moral upheaval there was the Jaina system of ethics with its rigid formalism and externalism frequently criticised in the Buddhist books. Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta emphasised the external act in preference to the mental act². In addition to all these ethical doctrines the Dīgha and Majjhima Nikāyas make constant reference to the inevitable moral upshot of philosophical materialism in general, referred to as the perverted philosophy (*viparīta-dassana*) that denied all morality ; it is branded as the heresy *par excellence* (*micchādiṭṭhi*), the evil doctrine (*pāpakam diṭṭhigatam*), and moral nihilism (*natthikavāda*)³. This view which is prominently attributed to a prince known as Pāyāsi-rājañña asserted the following three propositions : (1) There is no world beyond ; (2) There are no beings reborn otherwise than from parents ; (3) There is no result or consequence of

1. Dīgha Nikāya, I. 58

2. Majjhima Nikāya, I. 372 ff

3. Ibid., I. 130, 287, 401 ; Dīgha Nikāya, II. 316

good or bad acts.¹ As opposed to this *micchādiṭṭhi* early Buddhism sets forth *sammādiṭṭhi* or the correct view of life on which it bases its ethics. Let us now turn to an examination of that fundamental philosophical basis of Buddhist morality.

According to Early Buddhism man's appearance in this world is clearly not due to a mere concatenation of physical factors. Many statements in the dialogues make it clear that a non-physical factor is necessary for successful conception.² Such concatenation is due to *upadhisankhāras* generated by previous saṃsāric experiences³ and it is precisely in this context that it is affirmed that the reborn individual is neither the same nor another (*na ca so na ca añño*).⁴ It may be observed that in the latter portion of this statement (*na ca añño*) moral responsibility is definitely asserted. Life thus come into being is said to be characterised by several marks (*lakkhana*) such as impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, liability to disease and corruption, extraneousness, subjection to dissolution, voidness, and insubstantiality.⁵ These characteristics are sometimes brought under the three headings of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*, or *anicca*, *dukkha* and *vipariṇāmadhamma*.⁶ Thus is set forth the Noble Truth of the Unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha-sacca*) of saṃsāric existence (*bhava*), which is sometimes analysed as threefold *dukkhatā* (*dukkha-dukkha*, *saṅkhāra-dukkha* and *vipariṇāma-dukkha*)⁷

1. Dīgha Nikāya, II. 316, 317

2. Majjhima Nikāya, I. 265; Dīgha Nikāya, II. 63

3. Sutta Nipāta, vs. 728

4. Cp. Saṃyutta Nikāya, II. 20

5. Majjhima Nikāya, I. 435

6. Ibid., I. 232

7. Dīgha Nikāya, III. 216

Such unsatisfactoriness is due to the continuous change or *becoming* that is *saṃsāra*.¹ This very dynamic nature of saṃsāric life with its self-generated potentialities tends to a continuation of individuality (*nāma-rūpa*) or personality (*attabhāva*). Thus is it asserted in Early Buddhism that there is a life beyond (*atthi paro loko*),² which is proved by the super-normal experience of the Perfect Ones (arahants) who are perceivers of the world beyond (*paralokaviduno*) by virtue of their having acquired the faculties of recollecting past births (*pubbe-nivāsānussati*) and observing the passing away and rebirth of beings (*sattānaṃ cutupapatti-ñāṇa*)³, the latter being also termed the super-normal vision (*dibba-cakkhu*). Buddha Himself exercised this power on several occasions when requested to explain the bourne (*gati*) of his departed disciples.⁴ The Early Buddhist conviction of this fact of saṃsāric continuity is, therefore, beyond doubt and it is no wonder that those who refused to admit a life beyond were dubbed *micchā-diṭṭhikas*. It is clear then on what foundation the ethical system of Early Buddhism rests. Once this saṃsāric continuity with all its attendant *dukkha* is granted, the ideal of man's perfection turns out to be the release (*nissaraṇa*) therefrom. This is the Goal of Buddhist ethics which consequently is conceived as the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) or the ending of *dukkha*, generally called *Nibbāna*. Thus we discover that the *raison d'être* of Buddhist ethics is the fundamental fact of saṃsāric *dukkha*. Hence the essential basis of the Buddhist moral life (*brahmacariya*) lies not

1. Sutta Nipāta, vs. 742

2. Majjhima Nikāya, I. 403

3. Dīgha Nikāya, I. 82

4. See Dīgha Nikāya, Suttas 16, 18, 19

in some metaphysical hypothesis conceived by *a priori* reasoning but, as Buddha pointed out to Mālunkya-putta, on the conviction that “verily there is birth, there is decay, there is death, etc”, of which the destruction is declared to be possible in this very life.¹ Thus the mere speculation on metaphysical problems, usually referred to as ten, is condemned as unprofitable. Similarly Buddha tells Udāyi that such ultimate questions as those that concern the beginning (*pubbanta*) and the end (*aparanta*) of things, being solvable only by developing the higher faculties (*vijjā, abhiññā*) but not by the exercise of mere reason, it becomes imperative for man to accomplish the ethical process which alone could lead to the acquirement of such faculties.² Therefore, the importance of the ethical process for the realization of *Nibbāna* is unquestionable, and, as Dhammadinnā points out to Visākha, the moral life finds its apex, goal and consummation in *Nibbāna*.³

The foregoing discussion of the fundamental basis of the Buddhist ethic, its *raison d'être* and its goal, will help the student of Buddhism and the student of ethics to appreciate the important bearing that the Buddhist view of morality has to the burning questions of ethics such as the problem of evil, and the problem of ethical relativity. To an unbiased student of Buddhism it appears that Early Buddhism offers definite solutions to these problems and as such it has a claim to serious consideration in this respect.

Our brief presentation of the philosophical basis of Buddhist ethics will have stressed the extreme urgency

1. Majjhima Nikāya, I. 431

2. Ibid., II. 31, 32, 38

3. Ibid., I. 304

of the problem of evil for Early Buddhism as well as its all-embracing and profound nature as indicated by its saṃsāric context. The concept of evil as discussed by Western thinkers, pertaining as it does to merely this visible life, covers only a minute aspect of the problem but it can be seen that fundamentally there is no difference between the two issues for as Early Buddhism viewed it, “*dukkha-dukkhatā*” which is defined as man’s conflict with his environment is only one aspect of the general unsatisfactoriness of saṃsāric becoming (*bhava-dukkha*). Thus it is to be expected that a thinking person (*viññū puriso*) cannot but be impressed by the obtrusiveness of evil or *dukkha* around him. But this was exactly the point on which Professor Joad condemned Buddhism in his book *Matter, Life and Value* (p. 369), published in 1929 in which he complained that “for Buddhism as for Job man is born to trouble as sparks fly upward” and declared : “I differ, therefore, from the dominant philosophy of the East in not despising the ordinary life of struggle and enjoyment of effort and reward”. It is ironically significant, however, that after the lapse of only thirteen years he was compelled to radically alter his opinion, for in his later book, *God and Evil* (1942), he was forced to admit : “I conclude that attempts which are made . . . to show that evil is not a real and fundamental principle belonging to the nature of things are unsuccessful”. Such coincidence as this between Early Buddhism and Western philosophy on the problem of evil will necessarily remain partial in so far as such philosophers confine their observations merely to the experience of the individual in this visible existence. But, as we have attempted to show above, what is specially characteristic of the Buddhist *Weltanschauung*

(world-view) is the undeniable fact that this short span of a few score of years on earth is not the whole of one's empirical existence but only a temporary manifestation of a saṃsāric process that extends for innumerable "lives" in the past and may also extend for an indefinable period in the future.

Now, since this deeper significance of the general unsatisfactoriness of saṃsāric life and also the possibility of release therefrom has to be accepted on the validity of the experiences of the Perfect Ones, Early Buddhism recommends *saddhā* or the reliance on the experience of such arahants who have realised the higher vision and on their statements, after adequate investigation as to their worth.¹ Hence *saddhā* is held up to be the basis of the ethical process which ultimately leads to the realisation of the highest truth (*paramasacca*) and therewith the goal.² Thus in practical ethics *saddhā* comes to be regarded as one of the five good things to be cultivated (*paricaritabbam*), although the definite warning is given that mere faith in the teacher is not sufficient for complete ethical progress.³ The faith (*śraddhā*) of Vedic morality to which we have previously referred is considered to be mere blind faith (*amūlikā saddhā*), and is consequently condemned by the Buddha in a talk with the brahmin Bhāradvāja.⁴ It is on account of this that *saddhā* in Early Buddhism is said to be twofold, the faith that may be empty, void and false in its fruition, and the faith that is bound to

1. Majjhima Nikāya I. 173

2. Ibid., II. 171

3. Ibid., II. 94

4. Ibid., II. 170

lead to genuine consequences.¹ We cannot escape the conclusion that the *saddhā* encouraged in Early Buddhism is only the result of an inference from the realisation of arahants as to the possibility of one's own realisation of the goal. Hence the only kind of faith that is advocated, if it could be called faith at all, is what is designated "logical faith" (*ākāraṇatī saddhā*).² The conversion of laymen to the belief that it was necessary to lead the higher moral life under the Buddha or His disciples was always prompted by this kind of *saddhā*—a fact attested to at numerous places in the Canon.

The layman who thus takes up the spiritual life through his reliance on (*uddissa*) such a teacher is said to have started his career (*paṭipanno*) along the Path (*magga. paṭipadā*) to *Nibbāna*. This Path is said to consist of three stages or parts usually called the three *sampadās* or the three *khandhas*. The first of these stages is *sīla* or ethical conduct, and practical morals have a meaning for the disciple only till such time as he arrives at the next stage of the Path, namely, concentration (*samādhi*). But the goal is not reached even then, and a still higher stage of development must be gone through and this is technically known as *paññā* (wisdom). What is generally believed to be the Eightfold Path in Buddhism is included within these three stages as the learned Dhammadinnā explained to Visākha.³ How far, then, practical morality is of significance to one aspiring for the Buddhist goal

1. Majjhima Nikāya No. 95

2. Ibid., I. 401

3. Ibid., I. 301

becomes clear when it is considered that *sīla* forms only the initial stage of such process. In fact, Early Buddhism administers a warning to the aspirant to master morality but not allow morality to get the better of him, and it is clearly laid down that even virtuous conduct has to be transcended at one stage. It need not, therefore, appear paradoxical when it is asserted in the same context that the disciple should try to put a final end to meritorious forms of good conduct.¹ Thus for Buddhism morality is not an end in itself. It is considering these features of the Path which, it is obvious, transcend Ethical Perfectionism, as is understood by Western moralists, and also the metaphysical perfection implied in the Upanishads, that it is claimed that the Exalted One is the originator and proclaimer of a unique Way.

It is to be observed that in the spiritual evolution as indicated in this Path the question of Happiness as the ideal of morality finds a perfect solution. It is said that in the stage of concentration when the aspirant reaches the fourth *jhāna* both happiness and its opposite cease to concern him for he becomes indifferent to both pleasurable and painful feeling (*vedanā*). Up to that moment the aspirant is to experience inner happiness. This inner form of happiness is clearly differentiated from worldly happiness which is called “low, vulgar, and ignoble” inasmuch as such happiness depends on the senses. It is expressly stated that this latter form of material happiness is to be shunned² and hence to classify Buddhism as any form of Hedonism, as Dr. Pratt has done in his *Pilgrimage of Buddhism* (p. 20),

1. Majjhima Nikāya II. 27

2. Ibid., III. 230, 233

is quite unjustifiable. Over and above this sensuous happiness which has an erotic basis (*kāma*) as well as the inner jhānic happiness which is non-erotic (*nek-khamma*) is placed *Nibbāna*, as even this jhānic happiness is not final (*analam*), for it is only in the ultimate state of spiritual attainment (*saññāvedayitanirodha*) that happiness assumes its most perfect form. This state which is the *summum bonum* of Buddhism can be styled Happiness only in an exceptional sense. Yet, Buddha persists in calling it happiness in the face of the criticism of heretics, for, as He once explained to Ānanda, He did not regard a state as happy just because of pleasurable feeling, and also because he considered that there could be levels of “happiness” relative to the stage of spiritual evolution. Thus, if in the ideal state of *Nibbāna* the aspirant transcends the subtlest forms of happiness and is not tinged by them, it would not be quite apposite to identify the Early Buddhist ideal in ethics with that of Eudaemonism. But this does not deny the fact that for Buddhism just as for modern psychology and biology man, as well as other living beings, by nature seeks for pleasure and avoids pain (*sukhakāmo dukkhapaṭikkūlo*).

It can now be seen that there is a sense in which we may assert that the ethical process of Buddhism is intended to release man from the miseries of saṃsāric existence (*dukkha*) and take him to the ultimate Happiness or the Good (*attha*) that is *Nibbāna*. In this Buddhism does not go against the basic psychology of man's nature, but endeavours to bring about its refinement and sublimation until it totally transcends the level at which it is found in saṃsāric existence. Thus Nibbānic Happiness must be considered as the

ideal for every living being. Hence is derived also the *criterion* of moral judgment according to the ethical philosophy of Early Buddhism which we have attempted to outline above. This criterion of Buddhist ethics is emphasised in several places and seeks to determine whether a particular act would obstruct or not oneself or others in the attempt to win this release (*nissaraṇa*) from *Dukkha* or saṃsāric Evil. In his admonition to Rāhula Buddha makes it perfectly clear that “whatever act tends to the obstruction or harm (*vyābādha*) of oneself and others (on the Path) is to be considered bad (*akusalaṃ*) as its upshot is pain and its result Evil”.¹ It is significant that the word “*vyābādha*” means both *harm* to the individual concerned and *obstruction* to spiritual progress. Therefore, subjectively an act (*kamma*) becomes good (*kusala*) or bad (*akusala*) according as it promotes or hinders spiritual progress, and objectively it is considered to be meritorious (*puñña*) or demeritorious (*apuñña*) according as it is beneficial (*hita*) or harmful (*ahita*) to the similar progress of others. Sir Edward Arnold in his *Light of Asia* has beautifully summed up this idea :

“ Kill not—for pity’s sake—and lest ye slay
The meanest thing upon its upward way.”

To inflict pain, for instance, either on oneself or others is to cause distraction of mind by inciting evil and harmful emotions which cannot be but an obstacle on the “upward way”.

Thus the ethical content of an act is psychological and its source is volitional. Accordingly, Early Bud-

1. Majjhima Nikāya I. 415

dhism considers as ethical only those acts which are volitional (*sañcetanika*).¹ Thus the *Anguttara Nikāya* (III, 415) attributes to the Buddha the statement that the real act (*kamma*) is an act of volition (*cetanā*). This is natural inasmuch as the intensity of the act depends on the extent to which it is committed deliberately (*sañcicca*).² For instance, it is pointed out that an infant who is not conscious even of his own body cannot commit any sin. In technical language this would mean that all acts are not ethically significant but only those that are voluntary, that is to say, willed by the agent. This being the fundamental sense in which an act is conceived in Buddhist ethics what we *do* and *say* have only an *indirect* ethical significance, whereas what we *think* or *will* is *directly* ethical. In a conversation with the Jain Dīghatapassi Buddha emphasises the greater ethical importance of the mental or volitional act (*mano-kamma*) as compared with the verbal (*vacī-kamma*) or the physical act (*kāya-kamma*).³ Hence the Buddha's emphasis on the elimination of the cardinal evils of attachment (*rāga*, *lobha*), ill-will (*dosa*) and infatuation (*moha*) for they *directly* affect the nature of our volitions, while other evil acts such as meat-eating and drinking of liquor, etc., affect the mind only indirectly. Therefore, while the distinction between absolute and relative moral values seems meaningless and unnecessary according to the Buddha, there appears to be some sense in which we may divide voluntary acts or ethically significant acts into *direct* and *indirect* according as they affect the main ethical purpose of

1. Majjhima Nikāya III. 207, cp. I. 377

2. Ibid., I. 523, II. 103

3. Ibid., I. 373

leading to the release from saṃsāric existence. It thus becomes clear that for the Buddha moral judgments are not to be based on some *a priori* conceptions of objectively real values like goodness, truth and beauty, as is usually held by idealistic philosophers, nor are they to be regarded as *subjective* or *relative* from all points of view as asserted by most scientific and materialistic thinkers. According to Mr. Bertrand Russell it would seem that ethics are a mere matter of taste. "If two men differ about values", he says summing up his ethical doctrine, "there is not a disagreement as to any kind of truth but a difference of taste".¹ Similarly, Professor Edward Westermarck for whom all ethical judgments have an emotional basis is the leading exponent of a theory of Ethical Relativity, which, however, adds that moral phenomena are not made meaningless just because they happen to fall within the subjective sphere of experience. For him, nevertheless, ethics remain still *relative*, because moral judgments depend on economic, social and psychological (emotional) circumstances.² According to the Buddha, however, moral judgments assume a permanent value in so far as they are based on the *point of view of the end* which, as we have stressed above, is the release from saṃsāric Evil. But we may add that there is a sense in which moral values are *relative* even for the Buddha, and this derives only from the existence of levels of spiritual experience corresponding to the respective stages of the Path to which we have already referred.

40. Religion and Science, p.237

41. The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas, pp. 4, 18, 19; Ethical Relativity, p. 220

The above discussion should make it clear that the ethics of the Buddha is prompted by one *motive*, viz., the desire for release and relies on no external *sanctions* such as God, Church or State, but is pre-eminently *autonomous* in character.¹ In fact, the desire for release and the psychological observation that attachment, hate and infatuation directly affect the nature of our volitions, sum up the *motives* and *sanctions* of Buddhist morality. In this discussion, however, we have taken for granted the most important fact of the freedom of the human will. We regarded man as intrinsically a morally free agent who had within him the power to choose between alternative courses of action. Is this justifiable according to the Buddha's doctrine? Certainly, yes. There is, in fact, no more important conviction in the whole of Buddha's philosophy than the idea that within this individuality (*nāma-rūpa*) there is the *potentiality* of release if only man wills that way.² Therefore, in spite of the fact that there is in a sense *determinism* to the extent that empirical existence is admittedly conditioned and thus is obviously subject to the vicissitudes of birth, decay and death, there is in man the power (*balam, viriyan*)³ to overcome all this by the strength of will (*chando*).⁴ Human life is regarded by the Buddha as in every way the best suited for this effort and birth among the animals, etc., is consequently deprecated, for it is only in man that the *power to will* exists in such a high degree with infinite capacity to develop higher by self-discipline and medita-

1. See my Introduction to Tachibana's Ethics of Buddhism (Colombo 1961, Bauddha Sāhitya Sabhā)

2. Samyutta Nikāya, I. 62

3. Majjhima Nikāya, I. 407

4. *Ibid.*, I. 313

tion. Early Buddhism does not deny the importance of environmental factors in the moulding of man's conduct but, on the other hand, it does not in the least subscribe to any theory that man's conduct is merely a set of reactions to external stimuli or unconscious tendencies, or that it is determined by social and economic factors alone. for it would be admitted even by the most adverse critics of the Buddha that no one raised Man and his noblest gift, the human Reason or Will, to such dignity as that greatest of ethical teachers born in the philosophically rife atmosphere of India twenty-five centuries ago.

THE BUDDHIST CONCEPTION OF TRUTH

BY

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BUDDHISM IS THE first missionary religion in the history of humanity with a universal message of salvation for all mankind. The Buddha after His Enlightenment sent out sixty-one disciples in different directions asking them to preach the doctrine for the weal and welfare of mankind. He is said in one of the earliest texts to have been “born for the good and happiness of humanity” (*manussaloke hitasukhatāya jāto*, Sn. 683). Addressed as “the King of kings” (*rājābhirāja*, Sn. 553), He says, “I am a King, the supreme King of Righteousness, with righteousness do I extend my kingdom, a kingdom which cannot be destroyed”. (Sn. 554).

The era in which the Buddha was born marks a turning point in history for everywhere in the world from Greece to China we notice a new awakening and a quest for truth. A historian says : “This sixth century B.C. was, indeed, one of the most remarkable in all history. Everywhere . . . men’s minds were displaying a new boldness . . . It is as if the race had reached a stage of adolescence—after a childhood of 20,000 years.¹ To the east of India, in China, appeared the great religious teachers, Lao Tze and Confucius, the founders of Taoism and Confucianism, respectively. To the west there was Zarathustra in Persia, the founder of Zoroastrianism, Prophet Isaiah in Israel and Pythagoras in Greece. A student of religion observes : “It

1. H.G. Wells, *A Short History of the World*, Penguin Books, 1945, p. 90.

was in these days, rather than in those which made Bethlehem of Judea famous, that the principle of “peace on earth, goodwill to men” first began to sweep across the world like a cleansing wind”.¹.

Buddhist legends say that at this time the world over people were looking forward to the birth of a Supremely Enlightened One, an event which happens very rarely (*kadāci karahaci*) in history. With an air of expectancy Prophet Isaiah says : “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”. It is a strange coincidence that almost contemporaneous with this prophecy² was born the Buddha to whom all these titles have been given within a few centuries of His birth, for He has been called the *Acchhariya-puggala*—the Wonderful Person, *Satthā devamanussānam*—the Counsellor of gods and men, *Brahmātibrahmā* (also *Devātideva*)—the God among gods, *Ādi-Pitā*—the eternal Father and *Sāntirāja*—the Prince of Peace.

In India men prayed and longed for the Truth :

“ From the unreal lead me to the real !
From darkness lead me to light !
From death lead me to immortality ! ”

—*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaiṣad*, 1.3.28
(c. 700 B.C.).

1. Ed. Robert O. Ballou, *The Pocket World Bible*, London, 1948, p. 3.

2. “. . .Gautama Buddha, who taught his disciples at Benares in India about the same time that Isaiah was prophesying among the Jews in Babylon. . .”, H.G. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

There appeared many sages who claimed to have discovered as many paths to immortality and some of these are described in the Upaniṣads, the scriptures of the Ajivikas and Jains. Then appeared the Buddha who announced in no mistaken terms :

“ Open to them are the doors of Immortality ;
Those who have ears, let them send forth faith ”.

—*M.I.* 169 (c. 528 B.C.).

The Truth of *Nirvāṇa* that Buddha discovered is called in the Canon “ the Truth ” (*sacca*) and the fundamental doctrines that He proclaimed are summed up in the “ Four Noble Truths ” (*cattāri ariyasaccāni*). We do not propose in this article to describe or explain any of these “ truths ” but shall concern ourselves with the more prosaic task of examining what is meant by the term “ truth ”. This is a purely philosophical investigation and the reader may wonder as to what such academic philosophy has to do with the religion of the Buddha.

Here it is necessary to draw attention to another unique feature of the religion of the Buddha, namely, that it is the only religion of any religious teacher, which is the outcome of a consistent philosophy, which claims to tell us about the ultimate facts of existence and reality. The religion of the Buddha is a way of life resulting from the acceptance of a view of life, which is said to be factual (*yathābhūtam*). His philosophy is not without an epistemology or an account of the nature of knowledge. A detailed examination of this epistemology or theory of knowledge is outside

the scope of this brief essay¹ and we shall, therefore, take up this problem of what is meant by the term "truth" as explained and understood in the Canonical texts.

We use the term "truth" to characterise statements or more exactly to characterise what is expressed by statements, namely, propositions. To take an example we say, for instance, that the statement "there is an artificial lake in Kandy" expresses a truth. Not all true statements have a relevance for religion. The above statement about the Kandy lake has no bearing on religion. But the statement that "life is impermanent and insecure" has a relevance for religion, for the religious quest (*brahmacariyesanā*) or the noble quest (*ariyapariyesanā*) is the quest for security and permanence.

The Four Noble Truths state the following propositions : (i) life within the Cosmos, being infected with impermanence and insecurity, is subject to unhappiness, however "happy" we may be in a relative sense even for very long periods of time ; (ii) this unhappiness is caused by the operation of the unsatisfied desires for sensuous gratification, for selfish pursuits and for destruction, which continually seek satisfaction ; (iii) the cessation of these desires, which cannot be brought about by violent means (suicide) but only by self-development coincides with the realisation of supreme happiness ; (iv) the total development of the moral, intuitive and spiritual-intellectual aspects of one's

1. The author has made a comprehensive study of the epistemology of Buddhism in a book entitled "Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge" (George Allen Unwin & Co., pp. 550), in process of publication.

personality culminates in this final realisation and enlightenment.

These propositions which are claimed to be true are also said to be useful (*atthasaṃhitāṃ*) in the sense that they are relevant to our weal and welfare and a knowledge of these helps us to attain the goal of all human (and divine) spiritual development. At the same time there are propositions which do not serve such a purpose and are useless in the above sense. Propositions also may be agreeable and pleasant to hear as well as the reverse. If we tabulate the possibilities in terms of propositions, which may be true or false, useful or useless, pleasant or unpleasant, we get the following possibilities :

1.	True	..	useful	..	pleasant
2.	„	..	„	..	unpleasant
3.	„	..	useless	..	pleasant
4.	„	..	„	..	unpleasant
5.	False	..	useful	..	pleasant
6.	„	..	„	..	unpleasant
7.	„	..	useless	..	pleasant
8.	„	..	„	..	unpleasant

In the *Abhayarājakumāra Sutta*, it is said that the Buddha asserts propositions of the types one and two and that He does not assert propositions of the types three, four, seven and eight. The possibilities five and six are omitted, probably because it was considered that they did not, in fact, exist. The passage reads : “The Tathāgata does not assert a statement which He knows to be untrue, false, useless, disagreeable and unpleasant to others (8). He does not assert a statement which He knows to be true, factual, useless, dis-

agreeable and unpleasant to others (4). He would assert at the proper time a statement which He knows to be true, factual, useful, disagreeable and unpleasant to others (2). He would not assert a statement which He knows to be untrue, false, useless, agreeable and pleasant to others (7). He would not assert a statement which He knows to be true, factual, useless, agreeable and pleasant to others (3). He would assert at the proper time a statement which He knows to be true, factual, useful, agreeable and pleasant to others (1)". (*M.I.* 395).

So the Buddha makes assertions which are true and useful and either pleasant or unpleasant. In the *Sutta-nipāta* it is said that "one should say only what is pleasant". (*Sn.* 452). This is, no doubt, the general rule, though exceptionally one may say what is unpleasant as well for the good of an individual, just as out of love for a child one has to cause a certain amount of pain in order to remove something that has got stuck in its throat (*M.I.* 394, 5). Even the truth, it should be noted, should be stated only "at the proper time".

We normally make unpleasant statements when we are motivated by anger, jealousy, envy, malice or hatred and we try to rationalise what we do by imagining that our utterances are being made from the best of motives for the good of others. This is the reason why we should be extremely suspicious when we make such unpleasant statements.

What is the defining characteristic of truth? The words commonly used in the Pāli to denote "truth" mean "what has taken place" (*bhūtaṃ*), "what is like that" (*tacchaṃ*) and "what is not otherwise" (*anañ-*

ñathā). It is the object of knowledge. “ One knows what is in accordance with fact ” (*yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*, D.I. 83). These usages suggest the acceptance of what is called in philosophy the correspondence theory of truth. According to this theory, truth is “ what accords with fact ” and falsity “ what discords with fact ”. True and false beliefs, conceptions, and statements are defined in this manner in the *Apaṇṇaka Sutta* : “ When, in fact, there is a next world, the belief occurs to me that there is a next world, that would be a true belief. When, in fact, there is a next world, if one thinks that there is a next world, that would be a true conception. When, in fact, there is a next world, one asserts the statement that there is a next world, that would be a true statement ” (M.I. 403). Similarly for falsity : “ When, in fact, there is a next world, the belief occurs to me that there is no next world, that would be a false belief . . . ” (M.I. 402).

While truth is thus defined in terms of correspondence with fact, consistency or coherence is also considered a criterion of truth. The Canonical texts are quite aware of the principle of contradiction. In one place it is stated that “ if p (a certain statement) is true, not-p is false and if not-p is true, p is false ” (S. IV, 298, 9). But we also find in the texts statements of the following sort :

- (i) S is both P and not-P, *e.g.*, the universe is both finite and infinite ;
- (ii) S is neither P nor not-P., *e.g.*, the universe is neither finite nor infinite.

These statements appear to be self-contradictory to people who are acquainted only with Aristotelian logic.

How can a universe be both finite and infinite when according to the law of contradiction it cannot be both finite and infinite ? And how can a universe be neither finite nor infinite, when according to the law of excluded middle it must be either finite or infinite ? Western scholars completely misunderstood the nature of these assertions and what they misunderstood they attributed to the idiocy of the Indians. The French scholar, De la Vallee Poussin, makes the following observations about this logic : “ Indians do not make a clear distinction between facts and ideas, between ideas and words ; they have never clearly recognised the principle of contradiction. Buddhist dialectic has a four-branched dilemma : *Nirvāna* is existence or non-existence or both existence and non-existence or neither existence nor non-existence. We are helpless ”.¹

Today with the discovery of many-valued logics and the consequent realisation that Aristotelian logic is only one of many possible systems, the significance of this Buddhist logic of four alternatives (*catuṣkoṭi*) could be better understood. Briefly, this is a two-valued logic of four alternatives unlike Aristotelian logic, which is a two-valued logic of two alternatives. It is two-valued since it asserts that all propositions are either true (*saccaṃ*) or false (*musā*). Also according to this logic we say that something either is the case or is not the case ; there is no other possibility. But in actual conversation in certain situations we use statements of the form “ both is and is not ” (*i.e.*, “ he is both bald and not bald ”) or “ neither is nor is not ”. The Buddhist logic uses these statements as descriptive of these classes of situations. A discussion of the

1. The Way to Nirvana, Cambridge University Press, 1917, p. III.

precise nature of this system of logic would lead us into discussions of a technical nature, but an example would make it clear as to what is meant by the third and fourth possibilities which are logically impossible according to the Aristotelian scheme. If we talk about the extent of the universe we find, for instance, that we can think of four and only four possible mutually exclusive alternatives, viz. :

- (i) The universe is finite in all respects, *i.e.* it is finite and spherical (*parivaṇumo*) ;
- (ii) The universe is infinite in all dimensions ;
- (iii) The universe is finite in some dimensions and infinite in other dimensions ; this is what is meant by saying that “ the universe is both finite and infinite ” ;
- (iv) If the universe was unreal or space was subjective, then we cannot predicate spatial attributes like “ finite ” or “ infinite ” of the universe. In such a situation we may say, “ the universe is neither finite nor infinite ”.

We see from the above that the alternatives three and four are not self-contradictory as Western scholars supposed some time back in their ignorance of the true nature of logical systems. According to this four-fold (*catus-koṭi*) Buddhist system of logic the above four alternative views about the extent of the universe are clearly seen as four possible alternatives. (It may also be seen that only one and not more than one alternative may be true). According to the Aristotelian system, on the other hand, we can only make the statements “ the universe is finite ” and “ the universe is not finite ”. By the latter statement it is not clear whether we are

stating that the universe is not finite in all dimensions or in one or some dimensions only (views ii and iii). The fourth alternative cannot even be stated since according to the law of excluded middle the above two are the only alternatives possible and one of them must necessarily be true. The Buddhist four-fold logic makes it possible to state the four alternative theses clearly as mutually exclusive and together exhaustive possibilities. It is no more true or false than the Aristotelian and its merits should be judged by its adequacy for the purposes for which it is used.

The propositions of a specific or general character which can be thus stated in the form of the four alternatives belong to the class of statements which concern the events in the space-time-cause world. Statements about Nirvana or the Super-cosmic which is a reality that is non-spatio-temporal and unconditioned (*na paṭiccasamuppannaṃ*) fall outside the scope of logical discourse (*atakkāvacara*).

That consistency is held to be a criterion of truth is clear from the fact that the Buddha very often appeals to this principle in arguing with his opponents. He uses dialectical arguments in Socratic fashion to show that some of the theories held by his opponents were false. He starts with one of the assumptions of his opponents and proceeds step by step until at a certain stage in the discussion he is able to show that "his (opponent's) later statement is not compatible with the former nor the former with the later" (*na kho te sandhīyati purimena vā pacchimaṃ pacchinena vā purimaṃ*, M.I. 232). It is assumed that a theory is false unless it was consistent. In the *Suttanipāta*, referring to

diverse mutually contradictory theories the question is asked : “ Claiming to be experts, why do they put forward diverse theories—is truth many and at variance ? ” (Sn. 885). The answer given is : “ Truth, verily, is not multiple and at variance (Sn. 886). In this context the statement is made that “ truth is one without a second ” (*ekam hi saccam na dutiyam atthi*, Sn. 884). The presence of logical coherence and compatibility in all the statements of a theory and the absence of contradiction is clearly recognised as a criterion of truth.

Now although consistency is accepted as a criterion of truth, it need not necessarily be the case that a consistent theory is true. A true theory must be consistent but consistency alone is no infallible or sufficient criterion of truth. Consistency, no doubt, lends plausibility to the truth of a theory but we must not forget that it is also possible for a person to lie consistently and thereby present an appearance of truth. A religious philosophy like that of Spinoza’s, which is founded on *a priori* reasoning may appear to be true if it is consistent but it would nevertheless be false if it does not correspond with fact. There could be mutually inconsistent theories each of which was internally consistent.

It is a remarkable fact that the Canonical texts recognise this fact. The *Sandaka Sutta* refers to religions, based on pure reasoning and speculation, as being unsatisfactory (*anassāsikam*) and not necessarily true, even when the reasoning is sound. The Buddha says that one should not accept a view on the basis of pure reasoning (*mā takka-hetu*) for there could be

either mistakes in logic (*sutakkitam pi hoti duttakkitam pi hoti*, M.I. 520) or even otherwise the findings of such reasoning may or may not be true of external reality (*tathā pi hoti aññathā pi hoti*, *ibid.*). This is, in fact, a very modern view.

But it is important to note that there is another sense of consistency recognised in the Canonical texts. This is the consistency between the behaviour of a person and his statements. In this sense it is claimed that the Buddha “ practised what He preached and preached what He practised ” (*yathāvādi tathākāri, yathākāri tathāvādi*, It. 122). One does not normally speak of this kind of consistency as *logical* consistency ; but when Toynbee says that “ the Buddha was an illogical evangelist ”,¹ and speaks of His “ sublime inconsistency ” (op. cit., p. 64) or “ sublimely illogical practice ” (op. cit., p. 73) he is using “ illogical ” in this novel sense. Toynbee’s conclusions are based on a faulty understanding of the Canonical texts and as we have shown elsewhere some of his criticisms have already been forestalled and met in the Pali Canon itself.²

There is also a reference to “ partial truths ” (*paccekasacca*) in the Canon. Some religious teachers, it is said, comprehend part of the nature of man and his destiny in the universe and mistakenly assume that this is the whole truth. For instance, according to the description given of the origin of a theistic religious philosophy in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* a person from the

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1. A. Toynbee, *An Historian’s Approach to Religion*, O.U.P., 1956, p. 77.
 2. Vide K.N. Jayatilleke, “A Recent Criticism of Buddhism” in *Univ. of Ceylon Review*, Vol. 15, Nos. 3 and 4, pp. 136 ff.

world of Brahma (one believed to be a Personal Creator God) is born on earth, lives a homeless life, practises meditation and sees the heavenly world from which he came but does not see beyond. He concludes that Heaven and earth and all in it was created by the person who is adored as “ God, the Mighty God, the Omnipotent, the All-seeing, the Ruler, the Lord of all, the Maker, the Creator, the Most High, the Ordainer and Almighty Father of beings that are and are to be ” (D.I. 18). This is cited as a typical case where the partial and limited experience of a mystic forms the basis of a generalisation applied to all reality. The conclusions are said to be wrong but the limited value and validity of the experience is not denied. The diversity of religious theories is attributed to the universalisation of limited experiences valid in their own sphere. The parable of the blind men and the elephant is narrated to illustrate this fact. A number of men born blind are assembled by the king who instructs that they be made to touch an elephant. They touch various parts of the elephant such as the forehead, ears, tusks, etc. They are then asked to describe the elephant and each reports mistaking the part for the whole that the elephant was like that portion of the elephant, which was felt by them (Udāna, 68).

So truth is what corresponded with fact and was consistent although whatever is consistent is not necessarily true ; for a pack of lies could very well be consistent. Partial truths had a partly factual basis.

The Buddhist conception of truth has also been called pragmatic. Poussin says¹ : “ *Nous avons défini l'an-*

1. Bouddhisme, Third Ed., Paris, 1925, p. 129.

cienne dogmatique comme une doctrine essentiellement 'pragmatique' . . ." (We have defined the ancient teaching as a doctrine essentially "pragmatic"). But it is necessary to clarify the sense in which it is pragmatic. It is not pragmatic in the narrow utilitarian sense of the word for although in the classification of different types of propositions no mention is made of propositions which are both false and useful, true propositions could be either useful or useless in the Buddhist sense of the term as being "conducive to one's spiritual welfare" or not.

Man should give ear to true propositions which are useful in this sense and not fritter away his energies in trying to solve metaphysical questions, pertaining to the origin and extent of the universe, for instance, which have no bearing on the moral and spiritual life. The parable of the arrow illustrates this well when it says that a man struck with a poisoned arrow should be concerned with removing the arrow and getting well rather than be interested in purely theoretical questions (about the nature of the arrow, who shot it, etc.), which have no practical utility. In the Simsapa forest the Buddha takes a handful of leaves and says that what He has taught is as little as the leaves in His hand and that what He knew but did not teach is like the leaves in the forest (S.V. 437). He did not teach these things because "they were not useful, not related to the fundamentals of religion and not conducive to revulsion, dispassion, cessation, peace, higher knowledge, realisation and Nirvana" (M.I. 431). The parable of the raft has the same motive and is intended to indicate the utilitarian character of the truths of Buddhism in a spiritual sense. The Buddha says : "I preach you

a Dhamma comparable to a raft for the sake of crossing over and not for the sake of clinging to it . . .” (M.I. 134). A person intending to cross a river and get to the other bank, where it is safe and secure, makes a raft and with its help safely reaches the other bank but however useful the raft may have been, he would throw it aside and go his way without carrying it on his shoulders ; so it is said that “ those who realise the Dhamma to be like a raft should discard the Dhamma as well, not to speak of what is not Dhamma ” (M.I. 135). The value of the Dhamma lies in its utility and it ceases to be useful though it does not cease to be true when one has achieved one’s purpose with its help by attaining salvation.

While moral and spiritual truths are useful (*attha-saṃhitam*) and truth is not defined in terms of utility, it seems to have been held that the claim of a belief to be true was to be tested in the light of personally verifiable consequences. Thus the truth of rebirth is to be verified by developing the memory of pre-existence (*pubbenivāsānussati*). Verifiability in the light of experience, sensory and extra-sensory, is considered a characteristic of truth but what is thus claimed to be true is considered to be true only by virtue of its “ correspondence with fact ” (*yathābhūtam*). Thus verifiability is a test of truth but does not itself constitute truth.

Many of the important truths of Buddhism are considered to lie between two extreme points of view. Extreme realism which says that “ everything exists ” (*sabbam atthīti*) is one extreme and extreme nihilism which asserts that “ nothing exists ” (*sabbam natthī ti*)

is the other extreme—the truth lies in the middle (S. II, 76). The dogma of personal immortality (*sassata-diṭṭhi*) is one extreme and the dogma of annihilationism (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*) is the other (S. III, 98). Similar antinomies are the Materialist conception that the body and the soul are not different and the Dualist conception that they are different (S. II, 60), the Determinist thesis that everything is conditioned by past factors (*sabbam pubbekatahetu*) and the Indeterminist thesis that nothing is due to causes and conditions (*sabbam ahetu appaccaya* ; A. I, 173). The view that we are entirely personally responsible for our unhappiness and the opposite view that we are not at all responsible for our unhappiness (S. II, 20), extreme hedonism (*kāmasukhalikānuyogo*) and extreme asceticism (*attakilamathānuyogo*) (S. IV, 330). In all these instances it is said that the Buddha “without falling into these two extremes preaches the Dhamma in the middle”. Thus the mean between two extreme views is held to be true. The “middle way” (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) which is a mean both in the matter of belief as well as of conduct is said to “make for knowledge . . . and bring about intuition and realisation” (M. I, 15). That these truths lie in the middle, seems to be a contingent fact to be discovered empirically.

A distinction that gained currency in the scholastic period but which has its origin in the Canon itself is the contrast between conventional truth (*sammuti-sacca*) and absolute truth (*paramattha-sacca*). It is said that “just as much as the word ‘chariot’ is used when the parts are put together in order, there is the conventional use (*sammuti*) of the term ‘being’ when the psycho-physical constituents are present” (S.I. 135).

The statement “ there is a being ” is true in reference to a person only in the conventional sense for there is no entity or substance (soul) in reality corresponding to the word ‘ being ’. Therefore, it would be false or meaningless to say “ there is a being ” in an absolute sense. The reality of the empirical individual is not denied. The Buddha is quite emphatic on this point. In the *Paṭṭhapāda Sutta* where the question is discussed He approves of His interlocutor’s statement : “ I did exist in the past, not that I did not ; I will exist in the future, not that I will not, and I do exist in the present, not that I do not ” (D.I. 200). Only it does not make sense to speak of a substantial soul or entity in the absolute sense since such a soul or entity is not verifiable. We can compare this distinction with the contrast that is sometimes made by scientists between the conventional commonsense point of view and the scientific point of view. As a scientist says, “ the kitchen sink, like all the objects surrounding us, is a convenient abstraction ”.¹

1. Sherman K. Stein, *Mathematics*, W. H. Freeman & Co., San Francisco and London, 1963.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF BUDDHISM TO PHILOSOPHIC THOUGHT

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TEN or fifteen years from now, if I am still in the land of the living, I shall hope to write something more substantial on this topic. To do so would require that one achieve a broad perspective on the history of thought, in the West and in the East, and that he adequately assess the long run significance of Buddhism with its various schools when viewed in such a perspective. What I offer in this paper is my best present surmise as to the main conclusions that more sustained and mature reflection would approve.

In developing this anticipatory surmise I shall sketch four ideas, each of which seems to me highly likely to play an important part in such an assessment. With one partial exception, I believe that these ideas were present in Gautama's own philosophy. And, so far as I can tell, they were original with Him, in the form in which I shall describe them and in their significant challenge to philosophy. I do not wholly agree with all of them ; what I mean in emphasizing them is that philosophers, especially in the West, need to ponder them with utmost seriousness ; no philosophy which has failed to understand them and to meet their challenge can hope to stand.

I

The first of these ideas is that philosophy, in its investigations, its analyses, and its explanations, must

start from where we are rather than from somewhere else. Now, when expressed in such a general form, this idea is far from unique with Buddhism. Much Chinese thinking, especially in the Confucian tradition, assumes this principle, and what the West calls "empirical" philosophy has consciously accepted it. One of the questions confidently asked by empiricists through the centuries is : Where else can we start than from experience ?

But human experience is so defective and untidy, in so many ways, that keen thinkers in every age have been sorely tempted to start with something else—something neater, simpler, more rational, more perfect—and to conceive experience as the product of this something else. Different schools of thinkers succumb to this temptation in different ways : let us briefly review a few of them.

Religious thinkers wish to begin (and also to end) with God, or Brahman. Convinced as they are that He alone is eternally real and that all else in existence depends on Him, this seems to them the only reasonable conclusion to draw. It is presumptuous, they will admit, for man in his finitude to assume that he can see things from the standpoint of the Ultimate, yet, since an explanation from that standpoint would alone be true, one must make the best attempt that he can. Thinkers who incline toward materialism wish to start with the atoms—the simple units which are the building blocks of the physical universe—together with the modes of their combination. These, they are sure, last for ever, while all the experienced compounds that arise from them sooner or later pass away. Thinkers who find their haven in the realm of logic and mathe-

matics wish to start with the abstract entities and the fully rational laws there revealed. They do not see how the world of experience can be analyzed or explained in any other way than in terms of this logical structure.

Nonetheless, is there any reason to suppose that experience must submit to any of these demands ? It is what it is, and if we wish to understand we must avoid imposing any dubious requirements upon it, however reasonable those requirements might seem to be.

It is at just this point that the Buddha's interpretation of the principle : Let us start from where we are, is peculiarly challenging. Chinese acceptance of the axiom never quite worked free from limitations due to the Chinese cultural heritage ; it was frankly or subtly pervaded by the conviction that experience as we now confront it is a lapse from the Golden Age of Yao and Shun and needs to recover that lost ideal. Western philosophies of experience have been haunted by provincial and transitory notions of what sort of process experience is. Hume—the most influential empirical thinker of the past—thought it must be a temporal sequence of “ impressions ” and “ ideas ”, as he conceived those mental phenomena. More recent empiricists have reduced experience to “ sense data ” in their relational patterns, boldly assuming all that is involved in this complex and questionable concept.

As I interpret Him, Gautama realized quite clearly that “ starting where we are ” cannot be a purely passive principle like that of Western empiricism but must express an active interpretation of experience ; He realized also that if it is to give effective guidance it

must be freed so far as possible from any limitations of time or place. Experience must be conceived in universal human terms—in terms of factors that are basic in the daily living of people everywhere and always. What this meant concretely in His mind was twofold. On the one hand, we must approach experience as an unqualifiedly dynamic affair incapable of being understood in relation to any static goal or any fixed structural forms. On the other hand, we must approach it as a process in which men and women are groping toward the conditions of stable and secure well-being, away from the confused mixture of suffering, numbness, frustration, and transitory happiness in which they now exist. He was confident that sound axioms of analysis and of explanation would grow out of the confrontation of experience in these terms, and in no other way.

I am sure that the challenge of this idea has by no means been fully appreciated, either by the philosophies of the East or by those of the West. So far as the West is concerned, the notion of starting where we are has been so deeply affected by the assumptions of empirical science that attempts to conceive experience in any richer and more inclusive way have faced almost insuperable handicaps. So far as India is concerned, it has been impossible for most of her philosophic minds to escape from domination by the fixed conviction that since Brahman is the only unqualified reality, experience must somehow be explained or construed in relation to it. Many among them will admit that this quest cannot hope to succeed—all our categories of interpretation apply within the phenomenal world but not to the relation between that world and the transcendent reality. They will also admit that

even if it could succeed, the explanation reached would have meaning only to the saints who have realized union with Brahman ; but they need no explanation—they have left behind the state in which searching for a logical system to encase the world is an insistent demand. It is not a bold conclusion then that the Buddha's position will continue to exert a profound challenge until both Western and Eastern philosophies have taken its claims more soberly into account than they thus far have.

II

The second of these four ideas is the one usually referred to as Buddha's agnosticism with respect to metaphysical problems—His deep conviction that one should avoid attachment to any particular solution of these issues, and that when we need to refer to what lies beyond present experience it should be in terms of its contrast with what experience discloses rather than in terms of supposedly common factors.

The very provocative challenge of this idea is brought out most sharply when one considers it in relation to the points of view in Western thought that have most nearly filled a similar role—namely, the agnosticism of the last seventy-five years, the skepticisms of earlier philosophy, and the doctrine that in view of the limits of rational knowledge some form of faith is ultimately valid.

Late nineteenth century agnosticism, as represented by T. H. Huxley, was a consequence of assuming the exhaustive competence of empirical science so far as knowledge is concerned. The only knowledge man can

attain (so it was firmly believed) is the knowledge that is verifiable by science, hence in the case of metaphysical and theological questions that by their very nature lie beyond such verification the only justifiable position is to hold that we cannot know which answer to them is the true one. The positivism of our century rests on the same foundations, but adopts the more extreme contention that these questions are not merely unanswerable but are even senseless. A question whose scientific verification is impossible is no genuine question ; it is just a series of words. As for the skeptics of ancient and of early modern times, they did not restrict their drastic criticism to trans-empirical matters ; the more redoubtable among them, at least, believed it possible to undermine any conclusions drawn by reason. And in their case there seems to have been no positive insight to which this devastating criticism was expected to lead. With those who have been eager to limit rational knowledge so as to leave room for religious faith, there is the necessity of facing a difficult dilemma. Either the faith is entirely discontinuous with the operations of reason, in which case the acceptance of one form of faith rather than another would seem to be a purely blind commitment ; or else it is continuous with them, in which case the positive relation between faith and knowledge needs to be clearly defined. Religious thinkers in the West have found it very hard to formulate a persuasive position with regard to this dilemma.

The Buddha's agnosticism, I believe, is different from any of these viewpoints and avoids the specific difficulties that each of them confronts.

I find no adequate support for the conclusion that Gautama condemned speculative thinking as such. His agnosticism was the expression of three fundamental convictions. First, there was the conviction implied by the major idea above described, that beliefs about questions lying beyond experience are irrelevant to the real problems of life, and if our minds worry about them attention is inevitably distracted from the issues on which we crucially need a solution. We need to understand ourselves, in our aspiration to end suffering, and to find the dependable conditions of well-being ; it will take all the intellectual energy we possess to carry out successfully this task. He was sure, therefore, that He must discourage those whose keenness of mind tempts them into metaphysical speculation from wasting their precious powers in this fashion.

Second, there was the conviction, constantly confirmed by observation, that those who become attached to this or that metaphysical doctrine tend to make dogmatic claims for it and to engage in argumentative wrangling with those who hold a different position. Now, on the one hand, it seemed to Him clear that this unhappy outcome is unavoidable, once one devotes himself to answering these questions ; thinkers will be enticed by different theories about them, and since they are trans-empirical there is no way of establishing objectively one proposed solution as against others. On the other hand, it was clear that this outcome, far from leading toward release from self-centred craving, reveals an unfortunate form of bondage to it. Such a situation shows that metaphysical doctrines are intrinsically incapable of being asserted in serenity and compassion, and if this is the case they should not be as-

serted at all. Only the truth that can be spoken in love—the truth that ends discord rather than fosters it—is really truth.

Third, there was the final conviction that even when these difficulties are avoided any attempt to refer in positive terms to that which transcends our present experience is bound to be misleading, and to show effects which will obstruct our quest for liberation. A person who is fully thinking to start from where we are, and is also ready to centre his intellectual powers on the real problem of life, finds that at one point he will need to speak of that which lies beyond experience, and to relate it in the most clarifying fashion he can to experience as we now find ourselves immersed in it. He will need a term by which to refer to the goal toward which spiritual growth is leading ; he must answer questions as to what it is that will have been achieved when the process of liberation is complete. But even at this point serious difficulties arise if such questions are answered in positive terms. Shall he say that peace will have been achieved, or joy, or love ? To say this would be true, not false. However, to say it would be misleading, and perhaps seriously so. Anyone to whom it is said will inevitably interpret the meaning of these words in the light of his experience to date. But if he is still in bondage to blind and selfish craving the meaning he will give them is infected throughout by that bondage. He will think of peace as the hoped-for quiescence achieved when his longings have been satisfied ; he will imagine joy as the pleasurable concomitant of such a state ; love will mean his devoted attachment to this or that person whose help he needs in the quest for these satisfactions. The radically different qualities that these words would denote to one who has achieved liberation

are completely beyond him. But what would happen if, under these circumstances, he were encouraged to dwell hopefully on these words, and to indulge freely in the images they suggest to his mind ? He would try more zealously than ever to satisfy his immature desires and thus to realize these goals as he now pictures them, instead of being inspired to strive toward the superior state that can be achieved only when such desires are laid aside. For this reason the true goal must be described in negative terms—it is *Nirvana*. Not *Nirvana* in the sense of utter extinction, but *Nirvana* as the state in which the blind, demanding turmoil that has enslaved the person seeking liberation has been rooted out.

On Buddha's carefully considered presuppositions, there is no escape from a thorough-going agnosticism in this form. Perhaps the philosophic world will find that He was right.

III.

The third of these ideas grows directly out of this agnosticism. I shall put it in the form of a paradoxical question. Is the only sound philosophy a form of no-philosophy ? So far as I can tell, nothing quite comparable to this idea has appeared in the West. The ancient skeptics, who exemplified something verbally similar, did not share the further insight that is essential to this idea in its Buddhist guise ; nor does Ludwig Wittgensten, who in his famous *Tractatus* holds that all one can really do in relation to other philosophers is to wait till they say something and then show that they have actually said nothing.* And, so far as I can tell also, this idea was not definitely adopted by Gautama

* *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London, 1922. P. 187f.

Himself. In Him we meet an approach to it in the silence that He sometimes maintained in the presence of metaphysical questionings—at least when the meaning of that silence is considered in relation to His readiness to deal with all inquirers on their own ground. This readiness betokened a remarkable capacity to probe their perplexities in full awareness of individual differences and thus in a way most likely to be helpfully clarifying to each person. The idea comes before us full grown and articulate only in the *Madhyamika* Philosophy of Nagarjuna and his great successors.

Granted the basic Buddhist assumptions, what is the real task of philosophy ? It cannot be, of course, what most philosophers have supposed, namely, to reach solutions to speculative questions. In general terms, the answer is that its function is to contribute, in the way systematic intellectual analysis can, to the guidance of seekers for ultimate liberation. But how should it do this with specific reference to the great issues that philosophers perennially raise ? As I interpret the *Madhyamika* thinkers, they are confident that they understand the reason for His way of dealing with metaphysical questions and are revealing it more fully than He did. Their crucial conviction here is a very simple one. It is that the quest for a positive answer to puzzles about the nature of reality is not an expression of the aspiration toward spiritual perfection ; however subtle the disguise may be, it is an exhibition of compulsive demands that need to be overcome, not satisfied. These demands are characteristic of intellectually keen minds ; they represent the kind of obstruction to the full achievement of liberation to which such minds are peculiarly apt to succumb.

What then should be done about these speculative cravings ? Essentially, to discourage those who are seduced by them from expecting their satisfaction, and to entice them to seek instead the kind of spiritual insight that needs no rational articulation and is, indeed, capable of none. This, of course, cannot be accomplished by a hostile attack on their transcendental searchings, so natural to persons of great logical power, nor by a refutation of their major conclusions which rests on some alternative set of theoretical assumptions. Such attacks would only provoke them to a more ardent attachment to the obstructive notions that symbolize and express their enslavement. What this programme calls for is, rather, that one compassionately place himself within the framework in which their self-deceptive thinking moves, and show, by a fuller logical unfolding of their premises than because of their bondage they could achieve, that there are inherent contradictions in all the explanatory categories that they confidently employ. To carry out such a task of internal criticism requires that the thinker pursuing it on the one hand, show himself as competent in systematic philosophical analysis as those whom he is criticizing, and that, on the other hand, he have attained a deeper level of spiritual insight, so that his radical criticisms may express the loving understanding without which their constructive promise would be lost. And it means also, that, in intent, at least, he is setting up no alternative philosophical system in place of the refuted systems of others. Were he to do this he would himself have fallen prey to the temptations that have misled those whose doctrines and hopes he has swept away.

I can think of no more searching challenge to philosophers of the West than is contained in this idea, and thinkers of the East also need to square themselves more profoundly with it than most of them as yet have done.

IV

The fourth of these ideas is one which underlies each of the other three, and hence may be stated quite briefly. This is the idea that theoretical inquiry is not independent of practical action, as keen thinkers are prone to suppose, but is itself one factor in human action—the factor in virtue of which any action can be consciously guided instead of expressing a purely blind urge.

Now the West has produced pragmatic philosophies which have stressed this principle, and Eastern thought has been influenced by it to a very large extent. But I believe that in His way of conceiving it Gautama caught a rather distinctive insight, which not too many even among His own followers have fully shared. The pragmatism of John Dewey, a generation ago in the West, expressed a clear insistence that theory is one aspect of practice, whose role is to give it intelligent guidance, but in Dewey this insight reflected the limitations of his time and place. Especially was it confined by the orientation of Western empirical science and by the social reforms that in Dewey's mind constitute the only sound goals of practical action. In the East this kind of limitation has, of course, been absent. Nonetheless, most non-Buddhist modes of thought, and not a few Buddhist ones, have been captive to traditional Eastern notions as to what sort of thing practical action must be and how intellectual inquiry is related to it.

It seems to me that Gautama's insight here included two features, one of which was expressed in clearer and more radical form than His predecessors had given it, and the other was probably original with Him. As for the former, I am thinking of the thoroughly dynamic conception of experience and, therefore, of human action that has already been mentioned. One consequence of this conception was that intellectual searching itself is interpreted in terms of this dynamic framework ; far from being the halting expression within finite experience of a changeless transcendent consciousness, it exhibits the interaction of the same combining and separating forces that other modes of action reveal. As for the latter feature, I believe Gautama must have apprehended a principle whose implications for a theory of truth are, at least, equally radical. Certainly His own compassionate action, in relation to inquirers who came to Him, was constantly guided by this principle. It grows out of the recognition that whatever one says to another person, whether one is aware of it or not, has practical effects in the experience and action of that person. In particular, it either has the effect of eliciting his constructive capacities and fostering his growth toward spiritual freedom, or the contrary effect of confusing his emotions, dulling his aspiration, and stimulating his attachment to deceptive beliefs. Now so far as a speaker has gained liberation himself, he will be alertly aware of these effects, and his dominant motive will be so to speak, in everyone's presence, as to express a compassionate concern for the listener's dynamic growth toward unfettered well-being. All his philosophic thinking and every item in its verbal expression will be guided by this concern ; it will be a part of the discovering, exploring, creative action which his whole

experience in relation to every living creature will exemplify.

This idea is the most searching and challenging of the four I have sketched. Its drastic implication for philosophy may be succinctly stated in the principle that truth must be a dynamic and loving truth if it is to be truth at all.

In conclusion, I do not feel sure at present what qualifications in the case of each of these ideas are needed if they are to enter into the enduring deposit of man's philosophic reflection. But I do feel sure that such qualifications will only be accurately formulated when thinkers, both Eastern and Western, have pondered these ideas with the deepest sensitivity and the most adventurous vision of which they are capable.

Paper read at a Symposium on "Buddhism's Contribution to Art, Letters and Philosophy", arranged in November, 1956, by the Working Committee for the 2500th Buddha Jayanthi, Government of India, in collaboration with the UNESCO, to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of the Parinirvana of the Buddha.—Reprinted from "The Maha Bodhi", December, 1956.

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The Three Signata (*Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta*)
(THE WHEEL, No. 20).

The Buddhist Concept of Mind
(BODHI LEAVES, No. A. 9).

Both also in Sinhala version.

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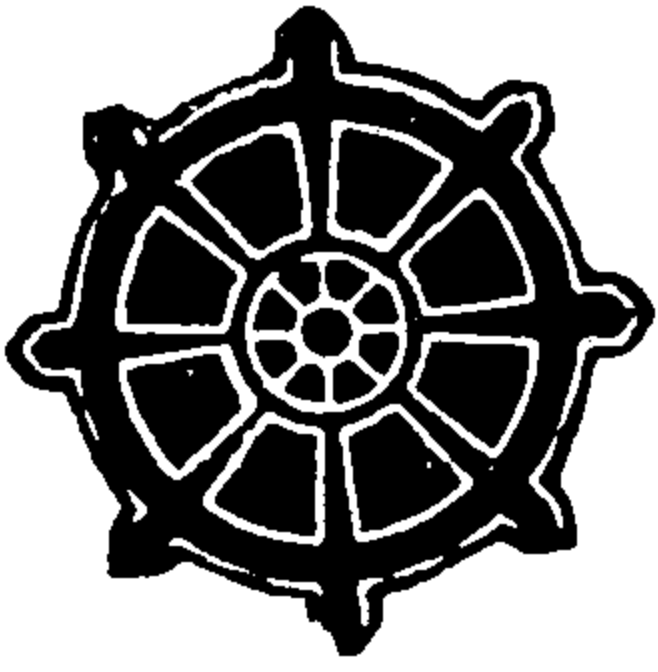
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TAMING THE MIND

**THE WHEEL
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Discourses of the Buddha

TAMING THE MIND

Discourses of the Buddha

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We are obliged to the Pali Text Society, London for kind permission to reproduce the translations collected here, excepting the last item which has been taken from Bhikkhu Buddharakkhita's rendering of the "Dhammapada", published by the Maha Bodhi Society, Bangalore (India).

Monks, I know not of any other single thing so intractable as the untamed mind. The untamed mind is indeed a thing untractable.

Monks, I know not of any other single thing so tractable as the tamed mind. The tamed mind is indeed a thing tractable.

Monks, I know not of any other single thing so conducive to great loss as the untamed mind. The untamed mind indeed conduces to great loss.

Monks, I know not of any other single thing so conducive to great profit as the tamed mind. The tamed mind indeed conduces to great profit.

Monks, I know not of any other single thing that brings such woe as the mind that is untamed, uncontrolled, unguarded and unrestrained. Such a mind indeed brings great woe.

Monks, I know not of any other single thing that brings such bliss as the mind that is tamed, controlled, guarded and restrained. Such a mind indeed brings great bliss.

Gradual Sayings (Anguttara Nikāya)
The Book of the Ones, Ch. IV
Translated by F. L. Woodward

Discourse to Gaṇaka-Moggallāna

(Majjhima Nikāya No. 107)

Thus have I heard: At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthī in the palace of Migāra's mother in the Eastern Monastery. Then the brahman Gaṇaka-Moggallāna approached the Lord; having approached he exchanged greetings with the Lord; having conversed in a friendly and courteous way, he sat down at a respectful distance. As he was sitting down at a respectful distance, Gaṇaka-Moggallāna the brahman spoke thus to the Lord: "Just as, good Gotama, in this palace of Migāra's mother there can be seen a gradual training, a gradual doing, a gradual practice, that is to say as far as the last flight of stairs;¹ so, too, good Gotama, for these brahmins there can be seen a gradual training, a gradual doing, a gradual practice, that is to say in the study (of the Vedas)²; so too, good Gotama, for these archers there can be seen a gradual practice, that is to say in archery; so too, good Gotama, for us whose livelihood is calculation³ there can be seen a gradual training, a gradual practice, that is to say in accountancy. For when we get a pupil, good Gotama, we first of all make him calculate: 'One one, two twos, three threes, four fours, five fives, six sixes, seven sevens, eight eights, nine

1. A seven-storied palace is not to be built in one day.—
Commentary.

2. It is not possible to learn the three Vedas by heart in one day.— *Commentary.*

3. *gaṇanā*. From this profession of his, the distinguishing addition to the brahman's name is derived. (*Ed., 'The Wheel'*)

nines, ten tens,' and we, good Gotama, also make him calculate a hundred. Is it not possible, good Gotama, to lay down a similar gradual training, gradual doing, gradual practice in respect of this *dhamma* and discipline?"

"It is possible, brahman, to lay down a gradual training, a gradual doing, a gradual practice in respect of this *dhamma* and discipline. Brahman, even a skilled trainer of horses, having taken on a beautiful thoroughbred, first of all gets it used to the training in respect of wearing the bit, then gets it used to further training—even so, brahman, the Tathāgata, having taken on a man to be tamed, first of all disciplines him thus:

Morality

'Come you, monk, be of moral habit, live controlled by the control of the Obligations, endowed with (right) behaviour and pasture, seeing peril in the slightest faults and, undertaking them, train yourself in the rules of training.' As soon, brahman, as the monk is of moral habit, controlled by the control of the Obligations, endowed with (right) behaviour and pasture, seeing peril in the slightest faults and, undertaking them, trains himself in the rules of training, the Tathāgata disciplines him further, saying:

Sense-control

Come you, monk, be guarded as to the doors of the sense-organs; having seen a material shape with the eye, do not be entranced with the general appearance, do not be entranced with the detail; for if one dwells with the organ of sight uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil, unskilful states of mind, may flow in. So fare along controlling it, guard the organ of sight, achieve

control over the organ of sight. Having heard a sound with the ear Having smelt a smell with the nose Having savoured a taste with the tongue Having felt a touch with the body Having cognised a mental state with the mind, do not be entranced with the general appearance, do not be entranced with the detail. For if one dwells with the organ of mind uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil, unskilful states of mind, may flow in. So fare along controlling it; guard the organ of mind, achieve control over the organ of mind.'

Moderation in eating

As soon, brahman, as a monk is guarded as to the doors of the sense-organs, the Tathāgata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, be moderate in eating; you should take food reflecting carefully, not for fun or indulgence or personal charm or beautification, but taking just enough for maintaining this body and keeping it going, for keeping it unharmed, for furthering the Brahma-faring¹, with the thought: Thus will I crush out an old feeling, and I will not allow a new feeling to arise, and then there will be for me subsistence and blamelessness and abiding in comfort.'

Vigilance

As soon, brahman, as a monk is moderate in eating, the Tathāgata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, dwell intent on vigilance; during the day while pacing up and down, while sitting down, cleanse the mind of obstructive mental states; during the middle watch of the night, lie down on the right side in the lion posture, foot

1. *brahmacariyam*. This refers to the pure life of a celibate recluse. (Ed., 'The Wheel')

resting on foot, mindful, clearly conscious, reflecting on the thought of getting up again; during the last watch of the night, when you have risen, while pacing up and down, while sitting down, cleanse the mind of obstructive mental states.'

Mindfulness and clear consciousness

As soon, brahman, as a monk is intent on vigilance, the Tathāgata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, be possessed of mindfulness and clear consciousness, acting with clear consciousness whether you are approaching or departing, acting with clear consciousness whether you are looking ahead or looking round, acting with clear consciousness whether you are bending in or stretching out (the arms), acting with clear consciousness whether you are carrying the outer cloak, the bowl or robe, acting with clear consciousness whether you are eating, drinking, munching, savouring, acting with clear consciousness whether you are obeying the calls of nature, acting with clear consciousness whether you are walking, standing, sitting, asleep, awake, talking or being silent.'

Overcoming of the five hindrances

As soon, brahman, as he is possessed of mindfulness and clear consciousness, the Tathāgata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, choose a remote lodging in a forest, at the root of a tree, on a mountain slope, in a glen, a hill cave, a cemetery, a woodland grove, in the open, or on a heap of straw.' On returning from alms-gathering after the meal, the monk sits down cross-legged, holding the back erect, having made mindfulness rise up in front of him. He, getting rid of covetousness for the world, dwells with a mind devoid of covetousness, he

cleanses the mind of covetousness. Getting rid of the taint of ill-will, he dwells benevolent in mind; compassionate and merciful towards all creatures and beings, he cleanses the mind of ill-will. Getting rid of sloth and torpor, he dwells without sloth or torpor; perceiving the light, mindful and clearly conscious he cleanses the mind of sloth and torpor. Getting rid of restlessness and worry, he dwells calmly: the mind inward tranquil, he cleanses the mind of restlessness and worry. Getting rid of doubt, he dwells doubt-crossed; unperplexed as to the states that are skilled¹, he cleanses his mind of doubt.

Jhāna

He, by getting rid of these five hindrances², which are defilements of the mind and deleterious to intuitive wisdom, aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, enters and abides in the first meditation which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness and is rapturous and joyful. By allaying initial thought and discursive thought, his mind subjectively tranquillised and fixed on one point, he enters and abides in the second meditation which is devoid of initial thought and discursive thought, is born of concentration and is rapturous and joyful. By the fading out of rapture, he dwells with equanimity, attentive and clearly conscious, and experiences in his person that joy of which the ariyans³ say: 'Joyful lives he who has equanimity and is mindful,' and he enters and abides in the third meditation.

1. *kusala*; sometimes translated by: salutary, profitable; karmically wholesome. (Ed., *The Wheel*)

2. On these see *'The Wheel'* No. 26.

3. *ariyā*; refers here, according to the *Visuddhī Magga*, to the Enlightened Ones.

By getting rid of anguish, by the going down of his former pleasures and sorrows, he enters and abides in the fourth meditation which has neither anguish nor joy, and which is entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness.

Brahman, such is my instruction for those monks who are learners who, perfection being not yet attained, dwell longing for the incomparable security from the bonds. But as for those monks who are perfected ones, the cankers destroyed, who have lived the life, done what was to be done, shed the burden, attained to their own goal, the fetters of becoming utterly destroyed, and who are freed by perfect profound knowledge—these things conduce both to their abiding in ease here and now as well to their mindfulness and clear consciousness.”

When this had been said, the brahman Gaṇaka-Moggallāna spoke thus to the Lord :

“Now, on being exhorted thus and instructed thus by the good Gotama, do all the good Gotama’s disciples attain the unchanging goal¹—nibbāna, or do some not attain it?”

“Some of my disciples, brahman, on being exhorted and instructed thus by me, attain the unchanging goal—nibbāna; some do not attain it.”

“What is the cause, good Gotama, what the reason that, since nibbāna does exist, since the way leading to nibbāna exists, since the good Gotama exists as adviser, some of the good Gotama’s disciples on being exhorted thus and instructed thus by the good Gotama, attain the unchanging goal—nibbāna, but some do not attain it?”

1. *accantanitṭhā*. *Accanta* can also mean utmost, culminating, supreme,

“Well then, brahman, I will question you on this point in reply. As it is pleasing to you, so you may answer me. What do you think about this, brahman? Are you skilled in the way leading to Rājagaha?”

“Yes, sir; skilled am I in the way leading to Rājagaha.”

“What do you think about this? A man might come along here wanting to go to Rājagaha; having approached you, he might speak thus: ‘I want to go to Rājagaha, sir; show me the way to this Rājagaha.’ You might speak thus to him: ‘Yes, my good man, this road goes to Rājagaha; go along it for a while. When you have gone along it for a while you will see a village; go along for a while; when you have gone along for a while you will see a market town; go for a while. When you have gone along for a while you will see Rājagaha with its delightful parks, delightful forests, delightful fields, delightful ponds.’ But although he has been exhorted and instructed thus by you, he might take the wrong road and go westwards. Then a second man might come along wanting to go to Rājagaha (as above)’ you will see Rājagaha with its delightful ponds.’ Exhorted and instructed thus by you he might get to Rājagaha safely. What is the cause, brahman, what the reason that, since Rājagaha does exist, since the way leading to Rājagaha exists, since you exist as adviser, the one man, although being exhorted and instructed thus by you, may take the wrong road and go westwards while the other may get to Rājagaha safely?”

“What can I, good Gotama, do in this matter? A shower of the way, good Gotama, am I.”

“Even so, brahman, nibbāna does exist, the way leading to nibbāna exists and I exist as adviser. But some of my disciples, on being exhorted and instructed

thus by me attain the unchanging goal—*nibbāna*, some do not attain it. What can I, brahman, do in this matter? A shower of the way, brahman, is a Tathāgata,”

When this had been said, the brahman Gaṇaka-Moggallāna spoke thus to the Lord:

“Good Gotama, as for those persons who, in want of a way of living, having gone forth from home into homelessness without faith, who are crafty, fraudulent, deceitful, who are unbalanced and puffed up, who are shifty, scurrilous and of loose talk, the doors of whose sense-organs are not guarded, who do not know moderation in eating, who are not intent on vigilance, indifferent to recluship, not of keen respect for the training, who are ones for abundance, lax, taking the lead in backsliding, shirking the burden of seclusion, who are indolent, of feeble energy, of confused mindfulness, not clearly conscious, not concentrated but of wandering minds, who are weak in wisdom, drivellers—the good Gotama is not in communion with *them*. But as for those young men of respectable families who have gone forth from home into homelessness from faith, who are not crafty, fraudulent or deceitful, who are not unbalanced or puffed up, who are not shifty, scurrilous or of loose talk, the doors of whose sense-organs are guarded, who know moderation in eating, who are intent on vigilance, longing for recluship, of keen respect for the training, who are not ones for abundance, not lax, shirking backsliding, taking the lead in seclusion, who are of stirred up energy, self-resolute, with mindfulness aroused, clearly conscious, concentrated, their minds one-pointed, who have wisdom, are not drivellers—the good Gotama is in communion with *them*. As, good Gotama, black gum is pointed to as chief of root-scents, as red sandal wood is pointed to as

chief of pith-scents, as jasmine is pointed to as chief of flower scents—even so is the exhortation of the good Gotama highest among the teachings of today. Excellent, good Gotama, excellent, good Gotama. As, good Gotama, one might set upright what had been upset, or disclose what was covered, or show the way to one who had gone astray, or bring an oil-lamp into the darkness so that those with vision might see material shapes—even so in many a figure is *dhamma* made clear by the good Gotama. I am going to the revered Gotama for refuge and to *dhamma* and to the Order of monks. May the good Gotama accept me as a lay-follower going for refuge from today forth for as long as life lasts.”

*From “Middle Length Sayings,”
Translated by I. B. Horner
(Pali Text Society, London)*

I will restrain thee, heart, as elephants
Are by the towngate's sally port kept back.
I'll not abet thee in thy naughty ways,
Thou net of wishes, thou of body born.
Not thine 'twill be, thus checked, to go at large.
As elephant that wins not through the gate,
Struggle thy best, thou witch, again, again;
Thou shalt not roam, who art to sin so fain.
Even as one who firmly wields the hook
Doth turn th'unbroken, untamed elephant
Against its will, so will I turn thee back.
As the good driver, in horsebreaking skilled,
Doth tame the mettle of the thoroughbred
So will I bring thee too beneath control
By virtue of the fivefold spiritual force.
Yea, by right heedfulness I'll bind thee fast,
Myself restrained, so will I master thee.
Curbed in the harness of right energy,
Thou shalt not, O my heart, go far from me.

Psalms of the Brethren (Theragāthā v. 355—359)
Verses of the Monk Vijitasena
Translated by C. A. F. Rhys Davids

Discourse on the “Tamed Stage”

Dantabhūmi-sutta

(Majjhima-Nikāya 'No. 125)

Thus have I heard: At one time the Lord was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove at the squirrels' feeding place. Now at that time the novice Aciravata was staying in the Forest Hut.¹ Then Prince Jayasena,² who was always pacing up and down, always roaming about on foot, approached the novice Aciravata; having approached he exchanged greetings with the novice Aciravata; having exchanged greetings of friendliness and courtesy, he sat down at a respectful distance. While he was sitting down at a respectful distance, Prince Jayasena spoke thus to the novice Aciravata:

“I have heard, good Aggivessana, that if a monk is abiding here diligent, ardent, self-resolute, he may attain one-pointedness of mind.”

“That is so, prince; that is so, prince. A monk abiding here diligent, ardent, self-resolute, may attain one-pointedness of mind.”

“It were good if the reverend Aggivessana were to teach me *dhamma* as he has heard it, as he has mastered it.”

“I, prince, am not able to teach you *dhamma* as I have heard it, as I have mastered it. Now, if I were to teach you *dhamma* as I have heard it, as I have mastered it, and if you could not understand the meaning of what I said, that would be weariness to me, that would be a vexation to me.”

1. A hut in a secluded part of the Bambo Grove for the use of monks who wanted to practise striving, *padhāna*.— *Comy.*

2. A son of King Bimbisāra.

“Let the reverend Aggivessana teach me *dhamma* as he has heard it, as he has mastered it. Perhaps I could understand the meaning of what the good Aggivessana says.”

“If I were to teach you *dhamma*, prince, as I have heard it, as I have mastered it, and if you were to understand the meaning of what I say, that would be good; if you should not understand the meaning of what I say, you must remain as you are; you must not question me further on the matter.”

“Let the reverend Aggivessana teach me *dhamma* as he has heard it, as he has mastered it. If I understand the meaning of what the good Aggivessana says, that will be good; if I do not understand the meaning of what the good Aggivessana says, I will remain as I am; I will not question the reverend Aggivessana further on this matter.”

Then the novice Aciravata taught *dhamma* to Prince Jayasena as he had heard it, as he had mastered it. When this had been said, prince Jayasena spoke thus to the novice Aciravata:

“This is impossible, good Aggivessana, it cannot come to pass that a monk abiding diligent, ardent, self-resolute should attain one-pointedness of mind.” Then Prince Jayasena, having declared to the novice Aciravata that this was impossible and could not come to pass, rising from his seat, departed.

And soon after Prince Jayasena had departed, the novice Aciravata approached the Lord; having approached and greeted the Lord, he sat down at a respectful distance. As he was sitting down at a respectful distance, the novice

Aciravata told the Lord the whole of the conversation he had with Prince Jayasena as far as it had gone. When this had been said, the Lord spoke thus to the novice Aciravata:

“What is the good of that, Aggivessana? That Prince Jayasena, living as he does in the midst of sense-pleasures, enjoying sense-pleasures, being consumed by thoughts of sense-pleasures, burning with the fever of sense-pleasures, eager in the search for sense-pleasures, should know or see or attain or realise that which can be known by renunciation, seen by renunciation, attained by renunciation, realised by renunciation---such a situation does not exist. It is as if, Aggivessana, among elephants or horses or oxen to be tamed, two elephants, two horses or two oxen are well tamed, well trained, and two are not tamed, not trained. What do you think about this, Aggivessana? Would these two elephants or horses or oxen that were to be tamed and that were well tamed, well trained--would these on being tamed reach tamed capacity, would they, being tamed, attain a tamed stage?”

“Yes, revered sir.”

“But those two elephants or horses or oxen that were to be tamed but that were neither tamed nor trained—would these, not being tamed, attain a tamed stage as do the two elephants or horses or oxen to be tamed that were well tamed, well trained?”

“No, revered sir.”

“Even so, Aggivessana, that Prince Jayasena, living as he does in the midst of sense-pleasures should know or see or attain or realise that which can be known

and realised by renunciation—such a situation does not exist. It is as if, Aggivessana, there were a great mountain slope near a village or a market-town which two friends, coming hand in hand from that village or market-town might approach; having approached the mountain slope one friend might remain at the foot while the other might climb to the top. Then the friend standing at the foot of the mountain slope might speak thus to the one standing on the top: ‘My dear, what do you see as you stand on the top of the mountain slope?’ He might reply: ‘As I stand on the top of the mountain slope I, my dear, see delightful parks, delightful woods, delightful stretches of level ground delightful ponds.’ But the other might speak thus: ‘This is impossible, it cannot come to pass, my dear, that, as you stand on the top of the mountain slope, you should see delightful ponds.’ Then the friend who had been standing on top of the mountain slope, having come down to the foot and taken his friend by the arm, making him climb to the top of the mountain slope and giving him a moment in which to regain his breath, might speak to him thus: ‘Now, my dear, what is it that you see as you stand on the top of the mountain slope?’ He might speak thus: ‘I, my dear, as I stand on the top of the mountain slope, see delightful parks delightful ponds.’ He might speak thus: ‘Just now, my dear, we understood you to say: This is impossible, it cannot come to pass that, as you stand on the top of the mountain slope, you should see delightful ponds. But now we understand you to say: ‘I my dear, as I stand on the top of the mountain slope, see delightful parks delightful ponds.’ He might speak thus: ‘That was because I, my dear, hemmed in by this great mountain slope, could not see what was to be seen.’

Even so but to a still greater degree, Aggivessana, is Prince Jayasena hemmed in, blocked, obstructed, enveloped by this mass of ignorance. Indeed, that Prince Jayasena, living as he does in the midst of sense-pleasures, enjoying sense-pleasures, being consumed by the thoughts of sense-pleasures, burning with the fever of sense-pleasures, eager in the search for sense-pleasures, should know or see or attain or realise that which can be known seen attained realised by renunciation—such a situation does not exist. Had these two similes occurred to you, Aggivessana, for Prince Jayasena, Prince Jayasena naturally would have trusted you and, having trust, would have acted in the manner of one having trust in you.”

“But how could these two similes for Prince Jayasena have occurred to me, revered sir, seeing that they are spontaneous, that is to say to the Lord, and have never been heard before?”

“As, Aggivessana, a noble anointed king addresses an elephant hunter saying: ‘You, good elephant hunter, mount the king’s elephant and go into an elephant forest. When you see a forest elephant, tie him to the neck of the king’s elephant.’ And, Aggivessana, the elephant hunter, having answered: ‘Yes, sire,’ in assent to the noble anointed king, mounts the king’s elephant and goes into an elephant forest. Seeing a forest elephant, he ties him to the neck of the king’s elephant. So the king’s elephant brings him out into the open. But, Aggivessana, the forest elephant has this longing, that is to say for the elephant forest. But in regard to him the elephant hunter tells the noble anointed king that the forest elephant has got out into the open. The noble anointed king then addresses an elephant tamer, saying: ‘Come you, good elephant tamer, tame the forest

elephant by subduing his forest ways, by subduing his forest memories, and aspirations and by subduing his distress, his fretting and fever for the forest, by making him pleased with the villages and by accustoming him to human ways.'

And, Aggivessana, the elephant tamer, having answered 'Yes, sire,' in assent to the noble anointed king, driving a great post into the ground ties the forest elephant to it by his neck so as to subdue his forest ways and accustom him to human ways. Then the elephant tamer addresses him with such words as are gentle, pleasing to the ear, affectionate, going to the heart, urbane, pleasant to the manyfolk, liked by the manyfolk. And, Aggivessana, the forest elephant, on being addressed with words that are gentle liked by the manyfolk, listens, lends ear and bends his mind to learning. Next the elephant tamer supplies him with grass-fodder and water. When, Aggivessana, the forest elephant has accepted the grass-fodder and water from the elephant tamer, it occurs to the elephant tamer: 'The king's elephant will now live.' Then the elephant tamer makes him do a further task, saying: 'Take up, put down.' When, Aggivessana, the king's elephant is obedient to the elephant tamer and acts on his instructions to take up and put down, then the elephant tamer makes him do a further, task, saying: 'Advance, retreat' a further task, saying: 'Get up, sit down.' When, Aggivessana, the king's elephant is obedient to the elephant tamer and acts on his instructions to get up and sit down, then the elephant tamer makes him do a further task, known as 'standing your ground': he ties a shield to the great beast's trunk; a man holding a lance is sitting on his neck, and men holding lances are standing surrounding him on all sides; and the elephant tamer, holding a lance with

a long shaft, is standing in front. While he is doing the task of 'standing your ground' he does not move a fore-leg nor does he move a hind-leg, nor does he move the forepart of his body, nor does he move the hindpart of his body, nor does he move his head, nor does he move an ear, nor does he move a tusk, nor does he move his tail, nor does he move his trunk. A king's elephant is one who endures blows of sword, axe, arrow, hatchet, and the resounding din of drum and kettle-drum, conch and tam-tam, he is (like) purified gold purged of all its dross and impurities, fit for a king, a royal possession and reckoned as a kingly attribute.

Acquisition of faith

Even so, Aggivessana, does a Tathāgata arise here in the world, a perfected one, fully Self-Awakened One, endowed with right knowledge and conduct, well-farer, knower of the worlds, the matchless charioteer of men to be tamed, the Awakened one, the Lord. He makes known this world with the *devas*, with Māra, with Brahmā, the creation with its recluses and brahmans, its *devas* and men, having realised them by his own super-knowledge. He teaches *dhamma* which is lovely at the beginning, lovely in the middle, lovely at the ending, with the spirit and the letters; he proclaims the Brahma-faring¹, wholly fulfilled, quite purified. A householder or a householder's son or one born in another family hears that *dhamma*. Having heard that *dhamma* he gains faith in the Tathāgata. Endowed with this faith that he has acquired, he reflects in this way: 'The household life is confined and dusty, going forth is in the open; it is not easy for one who lives in a house to fare

1. *brahmacariyāni*; the pure life of a celibate recluse.—

(Ed., 'The Wheel')

the Brahma-faring wholly fulfilled, wholly pure, polished like a conch-shell. Suppose now that I, having cut off hair and beard, having put on saffron robes, should go forth from home into homelessness?' After a time, getting rid of his wealth, be it small or great, getting rid of his circle of relations, be it small or great, having cut off his hair and beard, having put on saffron robes, he goes forth from home into homelessness. To this extent, Aggivessana, the ariyan disciple gets out into the open.

Morality

But, Aggivessana, *devas* and mankind have this longing, that is to say for the five strands of sense-pleasures. The Tathāgata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, be moral, live controlled by the control of the Obligations, possessed of (right) behaviour and pasture, seeing danger in the slightest faults; undertaking them train yourself in the rules of training.'

Sense-control

And when, Aggivessana, the ariyan disciple is moral, lives controlled by the control, undertaking them, trains himself in the rules of training, then the Tathāgata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, be guarded as to the doors of the sense-organs. Having seen a material shape with the eye (*as above, p.3*). Having cognised a mental state with the mind, be not entranced by the general appearance, be not entranced by the detail. For if you dwell with the organ of mind uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil unskilful states of mind, might flow in. So fare along with its control, guard the organ of mind, achieve control over the organ of mind.'

Moderation in eating

And when, Aggivessana, the ariyan disciple is guarded as to the doors of the sense-organs, then the Tathāgata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, be moderate in eating (*as above, p. 4*) abiding in comfort.'

Vigilance

When, Aggivessana, the ariyan disciple is moderate in eating, the Tathāgata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, abide intent on vigilance (*as above, p. 4*) you should cleanse the mind of obstructive mental states.'

Mindfulness and clear consciousness

And when, Aggivessana, the ariyan disciple is intent on vigilance, then the Tathāgata disciplines him further saying: 'Come you, monk, be possessed of mindfulness and clear consciousness. Be one who acts with clear consciousness (*as above, p. 5*) talking, silent.'

Overcoming of the five hindrances

And when, Aggivessana, the ariyan disciple is possessed of mindfulness and clear consciousness, then the Tathāgata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, choose a remote lodging in a forest, at the root of a tree, on a mountain slope, in a wilderness, a hill-cave, a cemetery, a forest haunt, in the open or on a heap of straw.' He chooses a remote lodging in the forest or on a heap of straw. Returning from alms-gathering after the meal, he sits down cross-legged, holding the back erect, having made mindfulness rise up in front of him. He, by getting rid of coveting for the world, dwells with a mind devoid of

coveting, he purifies the mind of coveting. By getting rid of the taint of ill-will, he dwells benevolent in mind, compassionate for the welfare of all creatures and beings, he purifies the mind of the taint of ill-will. By getting rid of sloth and torpor, he dwells devoid of sloth and torpor; perceiving the light, mindful, clearly conscious, he purifies the mind of sloth and torpor. By getting rid of restlessness and worry, he dwells calmly; the mind subjectively tranquillized, he purifies the mind of restlessness and worry. By getting rid of doubt, he dwells doubt-crossed, unperplexed as to the states that are skilful, he purifies the mind of doubt.

The four applications of mindfulness

He, by getting rid of these five hindrances which are defilements of the mind and weakening to intuitive wisdom, dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly conscious (of it), mindful (of it) so as to control the covetousness and dejection in the world. He fares along contemplating the feelings the mind the mental states in mental states, ardent, clearly conscious (of them), mindful (of them) so as to control the covetousness and dejection in the world.

As, Aggivessana, an elephant tamer, driving a great post into the ground, ties a forest elephant to it by his neck so as to subdue his forest ways, so as to subdue his forest aspirations, and so as to subdue his distress, his fretting and fever for the forest, so as to make him pleased with villages and accustom him to human ways—even so, Aggivessana, these four applications of mindfulness are ties of the mind so as to subdue the ways of householders and to subdue the aspirations of householders and to subdue the distress, the fretting and fever of householders; they are for leading to the right path, for realising nibbāna.

The Tathāgata then disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, fare along contemplating the body in the body, but do not apply yourself to a train of thought connected with the body; fare along contemplating the feelings in the feelings . . . the mind in the mind . . . mental states in mental states, but do not apply yourself to a train of thought connected with mental states.

Jhāna

He by allaying initial thought and discursive thought, with the mind subjectively tranquillized and fixed on one point, enters on and abides in the second meditation¹ which is devoid of initial and discursive thought, is born of concentration and is rapturous and joyful. By the fading out of rapture, he dwells with equanimity, attentive and clearly

1. It is noteworthy that the section on the Four Applications of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is here followed by the *second* meditation (*jhāna*), without mention of the first. This may either refer to a meditator who, already previously, has attained to the first *jhāna*, or, which seems more probable, it is meant to indicate that the intensive practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* which, through emphasis on bare observation, tends to reduce discursive thought, enables the meditator to enter directly into the second *jhāna* which is free from initial and discursive thought (*vitakka-vicāra*). This latter explanation is favoured by the facts that (1) in our text, the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* is preceded by the temporary abandonment of the five Hindrances which indicates a high degree of concentration approaching that of the *jhāna*; (2) in our text, the meditator is advised not to engage in *thoughts about* the body, feelings, etc., that is in discursive thinking which is still present in the first *jhāna*. (Editor, "*The Wheel*")

conscious, and experiences in his person that joy of which the ariyans say: 'Joyful lives he who has equanimity and is mindful,' and he enters and abides in the third meditation. By getting rid of joy, by getting rid of anguish, by the going down of his former pleasures and sorrows, he enters and abides in the fourth meditation which has neither anguish nor joy, and which is entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness.

The three knowledges (te-vijja)

1. Recollection of former habitations

Then with the mind composed thus, quite purified, quite clarified, without blemish, without defilement, grown pliant and workable, fixed, immovable, he directs his mind to the knowledge and recollection of former habitations: he remembers a variety of former habitations, thus: one birth, two births, three . . . four . . . five . . . ten . . . twenty . . . thirty . . . forty . . . fifty . . . a hundred . . . a thousand . . . a hundred thousand births, and many an eon of integration and many an eon of disintegration and many an eon of integration-disintegration: 'Such a one was I by name, having such a clan, such and such a colour, so was I nourished, such and such pleasant and painful experiences were mine, so did the span of life end. Passing from this, I came to be in another state where such a one was I by name, having such and such a clan, such and such a colour, so was I nourished, such and such pleasant and painful experiences were mine, so did the span of life end. Passing from this, I arose here.' Thus he remembers divers former habitations in all their modes and details.

2. The Divine Eye

Then with the mind composed, quite purified, quite clarified, without blemish, without defilement, grown pliant and workable, fixed, immovable, he directs his mind to the

knowledge of the passing hence and the arising of beings. With the purified deva-vision surpassing that of men, he sees beings as they pass hence or come to be; he comprehends that beings are mean, excellent, comely, ugly, well-going, ill-going, according to the consequence of their deeds, and he thinks: Indeed these worthy beings who were possessed of wrong conduct in body, who were possessed of wrong conduct of speech, who were possessed of wrong conduct of thought, scoffers at the ariyans, holding a wrong view, incurring deeds consequent on a wrong view—these, at the breaking up of the body after dying, have arisen in a sorrowful state, a bad bourn, the abyss, Niraya hell. But these worthy beings who were possessed of good conduct in body, who were possessed of good conduct in speech, who were possessed of good conduct in thought, who did not scoff at the ariyans, holding a right view, incurring deeds consequent on a right view—these, at the breaking up of the body, after dying, have arisen in a good bourn, a heaven world.

3. Destruction of Cankers: Sainthood

Then with the mind composed immovable, he directs his mind to the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers¹. He understands as it really is: This is anguish², this is the arising of anguish, this is the stopping of anguish, this is the course leading to the stopping of anguish. He understands as it really is: These are the cankers, this is the arising of the cankers, this is the stopping of the cankers, this is the course leading to the stopping of the cankers. Knowing thus, seeing this, his

1. *āsava*.

2. *dukkha*; usually rendered by 'suffering' or 'ill'.—
(Editor, 'The Wheel')

mind is freed from the canker of sense pleasures, is freed from the canker of becoming, freed from the canker of ignorance. In freedom the knowledge came to be: I am freed; and he comprehends: Destroyed is birth, brought to a close is the Brahma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or such

That monk is able to endure heat, cold, hunger, thirst, the touch of mosquitoes, gadflies, wind, sun and creeping things, abusive language and unwelcome modes of speech; he has grown to bear bodily feelings which as they arise are painful, acute, sharp, severe, wretched, miserable, deadly. Purged of all the dross and impurities of attachment, aversion and confusion ¹, he is worthy of oblations, offerings, respect and homage, an unsurpassed field of merit in the world.

If, Aggivessana, a king's elephant dies in old age, untamed, untrained, the king's old elephant that has died is reckoned as one that has died untamed. And so, Aggivessana, of a king's elephant that is middle-aged. And too, Aggivessana, if a king's elephant dies young, untamed, untrained, the king's young elephant that has died is reckoned as one that has died untamed. Even so, Aggivessana, if a monk who is an elder dies with the cankers not destroyed, the monk who is an elder that has died is reckoned as one that has died untamed. And so of a monk of middle standing. And too, Aggivessana, if a newly ordained monk dies with the cankers not destroyed, the newly ordained monk that has died is reckoned as one that has died untamed. If, Aggivessana, a king's elephant dies in old age, well tamed, well trained, the king's old elephant that has died is reckoned as one that has died

1. *rāga, dosa, moha,*

tamed. And so, Aggivessana of a king's elephant that is middle-aged. And too, Aggivessana, if a king's elephant dies young, well tamed, well trained, the king's young elephant that has died is reckoned as one that has died tamed. Even so, Aggivessana, if a monk who is an elder dies with the cankers destroyed, the monk who is an elder that has died is reckoned as one that has died tamed. And so, Aggivessana, of a monk of middle standing. And too, Aggivessana, if a newly ordained monk dies with cankers destroyed, the newly ordained monk that has died is reckoned as one that has died tamed."

Thus spoke the Lord. Delighted, the novice Aciravata rejoiced in what the Lord had said.

Coming from noonday-rest on Vulture's Peak
I saw an elephant, his bathing done,
Forth from the river issue. And a man,
Taking his goad, bade the great creature stretch
His foot; 'Give me thy foot'. The elephant
Obeyed, and to his neck the driver sprang.
I saw the untamed tamed, I saw him bent
To master's will; and marking inwardly,
I passed into the forest depths and there
I' faith I trained and ordered all my heart.

Verses of the Nun Dantikā
Psalms of the Sisters (Therīgāthā v. 48—50)
Translated by C. A. F. Rhys Davids

The Goad

(Anguttara-Nikāya, Catukka-nipāta, No. 113)

'Monks, these four goodly thoroughbred steeds are found existing in the world. What four ?

In this case, monks, we may have a certain goodly thoroughbred steed which at the very sight of the shadow of the goad-stick is stirred, feels agitation (thinking): What task, I wonder, will the trainer set me today ? What return can I make him ?¹ Here, monks, we may have such a steed, and this is the first sort of goodly thoroughbred steed found existing in the world.

Then again, monks, we may have a certain goodly thoroughbred steed which is not stirred at the mere sight of the goad-stick's shadow, feels no agitation, but when his coat is pricked with the goad, he is stirred, feels agitation (thinking): What task, I wonder This is the second sort

Then again, monks, we may have a certain goodly thoroughbred steed which is not stirred at the sight of the goad-stick's shade, nor yet when his coat is pricked with the goad, but when his flesh is pierced he is stirred, he feels agitated (thinking): What task, I wonder This is the third sort

Once more, monks, we may have a goodly thoroughbred steed which is stirred neither at the sight of the goad-stick's shade nor when his coat is pricked, nor yet when his flesh

1. *Kim paṭikaromi* seems to mean that the horse intends to do his best in return for the training. (Translator)—Alternative rendering: 'Should I not respond (or: obey him)?'

is pierced by the goad-stick; but when he is pierced to the very bone, he is stirred, feels agitation (thinking): What task, I wonder, will the trainer set me today? What return can I make him? Here we have such a goodly thoroughbred steed This is the fourth sort.

Thus, monks, these four goodly thoroughbred steeds are found existing in the world.

Just in the same way, monks, these four goodly thoroughbred men are found existing in the world. What four?

In this case, monks, we may have a certain goodly thoroughbred man who hears it said that in such and such a village or township is a woman or a man afflicted or dead. Thereat he is stirred, he feels agitation. Thus agitated he strictly applies himself. Thus applied he both realizes in his own person the supreme truth, and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom. Just as, monks, that goodly thoroughbred steed on seeing the shadow of the goad-stick is stirred, feels agitation, even so using this figure do I speak of this goodly thoroughbred man. Such in this case is the goodly thoroughbred man. This is the first sort

Again, monks, here we may have a goodly thoroughbred man who does not hear it said that in such a village or township is a woman or a man afflicted or dead, but with his own eyes beholds such. Thereupon he is stirred, he feels agitation (*as above*) Just as, monks, that goodly thoroughbred steed on having his coat pricked with the goad-stick, is stirred even so using this figure do I speak of this goodly thoroughbred man Such in this case is This is the second sort

Then again, monks, here we may have a goodly thoroughbred man who does not hear it said nor yet with his own eyes beholds a woman or a man afflicted or dead, but his own kinsman or blood-relation is afflicted or dead. Thereupon he is stirred Just as, monks, that goodly thoroughbred steed on having his flesh pierced is stirred even so using this figure do I speak of this goodly thoroughbred man Such in this case is This is the third sort

Once more, monks, here we may have a goodly thoroughbred man who neither hears it said nor yet with his own eyes beholds nor is his own kinsman or blood-relation afflicted or dead, but he himself is stricken with painful bodily feelings, grievous, sharp, racking, distracting, discomforting, that drain the life away. Thereat he is stirred, he feels agitation. Being so stirred he strictly applies himself. Thus applied he both realizes in his own person the supreme truth, and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom. Just as, monks, that goodly thoroughbred steed on being pierced to the very bone is stirred, feels agitation, even so using this figure do I speak of this goodly thoroughbred man. Of such a sort, monks, is the goodly thoroughbred man in this case. This is the fourth sort.

These, monks, are the four sorts of thoroughbreds among men found existing in the world.'

From 'Gradual Sayings,' The Book of the Fours,
Translated by F. L. Woodward.
(Pali Text Society, London)

The Mind

Just as a fletcher straightens an arrow, so does the wise man straighten his mind which is fickle and unsteady and difficult to guard and difficult to restrain. (33)

Just as a fish taken out of its watery abode and cast on land, quivers and throbs, so does the mind while abandoning the realm of Māra. (34)

It is good to restrain the mind which is difficult to subdue and is swift-moving and which seizes whatever it desires. A mind thus tamed brings happiness. (35)

Difficult to grasp and extremely subtle is this mind, seizing on whatever it desires; let the wise guard it. A guarded mind brings happiness. (36)

This mind wanders afar, is solitary, formless, and rests in the cave (of the heart). Those who subdue it are freed from the bonds of Māra. (37)

He whose mind is not steadfast and who knows not the Good Teaching and whose faith wavers, the wisdom of such a man never becomes perfect. (38)

He whose mind remains untouched by lust, and unaffected by hatred, and who has discarded both good and evil, for such a vigilant one there is no fear. (39)

Knowing this body to be as fragile as a clay pot and fortifying this mind like a well-fortified city, let a man fight Māra with the sword of wisdom; and let him guard his conquest and remain unattached (to it). (40)

Ere long alas ! will this body lie upon the earth,
unheeded and lifeless, even as a useless log. (41)

Whatever an enemy may do to an enemy or a hater
to a hater, an ill-directed mind would do one a greater
injury. (42)

Neither mother nor father nor any other relative
can do a person greater good than what his well-directed
mind can do. (43)

Dhammapada, Citta Vagga
Translated by Bhikkhu Buddharakkhita

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