THUS HAVE I HEARD...

Malalasekera

PRICE Rs. 2-50

THUS HAVE I HEARD....

THUS HAVE I HEARD....

(The Doctrine of the Buddha in Brief)

By

G. P. MALALASEKERA, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt.

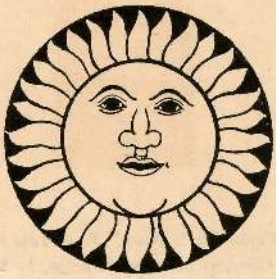
Dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies and Professor of Pali, the University of Ceylon

THE OLA BOOK CO.

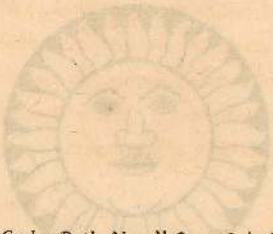
24, Queen Street

COLOMBO CEYLON

CONTENTS



First Published November 1944



Printed at the "Ceylon Daily News" Press, Lake House, Colombo, for the Ola Book Company in 10 pt. Perpetua, by Bernard de Silva

PREFACE

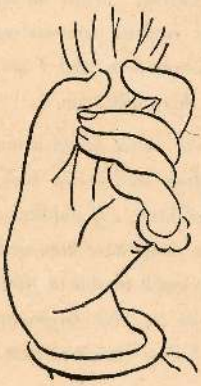
The following pages contain the text of seven talks broadcast from Colombo during 1943. These talks were meant primarily for visitors to the Island at the time, especially members of the Services, who wished to get some acquaintance with Buddhism, which forms the religion of the vast majority of the people of Ceylon. While the talks were being given, and long afterwards, numerous requests were received that they should be made available in some permanent form and I am grateful to the Ola Book Company for undertaking this publication.

The discerning reader will notice herein many passages, some of which are obviously quotations from well-known books and others plagiarisms of well-known writers on Buddhism. If publication had been originally intended due acknowledgment would have been made of these in their proper places but it would be too much trouble to refer them up now and I ask to be forgiven for failure to do so. No originality is claimed either for the facts stated or for the method of their treatment.

The talks are printed just as they were given, with no attempt at revision. They are necessarily sketchy and incomplete but it is hoped that enough has been said to stimulate further interest in the teachings of the Sākyamuni, which for over twenty centuries have guided the conduct and moulded the culture of one fifth of the human race.

G. P. MALALASEKERA

The University of Ceylon,
10th October, 1944.



I

THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

BUDDHISM is not merely a religion, it is also a whole civilisation, with its historical background, its literature and art, and philosophy, its institutions, social, political and educational, and its code of ethical conduct.

It had its origin in the Valley of the Ganges : from there it spread, first, throughout India. Then, carried by the royal missionary, great Asoka's son, Mahinda, it reached Ceylon, where it lives even today, in almost its pristine purity after the vicissitudes of twenty-five centuries.

From Ceylon it went, in due course, to Burma and Siam—the modern Thailand—into Cambodia and Indo-China, into Champa and Annam. In Central Asia it built mighty temples and created huge libraries, long since desolated by overwhelming storms of sand.

It secured a home in Java, was established in Tibet, spread into Mongolia and gained a firm foothold in China. Thence, through Korea, it was transmitted across the seas to Japan, where in the sixth century of the Christian era, the Japanese Emperor himself lectured on the new religion to vast audiences. The manuscripts of those lectures are still preserved in the royal archives.

Its record in literature is unique. From the very outset Buddhism appealed most strongly to the cultivated and the intellectual.

It is usually described as "*veditabbo viññūhi*" best appreciable by the wise. Its canonical scripture, now accepted as authoritative throughout the Eastern hemisphere, far exceeds those of other religions. The Buddhist monastery was everywhere the centre of education. Wherever it went, the new religion enriched the language of the people among whom it spread. The linguistic difficulties involved must have been enormous, since Indian idioms of thought and speech had to be adopted to wholly different mediums of expression.

The labours of Jerome, for instance, translating the Hebrew of the Old Testament into Latin, must have been as child's play compared with Hiouen Thsang's task in writing in Chinese the Prajnā Pāramitā, a work estimated at twenty-five times the length of the whole Bible. Equally voluminous were its productions in the Karosthi dialects of Turkestan and the region of the Pamirs.

Its achievements in the realm of art were no less significant. It was Buddhism that first called architecture to the service of religion. The stone terraces of the temple of Boro Budur in Java, crowded with statues and bas-reliefs which, if placed side by side, would extend to over three miles, rank among the architectural wonders of the world. So with the temple of Ankor Vat in Indo-China.

The paintings of the cave-temples of Ajanta and Ellora command our awe and our admiration. The image of the Buddha at Nara in Japan, fifty feet in height, and that at Kamakura, almost equally high, are unrivalled in their majesty by any sculpture in any country.

And then there are the numerous statues in our own beautiful Island, for instance the well-known stone image in the park at Anuradhapura, which so truly symbolises the central theme of Buddhism, the spiritual peace that comes of perfected knowledge and the subjugation of all passions.

But greater than all these triumphs was the indelible sway it exercised in moulding the character of the millions who became its votaries, instilling into them its noble ideals of peace and gentleness, tolerance and kindliness and hospitality, the care of the sick and the weary, the pursuit of the good and the beautiful, and compassion towards all that lives and breathes. It is Buddhism's proud boast that not a single drop of blood has ever been shed in its name.

Throughout its history its missionaries never claimed exclusive privileges for themselves nor attempted to preserve power over the churches they founded ; no endeavour was made by them to promote the trade of their nationals or to establish outposts for their empires.

The Founder of this great movement was the Buddha or Sākyamuni (the Sage of the Sakya clan) or, to give him his family name, Gotama. We are told that his personal name was Siddhattha. The Buddha generally spoke of himself as the Tathāgata, One who had found the Truth. The biographical details given of him in the books are too well-known to need recapitulation at length. His father was Suddhodana, chief of the Sakyan clan who lived at the foot of the Himalayas, and his mother was the lady Māyā. The pious delight to speak of the marvels that heralded his advent into

the world of men and his birth in a *sāla* grove. An immeasurable light filled the ten thousand world-systems ; the blind saw, the deaf heard and the dumb spoke; the crooked became straight and the lame walked ; the sick were healed, prisoners were set free. Fountains burst forth from the ground ; flowers fell from the sky : music and perfume filled the air, while devas in heaven sang in joy.

He was brought up in the lap of luxury ; his education consisted not only of knowledge of the wisdom which the great men of his time taught, but also of proficiency in all the manly arts. At the age of 16 he married Bimbādevi or Yasodharā, having won her favour by a display of his skill and prowess.

Though he had every reason to be happy, the sorrows of the world around him filled his sensitive soul with restlessness, and the more he pondered on the cruel realities of life, the more determined he became to find a way of escape from them.

" There is a getting born and a growing old, a dying and a being re-born. And from this suffering, alas, an escape is not known, even from old age and death. When shall such escape be revealed ?" And then he thought further, " Surely there must be a way out of this ill ? Just as there is warmth as opposed to cold, and light as against darkness, there must likewise be happiness as opposed to sorrow ?"

Thus pondered he, till one day when he was 29 years old, soon after the birth of his only child Rāhula, he left home and family, resolved never to return without succeeding in his quest. For

six long and weary years he sought, going through innumerable experiences that imposed severe strain on both his body and his mind. He was beset with numerous temptations but he overcame them all.

Then on the full-moon night in the flowery month of May, seated under a *peepul* tree near Gayā, while the world stood still in expectation, he put forth a supreme struggle. The forces of Evil opposed him in vain : he rent asunder the veil of ignorance and he saw the Truth, thus becoming the Buddha, the Awakened One, the Seer of the perfect Light.

He had found emancipation, *vimutti*. Thenceforth, for 45 years, till his death at Kusinārā at the age of eighty, his life was one of incessant activity, teaching and preaching, continually travelling except during the three months of the monsoon, sleeping but two hours a night, carrying the tidings of good cheer, the message of hope and happiness to all that would care to hear. Thus was his destiny fulfilled; accomplished was the resolve he had made many aeons ago to find the way of salvation and declare it to ailing humanity.

For, countless ages ago, he had been a very holy man, a hermit named Sumedha, wearing bark-robe and skin-mantle, and had met the Buddha Dīpankara—for Buddhas appear from time to time in the world and our books speak of twenty-eight such by name—to show men the way to Nibbāna, escape from suffering into happiness without end. In the dispensation of each Buddha many myriads of beings follow the Way thus taught and find their goal.

Sumedha saw that under the guidance of the Buddha Dīpankara he, too, could win emancipation for himself.

But nobler thoughts filled his mind. "What boots it", he asked himself, "that I should reach the further shore alone ? Rather let me be like Dīpankara and attain Buddhahood in some future age that I might bring solace to countless others as well". Thus began the first great act of renunciation, which the aim at supreme Enlightenment requires : it was but a presage of glorious fulfilment. It was, indeed, not undertaken without a full realisation of its meaning. The aspirant for Buddhahood is called the Bodhisatta—the seeker after Enlightenment—and his chief requisites are *karunā*, compassion and love of service, and *appamāda*, earnest resolution.

Each life, in one world-aeon after another, involved him in its entanglement of change and suffering. The Buddha-aspirant must understand all forms of experience : he must pass through all phases of life, animal, human and superhuman, and adapt himself in sympathy with them all. As man he must be tried again and again that he may meet ill-will with forbearance, be patient under abuse or cruelty, and learn to overcome evil with good. Mocked and derided, pierced with the slings and darts of outrageous fortune, offering life itself again and again in the service of others, he firmly trod the path of pain, that by the steadfast practice of the ten perfections—generosity, goodness, renunciation, wisdom, firmness, patience, truth, resolution, kindness and equanimity—he might win the knowledge that would save the world. As an old text has it: "He gave up

kingdom, city, wife and son. He plucked out his eyes and gave them to another. He allowed the flesh to be severed from his bones to ransome the life of a dove. He cut off his head to be given as alms : he gave his body to feed a starving tigress, he grudged not his bones and his brains for the good of others". Thus not in one single life only, but in many countless lives did he bear the cross of suffering and lay down his life in the service of humanity. And behind the tales that speak of these sacrifices is the subtle idea, significant for a proper understanding of the religion, that all forms of life, from the monkey or hare to the great Brahma himself, who rules in the highest heaven, all forms of life are interdependent and closely related to each other.

The wondrous being who thus became the Buddha was indeed yet a man, though, of course, endowed with what we might call a heavenly humanity. In fact it is this essential humanity of the Buddha that shines out most brilliantly through the canonical records of his life and activities. He moved amongst men and women—for his ministry was meant as much for women as for men—not as superman or an incarnation of a god who had come from heaven to earth for an all too brief visit, but as very man, and preaching to men and women that what *he* had become *they* could, everyone of them, become themselves, that we are all of us potential Buddhas. In fact, according to the teachings of Buddhism, there is in each one of us the germ of the Buddha-ideal, in some, of course, more developed than in others. In the ten thousand world-systems there is no greater being than a Buddha and the Buddha is always a human being.

It is this humanity that is the most striking thing about the Buddha, his humanity and also his great earnestness. He was in deadly earnest to tell the truth, whether others like it or not, though, of course, he chose his time and place. It is said about his speech that it was always truthful, spoken at the proper season, purposeful and profitable and in exact accord with his own actions.

Countless men and women sought his help and guidance in their personal problems and to all of them he was a friend and a brother. Even contemporary followers of other faiths admitted that his was an attractive personality. They said that he possessed the *āvattanī-māyā*, the power of fascination, and warned their adherents not to go near him lest they should be enticed by his winning ways. He always greeted with a smile those that went to see him and thus put them at their ease. He set no limit to what they could ask of him, though he firmly refused to be involved in answering questions which he declared were useless from the end he had in view, namely the finding of a way out of suffering into happiness.

He was very quick to recognise the infinite variety of men's dispositions : he could feel after the real need in each man's heart. The needs of men called forth in him an instant wish to help. His teachings were homely, yet full of wisdom ; he spared no pains to make men and women not just good but better, to help them become their best. His kindness to animals was intense as shown for instance when he interfered to get a pension for the king's elephant after she had been declared unfit for further service. He often looked after

the sick inmates of his monastery, himself attending to the worst cases : he made it part of his daily routine to visit the sick-room : he was fond of natural beauty and selected his residences with a view to their scenic attractiveness, preferring woodland and hill and flowering park.

He could appreciate good music, as when he praised Pancasikha's song pouring out his heart in praise of his beloved. The story of the little boy, Culla Panthaka, shows his deep affection for children. He found the little man in tears because he had been scolded by his elder brother for having failed to learn his lesson. The Buddha led him away by his hand, drew water from the well for him to wash his face and feet and gave the Buddha's own towel to wipe them. Having thus comforted him the Buddha took him under a tree and gave him a new lesson of but two words, promising that if he learnt the two words he would intervene with the brother and regain his goodwill for the boy. And, needless to add, under such humane methods, the boy soon became most proficient in his studies.

No proper appreciation of the Buddha's teaching is possible without some knowledge of the conditions of the age in which he lived. The Buddha lived in the sixth century B. C. It was an age of great activity, both intellectual and social, in many parts of the world. In Rome the last of the kings had come and gone, while in Greece the tyrants had been replaced by a more democratic form of government. Pythagoras was then conducting his famous school, while the philosopher Heraklitos was giving to the world

his doctrine of the fluid nature of all things. In China, Lao Tze had kindled men's minds by his teachings. In India itself there were very many flourishing cities and well-organised states, some democratic, others ruled by kings. The university of Taxila had many thousands of students and it was only one of many such. There was unlimited freedom of speech : kings and rich men actually provided halls for discussion where not only men but even women could meet and air their views untramelled by any restrictions, save the courtesies of debate. In the sphere of religion the Vedas still held great sway and the brahmanas, who were the custodians of this learning, had become a hereditary priesthood. They encompassed the whole of the life with religious observance. The ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and death were in their hands and it was they who arranged the formalities of worship and controlled the details for which they had to be handsomely rewarded. The belief was fostered that these rites and sacrifices helped one to gain not only the pleasures and enjoyments of this world and the next but also liberation from the sorrows of existence. It was also claimed that the performance of sacrifices was necessary to keep the world's order going and the brahmanas were the gods on earth sent hither for that very purpose. It was even asserted by some that the path of ritual could make men greater than the gods. Often these Vedic rites included animal sacrifices of a very cruel and revolting character.

There were, however, others who conceived of a different way to happiness. Man, they said, was naturally attached to worldly

enjoyment and wanted to delight the organs of sense. This was what kept him from being mighty and powerful. It did not need very deep investigation to prove that such enjoyment could not bring real happiness. The pleasures of sense were ephemeral. We should, therefore, try our best to control our senses, resorting to austerity or self-mortification in its different forms. In some cases this was carried to the severest possible extent. To wear a dress of coarse human hair or none at all, to eat but once in so many days, to hang head downwards like a bat, to stand on one leg for years on end—these and many other self-torturing inventions attracted certain types of men.

There was yet a third class who, inspired with a passion for truth, and a deep longing to solve the mysteries of existence, left home and family and sought in the seclusion of the forest or as wandering mendicants, opportunity for meditation and mental development. A teacher would gather round him others prepared to follow his instruction : travelling along from place to place they would meet friends or rivals for quiet discussion or even angry debate. To live on food or clothing given as gifts by others was considered in no way disgraceful : a grove of trees or a village rest-house would provide shelter for the night. Here the problems which from the beginning of time have kindled men's imagination and occupied human thought, were formulated with fearlessness and discussed with candour. Did the world have a beginning in time or was it eternal ? Was there a soul apart from the body ? What was it like ? What

happened to it after death ? If it lived again where did it live and how ? Was there a condition in which one could live and yet not live ?

It was into this sphere of religious and philosophical speculation that the Buddha was born. It was to men imbibing such ideas as these that he preached a new gospel which in its essence seems simplicity itself. "To live mastered by the body, " said he, " or to live totally neglecting the body is equally wrong. There is a middle way, the way of the good life. The good life is to be one's best in thought and word, in will and deed ". When he had discovered it he proclaimed his discovery in no uncertain terms. "Wide open are the portals of immortality," he announced, " let those that have faith and courage come and share therein ".

" Happy is the solitude of him who is full of joy, who has learnt the truth, who sees the truth. Happy is freedom from malice in this world, self-restraint towards all beings that have life. Happy is freedom from lust in this world, getting beyond all desires, the putting away of that pride which comes from the thought 'I am.' This truly is the highest happiness ". It was this message that the Buddha brought into the world, like a new theme.

II

THE FIRST SERMON

IT was seven weeks after the attainment of Enlightenment that the Buddha decided to preach his first sermon ; he selected five ascetics as his first audience. They lived in Benares, about a hundred miles from where he then was, at Gaya. This distance he covered on foot and then in the Deer-park at Isipatana, still the scene of pilgrimage, he met them. They were old friends and colleagues of his ; they had watched his earlier austerities with growing admiration and approval. They had marvelled at his stern resolve and his powers of endurance, his emaciated frame, his courage and devotion, but when after a long trial of this method, he had given it up and begun to take ordinary food, they had been filled with angry disappointment and left him in disgust. To them, therefore, the Buddha returned, to proclaim that he had at last discovered what he and they had sought.

It was a very practical sermon and went straight to the heart of their problem. He declared that those who wish to lead a religious life should avoid the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-torture. Self-indulgence is low and self-mortification crazy : both are profitless. There is a Middle Way which leads to insight and wisdom : its fruit is serenity, knowledge, enlightenment, Nibbāna.

It is summed up in four great truths, four irrefutable facts—the fact of suffering, the further fact that this suffering has its cause in

the craving for personal satisfaction, the third fact that this suffering will cease when such craving is stilled, and fourthly, that that result can be achieved by treading the Middle Way, otherwise defined as the Noble Eightfold Path, consisting of right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right rapture.

Once deliverance is thus obtained from suffering, such emancipation cannot *ever* be lost from those that have won it. There will be for them no more faring on through continued existence, no more birth and no more death. The fundamental principle of all reality is that whatever has a beginning must, in due course, also have an end, and suffering is no exception. Herein lies the core of the truth—the impermanency of everything in this world of time and space. The recognition of this fact provides the means for the eradication of all ill. Well might the devas of the ten thousand world-systems rejoice that the Rule of Truth and Righteousness had at last been established and the great fact of emancipation proclaimed !

This first sermon contains all the essentials of the Buddha's teaching and the elements of the Buddhist ideal. Its foundation is the apprehension of the ultimate facts of life, reached not so much by reasoning and logic as by immediate insight. When this apprehension is once gained the passions of sense are subdued, all ill-will disappears and conflict ceases. The winner of the goal no longer demands that the world shall minister to his gratification ; he is delivered from the arrogance of claiming the recognition of his own

individuality. The cravings on which his being had erstwhile been reared, have died away and in the resultant calm there is intense but tranquil joy.

It is fundamentally a teaching of emancipation : " just as the great ocean ", says the Buddha, " has only one taste, the taste of salt, so has this doctrine and discipline only one taste, the taste of emancipation ". Emancipation must needs imply the existence of evil from which men must be freed ; a happy world would require no such doctrine. Both facts are equally important—that is the reason for the statement which occurs again and again in the Buddha's discourses : " One thing do I teach and one only—suffering and the extinction of suffering ". The two are inseparable, they are complementary.

The first sermon is also significant for what it does *not* contain. It does not, for instance, give any account of the creation of the world, nor the progress of events whereby sin and death came to spoil the perfect order of things. It does not promise exemption from pain and evil in return for prayer or ritual or sacrifice, nor any support or favourable intercession by the divine powers. The Buddha does not proclaim himself a saviour, willing and able to take upon himself the sins of mankind. On the contrary, he declares that each man and woman must bear the burden of their own sins.

So far from promising, by his own merits, to save his disciples from the effects of their misdeeds and folly, he asserts that no god, even, can do for any man that work of self-conquest and self-emancipation

which in the teaching of the Buddha stands for "salvation". It will be seen, therefore, that many of the features which we are accustomed to find in what is usually called "religion" are absent from Buddhism. The Buddha claims only to be a guide, a teacher of the Way, who, having gained deliverance from suffering, declares that spiritual emancipation is no divine gift of grace but the conquest of man's intellect and will, rightly ruled and directed by man himself.

The goal and reward of the higher life is not in any external state but in the attainment of a perfect and tranquil mind. Nibbāna, which is the name given to that goal, is not a sort of Buddhist heaven, no new Jerusalem, no Holy City with "gates of pearl and streets of pure gold, as it were of transparent glass". There are heavens mentioned in the Buddhist books but they are just as transitory as the world of men; their pleasures just as fleeting and unsatisfactory.

"Come", says the Buddha to his disciples, "lead the good life"; and for what end? The extinction of suffering. It would be wrong to think that the suffering which the Buddha envisages is something apart from the ordinary sorrows and pains of life, the trivial material and moral suffering we all know; it is wrong to imagine that what the Buddha has in mind is a sort of metaphysical suffering, like the *Weltschermz* of German philosophy. Nothing is further from the truth. It is precisely of the suffering we are familiar with that he spoke: old age and illness, death, association with those we dislike and separation from those we love. Nothing can be simpler than

this. The Buddha takes his stand upon common experience, on the bitter consciousness of the ills that flesh is heir to, on revolt against the pleasures as well as the cares and sorrows of the world.

The first requisite of his teaching is thus a frank recognition of the facts of life, a just estimate of their values. The first essential is a realisation that all conscious existence is enveloped in suffering. The world is on fire, burning with lust, ill-will and stupidity ; how can there be laughter and joy ? This body of ours is a dressed-up lump, sickly and frail ; neglect it but for a few days and it becomes a mass of filth. In a few years it breaks into pieces and ends in death. Thereafter it becomes carrion for dogs and jackals, wolves and worms.

The maladies of the body are only too well-matched by the ills of the mind—striving and failure, frustrated ambition, mortified passion, baffled hope and disappointed endeavour, inexpressible bereavement, love wrecked by accident, disease or death. What anguish of mind there is in a single life-time, what grief and dejection, what lamentation and despair ! Not all the waters of the four great oceans can equal the tears shed by a single being in his long pilgrimage through the innumerable ages of his past. The scene of our days and years is full of change ; all our pleasures must end, alas ! too brief is their satisfaction. Early and late Death goes his rounds, ever alert and irresistible, mowing down high and low, rich and poor, young and old, the mighty and the meek.

This unescapable doom hangs over all felicity, frustrates all hope, poisons all joy. No one can escape it, whether deity, man or demon.

The gods in their celestial hostelries, however splendid they may be, and their life, however glorious, some of them redoubtable tyrants, others compassionate protectors,—they, too, are dominated by the same laws of decrepitude and dissolution as ours. How can they, deluded by their folly, save the world from suffering when even they have not freed themselves therefrom ?

Other religions, too, have described man as a pilgrim through a vale of tears, called the world a bubble, the life of man but a span, full of sorrow from womb to tomb, cursed from the cradle to the grave. But these religions, while declaring that " the world passeth away and the lust thereof ", also assure us that behind this transitory show lies God's eternity and that therein is security for those who do God's will. God, they say, has revealed in the commandments the conduct which enables men to share in his heaven. He has thus shown himself to be their Father and even though they must humble themselves before his holiness they may yet trust his mercy to forgive. Buddhism has no such consolation of possible mercy to offer. The laws that govern life are merciless and the Buddha refuses to be mealy-mouthed in his exposition of them. All existence, all existence without exception, is sorrow, he declared.

That his was an unattractive doctrine the Buddha himself realised, and we are told that for a brief moment after his Enlightenment he wondered whether it would be worthwhile carrying such a message to men who were blinded by passion and wrapt in the darkness of ignorance. But then he recalled that it was for this that he had

laboured throughout countless lives ; he knew that among men there were many whose minds were dulled by hardly any dust at all, and they would understand. In the world were men of many dispositions and capabilities, like lotuses in a pool, some blooming under the water, some on its surface, some emerging out of it. The Buddha considered himself a physician ; the illness of the world was desperate and a desperate remedy was required, nothing less would suffice. If by the sacrifice of his own life he could assure happiness to the world's creatures, he would have gladly laid it down. Many times, in his previous existences, while preparing for Buddhahood, he had given his life for others and one more life would have meant nothing to him. But in the destruction of suffering, as the Buddha saw it, the shepherd laying down his life for the flock had no meaning.

Though he thus declared the world and all in it a mass of suffering the Buddha never showed any impatience with it ; he was never angry with the world nor did he curse it. He thought of it as unsatisfactory and transitory rather than as wicked, as ignorant rather than rebellious. The temper which prompts the Buddha's utterances is not the melancholy of satiety, which, having enjoyed all things, finds that all is vanity, but rather the regretful verdict of one who while sympathising with the nobler passions—love, ambition, the quest of knowledge—is forced to pronounce them transitory and hence unsatisfactory. In his life there is no idea of suicidal sacrifice, no element of the tragic, no nervous irritability. He is never described as a man of sorrows ; the cares of the world did not weigh

him down. He was not overpowered with a sense of alienation from a holy god, of shame at the violation of a father's will and love. He did not consider himself as belonging to a race whose first pair had drawn upon themselves a sentence of labour and pain and involved their descendants in corruption. There was no need to call for repentance to escape an impending doom.

The Buddha was, therefore, always happy ; his images always depict him with a countenace of serene joy. " Happy I seek my rest ", he declared over and over again, " happy I rise ; happy I pass " the day, escaped from snare of evil." He described his teaching as " lovely in its origin, lovely in its progress and lovely in its consummation." One has only to read the outpourings of the heart of his disciples as contained in the records to realise that their lives were irradiated with joy, with bliss ineffable.

This was because the Buddha had not only the recognition of the existence of suffering but also the sure knowledge of the way out of it. There are four possible attitudes to suffering. The first is its denial in the face of all evidence to the contrary ; the second, passive resignation, the acceptance of a state of things which is inevitable ; the third is that of camouflage, by uttering pompous sophistries about suffering that it disciplines character, and attributing to it various other qualities so as to ennoble it or to diminish its bitterness. The fourth is to fight against it, accompanied by the faith that it can be overcome.

This last is the Buddhist attitude. " Warriors, warriors, we call ourselves," says a well-known passage, " we fight for splendid virtue,

for high endeavour, for sublime wisdom." It is necessary for purposes of conquest that we should discern in all his forms, beneath all his disguises, the enemy against whom we fight. It is a fight that each one must wage for himself, by himself. While it is true that we do not find in Buddhism the consolation of a saviour willing and able to fight on our behalf, we *do* find in it the encouraging and ennobling faith that man has within himself the strength and virtue that render him independent of all such consolation. It is the one religion that bids man unequivocally to trust himself, that calls upon him to raise himself by his own exertion, to govern and control and form himself. It is the one religion that tells him not only that there is no strength outside of himself to help him, but what is even more significant, there is no one that can prevail against him should he conquer and achieve sovereignty over himself. Not even a god, nor Mara, nor Brahma can change into defeat the victory of the man who has won self-conquest. "By canal and aqueduct," says an old text, "men lead the water where they want; fletchers bend the arrow; wise men fashion themselves." And again "self is the lord of the self; who else is the lord?" To depend on the mercy of a creator, says the Buddha, would be mere folly :—

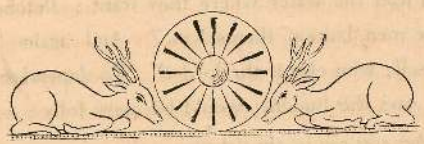
He who has eyes can see the sickening sight:
Why does not Brahma set his creatures right?
If his wise power no limits can restrain
Why is his hand so rarely spread to bless?
Why are his creatures all condemned to pain?
Why does he not to all give happiness?

Why do fraud, lies and ignorance prevail ?
Why triumphs falsehood—truth and justice fail ?
I count your Brahma one the unjust among,
Who made a world in which to shelter wrong.

As against this belief in a creator he gives his own teaching :—

By oneself alone is evil done, by oneself is one defiled.
By oneself is evil avoided, by oneself alone is one purified.
Purity and impurity depend on oneself ; no one can purify another.

Thus was the clarion-call sounded of human liberty : " Be ye refuges unto yourself ; be ye your own salvation. With earnestness and high resolve work out your salvation with diligence "



III

THE LAW OF KAMMA

THE Buddha wished to fulfil rather than to destroy the teachings of his predecessors. He was a reformer rather than a revolutionary and as such he made as much use as he possibly could of the beliefs and doctrines he found in existence. Thus it was that he accepted without much demur the accounts of the universe which he found prevalent in his day. These accounts spoke of worlds far vaster than even those conjured by the vivid imagination of the Hebrew psalmists and prophets, ranging through immense distances of space and huge aeons of time. The centre of the universe was a gigantic mountain called Meru, around whose base lay four great continents, the southern continent being Jambudvīpa, which included as its chief feature the mainland of India. On the summit of this mountain were the abodes of the gods, in numerous tiers one above the other, containing mighty multitudes of celestial beings, rank above rank, living in wondrous palaces with jewelled walls, sporting with numerous nymphs of marvellous beauty in fragrant pools and flowering parks where grew trees that fulfilled their every wish.

In these abodes heat and cold were unknown, grief and despondency, weariness and satiety did not find entrance. There was free and easy communication between the residences of the gods and those of men ; gods often came down and took part in the affairs of human beings, while those humans who had attained

purity through holiness and sacrifice were allowed access to the heavens for short sojourns. The heavenly habitations culminated in four realms occupied by beings without form, simple radiances like the spirits in Dante's Paradisio, needing no food but nourished on pure joy. High above them all, in a palace enclosed by no walls and with no pillars supporting it, needing neither sun nor moon to lighten it but self-luminous, shedding its radiance everywhere, lived the god of all gods, the mighty Brahma. The light of his little finger could illumine the whole universe. He was described in an old formula as " the great being, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-seeing, the Disposer , the Lord, the Maker, the Creator, Chief of all, appointing to each his place, the Ancient of Days, the Father of all that were, are and yet to be." His power was absolute and none could challenge his will. Though there was a being called Māra, who tempted men to live steeped in pleasure, there was nothing comparable to the Semitic conception of the principalities and powers of evil, world rulers of darkness who from their seats in the " heavenlies " constantly sought to frustrate the divine will. Beneath the earth were grim regions of gloom and torment where sinners suffered for their misdeeds, but not for ever, for even the worst offender had an end to his penalty and it might be his turn to ascend to a heavenly abode.

With all this the Buddha had no quarrel, because it was mostly harmless and he found it amusing, but he did not acknowledge the position assigned to Brahma. He refused to accept the belief that

the whole world and everything in it came out of Brahma, through him and unto him, that he was the source of the energy by which all existed, and the goal to which all things ultimately found their way. The Buddha declared quite categorically that there was no such being and could not be. No one had ever seen him, not even the great sages who claimed to be the guardians of his word and the exponents of his will. The Buddha did not quite call the brahman priests a generation of vipers, but he said they were no better than a string of sightless men wandering in a waterless jungle, blind leaders leading blind followers. The Buddha himself had sought for this Brahma but without success ; he had met those who claimed to be Brahma but their pretensions were soon exposed and their bluff called. The Buddha's teaching was that all life is suffering ; if there were an almighty God, whatever be his name, it was assumed that all power was vested in him ; man was simply the instrument of his will. Saint and criminal were alike the product of his agency, the distinction between good and evil thus disappeared. To a god who was also the author of suffering and sin no one could pay the homage of deep devotion or humble love. It did not matter, as far as the Buddha was concerned, whether this power was a living thing or an impersonal force, whether the world was created by a god desirous of multiplying himself, or as a sport, a passing whim of the divine being, almost a mistake, or whether it was the manifestation of some exuberant force giving expression to itself in joyous movement. He refused to acquiesce in such a view.

Brahma, whether god or impersonal power, cannot be an exception to the law of impermanence that reigns in the universe. The mightiest mountain and the deepest ocean depths, the broad earth itself disintegrate and pass away as surely as the gorgeous butterfly that dances in the sunlight. Brahma, too, is subject to the same law. The destruction of the whole universe is as certain as the death of a mouse and, to the philosopher, not any more important. It was perhaps this same thought that Shelley had in mind when he wrote :

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever from creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river sparkling, bursting, borne away.

Having thus denied permanence to Brahma, the Buddha denied also that all the creatures of the world were under Brahma's domination. If he had no power even over himself, how could he have power over others ? But then there arose the further question, if Brahma did not rule the world, who was responsible for all that happened in it ? Who determined birth and old age and death ? Who was responsible for the inequalities amongst men, some being rich, others poor, some wise others stupid, some noble and kind, others selfish and wicked, some healthy and strong, others wretched and sickly ? Was it by mere chance that these things happened ? No, answered the Buddha, nothing happened by chance, and then proceeded to formulate the doctrine which came to be known as the Law of Kamma, and which forms one of the most fundamental of his teachings.

Kamma means action, doing, work, business ; and the Law of Kamma may be described as the Law of Cause and Effect. Very briefly stated it is this : everything that happens does so only by reason of some antecedent cause, and with the cessation of that cause also ceases to be. Otherwise expressed, everything is the effect of some cause and is itself the cause of some other effect. This law, the Buddha declares, holds true in every department of the universe ; it is a very intricate thing to follow in all its multifarious details, through every turning of its many ramifications, but as far as man is concerned it is the law that affects his happiness and sorrow. It has no origin in time; in fact, it has no origin at all ; it is not a " command ", therefore it cannot be broken. Thus, in Buddhism, there is no such thing as sin in the sense of a violation o God's command.

No one can, however, disregard it without paying the penalty, but the penalty is never arbitrary, though it is unvarying. It cannot be altered by beseeching, by self-torturing or by offerings. No god can interfere with it. Gone, therefore, is the need for prayers, ceremonies and rites and the priesthood required for their celebration.

It will not be contemned of any one ;
Who thwarts it loses, and who serves it gains ;
The hidden good it pays with peace and bliss,
The hidden ill with pains.
It knows not wrath or pardon ; utter-true
Its measures meet, its faultless balance weighs ;
Times are nought, tomorrow it may judge,
Or after many days.

Thus, for the rule of Brahma, the Buddha substituted the rule of the Law of Kamma ; like everything and every one else Brahma, too, is involved in its power. The Buddha did not claim originality for this doctrine ; it had been taught by previous Buddhas but had been forgotten by later generations.

In this age, too, Yajnavalkya, the greatest of the pre-Buddhist thinkers of India, had hinted at it. But it was considered by him as a very esoteric doctrine and he taught it only in the vaguest outline at that. It was the Buddha who gave it shape and form and declared its universality. The Buddhists have always regarded it as the foundation of their religion. Very early in the Buddha's ministry, one of his first five disciples, Assaji, met the two young ascetics who later became the two chief disciples of the Buddha. They were wandering about in search of the Deathless and having seen Assaji asked him what he considered was the crux of his master's teaching. Assaji's answer was contained in a formula which from that day to this has been regarded as the most famous and the most authoritative statement of the Buddha's doctrine. *Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetum Tathāgato āha; tesan ca yo nirodho, evamvādi Mahāsamano.* " How all things here through Cause have come, He hath made known—the Awakened One. And how again they pass away, This too the Great Recluse doth say ".

According to this doctrine the universe has no assignable origin ; certainly no creator had started it pronouncing it to be very good. Nothing can happen without a cause ; each event springs out of some

antecedent and that, in its turn, has been produced by something else. In all this incalculable series there is no chance, no accident, no caprice, no fate. Men are not tumbled out haphazard into this world, like so many pebbles out of a sack to roll this way and that, into happiness or misery just as chance dictates. The history of an individual does not begin with his birth, but has been endless ages in the making. Each being is, in a very real sense, the issue of all the past. We may thus put a new and deeper meaning into the words of the poet : " Our deeds follow us from afar ; and what we have been makes us what we are." Just as it is wrong to say that a being enters into life at the bidding of a god so it is equally wrong to say that the law governing birth is merely biological. The real antecedents of a new-born infant are not those of historic geneology. Healthy and clever parents do no doubt transmit their qualities to their offspring, as much as sickly and stupid ones do theirs. But it is Kamma that determines the family and the environment in which the child takes its birth. Each child starts on its career with a physical body and social position which it owes immediately to its parents but the advantages or drawbacks involved are themselves due to his past acts which may be generations or even ages old. The abilities and aptitudes, the tempers, the impulses, the passions and dispositions possessed by each of us are therefore the results of the accumulated Kamma of a limitless past.

For, with the doctrine of Kamma, is also connected that other teaching of the Buddha which speaks of men as wandering about in

Samsāra, continued existence, birth after birth. Before and behind us there stretches a vista of lives, past, present and to come, impermanent and unsatisfying, involving Dukkha or suffering, until by our own efforts we put an end to the process. This faring on, this Samsāra, too, has a cause. It is the result of what is called in the Buddha's teaching Tanhā, thirst, the craving for life in its widest sense—the craving for pleasure which propagates life, the craving for existence in the dying man which brings about another rebirth, the craving for power, for wealth, for pre-eminence within the limits of the present life.

The nature of this craving and its actions are explained at great length in Buddhism in what is known as the Paticca-Samuppāda, the Chain of Causation or the Doctrine of Dependent Origination. It is too complicated a matter to be dealt with in a talk of this kind. Once this fact is realised, that our suffering has a cause, men can break the bonds and escape from Samsāra. They remain in bondage only because of their ignorance. Mark Twain somewhere tells the story of a man who lived in a dark prison cell for many years ; food was brought to him at regular intervals and he was contented. Then one day a sudden thought struck him. He got up, and pushed the door hard ; it opened out into the sunlight and into freedom. It had never been locked. We are like that prisoner, caged in Samsāra.

The Buddhist conception of Kamma has nothing to do with predestination. That which we have done in the past has made us

what we are now ; that which we are in the process of doing now, this day, this minute, is making what we shall be in the future. The future will be a process of becoming largely what we make it. It is always *being* shaped, but never finished. There is no evidence o its being predetermined independently of us, but we do know that we largely determine it by our own acts.

There is no fixed future, even as regards tomorrow, but only possible futures, which depend largely on our present thoughts and actions. Just as we have been making ourselves in all our previous lives, so *now* it lies with us to determine our future ; there is no god that can stop our doing so. It is quite wrong, therefore, according to Buddhism, to say that everything is predetermined. In one place the Buddha declares, rather succinctly, " If any one says that a man must reap according to his deeds, then there is no virtue in righteousness to destroy sorrow. But if any one says that what a man reaps is in accord with his deeds, then there is such virtue ". Our present Kamma can, if sufficiently powerful, completely change the results of past deeds ; the past gives us certain tendencies and latencies, it is for us to fashion them how we will. We are our own creators as well as our own enemies.

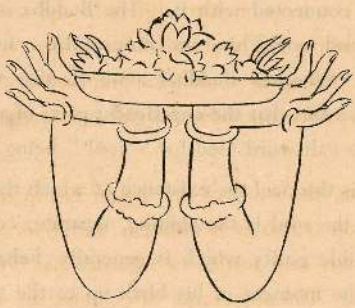
One of the best-known Buddhist stories is that of Angulimāla, the brigand, who after he had committed numerous murders came under the influence of the Buddha and ended as an Arahant, one who had attained the supreme goal of Nibbana. Evil Kamma can be overcome by the guidance of far-reaching knowledge and of

penetrating insight and it is here that the services of a good friend, a *kalyānamitta*, become valuable, nay, essential. A *kalyāna-mitta* is a good man who, having won knowledge, shows the path to others. The Buddha is regarded as the greatest of such kalyāna-mittas. An incident is recorded of how once Ananda, the personal attendant of the Buddha, remarked to the Buddha "Sir, it seems to me that the pursuit of the good life depends at least half of it on the services of a kalyāna-mitta, a good man who would act as counsellor, guide and friend." "Say not so, Ananda", was the Buddha's rejoinder, "not merely half but the whole of the good life depends on such a kalyāna-mitta." It should be the ideal of all good men to be kalyāna-mittas to their fellows.

There are two observations which are commonly made regarding the Doctrine of Kamma. One is the question, can the doctrine be proved ? The answer is: No, not by the ordinarily accepted canons of proof. But the Buddha has declared that looking back on his many lives and the lives of many others he did see the workings of the law very clearly and unmistakably. This knowledge he did not claim as his prerogative ; any one prepared to take the necessary trouble could acquire the same insight and verify the doctrine for himself.

Till such time, the word of the Master has to be believed. The other observation is that it is unjust to suffer for ill deeds that are forgotten. In any case justice or injustice has nothing to do with Kamma as such. The observation is coloured by our conception of

the law as being laid down by somebody and the penalty as being inflicted by a humane authority for a purpose. It must be admitted that where a man can by memory link the pain he now endures with the ill which was its cause, the pain would be better, *i.e.* more educational for him. But this would be to introduce into the universe a purpose which finds no support in the Buddha's teaching. It may also be argued that this want of memory affects not only past existences but also the early phases of this existence. Can any one escape the effects of certain influences upon his childhood because he cannot remember them ? Do even the ordinary Courts of Law release a debtor from payment merely because he has forgotten his bills ? With regard to the other question, far more legitimate than either of these, as to how the doctrine of Kamma affects Free Will, occasion will be found to deal with it later.



IV

THE BEDROCK OF BUDDHISM

THERE is *one* doctrine in Buddhism which separates it from all other religions, creeds and systems of philosophy and which makes it unique in the world's history. All its other teachings, such as the doctrine of impermanence, the denial of a supreme, personal god, the law of Kamma, its system of ethics and its practice of meditation, —all these are found, more or less in similar forms, in one or other of the schools of thought or religions which have attempted to guide men through life and explain to them the unsatisfactoriness of the world. But in its denial of any real permanent Soul or Self, Buddhism stands alone. This teaching presents the utmost difficulty to many people and often provokes even violent antagonism towards the whole religion. Yet this doctrine of *No-Soul* or *Anattā*, as it is called, is the bedrock of Buddhism and all the other teachings of the Buddha are intimately connected with it. The Buddha is quite definite in its exposition and would have no compromise. In a famous passage he declares, "Whether Buddhas arise in this world or not, it always remains a fact that the constituent parts of a being are lacking in a Soul," the Pali word used for "Soul" being Attā.

Now, what is this *Soul* the existence of which the Buddha denies ? Briefly stated, the soul is the abiding, separate, constantly existing and indestructible entity which is generally believed to be found in man from the moment of his birth up to the time of his death,

and to exist after his death in some other place, either heaven or hell, for all eternity. In some religions only human beings are spoken of as having souls; the lower animals are denied even the consolation of a future life in which some at least of their undeserved sufferings in this world may be redeemed. This soul is regarded as being separate for each individual ; it is a bit of the divine, a spark from God implanted within each human being and destined, ultimately, to return to its Maker. As long as the soul resides in man, it is the thinker of all his thoughts, the doer of his deeds and the director of the organism generally. It is the lord not only of the body but also of the mind ; it gathers its knowledge through the gateways of the senses. Though it cannot be seen by the eye, nor reached by speech, nor apprehended by the mind, yet its existence is to be accepted on faith. Without a soul we are told there can be no immortality and without immortality hereafter, this life would not be worth living. The existence of a soul alone can ensure for each individual the fruits of his actions. Without it there can be no reward in heaven or punishment in hell, no recompense for one's deeds.

Such, generally speaking, is the teaching of other religions, with a few minor differences in detail. Buddhism, on the contrary, *denies* all this and asserts that this belief in a permanent and a divine soul is the most dangerous and pernicious of all errors, the most deceitful of illusions, that it will inevitably mislead its victims into the deepest pit of sorrow and suffering. It is in fact, says the Buddha,

the root-cause of all suffering, because the belief in a separate self breeds egotism and selfishness, selfishness produces craving for life and life's pleasures—*tanhā*—which plunges beings into the ocean of Samsāra—continued existence.

This doctrine of the denial of the Soul the Buddha arrives at by analysis ; Buddhism is, for this reason chiefly, called the Vibhajja-vāda, the Religion of Analytical Knowledge. Man, says the Buddha—for it is with man that we are mainly concerned—is composed of two chief parts, the physical body—*rūpa*—and the mind—*nāma*.

Let us analyse these two components and see if we can find anything permanent or divine in them. Let us begin with the body. At first sight, the body would seem to be *our own* and continuous from our first memory of childhood. But it is, really, *not* our own, because *we* cannot *control* it. It grows old and is subject to disease and finally it dies. Every instant parts of it are perishing; the hair, nails and skin for instance quite noticeably, but the millions of cells within us not so palpably. The body is always decaying, some parts of us are dead already ; our survival is merely a sort of balance between living and dead cells. Though we feel we are the same persons, that our body continues to be the same, it really is not so. The child becomes the youth, the youth changes into the old man. Anyone who has lived to be 70 years old has possessed several bodies completely different, no single atom of which was common to any two of them.

What of the mind ? The mind is even less permanent, for while the body lasts for a bit, at least in appearance, the mind or what is

called the mind—for it is a compound of all sorts of things thoughts, feelings, consciousness—the mind keeps perishing day and night, always changing. A man's mind, his character, aspirations, *must* change and they do, or there would be no possibility of his higher development, progress and improvement. If the Soul is an emanation, a spark of a God who is almighty, all-knowing and all-perfect, then it should be pure and perfect from the beginning and should require no development, no purifying. But we know that such is not the case. We know that character, mind and emotions require the most constant care, diligence and energy to direct and develop them, to hold them to the path of righteousness and purity. It is only by such constant care and vigilance that any progress at all is realised.

The same can be said of all mental faculties: reasoning, the powers of discrimination and judgment, the will and the memory. There is nothing in any of them of which we can say, " *This* is the permanent self, the same yesterday, today and for ever."

Not only is there no evidence of the existence of a permanent, divine soul anywhere within us, but on the contrary there is also evidence that there is no such thing and that it is, therefore, a waste of time to discuss or think about it at all. It may, however, be argued, "Yes, we agree that the Soul is not to be found in any of the *parts* of our body and mind, but *we* say that the *whole* of our being is the Soul ". This seems to be rather a begging of the question because the appearance of a whole is merely a delusion ;

what " whole " can there be in something in which every particle is constantly, continually changing? We cling to our selves, hoping to find something immortal in them, like children who would wish to clasp a rainbow. To the child a rainbow is something vivid and real; but the grown-up knows that it is merely an illusion caused by certain rays of light and drops of water. The light is only a series of waves or undulations, having no more reality than the rainbow itself, while " water " is merely a name for a certain combination of particles of hydrogen and oxygen, a combination which has no permanency whatsoever. Like the rainbow are all things : there is a process, a conditioning, but nowhere the least trace of anything permanent.

Life is thus merely a phenomenon, or, rather, a series, a succession of phenomena, produced by the law of cause and effect. An individual existence is to be looked upon not as something permanent but as a succession of changes, as something that is always passing away. Each of us is merely a combination of material and mental qualities ; every person or thing or god is thus a " putting together ", a compound, what the Buddha calls a " *sankhāra* ". In each individual without exception the relation of the component, constituent parts is ever changing so that the *compound* is never the same for two consecutive moments. And this compound, this individual, remains separate as long as it persists in Samsāra or existence as we know it. It is this separateness which is the cause of life and, therefore, of sorrow. *I* am *I* and *you* are *you* ; if I am

hungry and I see *you* eat, I am not satisfied. If I have a toothache it is I who suffer, not you. That is because all our experiences are included in a single body. Hunger and pain are experiences that each separate self must endure, they can be removed when their cause, their *ultimate* cause, is removed and then the sense of separateness will also be automatically removed. Till such time the continuity of a person is maintained, through birth in this life and in many other lives. Our present life is only a link in the infinite chain of existence ; what subsists is only the unbroken continuity of the processes that constitute life. Assemble together the parts of a battery and there is electricity.

As long as the cause of life persists, the sense of separateness, the craving for existence, so long will life continue; remove the cause of life and life does not come about. Remove the clinging to life and life is not continued. The continuity of life is like the flame of a lamp. The light appears to come from the lamp throughout the night ; yet every instant oil and wick and lamp-holder and the air that feeds the flame are constantly changing. It is the same, yet not the same ; the infant that comes to birth is different from the old man who dies, yet both are called the same person. The fire will burn as long as there is fuel to feed it ; so will life continue as long as there is craving. It is kamma, our actions, our thoughts and words, produced by this craving, that keeps the process going. Like the current of a river is life. A person standing on the bank thinks the river is the same though not a drop of water which he sees at any point remains

where it was a moment ago. The beginning and end of the river are called source and mouth, though they are still composed of the same water as the rest of the river; even so is the source and mouth of the river of life called birth and death though still composed of the water of life. At death, the flow of the stream *from life to life* seems to be interrupted but there is no *real* interruption, only a more obvious, a more violent breach in the continuity than in normal life. To the Buddhist death is not anything very important but merely an incident between one life and its successor. Birth and death have great significance only to those who believe .in a single life. The true Buddhist regards death with something like indifference because he knows that he has experienced it countless times already. Nor does he *desire* death, by suicide for instance, for death cannot end his troubles. Suicide would be useless to himself and rather painful to his friends. Death comes about either by the lapse of his natural term of life or by the exhaustion of the kamma that gave him birth in this life or by both these causes or even by some strong extraneous kamma, for there is such a thing as *akāla-marana*, untimely, sudden death. A lamp may go out with the exhaustion of oil or wick or both or by a sudden gust of wind.

If at death the craving for life has not been completely destroyed then this craving gathers fresh life, body and mind. The result is a new individual, new in a sense. There is nothing that passes from one life to another. It is the kamma produced by us in our previous lives and in this life that brings about the new life. The new body

and mind is merely the result of the previous body and mind. Just as this life is the result of the kamma of past lives so our next life is the product of that kamma plus the kamma of the present life. If we use the word character as a convenient term for the sum-total of our activities, the fruit of all our lives, then we may say that our "character" is reproduced in the new life. The body and mind of the new life are not the same as the body and mind of the old, but only *appropriate* ones, *i.e.* those appropriate to the kamma that produces them. Somewhere in the various worlds, for this is only but one of many worlds, not necessarily spatially but conditionally, somewhere in the various worlds, our kamma finds precisely these conditions that are in tune for the rebirth. It follows, therefore, that the new body need not be of the same size or sex or aspect as the previous one or that there need be a body at all or that the world in which the new birth takes place is the same as this. The mind, too, continues working from where it left off and follows its development under the new surroundings.

The only satisfactory explanation of genius is this, that it is provided by the continuity of consciousness. Heredity, in Buddhism, is not a continuation from father to son or ancestor to progeny but from one mind-lineage, *cittaparampara*, to another.

The Buddhist books generally illustrate rebirth by fire, showing how from one lamp another is lit. No flame passes from the one to the other ; it is the same fire but yet not the same, only a continuity. Modern writers use water as the illustration. Waves

pass across the surface of the sea and successive waves are not the same, nor is what we call the same wave really the same at two different points in its progress, and yet one wave causes another wave and transmits its form and movement. So are beings travelling through Samsāra, not the same at any two points in a single life and still less the same in two consecutive lives. Yet it is the impetus and form of the previous lives, the desire that urges them and the form that it takes, which determine the character of the succeeding lives.

What is important to the Buddhist is not death or rebirth, for these processes are always taking place even in our present life, but the fact that the life-quality which succeeds death is entirely in his own power and that his future environment will depend entirely on him. Though the tendencies of a past birth influence the trend of mind-processes in a subsequent life, yet the mind has the power inherent in it of overcoming, at least very largely, the evil that might be transmitted. This is Free-will as taught in Buddhism, and it is really free. Life, it is true, in whatever form it exists, is unsatisfactory, but so long as life lasts for us it is in our interest to make it as less unsatisfactory as possible by mental culture and practical effort.

Must this process of life after life always continue ? Certainly not, says the Buddha; it is the purpose of the Buddha's teaching to tell us how it can be completely destroyed. And with the destruction of the process we reach Nibbāna, a word better known in its Sanskrit

form of Nirvāna. It is the cessation of life as we know it, in a sense it is annihilation, but not the annihilation of self, for there is no self to annihilate. The fire has gone out because there is no more fuel to feed it. It is the annihilation of the illusion of self, of separateness. The whole of the clingings, affections for oneself, the desires, the appetites, the thirst, *tanhā*, which surround or support this illusion are all destroyed together with the evil, the ignorance, the hatred and greed and the lust which accompany it. They die for lack of the nourishment that sustained them, never more to return. The prisoner in Samsāra who was bound and chained by his own passions and desires for himself and his own preservation, whose prison walls were erected and sustained by himself, now finds that he is free, the fetters fall from him, the prison walls and roof and floor disappear. Nirvana is not merely a negative condition but a very positive state of bliss ineffable, of unbounded peace and joy, as is testified by the countless utterances of those that have attained it. *Aho sukham, aho sukham*, they exclaim, "ah, what happiness, what bliss"; cooled are life's sorrows, gone all fear and they are joyful with much joy.

When the Saint—so is he called, the Arahant, the Perfect One—who has attained Nirvāna dies, he is not reborn anywhere for he is no longer subject to any of the laws that govern life and death. What exactly happens to him we cannot say, for all our thoughts, terms and modes of speech are bound up with the illusion of self and are therefore incapable of describing this state—which is called Parinirvāna—which the Arahant attains after death, a state which

is the very antithesis of life as known to us. It is an experience, not a speculation. All we can say about is that it is beyond and outside all conditionings. A well-known passage in the books describes it as a state "where there is neither solid nor liquid, neither heat nor air, neither this world nor any other, neither sun nor moon, neither arising nor passing away nor standing still, neither a being born nor a dying, neither substance nor development nor any basis for substance." It is the end of Sorrow, to be known by freedom from distress and danger, by confidence, by peace and calm, by bliss and happiness, by purity and freshness. There is no particular spot where it is to be found, nothing to define it by. Such is Parinirvāna, the goal of the Buddhist, for the attainment of which the Buddha taught to beings the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths—of suffering, its cause, its cessation and the way thereto—that Way being known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

It is a strange thing but quite true and significant that this scheme for the perfect life which the Buddha taught and which has influenced the lives of more men than any other teaching, should have been founded upon a doctrine of impermanence, and should be altogether independent of the age-long and firmly held belief in an everlasting and unchanging existence after death for each individual soul. To many people such a doctrine may appear void and unattractive. But is it really so ? Should we live the perfect life only because we have a belief in and a hope of some personal happiness, which we ourselves shall enjoy hereafter ? Is it not enough that we should have done our share to lessen the sum-total of the world's sorrow ?

V

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

AS soon as the Buddha had achieved his eager quest for a solution of the riddle of Life, he proceeded to make known the Truths he had discovered. These Truths concerned Suffering and the destruction of Suffering. For the destruction of suffering he proclaimed a body of teaching which came to be called the Noble Eightfold Path. It consists of eight items : Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration of Mind. The Path has for its object the promotion of virtue, knowledge and mental poise and the whole of it constitutes a programme of action which the Buddha prescribes for those who are willing to follow it and thereby attain the happiness of Nibbana. Each of the eight divisions embraces a number of mental and moral conditions which must be cultivated. The divisions are not a series of successive steps to be trodden one after another but rather a series of concentric circles, though, of course, the later divisions presuppose the presence of the earlier ones.

Right View requires the disciple to be equipped with correct ideas about the world and the significance of life. No superstitions or delusions should mislead him ; he must follow neither any person nor any thing unquestioningly, sheep-like baaing in chorus, but he should satisfy himself, as far as he can judge, that the doctrines

he professes and the deeds he performs are good, wise and, therefore, conducive to happiness. He must make full and free inquiry regarding everything that is put before him but suspend final judgment till he knows the full facts. He should look straight at the facts of existence, unflinchingly, unprejudiced and unafraid, and realise the universality of suffering. The Buddhist is not required to accept anything on faith, unless he does so of his own free will. The Buddha nowhere speaks of any knowledge or any belief which by itself, intrinsically, means holiness, apart from the action that follows from such knowledge. There is in Buddhism no salvation by mere faith.

Right Resolve is the determination to foster noble aspiration and endeavour, to renounce sensual pleasures, to be free from malice and ill-will, from all desire to inflict pain for whatsoever cause, and to cultivate a temper of kindness and benevolence. Right Speech is abstention from every kind of falsehood, from backbiting and slander, from rude malicious and abusive language, from foolish talk and unworthy chatter and gossip.

Right Action ensures that the disciple's conduct shall be peaceful, honourable and pure; that he shall, above all, abstain from injury to any living thing, from appropriating to himself that which is not willingly given by its owner, and from carnal indulgence.

Next comes Right Livelihood, the abandonment of wrong occupations and getting one's living only by right methods. Five occupations are specially mentioned as bad: those of trader in weapons of war, butcher, publican, slave-dealer and purveyor of poisons.

Right Effort demands assiduous self-discipline, the prevention of evil states of mind from arising, and the suppression of evil states that have arisen. Good states of mind not yet arisen must be produced, well-established, developed and brought to perfection. It consists not merely in the suppression of evil but also in making all the good things in one to grow, acquiring new goodness, fostering and increasing it.

Great stress is laid on Right Mindfulness whereby the disciple is mindful not only of his body in all its actions, such as eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, talking and being silent, but also in watchfulness over his mind. It amounts to complete self-mastery by full awareness of what we do and say, think and feel, and allows nothing to happen heedlessly or mechanically, and controls not merely our conscious doings but even those activities of the mind in which we generally regard the mind as being just receptive and passive.

The eighth and last is Right Concentration which leads to mental equipoise, balance and thence to ecstasy and rapture. The disciple's whole body and mind become permeated with a feeling of purity and peace ; he can focus his mind to one point and apply all his mental powers to such great matters as he may select or he may revel in the enjoyment of supernatural powers, such as recalling his past births, or clairvoyance or clairaudience. But, what is really important, is that he *now* realises the full significance of the Four Truths, of suffering, its cause, its cessation and the Way thereto. He

also realises the origin of the three great evils, of love of pleasure, desire for continued existence and ignorance. Thus seeing and knowing his heart is set free. The knowledge of this freedom fills him with joy. "Just as if in a mountain fastness there were to be a pool of water, clear, transparent and serene and a man standing on the bank with eyes to see should perceive therein the mussels and the shells and the gravel and pebbles, and the shoals of fish as they move about in the water or live therein, even so the whole world and everything within it and the nature of life appears within the disciple's vision. He sees the truth and is full of serene joy, with intelligence alert and the consciousness of freedom won and duty done."

It will be seen that the various divisions of the Path are not mutually exclusive ; also that it involves discipline of great severity, sustained energy, prolonged endeavour and unwearied patience. Not every one can undertake to cover the whole Path in a few short, sharp strides. The Buddha recognised the frailty of human nature and the differences that exist among men in temperament and capability. He, therefore, indicates in his teachings how each one can, according to his will and power, follow the Path in graduated stages. Those who cannot lead the perfect life can at least practise the common virtues, the common duties of the good man, follow conduct that would ensure him happy rebirth, realising, at least in glimpses, the vanity of worldiness and the advantages of abandoning sensual desire. There are certain duties, says the Buddha, which every man, as a social being, owes to his fellows, and the least he can do is

to carry them out with earnestness and devotion. These duties are mutual, such as for instance, the duties of parents to children and children to parents. Similarly, there are other reciprocal obligations, *e.g.* of pupil and teacher, husband and wife, friends and relatives, master and servant, laity and clergy.

Though it is true that the Buddha does not lay emphasis on man as a political animal yet he speaks of the duties of rulers towards their subjects and *vice versa*. He is not concerned with wise diplomacy or arbitration to determine the rights and wrongs of national affairs, but he prefers to take men straight to the realm of first principles and leave them to solve their practical difficulties in the light of those principles. The whole force of Buddhist ethic is concentrated on the cultivation of character and the aim of the Buddha's teaching is to organise human effort for the attainment of knowledge and virtue. It is a meritorious thing, for instance, to maintain and provide comforts to those who have renounced the world, to devote their lives to religious and intellectual life but that is not enough. Whosoever seeks to escape from rebirth must somewhere, somehow, begin to control his senses, his passions, his base and foolish longings for his own gratification.

The man who has conquered self-love is, according to the Buddha, the highest being in the universe. This conquest can best be acquired by living the homeless life but even those who remain in their homes and follow their normal callings can still live the unworldly life, by practising generosity, by following the principles of righteousness

and justice, by abstaining from unworthy desires, and by observing an elementary morality. The minimum required of a good man, a good citizen, is that he should abstain from taking life, from theft, from unchastity, from lying and from intoxicants. If he could, at least several times a month, refrain from eating too often especially after mid-day, from wearing flowers and scents and perfumes, and sleep on a mat on the ground, that would be a further advance in simplicity of life. Wandering about the streets at unseasonable hours, frequenting places of public amusement, gambling, association with evil companions, and idleness should be avoided. He should keep away from him lust, greed, ill-will, stupidity and fear because they lead him astray. Covetousness, malevolence, ill-temper, sloth and torpor of body and mind, fretfulness and irritability, doubt and perplexity,these the Buddha declares are hindrances to spiritual progress.

Belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies, pride and self-righteousness, feebleness of purpose and speculation also keep the mind in bondage to the senses, and should be suppressed. The duties of a good man the Buddha has summarised in a well-known discourse which says : "To succour father and mother, to cherish wife and child, to follow a peaceful calling : This is the greatest blessing. To give alms, to live religiously, to give help to relatives, to do blameless deeds.....To cease and abstain from sin, to eschew strong drink, to be diligent in good deeds.....Reverence and low-liness, contentment and gratitude, to receive religious teaching in

season.....To be long-suffering and meek, to associate with holy men, to hold religious discourse at due times.....Temperance and chastity, discernment of the Four Noble Truths, the prospect of Nibbana.....To have a mind unshaken by the vicissitudes of life, inaccessible to sorrow, passionless, secure: This is the greatest blessing."

The Noble Eightfold Path has certain features that deserve special mention. It is not a divine revelation but a Way, discovered after long search and experiment. The goal is to be reached by earnest and incessant activity ; mere belief can achieve nothing, nor prayer or sacrifice. To pray for happiness, says the Buddha, is as futile as to ask the further bank of a river to come over that we may get to the other side. There is nothing in the Path that can be called worship or cult, nothing whatever which in ordinary language is called a religious act. It is true that Buddhists offer flowers to their Master but that is merely a higher form of laying wreaths on the graves of heroes. The whole teaching is based on the principle that everything depends on the disciple's individual exertion. The Buddha merely shows the way. The perfect life is completely detached from any connection with a God or any other outside force. There are no commandments or prohibitions, no "Thou shalts" or "Thou shalt nots," but only recommendations as to what might or might not be done to attain salvation. No gracious smile of a gratified deity awaits the faithful follower of these views and no frown of a demon glooms upon the man who chooses to ignore them.

Holiness is simply a way out of misery to happiness. To ask why the Path should be followed is as childish as to ask a physician why we should want to be well. Both questions are not only tiresome and irrelevant but also while appearing to be profound ask nothing worth answering.

The Buddha upholds the supremacy of human reason ; he wants nothing taken on faith ; his teaching breathes an air of noble freedom. He showed in his own life what humanity can do. He makes no claims of rights or privileges for himself ; what he has done we all can do. He makes simple goodness in spirit and deed the basis of religion ; the goal at the end of the Path is not mere absence of suffering but positive happiness and joy. It is a state that can be achieved here and now, in this very life, in this very world not in some nameless, unknown, hereafter.

The Buddha's teaching has sometimes been charged with selfishness because its avowed aim is to make an end of individual suffering. This is due to ignorance of its real import. Buddhism views all creatures as involved in the common suffering, and consequently needing help, comfort and deliverance. The service of others in want or in trouble is with the Buddha a universal call. There are some who hold that a life of service for others is the best life regardless of what follows ; the Buddha goes further.

His own life was a living testimony that he considered as the happiest and best life a life of self-sacrifice but he did not blind himself to the fact that the world, even if it consisted of none

but heroes and martyrs, is yet a most unsatisfactory world. Not only is the lay disciple enjoined to share with others his worldly possessions but even the monk who has nothing except his robe and alms-bowl is expected to give to others what he has found. And his is a treasure far more than gold, the gift of Truth which he has discovered after long quest. Active benevolence and love are enjoined as a duty by the Buddha for all and praised by him in language of singular beauty and earnestness. Not only are good works necessary but even far more the love that irradiates them. "All good works whatsoever," he says in a well-known passage, "are not one sixteenth part of the love that sets free the heart ; such love comprises good works; it shines upon them, gives them light and radiance".

The Buddhist ideal demands an affection of the most vigilant tenderness :—

Even as a mother watcheth over her child,
Her only child, as long as life doth last,
So let us, for all creatures great and small,
Develop such a boundless heart and mind ;
Ay, let us practise love for all the world,
Above, below, around and everywhere,
Uncramped, free from ill-will and enmity.

VI

THE COMMUNITY OF MONKS

IT is a view common to all religions that family life and worldly business are incompatible with the quest for higher spiritual development. The religion of the Buddha is no exception ; while the layman could practise many of the teachings and enjoy many of the blessings of the religious life, the Buddha held that the path to holiness could not be fully traversed among the occupations and interests of common life. The records do speak, it is true, of men who became arahants *i.e.* saints, while in the condition of householders but it is explained that such men had assiduously practised the monastic life in former births and were thus fully ripe for salvation.

As a poet has it, the blue-necked peacock can never attain the swiftness of the swan ; neither can the householder, however good he be, equal the monk. The life of complete holiness, in Buddhism, thus involves withdrawal from the world ; home and family must be abandoned, profession, trade and craft left behind. The detachment needed for the higher life can only be realised by the unflinching severance of all home-ties. It was for this reason that immediately after the attainment of Enlightenment the Buddha founded a religious order which has continued to the present day with very little change in its essential character. It is known as the Sangha and its members are called Bhikkhus.

This Order originated with the five ascetics to whom the Buddha preached his first sermon at Benares and who became his earliest converts. The story of the origin and expansion of the Order is so simple and spontaneous that we are almost surprised to see how naturally it ultimately came to be one of the greatest forces for good in the world. It was very common in India at the time of the Buddha for earnest-minded men to renounce household life and become wandering ascetics. In gathering round him a band of disciples who were prepared to accept his doctrines and follow a common mode of life, the Buddha, therefore, did nothing new. He was merely doing, obviously of course with more conspicuous success, what every contemporary teacher set out to do. The Order which the Buddha founded differed from the others chiefly in being broader and more human, less prone to extravagance and better organised.

The emphasis laid by the Buddha on insight and knowledge, rather than on ritual and observance, was such that at first the response was mainly from the educated young men of what were called good families. The number of young nobles who sought admission to the Sangha became so large that it excited considerable disquiet and complaints were made that soon there would be no more fathers to beget sons, wives were being widowed and families would soon become extinct ; when the monks went about for alms they were reviled as destroyers of the family-life. But soon the people understood the true import of the Order and became its most ardent supporters. The Buddha's teaching was not that life was worthless but that all life was unsatisfactory.

Very early in the history of the Sangha, King Bimbisara of Magadha, who was one of the Buddha's greatest admirers and most faithful followers, issued a proclamation granting complete freedom from all laws to those joining the Buddhist fraternity of monks ; he also presented for their use his own pleasure-park near the capital as a place of rest and quiet. It was the first of many similar gifts by those who followed the royal example.

As a result, it was not only seekers after the Truth and the higher life that wished to be admitted to the Order, but even robbers, debtors, slaves running away from their masters, boys in search of pleasant food, soldiers anxious to escape service, sufferers from loathsome diseases and others seeking protection from the clutches of the law or those merely wishing to lead an idle and comfortable life began to avail themselves of these immunities. The Buddha at first laid down no barrier of race, caste, occupation or age but soon it became necessary to make definite regulations to prevent the intrusion of the unfit and to give guidance in such matters as ceremonial, discipline, clothes, food, furniture, dwellings and medicine. The regulations were not all made at once but were formulated from time to time as each incident and difficulty arose and brought to the Buddha's notice. This resulted in the gradual elaboration of a code of discipline, known as the Vinaya, which was meant to secure that only those influenced by the proper motives would seek admission into the Order and only those who conducted themselves properly could remain within it.

At first the Buddha admitted members of the Order himself but increasing distances and other practical difficulties rendered this more and more inconvenient and the disciples themselves were permitted to admit members.

Two simple ceremonies were prescribed for admission to the novitiate and to full privileges, respectively. Though sometimes described as " ordination ", they are unlike the ordinations of other religions but are rather applications from postulants which are granted by a Chapter of monks consisting of not less than ten members. The admission to the novitiate—Sāmaneraship—is called *pabbajjā* or going forth, *i.e.* leaving the world. The would-be-novice has his hair shorn, and also his beard, if he has any—for novices can be enrolled at any age—and puts on yellow robes. He recites a formula, known as the Three Refuges whereby he professes his faith in the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Order of Monks. He also takes upon himself a promise to observe ten precepts which consist in abstinence from hurting life, stealing, impurity, lying, intoxicants, eating at forbidden times, dancing music and theatrical shows, garlands, perfumes and ornaments, high or large beds and accepting gold and silver. This is his formal abandonment of the world.

Full membership of the Order is obtained by a further ceremony, called *Upasampadā*. No candidate is so admitted under twenty years of age ; he is examined to ascertain that he is a free man, that neither his parents nor the State have a claim on him, and that he does not suffer from certain diseases and physical disabilities. He is introduced

to the Chapter by a learned and competent monk who asks those in favour of his admission to signify the same by their silence and those who are not, to speak. When this formula is repeated three times without objection being recorded, the ceremony is complete. The newly-admitted Bhikkhu is placed under a qualified preceptor, the *Upajjhāya*, of at least ten years' standing in the community. He has to wait upon the preceptor, seeing to the latter's clothes, bath, bed, etc., and, in return, the preceptor gives him spiritual instruction, supervises his conduct and tends him in sickness. No vows of obedience are taken and the monk is always at liberty to return to the world. No disgrace of any kind attaches to the man who so reverts, provided that he has not been guilty of evil conduct while being a monk.

It is a grave and strenuous discipline that the monk is expected to practise. The Buddha described it as the Middle Way, equally distant from luxury and from self-mortification; on the one side from the world, with its interests, its enjoyments and its passions and on the other from the practices of the hair-clad ascetic and naked devotee. It is interesting to note that some contemporary opinion in India criticised the monks as easy going and lax. It is said that the Buddha's own cousin, Devadatta, tried to induce him to make the discipline more severe. The Buddhist monks could not claim, much less exact, anything from the layman, yet it was considered the layman's duty and his privilege to provide the monks with food, clothes, lodging and whatever else they might legitimately need. It was

the most obvious and easy method for a layman to acquire merit. Strictly speaking, a monk does not beg for food, nor does he give thanks for what he receives. He gives the layman a chance of doing a good deed and it is the donor, not the recipient, who should be thankful. The monk, on his part, by leading the good life to the best of his ability, ensures that the gifts provided by the piety of laymen earn for them the greatest reward.

The monk's conduct must be grave and serious ; the doors of the senses must be closely guarded. He must always be mindful and self-possessed, constantly on the alert in all his actions, ardent and strenuous, not hankering after the objects and pleasures of the world and feeling no dejection at their loss. Such ceaseless attentiveness requires a long training in concentration and for this purpose solitude and meditation are necessary. Beginning from such simple exercises as the contemplation of the impurities of the body, he rises to greater heights of contemplation, to raptures and ecstasies, both mental and moral. Four such Raptures are specially mentioned, in the first of which the monk pervades the whole of the universe with boundless love, above, below, around, with far-reaching and measureless love. His mind is filled with Sympathy with all things that have life, Pity for those involved in all forms of suffering and Equanimity which can bear the sight of the world of Ill without quailing, confident in the means to end it. By successive processes of abstraction and intense inward withdrawal he reaches a state of void in which all consciousness of ideas and feelings have wholly

passed away and the light of Truth shines in his mind, translucent and unobstructed and he is filled with the sense of complete freedom.

But only rare souls can climb such heights ; the ordinary member of the Sangha is not so ambitious and he takes upon himself a long period of less strenuous training. He would rise early, travel about or go round to beg his only meal and, having taken it, spend the heat of the day in retirement and meditation. In the evening there would be discussion and instruction. Sometimes he might be entertained to a substantial meal at the house of some rich devotee and a comfortable house provided for him. But he has no right to expect any of these things. It is the duty of monks to wait upon their sick colleagues and to help each other in all their needs.

The private possessions allowed to a member of the Order are only the three garments he wears on his person, a belt, an alms-bowl, a razor, a needle and a water-strainer. Everything else that may be given to an individual has to be handed over to the confraternity to be held in common. All property belonging to the Order is communal. It sometimes happened even in the Buddha's life-time that conditions in monastic establishments, especially near the principal cities, attained a high level of comfort, according to the standards of the times. Here and there the liberality of the laity erected large residences with halls for exercise, store-rooms for robes and other requisites, warm baths and ample grounds. In such cases all sorts of restrictive precepts prevented any tendency towards luxury.

Generally, however, the Brethren live in little groups of huts and their lives are of the greatest simplicity. A monk is only sufficiently clad to protect him from cold and heat and his food just enough to maintain his health for the inward concentration needed. Rags gathered from different places would go to make his clothes if no pious layman provides them and food is obtained by the daily round from house to house, if there is no invitation to a meal. If he lives in the forest, as many do to this day, the trees and creepers there would provide him with berries and roots.

A monk's year is divided into two parts. During nine months he would wander about in the woods or reside in a monastery. During the remaining three months residence in a monastery is obligatory and the laity are expected to make the necessary provisions. This period is the *Vassa* or the rainy season when travelling is impossible. No special observances are prescribed for this period but as it is the time when people have most leisure and the monks are brought into continual and more intimate contact with them, it has come to be regarded as the appropriate season for instructing the laity in matters of religion. The end of the rains is marked by a ceremony called *Pavārana* or the End of the Retreat, at which the monks living in the same monastery ask one another to pardon any offences that might have been committed by them. Immediately after this comes the *Kathina* ceremony or distribution of robes. The word *kathina* signifies the store of raw cotton presented by the laity and held as common property

until distributed to individuals. In modern times this has become a very elaborate ceremonial.

As the rules prescribed for monks implied a life of continuous tension, it was soon found necessary to make provision for the regulation of strict discipline and to impose remedies for its violation. It was, therefore, laid down—tradition says at the suggestion of King Bimbisara—that all the monks inhabiting a parish or district, within limits formally prescribed by the monks themselves, to hold periodical meetings attendance at which was compulsory. These meetings are held at the new and full moon and on the eighth days after the new and full moons. They have become occasions for mutual confession and the ceremony consists of the recital of a formula called the *Pātimokkha* or "Disburdenment", embodying a list of formal transgressions and acts of unseemly behaviour, some 227 in all.

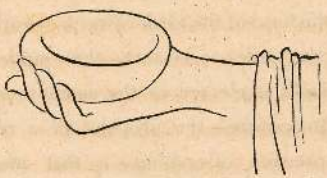
These rules show that the Buddha was very particular about refinement in conduct and "gentlemanliness" in personal behaviour, including the strict observance of good manners. The monks would assemble in the evening and after a duly trained Elder has opened the proceedings, each rule is repeated three times. After each item the question is put to the assembly, "Are you pure in this matter?" Silence indictates a good conscience; only if a monk has something to confess does he speak. Failure to acknowledge a remembered transgression involves intentional falsehood which would prevent higher stages of spiritual development. If a

monk confesses to having destroyed human life, or committed unchastity or theft or to have falsely proclaimed the possession of advanced insight, he would be expelled from the community. For minor offences the offender may be rebuked, suspended or some form of expiation prescribed. But this can be done only if the monk admits his guilt ; no allegations or evidence against him will suffice. The Buddha insisted that no adherence to rules was of any use apart from the emancipation and purity of heart and mind and the cultivation of love and knowledge.

From its inception the Buddhist Sangha has been a model democratic institution. There are no vows of obedience, and no recognition of rank other than simple seniority or the relation of teacher to pupil. As time went on various expedients were invented in different countries since the management of large bodies of men necessitates authority in some form but these have never assumed the right to direct the belief and conduct of others. In the Sangha no monk can give orders to another ; there is no compulsion, no suppression of discussion, no delegated power to explain or supplement the truth. The Buddha considered himself only as an elder brother who set the perfect example and he refused to nominate a successor to be the head of the Order after his death. The Teaching and the Rules of the Order were to be their guide. At gatherings of the monks a chairman is elected by the unanimous consent of those present, and the procedure—the proposal of a resolution and the request for an expression of opinion—is that adopted in modern

public meetings, except that assent is signified by silence. All decisions are taken by majority vote and sometimes, where strong differences of opinion seem to exist, a decision is postponed for a more suitable occasion and special committees are set up to deal with problems needing investigation.

At first the Sangha consisted exclusively of monks but about five years after its establishment, women too were admitted with a few restrictions, dictated not by any prejudice the Buddha had against women, but as a concession to current public opinion. The Buddhist Sangha never promoted wars nor claimed to be the source and guide of civil power. It has no Pope and no hierarchy ; nor does it profess to cover the whole field of religion. It has always practised toleration and true unworldliness, directly encouraged art and literature and never opposed the progress of knowledge. The monk is merely one who is on a higher spiritual level than laymen ; he may teach, though teaching is not obligatory to him. Yet always the monastery has been the centre of education and these monasteries sometimes developed into mighty universities like that at Nalanda with its 5,000 students all fed, clothed and taught free, or like the Maha-Vihara at Anuradhapura which attracted men in search of learning from all parts of the then known world.



VII

THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

COMPASSION for the world, the realisation of its universal suffering and of the ignorance which is at the root of that suffering were the causes that called the Buddha into the field as a Teacher. It was to relieve the world of its suffering and to remove its ignorance that he had laboured during countless lives, making sacrifices beyond all imagination ; he had renounced his own personal happiness, only that he might find a way out of life's ills. It was but natural, therefore, that almost immediately after the Buddha gained Enlightenment he should have proclaimed to the world the success of his search : " Wide open is the door of the Deathless, open to all that have ears to hear. Let them put forth faith and reach it." He had discovered the Middle Way, between the two extremes of pleasure and self-mortification, through insight and wisdom to serenity, enlightenment and emancipation. For those who had attained the goal that lay at its close, there would be no more birth and no more death.

The Buddha's disciples at first were only the five ascetics who had been his companions in the practice of austerities, but quite soon the little group grew till within a few weeks it numbered sixty arahants. The Buddha now felt that the time had come to spread his doctrine far and wide. He summoned them, therefore, and pointed out to them that the shadows of change and mortality enveloped not only

men and women but even the gods, and that for all of these the knowledge of the Truth would be of inestimable gain. "Go ye", he said, "and wander forth for the gain of the many, the welfare of many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach the Truth which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in its progress, and glorious in its end, in the spirit and in the letter. Proclaim the life of holiness, consummate, perfect and pure." Thus began the great Buddhist missions which in the course of a few centuries brought nearly one-fifth of the world's population under the influence of the Buddha's teaching.

It is correct to say that Buddhism is the first universal and missionary religion ; it was the Buddha who first taught that the way to salvation is open to one and all who are prepared and are able to follow it, irrespective of any other condition whatsoever. The monk's life is, of course, the ideal life but, said the Buddha, not all may have the necessary qualifications of intellect and character to become monks. All can, however, be good laymen, if they have but a little determination, and for a layman the religious life ordinarily consists in the observance of more or less elementary morality combined with such simple virtues as the study of the scriptures, the care of parents, respect for elders, and the reverent service of holy men. The Buddha did not deny the existence nor forbid the worship of popular gods ; in fact he looked upon such worship with a genial and kindly tolerance. He recognised the very

human craving for personal happiness through superhuman help, a craving which some other religions satisfy by supplementing their belief in an Almighty God with the worship of numerous saints. The Buddha made it quite clear, however, that such worship was *not* holiness and that the gods were, if anything at all, merely people who may be able or willing to help good men and women. They were useless as guides to salvation since they needed instruction themselves.

The Buddha also realised the necessity of variety in sympathetic response to the needs of men and women, in harmony with their different degrees of mental and spiritual growth. He did not lay down any creed that had to be believed in everywhere, always and by everybody. Indian religions have always shown more spirituality and a greater sense of liberality than Western creeds ; they are not merely tolerant but hold that the different classes of mankind have their own rules of life and their own suitable beliefs and that he who follows such partial truths does no violence to the greater and all-inclusive truths of which circumstances have made him ignorant. There is an evolution in the realisation of Truth as there is in other kinds of growth. It is the duty of the good man, the *kalyāna-puthujjana* to hasten this evolution and that is why the gift of Truth is considered to be the highest of all gifts.

In Buddhism the spread of the doctrine was from the very outset regarded as the permanent and immediate duty of the disciples. The trained Elder should not only instruct the young novices within

the community, but he must also carry the message of deliverance far and wide. He has nothing else to give in return for the layman's services. But in Buddhism there are no sanctuaries, no consecrated officers, no hallowed gifts, no mysteries, no priesthood and no sacrifice. The Buddhist missionary does not feel that he can " save " men only to the extent that some God is willing to help to rescue them from their own impotence. He does not labour under the belief that salvation depends on the acceptance of the benefits of an atonement which has been accomplished once for all, that for those who refuse such benefits or have never received an offer of them, no fresh opportunity would ever be vouchsafed. On the contrary, everything depends on the earnestness of his own efforts and he can play as much part in the great aim for universal deliverance as anyone else. He needs no blessings from a higher power, no permission from any authority.

It is true that the Buddhist Order contains no records of martyrs but there is no doubt that the Buddhist missionaries had often to contend with strenuous opposition in their call to men to lead lives of holiness. The books mention the ridicule and the persecution to which the Buddha himself was subjected in his lifetime. It is not easy to live happily in an atmosphere of scorn and hatred but the Buddha showed only love in the face of provocation and gentleness in the face of derision.

Who doth not, when reviled, revile again, a twofold victory wins ;
Both of the other and of himself he seeks the good.

The Buddha compared himself to an elephant who had entered the fray, enduring in silence the storm of arrows in battle.* What sacrifices had he not made, what an accumulation of suffering and scorn had he not borne that he might open the road to Truth and the Good. He expected of his disciples, therefore, that they should do likewise ; whatever had to be suffered by those whom he addressed he, too, had suffered ; whatever labours of self-disciples he laid upon his followers, he had himself, again and again, fulfilled. His was thus an example of the greatest stimulation and it produced in his disciples boundless enthusiasm and zeal for the propagation of the Truth. When one of the early arahants, Punna, informed the Buddha of his desire to preach the doctrine among the Sunas, who were probably identical with the Huns of history, the Buddha warned him that he might have his hands and feet cut off and even his life taken away. Punna's reply was that in any event the body was a loathsome thing and what did it matter if it were destroyed in the pursuit of good ? Such was the spirit of the disciples.

Communication in those days was not easy and travel was full of peril. But, nothing undaunted by these risks, the early missionaries went east and west and north and south, a long and unbroken succession of monks, and nuns also,—for the nuns were as active as the monks—consisting of converted brahmanas, princes and nobles,

*අහං නාගොව සඞ්ගාමෙ	*Ahaṃ nāgo va saṅgāme
චාපාතො පතිතං සරං	Cāpāto patitaṃ saraṃ
අතිවාක්‍යං තිතික්ඛිස්සං	Ativākyaṃ titikkhissaṃ
දුස්සීලො හි බහුජ්ජනො.	Dussīlo hi bahujjano

ladies of the court and wives of wealthy merchants, men and women of divers ranks and races. They travelled often over vast forests, with roots and berries as their only food ; they crossed deep rivers, infested with crocodiles in but the flimsiest of crafts, climbed inaccessible mountain-passes and even went across the seas. They knew that wild beast and reptile, robber or cannibal, and many unknown dangers might make an end of them but they were confident that others would follow without fail and where the world's welfare was concerned, as one missionary asks, who could be slothful or indifferent ?

There is no satisfactory record of these missionary activities till we come to the time of the great Buddhist emperor Asoka, who ruled in the third century B.C. Asoka's empire exceeded in dimension the territory of present-day British India. In the ninth year of his reign he attacked and conquered the kingdom of Kalinga in the eastern shores of India. In this campaign as many as 150,000 persons had been enslaved or deported, 100,000 killed and many times that number had perished through famine and disease. Soon afterwards Asoka came under the influence of Buddhism and he waged war no more. His previous career filled him with grief and horror and thenceforward he dedicated his services in the cause of peace. The taking of life, even that of an animal, became hateful to him, he disliked all strife, even the mutual hostilities of creeds and sects. He made Buddhism the state religion and directed all his energy to increase in the world qualities of compassion and liberality,

truthfulness and purity, mildness and goodness, the constituents of piety, the practice, in a word, of the Dhamma which he defined in one place as "obedience to parents, respect for living creatures, the speaking of truth, reverence to teachers and elders and courtesy and consideration to everyone". Towards the end of his life we are told that he entrusted the administration of his kingdom to commissioners and became a member of the Buddhist Sangha.

In the history of the world Asoka gained immortality by his famous edicts which he caused to be engraven on rocks in different parts of his dominions. These have now been deciphered and we are able to have some idea of his opinions and aspirations. Both by precept and example Asoka appears to have been an ardent exponent of the strenuous life and in his edicts he continually harps upon the necessity of energy and exertion, thus giving the lie to the criticism that Buddhism is a gloomy and unpracticable creed, suited only to the stoical and scholarly recluse. The religion which he enjoins in his edicts is just ordinary and civic virtue, except that it makes respect and regard for all life whatsoever an integral part of morality. Asoka has been regarded as the model Buddhist king ; the physical and moral welfare of his subjects was his constant care. He had wells dug by the roadside, supervised charities, built hospitals and provided medical aid not only for men but also for animals. He constantly proclaimed the necessity of goodwill among all classes and lectured to his subjects on their duties to all living creatures. He instituted circuits in which prominent officials travelled through

the kingdom expounding to the people their social and religious duties and commending special portions of Buddhist texts for their intense study. He emphatically enjoined religious toleration, and included Brahamans and ascetics, and followers of sects of various kinds in his unceasing benevolence.

The wide tolerance thus shown by Asoka is characteristic of Buddhism throughout its history. For Buddhism has never claimed any exclusive power to divide mankind into two groups, the saved and the lost. Its long history has no blots of persecutions or inquisitions. It has always been considerate to those outside its pale. Even within its own ranks, differences of opinion were settled by quiet adjustment and general sanction, with no heat of temper being allowed to mar the serenity of the proceedings. It can be said without fear of contradiction that of all religious orders mentioned in the history of religion, Buddhism has displayed the greatest variety and freedom of thought.

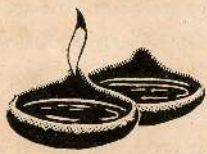
Asoka's greatest achievement, however, was the despatching of missions to propagate the religion which had won his allegiance. He was clearly dominated by a burning desire to see the Dhamma spread throughout the world. In the first instance he brought practically the whole of India under the sway of Buddhism, including not only the Dravidian peoples of the South but also the wild tribes of the forests and the hills. To Ceylon, which in time became the home of Buddhism, he sent his royal son, Mahinda, and his daughter Sanghamittā, both of whom had joined the Order and attained

arahantship. He sent eminent teachers to Kashmir and Gandhara in Western India ; to the Himalayas and the " Golden Land " in South East Asia. His records also speak of missions sent to the Hellenistic kingdoms of Asia, Africa and Europe—to Syria and Egypt, Cyrene, Macedonia and Epirus, to Bactria and, through Central Asia, to China. Thus began the great expansion of Buddhism. A modern Christian divine, Bishop Copleston, described it as "the greatest missionary effort, in scale at any rate, made by man outside Christianity ". There is no need to quarrel with this description except perhaps to ask the good bishop where did he find a greater *inside* Christianity ?

Asoka has been compared to the Christian emperor Constantine and even to St. Paul, but in both cases the comparison is only superficial. Constantine merely recognised and regulated a religion which had already won its way in his empire. St. Paul, for good or evil, greatly developed and complicated the teaching of Christ. Asoka's activities had a decisive effect in the history of Buddhism, especially in making it a world-religion. After his time the Dhamma spread further, into Burma and Siam, Annam, Corea and Japan, Tibet and Mongolia, Java, Cambodia and Champa. Nowhere was its progress sought by its missionaries by any means other than those of persuasion ; they claimed no privileges either for themselves or for their countries, but merely promoted its ideals of kindliness and peace paying little or no attention to problems of efficient organisation, the founding of places of worship or the establishment

of ecclesiastical authority. When one looks back on the history of Buddhism one cannot help marvelling at the rapidity with which Buddhist missionaries won over millions of people in many countries to a way of life and to the acceptance of doctrines so different to those that generally find favour with the majority amongst men, to a religion which acknowledges no god in the accepted sense, which denies a soul, which counts the belief in personal immortality a blunder, which refuses any efficacy to prayer and sacrifice, which bids men to look to nothing but their own efforts for salvation, which has no forgiveness of sins or communion with God, which knows nothing of vows of obedience and never sought the aid of secular power, which has no dogmas and no priesthood, which claims no special place even for its Founder but teaches that every man and woman can be equally great with the Teacher himself, which says that every one is his own Saviour and that the highest happiness is to be found not in some far-off heaven but in this very world, in this very life. It was truly a remarkable feat.

THE END



Printed at the Ceylon Daily News Press, Lake House, McCallum Road, Colombo, by Bernard de Silva, for The Ola Book Company, Queen St., Colombo—Nov. 1944.

THE OLA BOOK Co's
Other Publications

IN ENGLISH

This Other Lanka	...	*by D. T. Devendra*
The Small Man and His Money	...	*by Norman Herbert*
Buddhist Essays	...	*by J. R. Jayewardene*
Soviet Way	...	*by Pieter Keuneman*
Poems	...	*by Sunetha Wickremasinghe*
Kandyan Lotus	...	*by Earle Mendis*
The Case for Free Education	...	*by N. M. Perera*
*Marginal Comments	...	*by E. F. C. Ludowyke*

IN SINHALESE

Navalanka	...	*by "Chandradeva"*
Rohini	...	*by Martin Wickremasinghe*
Ape Vithi	...	"
Sahityodaya Katha	...	"
Apuru Moona	...	"
Bauddha Lipi	...	*by J. R. Jayewardene*
Sahitya ha Samajaya	...	*by K. Pannakitti*
Dawasa	...	*by T. Seelawansa*
Russian Short Stories	...	*Edited by E. R. de S. Sarathchandra*
*Arabian Nights	...	*Translation by E. R. Eratne*
*Stories from Tagore	...	"
*Boy Judge	...	"
*Katha Perahera	...	*by K. D. de Lanerolle*

*Denotes a book in the Press.

The Sign of a Good Book

After all, there's nothing like a good book. If it's an Ola Publication it's bound to be a good book

THE OLA BOOK CO.
21, Queen Street
COLOMBO