

BUDDHISM IN A NUTSHELL



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By Nārada Thera

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BUDDHISM IN A NUTSHELL

by

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VAJIRARAMA PUBLICATION SOCIETY

VAJIRARAMA, BAMBALAPITIYA

2497—1954

294.3

NAR



VAJIRARAMA PUBLICATION

SERIES No. II



Printers:
THE CEYLON DAILY NEWS
LAKE HOUSE COLOMBO

P R E F A C E

Buddhism in a Nutshell first appeared in 1933. Since then several editions were published by various philanthropic gentlemen for free distribution.

This new edition has been slightly modified and enlarged.

For a fuller exposition of the subject readers are kindly requested to read *The Buddha-Dhamma*, or *The Life and Teachings of the Buddha*.

Permission may freely be obtained to reprint or to translate this book.

NĀRADA

27th April, 1954,
Vajirarama,
Colombo.

BUDDHISM IN A NUTSHELL

“*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-Sambuddhassa.*”

THE BUDDHA



ABOUT 623 B.C. there was born in the district of Nepal an Indian Sakyan Prince, by name *Siddhattha Gotama*. At the age of sixteen he married his cousin, the beautiful Princess *Yasodharā*.

For nearly thirteen years since his happy marriage, he lived in the lap of luxury, blissfully ignorant of the vicissitudes of life outside the palace gates. With the march of time truth gradually dawned upon him.

In his 29th year, which witnessed the turning point of his noble career, his son *Rāhula* was born unto him. This first and only offspring of his, he regarded as a bondage, for he realised that all without exception were subject to birth, death, and decay, and that all worldly pleasures were only a prelude to pain. Comprehending thus the universality of sorrow, he wanted to find out a panacea for this universal sickness of humanity.

Eventually he renounced his royal pleasures, donned the simple garb of an ascetic, and wandered as a seeker of Truth. He approached many a distinguished teacher of his day, but nobody was competent enough to give him what he earnestly sought. All the so-called philosophers were groping in the dark. It was a matter of blind leading the blind, as they were all enmeshed in ignorance and were caught in the whirlpool of *Samsāra*.

As it was the belief in the ancient days that no salvation could be gained unless one leads a life of strict asceticism, he strenuously practised all forms of severe austerities. “Adding vigil after vigil, and penance after penance”, he made a super-human effort for six long years.

His body was reduced to almost a skeleton. The more he tormented his body, the farther his goal receded from him.

His strenuous and unsuccessful endeavours taught him one important lesson—that is, the utter futility of self-mortification.

Benefiting by this invaluable experience of his, he finally decided to follow an independent course, avoiding the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. The former retarded his spiritual progress, and the latter weakened his intellect. The new path which he himself discovered was the *Majjhimā Patipadā*, the Middle Path, which subsequently became one of the salient characteristics of His teaching.

One happy morning, while He was seated under the Bodhi tree, unaided and unguided by any super-natural agency, but solely relying on His efforts and wisdom, He eradicated all passions and attained Enlightenment (Buddhahood) at the ripe age of 35.

Having attained Buddhahood, that supreme state of perfection, He devoted the remainder of His precious life to serve humanity both by example and precept, dominated by no personal motive whatsoever.

After a very successful ministry of 45 long years the Buddha, as every other human being succumbed to the inexorable law of change, and finally passed away into *Nibbāna* in His 80th year.

The Buddha was, therefore, a human being. As a man He was born, as a man He lived, and as a man His life came to an end. Though a human being, He became an extraordinary man—*Acchariya Manussa*. The Buddha laid stress on this important point and left no room whatever for anyone to fall into the error of thinking that He was an immortal divine being. Fortunately there is no deification in the case of the Buddha.

The Buddha is neither an incarnation of Vishnu, as is believed by some, nor is He a saviour who saves others by His personal salvation. The Buddha exhorts His disciples to depend on themselves for their salvation, for both purity and defilement depend on oneself. In the *Dhammapada* He

says—“*Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ—Akkhātāro Tathāgatā.*” You should exert yourselves; the Tathāgatas are only teachers.

The Buddhas point out the path, and it is left for us to follow that path to obtain our purification.

“To depend on other for salvation is negative, but to depend on oneself is positive.” Dependence on others means a surrender of one’s effort.

In exhorting His disciples to be self-dependent the Buddha says in the Parinibbāna Sutta :—“Be ye islands unto yourselves, be ye a refuge unto yourselves, seek not for refuge in others.”

Furthermore, the Buddha does not claim the monopoly of Buddhahood, which, as a matter of fact, is not the prerogative of any specially graced person. He reached the highest possible state of perfection any person could aspire to, and without the close-fist of a teacher He revealed the only straight path that leads thereto. According to the teachings of the Buddha anybody may aspire to that supreme state of perfection if he makes the necessary exertion. The Buddha does not condemn men by calling them wretched sinners, but, on the contrary, He gladdens them by saying that they are pure in heart at birth. In His opinion the world is not wicked, but is deluded by ignorance. Instead of disheartening His followers and reserving that exalted state only to Himself, He encourages and induces them to emulate Him.

As a man He attained Buddhahood and proclaimed to the world the latent possibilities and the creative power of man. Instead of placing an unseen, Almighty God over man and making him subservient to him, He raised the worth of mankind. It was He who taught that man can gain his salvation by his own exertion without depending on a God or mediating priests. It was He who taught the ego-centric world the noble ideal of selfless service. It was He who revolted against the degrading caste system and taught equality of mankind and gave equal opportunities for all to distinguish themselves in every walk of life.

He opened the gates of success and prosperity to all deserving ones despite the natural barriers of birth. He gave

complete freedom of thought and made us open our eyes to see things as they truly are. He comforted the bereaved by His consoling words. He ministered to the sick that were deserted. He helped the poor that were neglected. He ennobled the lives of sinners, purified the corrupted lives of criminals. He encouraged the feeble, united the divided, enlightened the ignorant, clarified the mystic, guided the benighted, elevated the base, dignified the noble. Both rich and poor, saints and sinners loved Him alike. Despotic and righteous kings, famous and obscure princes and nobles, generous and stingy millionaires, haughty and humble scholars, destitute paupers, down-trodden scavengers, wicked murderers, despised courtesans—all benefited by His words of wisdom and compassion.

His noble example was a source of inspiration to all. His serene and peaceful countenance was a soothing sight to the pious eyes. His message of Peace was welcomed by all with indescribable joy and was of eternal benefit to everyone who had the fortune to hear and practise it.

Wherever His teaching penetrated it left an indelible impression upon the character of the respective peoples. The cultural advancement of all the Buddhist nations was mainly due to His sublime Teaching. Though nearly 2500 years have elapsed since the passing away of this greatest Teacher, yet His noble personality still influences all those who come to know Him.

Of the Buddha a St. Hillaire might say—"The perfect model of all the virtues He preaches.....His life has not a stain upon it." A Fausboll would say—"The more I know Him, the more I love Him." A humble follower of His would say—"The more I know Him, the more I love Him ; the more I love Him, the more I know Him."

The teaching founded by the Buddha is, in popular language, known as Buddhism.

THE DHAMMA

Is it a Philosophy ?

The all-merciful Buddha has passed away, but the sublime Dhamma, which He unreservedly bequeathed to humanity, still exists in its pristine purity.

Although the Master has left no written records of His Teachings, His distinguished disciples preserved them by committing to memory and transmitting them orally from generation to generation.

Immediately after His demise 500 chief Arahats, versed in the Dhamma and Vinaya, held a convocation to rehearse the Doctrine as was originally taught by the Buddha. Venerable Ānanda Thera, who enjoyed the special privilege of hearing all the discourses, recited the Dhamma, whilst the Venerable Upāli recited the Vinaya.

The Tripitaka was compiled and arranged in its present form by those Arahats of old.

During the reign of the pious Sinhala King *Vattagāmani Abhaya*, about 80 B.C., the Tripitaka was, for the first time in the history of Buddhism, committed to writing on ola leaves in Ceylon.

This voluminous Tripitaka, which contains the essence of the Buddha's Teaching, is estimated to be about eleven times the size of the Bible. A striking contrast between the Tripitaka and the Bible is that the former is not a gradual development like the latter.

As the word itself implies the Tripitaka consists of three baskets. They are the Basket of Discipline (*Vinaya Pitaka*), the Basket of Discourses (*Sutta Pitaka*), and the Basket of Ultimate Doctrine (*Abhidhamma Pitaka*).

The *Vinaya Pitaka* mainly deals with rules and regulations which the Buddha promulgated, as occasion arose, for the future discipline of the order of monks (*Bhikkhus*) and nuns (*Bhikkhunis*). It describes in detail the gradual development of the Sasana (Dispensation). An account of the life and ministry of the Buddha is also given. Indirectly it reveals some important and interesting information about ancient history, Indian customs, arts, sciences, etc.

This Pitaka consists of the five following books :—

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. <i>Pārājikā Pāli</i> —Major Offences, | } <i>Vibhanga</i> |
| 2. <i>Pācittiya Pāli</i> —Minor Offences, | |
| 3. <i>Mahāvagga Pāli</i> —Greater Section, | } <i>Khandaka</i> |
| 4. <i>Cullavagga Pāli</i> —Shorter Section, | |
| 5. <i>Parivāra Pāli</i> , | |

The *Sutta Pitaka* consists chiefly of discourses delivered by the Buddha Himself on various occasions. There are also a few discourses, delivered by some of His distinguished disciples such as the Venerable Sāriputta, Ānanda, Moggallāna, etc., included in it. It is like a book of prescriptions, as the sermons embodied therein were expounded to suit the different occasions and the temperaments of various persons. There may be seemingly contradictory statements, but they should not be misconstrued as they were opportunely uttered by the Buddha to suit a particular purpose ; for instance, to the self-same question He would maintain silence (when the inquirer is merely foolishly inquisitive), or give a detailed reply when He knew the inquirer to be an earnest seeker.

This Pitaka is divided into five Nikāyas or Collections, viz. :—

1. *Dīgha Nikāya* (Collection of Long Discourses),
2. *Majjhima Nikāya* (Collection of Middle-length Discourses),
3. *Sanyutta Nikāya* (Collection of Kindred Sayings),
4. *Anguttara Nikāya* (Collection of Discourses arranged in accordance with number),
5. *Khuddaka Nikāya* (Smaller Collection).

The fifth is subdivided into fifteen books :—

1. *Khuddaka Pāṭha* (Shorter Texts),
2. *Dhammapada* (Way of Truth),
3. *Udāna* (Paeons of Joy),
4. *Iti Vuttaka* ("Thus said" Discourses),
5. *Sutta Nipāta* (Collected Discourses),
6. *Vimāna Vatthu* (Stories of Celestial Mansions),
7. *Peta Vatthu* (Stories of Petas),
8. *Theragāthā* (Psalms of the Brethren),
9. *Therīgāthā* (Psalms of the Sisters),
10. *Jātaka* (Birth Stories),
11. *Niddesa* (Expositions),
12. *Paṭisambhidā* (Analytical Knowledge),
13. *Apadāna* (Lives of Arahats),
14. *Buddhavaṇsa* (The History of the Buddha),
15. *Cariyā Piṭaka* (Modes of Conduct).

The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is, to a deep thinker, the most important and the most interesting collections, as it contains the profound philosophy of the Buddha's Teaching, in contrast to the illuminating and simpler discourses in the *Sutta Pitaka*.

In the *Sutta Pitaka* is found the *Vohāra Desanā* (conventional teaching), whilst in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is found the *Paramattha Desanā* (ultimate teaching).

In the *Abhidhamma* the so-called being is microscopically analysed and its component parts are minutely described. The ultimate goal, together with the method of achieving it, is also explained in detail. The four ultimates (*Paramattha*) enumerated in the *Abhidhamma* are i. *Citta* (Consciousness), ii. *Cetasika* (Mental Concomitants), iii. *Rūpa* (Matter), and iv. *Nibbāna*.

The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* consists of seven books:—

1. *Dhamma Saṅgani* (Classification of Dhammas),
2. *Vibhanga* (The Book of Divisions),
3. *Kathā Vattu* (Points of Controversy),
4. *Puggala Paññatti* (Description of Individuals),
5. *Dhātu Kathā* (Discussion with reference to Elements)
6. *Yamaka* (The Book of Pairs),
7. *Paṭṭhāna* (The Book of Relations).

The sublime Dhamma, enshrined in these sacred texts, deals with truths and facts, and is not concerned with theories and philosophies which may be accepted as profound truth today only to be thrown overboard tomorrow. The Buddha has presented us with no new astounding, philosophical theories, nor did He venture to create any new material science. He explained to us what is within and without, so far as it concerns our emancipation, and ultimately expounded a path of deliverance, which is unique. Incidentally He has, however, forestalled many a modern scientist and philosopher.

Schopenhauer in his "World as Will and Idea" has presented the truth of suffering and its cause in a Western garb. Spinoza, though denies not the existence of a permanent reality, asserts that all permanent existence is transitory. In his opinion sorrow is conquered "by finding an object of knowledge which is not transient, not ephemeral,

but is immutable, permanent, everlasting." Berkley proved that the so-called indivisible atom is a metaphysical fiction. Hume, after a relentless analysis of the mind, concluded that consciousness consists of fleeting mental states. Bergson advocates the doctrine of change. Prof. James refers to a stream of consciousness.

The Buddha propounded these doctrines of Transiency, (*Anicca*) Sorrow (*Dukkha*), and No-soul (*Anatta*) some 2500 years ago whilst He was sojourning in the valley of the Ganges.

It should be understood that the Buddha did not preach all that He knew. On one occasion whilst the Buddha was passing through a forest He took a handful of leaves and said :—"O Bhikkhus, what I have taught is comparable to the leaves in my hand, what I have not taught is comparable to the amount of leaves in the forest."

He taught us only that which is necessary for our emancipation. Incidentally, however, He has made some statements which are accepted as scientific truths today.

Buddhism no doubt accords with science, but both should be treated as parallel teachings, since one deals mainly with material truths whilst the other confines itself to moral and spiritual truths. The subject-matter of each is different.

The Dhamma He taught is not merely to be preserved in books, nor is it a subject to be studied from an historical or literary point of view. On the contrary it is to be learnt and put into practice in the course of one's daily life, for without practice one cannot appreciate the truth. The Dhamma is to be studied, and more to be practised, and above all to be realised : immediate realization is its ultimate goal. As such the Dhamma is compared to a raft which is meant for the sole purpose of escaping from the ocean of Saṃsāra. Buddhism, therefore, cannot strictly be called a philosophy.

IS IT A RELIGION ?

It is neither a religion in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, for it is not a system of faith and worship.

Buddhism does not demand blind faith from its adherents. Here mere belief is dethroned and is substituted by confidence based on knowledge, which, in Pāli, is known as *Saddhā*. The confidence placed by a follower on the Buddha is like that of a sick person in a noted physician, or a student in his teacher. A Buddhist seeks refuge in the Buddha because it was He who discovered the Path of Deliverance.

A Buddhist does not seek refuge in the Buddha with the hope that he will be saved by His personal salvation. The Buddha gives no such guarantee. It is not within the power of a Buddha to wash away the impurities of others. One could neither purify nor defile another.

The Buddha, as Teacher of Devas and men, instructs us, but we ourselves are directly responsible for our purification or defilement.

Although a Buddhist seeks refuge in the Buddha, he does not make any self-surrender. Nor does a Buddhist sacrifice his freedom of thought by becoming a follower of the Buddha. He can exercise his own freewill and develop his knowledge even to the extent of becoming a Buddha himself.

The starting point of Buddhism is reasoning or understanding, or, in other words, *Sammā-Ditṭhi*.

To the seekers of truth the Buddha says :—

“ Do not accept anything on (mere) hearsay—(*i.e.*, *thinking that thus have we heard it from a long time.*) Do not accept anything by mere tradition—(*i.e.*, *thinking that it has thus been handed down through many generations.*) Do not accept anything on account of mere rumours—(*i.e.*, *by believing what others say without any investigation.*) Do not accept anything just because it accords with your scriptures. Do not accept anything by mere supposition. Do not accept anything by mere inference. Do not accept anything by merely considering the reasons. Do not accept anything merely because it agrees with your pre-conceived notions. Do not accept anything merely because it seems acceptable—(*i.e.*, *thinking that as the speaker seems to be a good person his word should be accepted.*) Do not accept anything thinking that the ascetic is respected by us (*therefore it is right to accept his word*).

“ But when you know for yourselves—these things are immoral, these things are blameworthy, these things are

censured by the wise, these things when performed and undertaken, conduce to ruin and sorrow—then indeed do you reject them.”

“When you know for yourselves—these things are moral, these things are blameless ; these things are praised by the wise ; these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to well-being and happiness—then do you live acting accordingly.”

These inspiring words of the Buddha, uttered some 2500 years ago, still retain their original force and freshness.

Though it be proved that there is no blind faith, one might argue whether there is no worshipping of images etc. in Buddhism.

Buddhists do not worship an image expecting worldly favours, but pay their homage to what it represents.

An understanding Buddhist, in offering flowers and incense to an image, designedly makes himself feel that he is in the presence of the living Buddha, and thereby gains inspiration from his noble personality and breathes deep his boundless compassion. He tries to follow His noble example.

The Bo-tree is also a symbol of Enlightenment. These external objects of homage are not absolutely necessary, but they are useful as they tend to concentrate one's attention. An intellectual person could dispense with them as he could easily focus his attention and visualise the Buddha.

For our own good, and out of gratitude, we pay such external homage, but what the Buddha expects from His disciples is not so much obeisance as the actual observance of His Teachings. The Buddha says—“He honours me best who practises my teaching best.” “He who sees the Dhamma sees me.”

Further, it must be mentioned that there are no prayers in Buddhism. However much we may pray to the Buddha we cannot be saved. The Buddha does not grant worldly favours to those who pray to Him. Instead of prayers there are meditations intended to purify the mind. The Buddha not only speaks of the futility of offerings prayers but also disparages a slave mentality. A Buddhist should not pray to be saved, but should rely on himself and win his freedom.

Dependence on an external power means a surrender of human effort.

“Prayer takes the character of private communications, selfish bargaining with God. It seeks for objects of earthly ambitions and inflames the sense of self. Meditation on the other hand is self-change.”*

In Buddhism there is no one God whom Buddhists should obey and fear. The Buddha does not believe in a cosmic potentate, omniscient and omnipresent. There are no dogmas that we must believe. There are no creeds that we must accept on faith. There are no priests to act as mediators. There are no special rites and ceremonies to become a Buddhist, no prayers and sacrifices to be offered, no penances and repentance to be made to gain one's salvation.

Buddhism cannot, therefore, strictly be called a religion because it is neither a system of faith and worship, nor “the outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of a god or gods having power over their own destiny to whom obedience, service, and honour are due.”

If by religion is meant “a teaching which takes a view of life that is more than superficial, a teaching which looks into life and not merely at it, a teaching which furnishes men with a guide to conduct that is in accord with this its ‘in-look’, a teaching which enables those who give it heed to face life with fortitude and death with serenity,”[†] or even a teaching (Āgama) which is conducive to the good and happiness of self and that of others, then it is certainly a religion of religions.

IS BUDDHISM AN ETHICAL SYSTEM?

It no doubt contains an excellent code of morals which is adaptable to all times and ages, but is much more than ordinary morality. *Sīla* or morality is only the first stage on the Path of Purity, and is a means to an end. Conduct, though essential, is itself insufficient to gain one's emancipation. It should be coupled with wisdom or knowledge (*Paññā*).

In observing the principles of morality a Buddhist should not only regard his own self but also should have a consideration for others as well—animals not excluded.

* Sir S. Radhakrishna

† Bhikkhu Silacara

In Buddhism there are deeds which are ethically good, deeds which are ethically bad, deeds which are neither good nor bad, and deeds which tend to the ceasing of all deeds. Good deeds are essential for one's emancipation, but when once the ultimate goal of the Holy Life is attained, one transcends both good and evil. The Buddha says :—

“ Righteous things (Dhamma) you have to give up, how much more the unrighteous things (Adhamma).”
(Majjhima Nikāya).

The deeds of an Arahant, a perfect Saint, are neither good nor bad because he has gone beyond both. This does not mean that he is passive. He *is* active, but his activity is selfless and is directed to keep others to tread the Path he has trod himself. His deeds, ordinarily accepted as good, lack a creative power as regards himself. Purest gold cannot further be purified. He accumulates no fresh Kammic activities. Understanding things as they truly are, he has finally shattered the cosmic chain of cause and effect.

It should be mentioned that an Almighty God or any other external supernatural agency plays no part whatsoever in the moulding of the character of a Buddhist. In Buddhism there is no one to reward or punish. Pain or happiness are the due results of our actions. The question of incurring the pleasure or displeasure of a God does not enter the mind of a Buddhist. Neither hope of reward nor fear of punishment acts as an incentive to him to do good or to refrain from evil. A Buddhist is aware of future consequences, but he refrains from evil because it retards, does good because it aids, progress to Bodhi-Enlightenment. There may also be some who do good because it is good, refrain from evil because it is bad.

To understand the exceptionally high standard of morality the Buddha expects from His ideal followers, one must carefully read the *Dhammapada*, *Sigālovāda Sutta*, *Vyagghapajja Sutta*, *Mangala Sutta*, *Karaniya Sutta*, *Parābhava Sutta*, *Vasala Sutta*, *Dhammika Sutta*, etc.

In one sense Buddhism is not a philosophy, in another sense it is the *philosophy of philosophies*.

In one sense Buddhism is not a religion, in another sense it is the *religion of religions*.

As a moral teaching it excels all ethical systems, but morality is only the beginning and not the end of Buddhism.

The original Pāli term for Buddhism is Dhamma, which literally means that which upholds. There is no English equivalent that exactly conveys the meaning of the Pāli term.

The Dhamma is that which really is. It is the Doctrine of Reality. It is a Means of Deliverance, and Deliverance itself. Whether the Buddha arise or not the Dhamma exists. It is a Buddha who realises this Dhamma, which ever lies hidden from the ignorant eyes of men, till He, an Enlightened One, comes and compassionately reveals it to the world.

This Dhamma is not something apart from oneself, but is closely associated with oneself. As such the Buddha exhorts:—

“ Abide with oneself as an island, with oneself as a Refuge. Abide with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge. Seek not for external refuge.” (Parinibbāna Sutta).

SOME SALIENT FEATURES OF BUDDHISM

The foundations of Buddhism are the four Noble Truths—namely, the Noble Truth of Sorrow, (the *raison d'etre* of Buddhism), the Noble Truth of the Cause of Sorrow, *i.e.* Craving, the Noble Truth of the Annihilation of Sorrow, *i.e.*, Nibbāna, (the *Summum Bonum* of Buddhism), and the Path leading to the Destruction of Sorrow.

What is the Noble Truth of Sorrow ?

Birth is sorrow, old age is sorrow, disease is sorrow, death is sorrow, to be united with the unloved is sorrow, to be separated from the loved is sorrow, not to receive what one craves for is sorrow; in brief the five Aggregates of Attachment are sorrow.

What is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Sorrow ?

It is the craving which leads from rebirth to rebirth accompanied by lust of passion, which delights now here and now there; it is the craving for sensual pleasures (*Kāmatanhā*),

for existence (*Bhavatanhā*)¹ and for annihilation (*Vibhavanhā*).²

What is the Noble Truth of the Annihilation of Sorrow?

It is the remainderlessness, total annihilation of this very craving, the forsaking it, the breaking loose, fleeing, deliverance from it.

What is the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Annihilation of Sorrow?

It is the Noble Eightfold Path which consists of right understanding, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right endeavour, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Whether the Buddhas arise or not these four Truths exist in the universe. The Buddhas only reveal these Truths which lay hidden in the dark abyss of time.

Scientifically interpreted the Dhamma may be called the law of cause and effect. These two embrace the entire body of the Buddha's Teachings.

Buddhism rests on the pivot of sorrow. But it does not thereby follow that Buddhism is pessimistic. It is neither totally pessimistic nor totally optimistic, but on the contrary, it teaches a truth that lies midway between them. One would be justified in calling the Buddha a pessimist if He had only enunciated the Truth of suffering without suggesting a means to put an end to it. The Buddha perceived the universality of sorrow and did prescribe a panacea for this universal sickness of humanity. The highest conceivable happiness according to the Buddha is Nibbāna—“*Nibbānam paramam sukham*”—Nibbāna is bliss supreme.

The Buddha on the other hand does not expect His followers to be constantly brooding over this fact and lead a miserable unhappy life. He exhorts them to be always happy and cheerful, for joy (*Piti*) is one of the Factors of Enlightenment.

Real happiness is found within, and is not to be defined in terms of wealth, children, honours or invasions. If such possessions are misdirected, forcibly or unjustly obtained,

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1. *Tanhā* associated with “Eternalism” (*Sassatadiṭṭhi*).
 2. *Tanhā* associated with “Nihilism” (*Ucchedadiṭṭhi*).

misappropriated or even viewed with attachment, they will be a source of pain and sorrow to the possessors.

The so-called happiness of the ordinary man is merely the gratification of some desire. "No sooner is the desired thing gained than it begins to be scorned." Insatiate are all desires. Worldly bliss, heavenly bliss not excluded, is only a prelude to pain. Sorrow is, therefore, essential to life and cannot be evaded. If it can find entrance in no other form, then it comes, as Schopenhauer says, in the sad grey garments of tedium and ennui.

Suffering exists as long as there is craving. It can only be annihilated by treading the Noble Eightfold Path and attaining the supreme bliss of Nibbāna.

These four Truths could be verified by experience. Hence the Buddha Dhamma is not based on the fear of the unknown, but is founded on the bedrock of facts which could be tested by ourselves and verified by experience. Buddhism is, therefore, rational and practical.

Such a rational and practical system cannot contain any mysticism or esoteric doctrines. Blind faith therefore is foreign to Buddhism. Where there is no blind faith there cannot be any coercion or persecution or fanaticism. To the unique credit of Buddhism it must be said that throughout its peaceful march of 2500 years no drop of blood was shed in the name of the Buddha, no mighty monarch wielded his powerful sword to propagate the Dhamma, and no conversion was made either by force or by any repulsive methods.

In the name of Buddhism no altar was reddened with the blood of a Hypatia, no Bruno was burnt alive.

Buddhism appeals more to the intellect than to the emotion. It is concerned more with the character of the devotees than with their numerical strength.

On one occasion Upāli, a follower of *Nigantha Nātaputta* approached the Buddha and was so pleased with the Buddha's exposition of the Dhamma that he instantly expressed his desire to become a follower of the Buddha. But the Buddha cautioned him, saying:---

"Of a verity, O householder, make a thorough investigation. It is well for a distinguished man like you to (first) make a thorough investigation."

Upāli, who was overjoyed at this unexpected remark of the Buddha, said: Lord, had I been a follower of another religion, its adherents would take me round the streets in a procession proclaiming that such and such a millionaire had renounced his former faith and embraced theirs. But, Lord, your reverence advises me to investigate further. The more pleased am I with this remark of yours. For the second time, Lord, I seek refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.

Buddhism is saturated with this spirit of free inquiry and complete tolerance. It is the teaching of the open mind and the sympathetic heart which, lighting and warming the whole universe with its twin rays of wisdom (*Paññā*) and compassion (*Karunā*), sheds its genial glow on every being struggling in the ocean of birth and death.

The Buddha was so tolerant that He did not even exercise His power to give any commandments to His lay followers. Instead of using the imperative, He says:—It behoves you to do this—It behoves you not to do this.

This tolerance the Buddha extended to men, women, and all living beings.

It was the Buddha who first abolished slavery and vehemently protested against the degrading caste-system which was firmly rooted in the soil of India. In the Word of the Buddha it is not by mere birth one becomes either an outcast or a Brahmin, but by one's actions. Caste or colour does not preclude one from becoming a Buddhist or entering the Order. Fishermen, scavengers, courtesans, together with warriors and Brahmins, were freely admitted to the Order and enjoyed equal privileges and were also given positions of rank. *Upāli*, the barber, for instance, was made in preference to all others the chief in matters pertaining to Vinaya discipline. The timid *Sunīta*, the scavenger, was admitted by the Buddha Himself to the Order and enabled him to attain Saintship. *Angulimāla* the robber and criminal, was converted to a compassionate Saint. The fierce *Ālavaka* sought refuge in the Buddha and became a *Sotapanna*. The courtesan *Ambapāli* entered the Order and attained *Arahatship*. Such instances could easily be multiplied from the Tipitaka to show that the portals of Buddhism were wide open to all, irrespective of caste, colour, or rank.

It was also the Buddha who raised the status of women and brought them to the realisation of their importance to society.

The Buddha did not humiliate women, but only regarded them as feeble by nature. He saw the innate good of both men and women and assigned to them their due places in His teaching. Sex is no barrier to attaining Sainthood.

Sometimes the Pāli term used to denote women is "Mātugāma" which means "mother-folk", or "society of mothers". As a mother woman holds an honourable place in Buddhism. Even the wife is regarded as "the best friend" (paramā sakhā) of the husband.

Hasty critics are only making "ex parte" statements when they reproach Buddhism with being inimical to women. Although at first the Buddha refused to admit women into the order on reasonable grounds, yet later He yielded to the entreaties of His foster mother Pajāpati Gotami and founded the Bhikkhunī Order. Just as the Arahats Sāriputta and Moggallāna were made the two chief disciples in the Order of monks, even so He appointed Arahants Khemā and Uppalavannā as the two chief female disciples. Many other female disciples too were named by the Buddha Himself as His distinguished and pious followers.

On one occasion the Buddha said to king Kosala who was displeased on hearing that a daughter was born to him:—

"A woman child, O Lord of men, may prove
Even a better offspring than a male."

Many women, who otherwise would have fallen into oblivion, distinguished themselves in various ways, and gained their emancipation by following the Dhamma and entering the Order. In this new Order, which later proved to be a great blessing to many a woman—queens, princesses, daughters of noble families, widows, bereaved mothers, destitute women, pitiable courtesans, all despite their caste or rank, met on a common platform, enjoyed perfect consolation and peace, and breathed that free atmosphere which is denied to those cloistered in cottages and palatial mansions.

It was also the Buddha who put a stop to the sacrifice of poor beasts and admonished His followers to extend their

Maitri or loving-kindness to all living beings,—even to the tiniest creature that crawls at one's feet. No man has the power or the right to destroy the life of another as life is precious to all.

A genuine Buddhist would exercise this *Maitri* towards every living being and identify himself with all, making no distinction whatsoever with regard to caste, colour, or sex.

It is this Buddhist *Maitri* that attempts to break all the barriers which separate one from another. There is no reason to keep aloof from others merely because they belong to another persuasion or another nationality. In that noble *Tolerance Edict* which is based on Culla-Vyūha and Mahā-Viyūha Suttas, Asoka says: Concourse alone is best, that is, all should hearken willingly to the doctrines professed by others.

Buddhism is not confined to any country or any particular nation. It is universal. It is not nationalism which, in other words, is another form of caste system founded on a wider basis. Buddhism, if it be permitted to say so, is super-nationalism.

To a Buddhist there is no far or near, no enemy or foreigner, no renegade or untouchable, since universal love, realised through understanding, has established the brotherhood of all living beings. A real Buddhist is a citizen of the world.

Buddhism is, therefore, unique, mainly owing to its rationality, practicability, efficacy, and universality. It is the noblest of all unifying influences and the only lever that can uplift the world.

These are some of the salient features of Buddhism, and amongst some of the fundamental doctrines may be said—Kamma, or the Law of Causation, the Doctrine of Rebirth, Anatta, and Nibbāna.

KAMMA, OR THE LAW OF MORAL CAUSATION

We are faced with a totally ill-balanced world. We perceive the inequalities and manifold destinies of men and the numerous gradations of beings that prevail in the universe. We see one born into a condition of affluence, endowed with

fine mental, moral, and physical qualities, and another into a condition of abject poverty and wretchedness. Here is a man virtuous and holy, but, contrary to his expectation, ill-luck is ever ready to greet him. The wicked world runs counter to his ambitions and desire. He is poor and miserable in spite of his honest dealings and piety. There is another vicious and foolish, but accounted to be fortune's darling. He is rewarded with all forms of favours, despite his shortcomings and evil modes of life.

Why, it may be questioned, should one be an inferior and another a superior? Why should one be wrested from the hands of a fond mother when one has scarcely seen a few summers, and another should perish in the flower of manhood, or at the ripe age of eighty or hundred? Why should one be sick and infirm, and another strong and healthy? Why should one be handsome, and another ugly and hideous, repulsive to all? Why should one be brought up in the lap of luxury, surrounded with amusements and pleasures, and another in tears, steeped to the lips in misery? Why should one be born a millionaire, and another a pauper? Why should one be a mental prodigy, and another an idiot? Why should one be born with saintly characteristics, and another with criminal tendencies? Why should some be linguists, artists, mathematicians or musicians from their very cradle? Why should some be congenitally blind, deaf, and deformed?

These are some problems that perplex the minds of all thinking men. How are we to account for all this unevenness of the world, this inequality of man?

Is it due to the work of blind chance or accident?

There is nothing in this world that happens by blind chance or accident. To say that anything happens by chance, is no more true than that this book has come here of itself. Strictly speaking nothing happens to man that he does not deserve for some reason or other.

Could this be the fiat of an irresponsible God-creator?

Huxley writes:—"If we are to assume that anybody has designedly set this wonderful universe going, it is perfectly clear to me that he is no more entirely benevolent and just,

in any intelligible sense of the words, than that he is malevolent and unjust."

According to Einstein: "If this being (God) is omnipotent then every occurrence, including every human action, every human thought, and every human feeling and aspiration is also his work; how is it possible to think of holding men responsible for their deeds and thoughts before such an Almighty being?"

"In giving out punishments and rewards, He would to a certain extent be passing judgment on himself. How can this be combined with the goodness and righteousness ascribed to him?"

"According to the theological principles man is created arbitrarily and without his desire and at the moment of his creation is either blessed or damned eternally. Hence man is either good or evil, fortunate or unfortunate, noble or depraved, from the first step in the process of his physical creation to the moment of his last breath, regardless of his individual desires, hopes, ambitions, struggles or devoted prayers. Such is theological fatalism." (Spencer Lewis).

As Charles Bradlaugh says:—"The existence of evil is a terrible stumbling block to the Theist. Pain, misery, crime, poverty confront the advocate of eternal goodness and challenge with unanswerable potency his declaration of Deity as all-good, all-wise, and all-powerful."

In the words of Schopenhauer:—"Whoever regards himself as having become out of nothing must also think that he will again become nothing; for that an eternity has passed before he was, and then a second eternity had begun, through which he will never cease to be, is a monstrous thought."

"If birth is the absolute beginning, then death must be his absolute end; and the assumption that man is made out of nothing leads necessarily to the assumption that death is his absolute end."

Commenting on human suffering and God, Prof. J. B. S. Haldane writes:—"Either suffering is needed to perfect human character, or God is not Almighty. The former theory is disproved by the fact that some people who have

suffered very little but have been fortunate in their ancestry and education have very fine characters. The objection to the second is that it is only in connection with the universe as a whole that there is any intellectual gap to be filled by the postulation of a deity. And a creator could presumably create whatever he or it wanted."

In *Despair*, a poem of his old age, Lord Tennyson thus boldly attacks God, who, as recorded in *Isaiah*, says, "I make peace and create evil." (*Isaiah*, xlv. 7.).

"What! I should call on that infinite love that has served us so well?

Infinite cruelty, rather, that made everlasting hell,
Made us foreknew us, foredoomed us, and does what
he will with his own:

Better our dead brute mother who never has heard
us groan."

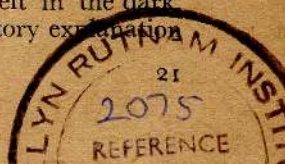
Surely "the doctrine that all men are sinners and have the essential sin of Adam is a challenge to justice, mercy, love and omnipotent fairness."

Some writers of old authoritatively declare that God created man in his own image. Some modern thinkers state, on the contrary, that man created God in his own image. With the growth of civilization man's conception of God also became more and more refined.

It is, however, impossible to conceive of such a being either in or outside the universe.

Could this variation be due to heredity and environment? One must admit that they are partly instrumental, but they cannot be solely responsible for the subtle distinctions and vast differences that exist amongst individuals. Why should, for instance, twins who are physically alike, enjoying the same privileges of upbringing, be very often temperamentally, intellectually totally different?

Heredity alone cannot account for this variation. It explains only similarities but not the differences. Physical germs explain only a portion of man. With regard to mental, intellectual and moral differences we are left in the dark. The theory of heredity cannot give a satisfactory explanation



for the birth of a criminal in a long line of honourable ancestors, the birth of a saint or a noble man in a family rotten to the roots, colossal characters like Homer and Plato, men of genius like Shakespeare, infant prodigies like Pascal, Mozart, Beethoven, Raphael, etc.

According to Buddhism this variation is due not only to heredity, environment, "nature and nurture" but also to our own Kamma, or in other words, to our own inherited past actions and present deeds. We ourselves are responsible for our own deeds, happiness, and misery. We build our own hells. We create our own heavens. We are the architects of our own fate. In short we ourselves are our own Kamma.

On one occasion a certain young man named *Subbha*, approached the Buddha, and questioned why and wherefore it was that among human beings there are the low and high states.

"For", said he, "we find amongst mankind those of *brief life* and those of *long life*, the *hale* and the *ailing*, the *good-looking* and the *ill-looking*, the *powerful* and the *powerless*, the *poor* and the *rich*, the *low-born* and the *high-born*, the *ignorant* and the *intelligent*."

The Buddha briefly replied: "Every living being has Kamma as its own, its inheritance, its cause, its kinsman, its refuge. Kamma is that which differentiates all living beings into low and high states."

He then enumerated the causes of such differences.

In connection with this variation the *Atthasālini* states² :—

"Depending on *this* difference in Kamma appears the difference in the birth of beings, high and low, base and exalted, happy and miserable. Depending on the difference in Kamma appears the difference in the individual features of beings as beautiful and ugly, high-born or low-born, well-built or deformed. Depending on the difference in Kamma appears the difference in the worldly conditions of beings as gain and loss, fame and disgrace, blame and praise, happiness and misery.

¹ Cūlakamma Vibhanga Sutta—Majjhima Nikaya No. 135.

² See "The Expositor", pt. 1, p. 87.

“ By Kamma the world moves,
 By Kamma men live,
 And by Kamma are beings bound,
 As by its pin the rolling chariot wheel.
 By Kamma one attains glory and praise,
 By Kamma bondage, ruin, tyranny,
 Knowing that Kamma bears manifold
 Why say ye, ‘ In the world no Kamma is ’ ? ”

Thus we see that our mental, intellectual, moral, and spiritual differences are mainly due to our own actions and tendencies.

Kamma literally means action; but, in its ultimate sense, it means the meritorious and demeritorious volition (*Kusala Akusala Cetanā*). Kamma constitutes both good and will.

Buddhism attributes this variation to Kamma, but it does not assert that everything is due to Kamma.

If everything were due to Kamma, a man must ever be bad for it is his Kamma to be bad. One need not consult a physician to be cured of a disease, for if one's Kamma is such one will be cured.

There are five orders or Niyāmas according to Buddhism:—

- i. *Kamma Niyāma*, order of act and result; *e.g.*, desirable and undesirable results follow good and bad actions, respectively.
- ii. *Utu Niyāma*, physical (inorganic) order; *e.g.*, seasonal phenomena.
- iii. *Bīja Niyāma*, order of germs or seeds; *e.g.*, rice produced from rice-seed etc.
- iv. *Citta Niyāma*, order of mind; *e.g.*, processes of consciousness (*Citta Vīthi*) etc.
- v. *Dhamma Niyāma*, order of the norm; *e.g.*, the phenomena occurring at the advent of a Bodhisatta in his last birth, gravitation, etc.

Kamma is, therefore, only one of the five orders that prevail in the universe. It is a law in itself. It is neither fate nor is it pre-destination that is imposed on us by some

mysterious unknown power to which we must helplessly submit ourselves. It is one's own doing that reacts on one's own self.

It must also be said that such phraseology as rewards and punishments should not be allowed to enter into discussions concerning the problem of Kamma. For Buddhism does not recognise an Almighty Being who rules His subjects and rewards and punishes them accordingly. Buddhists, on the contrary, believe that sorrow and happiness one experiences are the natural outcome of one's own good and bad actions.

A Buddhist who is fully convinced of the doctrine of Kamma does not pray to another to be saved but confidently relies on himself for his salvation.

It is this doctrine of Kamma that gives him consolation, hope, self-reliance, and moral courage. It is this belief in Kamma 'that validates his effort, kindles his enthusiasm,' makes him ever kind, tolerant, and considerate. It is also this firm belief in Kamma that prompts him to refrain from evil, do good and be good without being frightened of any punishment or tempted by any reward.

This law of Kamma, it must be admitted, can neither be proved nor disproved experimentally.

Nevertheless it is this doctrine of Kamma that can explain the problem of suffering, the mystery of so-called fate or predestination of other religions, and above all the inequality of mankind.

Kamma is a law in itself, but it does not thereby follow that there should be a law-giver. Ordinary laws of nature, like gravitation, need no law-giver. The law of Kamma too needs no law-giver. It operates in its own field without the intervention of an external, independent ruling agency.

Nobody, for instance, has decreed that fire should burn. Nobody has commanded that water should seek its own level. No scientist has ordered that water should consist of H₂O, and that coldness should be one of its properties. These are their intrinsic characteristics.

Inherent in Kamma is the power of producing its due effect. The cause produces the effect; the effect explains the cause. Seed produces the fruit; the fruit explains the

seed as both are inter-related. Even so Kamma and its effect are inter-related; "the effect already blooms in the cause".

Kamma and re-birth are accepted as axiomatic.

RE-BIRTH

As long as this Kammic force exists there is re-birth, for beings are merely the visible manifestation of this invisible Kammic force. Death is nothing but the temporary end of this temporary phenomenon. It is not the complete annihilation of this so-called being. The organic life has ceased, but the Kammic force which hitherto actuated it has not been destroyed. As the Kammic force remains entirely undisturbed by the disintegration of the fleeting body, the passing away of the present consciousness only conditions a fresh one in another birth.

Birth is therefore preceded by death, and death, on the other hand, is preceded by birth. This constant succession of birth and death in connection with one individual life flux constitutes what is technically known as *Samsāra* (wandering again and again).

What is the absolute beginning of *Samsāra*? Or to put it in other words, what is the ultimate origin of life?

The Buddha pertinently says: "Without cognisable beginning is this *Samsāra*. A first beginning of beings who, obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving, wander and fare on, is not to be perceived."

If life is an identity, it must necessarily have an ultimate origin. Life, strictly speaking, is a flux or a force, and as such necessitates a beginningless past.

One might argue that life must have had a beginning in the infinite past and that beginning or the first cause is the Creator. "In that case there is no reason why the same demand may not be made of this postulated Creator."

Instead of vainly seeking for a beginning in a beginningless past the Buddha advises us to find out the cause of this re-birth and utilise our energy to transfer this life-stream to the sorrowless and peaceful state—*Nibbāna*.

In the search after the cause of birth and death Buddhism takes for its starting point the being as it is, here and now, and traces back the causes of its conditioned existence.

From the Buddhist point of view all men and animals are composed of interrelated mind and matter (*Nāma* and *Rūpa*), which constantly change with lightning rapidity, not remaining the same even for two consecutive moments.

Though all are identical inasmuch as they possess the two common factors, mind and matter, yet they are all so varied that, leaving lower animals aside, even amongst mankind no two persons are found to be alike in any respect—each person having his particular traits of character.

Tracing back the individual, therefore, to the foetus in the womb to see where lies the cause, we again discover two common factors—the sperm-cell and the ovum-cell. Now a question might arise as to whether these two are the only materials for the production of the foetus. If so, we cannot comprehend why precisely “A” should fortunately or unfortunately spring from the particular sperm and ovum-cell and not “B”, since one has equal claims as the other. †

Buddhism offers a solution to this intricate problem by attributing this appropriation of cell-matter to the existence of a third factor which is vital for the formation of the foetus. “By the conjunction of three, O Bhikkhus”, says the Buddha, “does the formation of life come about. If mother and father come together but it is not the mother’s proper period, and the ‘being-to-be-born’ (*Gandhabba*) does not present itself, a germ of life is not planted. If mother and father come together and it is the mother’s proper period, and the ‘being-to-be-born’ also presents itself, then a germ of life is there planted.”*

This newly discovered element is, in the words of the Abhidhamma, termed *Paṭisadhiviññāṇa* (Re-linking Consciousness).

We have now found the first term of the life’s progression, but our limited knowledge does not help us to proceed further and determine the cause of this relinking consciousness which is essential for the “being-to-be-born.”

† See Dhalke, *Buddhism and Science*.

* Compare “*omne vivum e vivo*”—“all life from life.”

The Buddha, however, developing a super-normal insight so as to penetrate into realms beyond the reach of normal sense, comprehended the root of this third element. He tells us that the coming into being of the re-linking consciousness is dependent upon the passing away of another consciousness in a past birth, and the process of coming into being and passing away is the result of a powerful force known as *Katama*.

But how are we to believe that there is a past existence?

The most valuable evidence Buddhists cite in favour of rebirth is the Buddha, for He developed a knowledge which enabled Him to read past and future lives.

Following His instructions His disciples also developed this knowledge and were able to read their past lives to a great extent.

Even some Indian Rishis, before the advent of the Buddha, were distinguished for such psychic powers as clairaudience, clairvoyance, thought reading, remembering past births, etc.

There are also some persons, who probably in accordance with the laws of association, suddenly develop the memory of their past birth and remember fragments of their previous lives. Such cases are very rare, but those few isolated instances tend to throw some light on the idea of a past birth. So are the experience of some modern reliable psychists and strange cases of alternating and multiple personalities.

Sometimes we get strange experiences which cannot be explained but by rebirth.

How often do we meet persons whom we have never met, and yet inwardly feel that they are quite familiar to us? How often do we visit places, and yet feel impressed that we are perfectly acquainted with those surroundings?

The Buddha tells us :—

*“ Through previous associations or present advantage,
That old love springs up again like the lotus in the water.”*

Into this world come perfect Ones like the Buddhas and highly developed personalities. Do they evolve suddenly? Can they be the products of a single existence?

How are we to account for colossal characters like Homer and Plato, men of genius like Shakespeare, infant prodigies like Pascal, Mozart, Beethoven, Raphael, etc.?

Heredity alone cannot account for them, "else their ancestry would disclose it, their posterity, even greater than themselves, demonstrate it."

Could they rise to such lofty heights if they had not lived noble lives and gained similar experiences in the past? Is it by mere chance that they are born of those particular parents and placed under those favourable circumstances?

The few years that we are privileged to spend here, or for the most five score years, must certainly be an inadequate preparation for eternity.

If one believes in the present and in the future, it is quite logical to believe in the past. The present is the offspring of the past, and is the parent of the future.

If there are reasons to believe that we have existed in the past, then surely there are no reasons to disbelieve that we shall continue to exist after our present life has apparently ceased.

It is indeed a strong argument in favour of past and future lives that "in this world virtuous persons are very often unfortunate and vicious persons prosperous."

A Western writer says :—

"Whether we believe in a past existence or not, it forms the only reasonable hypothesis which bridges certain gaps in human knowledge concerning certain facts of every day life. Our reason tells us that this idea of past birth and Karma alone can explain the degrees of difference that exist between twins, how men like Shakespeare with a very limited experience are able to portray with marvellous exactitude the most diverse types of human character, scenes and so forth of which they could have no actual knowledge, why the work of the genius invariably transcends his experience, the existence of infant precocity, the vast diversity in mind and morals, in brain and physique, in conditions, circumstances, and environment observable throughout the world, and so forth.

The cause of this Kamma, continues the Buddha, is Avijjā or Ignorance of the four Noble Truths. Ignorance is, therefore, the cause of birth and death; and its transmutation into Knowingness or Vijjā is consequently their cessation.

The result of this Vibhajja Method of analysis is summed up in the Paticca Samuppāda.

PATICCA SAMUPPĀDA

Paticca means because of, or dependent upon; *Samuppāda*, "arising or origination." *Paticca Samuppāda*, therefore, literally means—"Dependent-Arising" or "Dependent Origination."

It must be borne in mind that *Paticca Samuppāda* is only a discourse on the process of birth and death, and not a theory of the evolution of the world from primordial matter. It deals with the cause of rebirth and suffering, but it does not in the least attempt to show the absolute origin of life.

Ignorance (*Avijjā*) is the first link or cause of the wheel of life. It clouds all right understanding.

Dependent on ignorance of the Four Noble Truths arise activities (*Sankhārā*)—both moral and immoral. The activities whether good or bad rooted in ignorance which must necessarily have their due effects only tend to prolong wandering in Saṃsāra. Nevertheless good actions are essential to get rid of the ills of Saṃsāra.

Dependent on activities arises re-birth consciousness (*Viññāṇa*). This links the past with the present.

Simultaneous with the arising of rebirth-consciousness there come into being mind and body (*Nāma Rūpa*).

The six senses (*Salāyatana*) are the inevitable consequences of mind and body.

Because of the six senses contact or *Phassa* sets in.

Contact leads to sensation (*Vedanā*).

These five, *viz.*, consciousness, mind and matter, six senses, contact and sensation are the effects of past actions and are called the passive side of life.

Dependent on sensations arises craving (*Tanhā*).

Craving results in attachment (*Upādāna*).

Attachment is the cause of *Kamma* (*Bhava*) which, in its turn, conditions future birth (*Jāti*).

Birth is the inevitable cause of old age and death (*Jarā-Marana*).

If on account of a cause the effect comes to be, then if the cause ceases, the effect also must cease.

The reverse order of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* will make the matter clear.

Old age and death are possible in, and with, a psycho-physical organism. Such an organism must be born; therefore it pre-supposes birth. But birth is the inevitable result of past deeds or *Kamma*. *Kamma* is conditioned by attachment which is due to craving. Such craving can appear only where sensation is. Sensation is the outcome of contact between the senses and object. Therefore it pre-supposes organs of senses which cannot exist without mind and body. Where there is a mind there is consciousness. It is the result of good and evil of the past. The acquisition of good and evil is due to ignorance of things as they truly are.

The whole formula may be summed up thus:—

- Dependent on Ignorance arise Activities (moral and immoral),
- „ „ Activities arise Consciousness (Re-birth Consciousness),
- „ „ Consciousness arise Mind and Matter,
- „ „ Mind and Matter arise the six Spheres of Sense,
- „ „ the six Spheres of Sense arises Contact,
- „ „ Contact arises Sensation,
- „ „ Sensation arises Craving,
- „ „ Craving arises Attachment,
- „ „ Attachment arise Actions (*Kamma*),
- „ „ Actions arise Re-birth.
- „ „ Birth arise Decay, Death, Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief and Despair.

Thus does the entire aggregate of Suffering arise. The first two of these twelve pertain to the past, the middle eight to the present, and the last two to the future.

The complete cessation of Ignorance leads to the cessation of Activities.

- The Cessation of Activities leads to the Cessation of Consciousness,
 " " Consciousness leads to the Cessation of Mind and Matter,
 " " Mind and Matter leads to the Cessation of the six Spheres of Sense,
 " " the six Spheres of Sense leads to the Cessation of Contact,
 " " Contact leads to the Cessation of Sensation,
 " " Sensation leads to the Cessation of Craving,
 " " Craving leads to the Cessation of Attachment,
 " " Attachment leads to the Cessation of Actions,
 " " Actions leads to the Cessation of Re-Birth,
 " " Re-birth leads to the Cessation of Decay, Death, Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief and Despair.

Thus does the cessation of this entire aggregate of suffering result.

This process of cause and effect continues *ad infinitum*. The beginning of this process cannot be determined as it is impossible to say whence this life-flux was encompassed by nescience. But when this nescience is turned into knowledge, and the life-flux is diverted into Nibbānadhātu, then the end of the life process or Saṃsāra comes about.

ANATTA OR SOUL-LESSNESS

Anatta Doctrine :—

This Buddhist doctrine of re-birth should be distinguished from the theory of re-incarnation or transmigration, for

Buddhism denies the existence of an unchanging or eternal soul.

A soul which is eternal must necessarily remain always the same without any change whatsoever. If the soul, which is supposed to be the essence of man, is eternal, there cannot be either a rise or a fall. Besides one cannot understand why "different souls are so variously constituted at the outset."

To prove the existence of endless felicity in an eternal heaven and unending torments in an eternal hell, an immortal soul is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, what is it that sinned on earth and is punished in hell?

"It should be said", writes Bertrand Russell, "that the old distinction between soul and body has evaporated quite as much because 'matter' has lost its solidity as because mind has lost its spirituality. Psychology is just beginning to be scientific. In the present state of psychology belief in immortality can at any rate claim no support from science."

Buddhists do agree with Russell when he says "there is obviously some reason in which I am the same person as I was yesterday, and, to take an even more obvious example, if I simultaneously see a man and hear him speaking, there is some sense in which the 'I' that sees is the same as the 'I' that hears."

Till recently scientists believed in an indivisible and indestructible atom. "For sufficient reasons physicists have reduced this atom to a series of events. For equally good reasons psychologists find that mind has not the identity of a single continuing thing but is a series of occurrences bound together by certain intimate relations. The questions of immortality, therefore, has become the question whether these intimate relations exist between occurrences connected with a living body and other occurrences which take place after that body is dead."

As C. E. M. Joad says in "The Meaning of Life", Matter has since disintegrated under our very eyes. It is no longer solid; it is no longer enduring; it is no longer determined by compulsive causal laws; and more important than all, it is no longer known."

The so-called atoms, it seems, are both "divisible and destructible." The electrons and protons that compose atoms "can meet and annihilate one another while their persistence, such as it is, is rather that of a wave lacking fixed boundaries, and in process of continual change both as regards shape and position than that of a thing."*

Bishop Berkley who showed that this so-called atom is a metaphysical fiction held that there exists a spiritual substance called the soul.

Hume, for instance, looked into consciousness and perceived that there was nothing except fleeting mental states and concluded that the supposed 'permanent *ego* is non-existent.'

"There are some philosophers", he says, "who imagine we are every moment conscious of what we call 'ourselves'; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence and so we are certain.....both of its perfect identity and simplicity. For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call 'myself' I always stumble on some particular perception or other—of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself.....and never can observe anything but the perception.....nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect non-entity."

Bergson says, "All consciousness is time existence; and a conscious state is not a state that endures without changing. It is a change without ceasing; when change ceases it ceases; it is itself nothing but change."

Dealing with this question of soul Prof. James says—"The soul-theory is a complete superfluity, so far as accounting for the actually verified facts of conscious experience goes. So far no one can be compelled to subscribe to it for definite scientific reasons." In concluding his interesting chapter on the soul he says:—"And in this book the provisional solution which we have reached must be the final word: *the thoughts themselves are the thinkers.*"

The Buddha anticipated these facts some 2500 years ago.

According to Buddhism matter is merely the manifestation of forces and qualities. Mind too is nothing but a complex

compound of fleeting mental states. Each unit of consciousness consists of three phases—genesis (Uppāda), development (Ṭhiti), and dissolution (Bhanga). One unit of consciousness perishes only to give birth to another. The subsequent thought-moment is neither absolutely the same as its predecessor—since that which goes to make it up is not identical—nor entirely another—being the same continuity of Kamma energy. Here there is an identity in process.

It must not be understood that a consciousness is chopped up in bits and joined together like a train or a chain. But, on the contrary, “it persistently flows on like a river receiving from the tributary streams of sense constant accretions to its flood, and ever dispensing to the world without it the thought-stuff it has gathered by the way.”† It has birth for its source and death for its mouth. The rapidity of the flow is such that hardly is there any standard whereby it can be measured even approximately. However it pleases the commentators to say that the time duration of one thought-movement is even less than one-billionth part of the time occupied by a flash of lightning.

Here we find a juxta-position of such fleeting mental states of consciousness opposed to a super-position of such states as some appear to believe. No state once gone ever recurs nor is identical with what goes before. But we worldlings, veiled by the web of illusion, mistake this apparent continuity to be something eternal and go to the extent of positing an unchanging soul, an Atta, the doer and receptacle of all actions, to this changing consciousness.

“The so-called being is like a flash of lightning that is resolved into a succession of sparks that follow upon one another with such rapidity that the human retina cannot perceive them separately, nor can the uninstructed conceive of such succession of separate sparks.”* As the wheel of a cart rests on the ground on one point, so does the being live only for one thought-moment. It is always in the present, and is ever slipping into the past. What we shall become is determined by this present thought-moment. We are what we were; we will be what we are.

†See Compendium of Philosophy—Introduction—p. 12.

*Compare the cinematograph film where individual photographs give rise to a notion of movement.

If there is no soul, what is it that is re-born? one might ask.

Well, there is nothing to be re-born. When life ceases the Kammic energy re-materialises itself in another form. As Bhikkhu Silācara says: "Unseen it passes whithersoever the conditions appropriate to its visible manifestation are present, here showing itself as a tiny gnat or worm, there making its presence known in the dazzling magnificence of a Deva or an Archangel's existence. When one mode of its manifestation ceases it merely passes on, and where subtle circumstances offer, reveals itself afresh in another name or form."

Buddhism does not totally deny the existence of a personality in an empirical sense. It only attempts to show that it does not exist in an ultimate sense. The Buddhist Philosophical term for an individual is Santāna, *i.e.*, a flux or a continuity. It includes the mental and physical elements as well. The Kammic force of each individual binds these elements together. This uninterrupted flux or continuity of psycho-physical phenomenon, which is conditioned by Kamma, and not limited only to the present life, but having its source in the beginningless past and its continuation in the future—is the Buddhist substitute for the permanent ego or the immortal soul of other religions.

NIBBĀNA

This process of birth and death continues *ad infinitum* until this flux is transmuted, so to say, to Nibbānadhātu, the ultimate goal of Buddhists.

The Pāli word Nibbāna is formed of *Ni* and *Vāna*. *Ni* is a negative particle and *Vāna* means lusting or craving. "It is called Nibbāna, in that it is a departure from the craving which is called *Vāna*, lusting."

It may also be defined as the extinction of lust, hatred, and ignorance. "The whole world is in flames", says the Buddha. "By what fire is it kindled? By the fire of lust, hatred, and ignorance, by the fire of birth, old age, death, pain, lamentation, sorrow, grief, and despair it is kindled."

It should not be understood that Nibbāna is a state of nothingness or annihilation owing to the fact that we cannot conceive it with our worldly knowledge. One cannot

say that there exists no light just because the blind man does not see it. In that well known story, too, the fish arguing with his friend the turtle triumphantly concluded that there exists no land.

Nibbāna of the Buddhists is neither a mere nothingness nor a state of annihilation, but what it is no words can adequately express. Nibbāna is a Dhamma which is "unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, and unformed," Hence it is eternal (Dhuvā), desirable (Subhā), and happy (Sukhā).

In Nibbāna nothing is "eternalised", nor is anything "annihilated", besides suffering.

According to the Books references are made to Nibbāna as *Sopādisesa* and *Anupādisesa*. These, in fact, are not two kinds of Nibbāna, but the one single Nibbāna, receiving its name according to the way it is experienced before and after death.

Nibbāna is not situated in any place nor is it a sort of heaven where a transcendental *ego* resides. It is a state which is dependent upon this body itself. It is an attainment (Dhamma) which is within the reach of all. Nibbāna is attainable even in this present life. Buddhism does not state that this ultimate goal could be reached only in a life beyond. Here lies the chief difference between the Buddhist conception of Nibbāna and the non-Buddhist conception of an eternal heaven attainable only after death. When Nibbāna is realised in this life with the body remaining, it is called *Sopādisesa Nibbāna-dhātu*. When an *Arahat* attains *Parinibbāna*, after the dissolution of his body, without any remainder of physical existence it is called *Anupādisesa Nibbāna-dhātu*.

In the words of Sir Edwin Arnold—

*"If any teach Nirvana is to cease
Say unto such they lie.*

*If any teach Nirvana is to live
Say unto such they err."*

THE PATH TO NIBBĀNA

How is the Nibbāna to be attained ?

It is by following the Noble Eight-fold Path which consists of Morality (*Sīla*), Concentration (*Samādhi*), and Wisdom (*Paññā*).*

The Buddha expresses this in the following beautiful little verse:—

*Sabba pāpassa akaraṇaṃ
Kusalassa upasampadā
Sacitta pariyodapanam
Etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ*

To refrain from all evil,
To do what is good,
To cleanse one's mind;
This is the advice of all the Buddhas.

Sīla or morality is the first stage on this path to Nibbāna.

Without killing or causing injury to any living creature, he should be kind and compassionate towards all, even to the tiniest creature that crawls at his feet. Refraining from stealing "whether in its dissembled or obvious forms", he should be upright and honest in all his dealings. Abstaining from sexual misconduct which debases the exalted nature of man, he should be pure and chaste. Shunning false speech, he should be truthful. Avoiding pernicious drinks that promote heedlessness, he should be sober and diligent.

These elementary principles of regulated behaviour are essential to one who treads the path to Nibbāna. Violation of them means the introduction of obstacles on the path which will obstruct his moral progress. Observance of them means steady and smooth progress along the path.

If the spiritual pilgrim finds these five precepts too elementary, he may advance a step further and observe the eight or even the ten precepts.

*Right understanding (*Sammā-Diṭṭhi*), Right Thoughts (*Sammā-Saṅkappa*), Right speech (*Sammā-Vācā*), Right Actions (*Sammā-Kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*Sammā-Ājīva*), Right Effort (*Sammā-Vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-Sati*) and Right Concentration (*Sammā-Samādhi*) constitute the Noble Eightfold Path.

It will be noticed that as the pilgrim proceeds on this high way, he is expected to live a life of strict celibacy, simplicity, voluntary poverty, self-control and the nourishing of the body sparingly, "lest the vigour and well being might foster indolence, sloth and torpidude," and worldly bonds might impede his progress.

Whilst he progresses slowly and steadily with regulated word and deed and restrained senses, the Kammic force of this striving aspirant compels him to renounce worldly pleasures and adopt the ascetic life. To him then comes the idea that

"A den of strife is household life,
And filled with toil and need;
But free and high as the open sky
Is the life the homeless lead."

In the guise of a Bhikkhu, he leads the life of voluntary poverty and practises the four kinds of Higher Sila—*viz.*, Discipline as prescribed by the Pātimokkha, Sense-restraint, Purity of Conduct connected with livelihood, and Conduct in connection with the necessaries of life.

Securing a firm footing on the ground of Sila, the progressing pilgrim then embarks upon the higher practice of Samādhi, the control and culture of the mind—the second stage on this Path.

Samādhi—is the "One-pointedness of the mind." It is the concentration of the mind at will on one object to the entire exclusion of all irrelevant matter.

After giving a careful consideration to the subject for contemplation, he should choose the one most suited to his temperament. This being satisfactorily settled he makes a persistent effort to focus his mind until he becomes so wholly absorbed and interested in it, that all other thoughts get *ipso facto* excluded from the mind. The five Hindrances to progress—namely, sense-desire, hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and brooding, and doubts are then temporarily inhibited. Eventually he gains ecstatic concentration and, to his indescribable joy, becomes enwrapt in *Jhāna*, enjoying the calmness and serenity of a one-pointed-mind.

When one gains this perfect one-pointedness of the mind it is possible for one to develop the five Supernormal Powers (Abhiññā)—Divine Eye (Dibbacakkhu), Divine Ear (Dibbasota), Reminiscence of past births (Pubbenivāsānussati Nāṇa), Thought Reading (Paracitta Vijānana), and different Psychic Powers (Iddhividha). It must not be understood that those supernormal powers are essential for Sainthood.

Though the mind is now purified there still lies dormant in him the tendency to give vent to his passions, for, by concentration passions are lulled to sleep temporarily. They may rise to the surface at unexpected moments.

Both Discipline and Concentration are helpful to clear the Path of its obstacles but it is Insight (Vipassanā Paññā) alone which enables one to see things as they truly are, and consequently reach the ultimate goal by completely annihilating the passions inhibited by Samādhi. This is the third and the final stage on the Path to Nibbāna.

With his one-pointed mind which now resembles a polished mirror he looks at the world to get a correct view of life. Wherever he turns his eyes he sees nought but the Three Characteristics—Anicca (transiency), Dukkha (sorrow) and Anatta (soul-lessness)—standing out in bold relief. He comprehends that life is a fleeting, continuous, undivided movement. Neither in heaven nor on earth does he find any genuine happiness, for every form of pleasure is only a prelude to pain. What is transient is therefore painful, and where change and sorrow prevail, there cannot be a permanent "ego."

Whereupon he takes one of the above three characteristics which appeals to him most and intently keeps on developing Insight in that particular direction until that glorious day comes to him when he would realise Nibbāna for the first time in his life, having destroyed the three Fetters—self-illusion (*Sakkāya diṭṭhi*), doubts (*Vicikicchā*) indulgence in wrongful rites and ceremonies (*Sīlabbataparāmāsa*).

At this stage he is called a *Sotāpanna*—one who has entered the stream that leads to Nibbāna. As he has not eradicated all Fetters he is reborn seven times at the most.

Summoning up fresh courage, as a result of this distant glimpse of Nibbāna, the Aryan Pilgrim makes rapid progress

and cultivating deeper Insight becomes a *Sakadāgāmi*—Once Returner—by weakening two more Fetters—namely, Sense-desire (*Kāmarāga*) and ill-will (*Pāpighā*). He is called a *Sakadāgāmi* because he is reborn on earth only once in case he does not attain Arahatsip.

It is in the third stage of Sainthood—*Anāgāmi*, (Never-Returner) that he completely discards the above two Fetters. Thereafter he neither returns to this world nor does he seek birth in the celestial realms, since he has no more desire for sensual pleasures. After death he is reborn in the “Pure Abodes”, (*Suddhāvāsa*), a congenial place meant exclusively for *Anāgāmins* and *Arahants*.

Now the earnest pilgrim, encouraged by the unprecedented success of his endeavours, makes his final advance and destroying the remaining Fetters, namely, lust after life in Realms of Forms (*Rūparāga*) and Formless Realms (*Arūparāga*), conceit (*Māna*), restlessness (*Uddhacca*), and ignorance (*Avijjā*) becomes a perfect Saint by attaining Arahatsip.

Instantly he realises that what was to be accomplished has been done, that a heavy burden of sorrow has been relinquished, that all forms of the “will-to-live” have been totally annihilated, and that the Path to *Nibbāna* has been trodden. The happy pilgrim now stands on heights more than celestial, far removed from the rebellious passions and defilements of the world, realising the unutterable Bliss of *Nibbāna* and like many an *Arahat* of old, uttering that paeon of joy:—

“ Good-will and wisdom, mind by method trained,
The highest conduct on good morals based,
This maketh mortals pure, not rank or wealth.”

MAY ALL BEINGS BE WELL AND HAPPY!



Printed at The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd., Lake House, Colombo
for *Vijñāna Publications Society*, Bambalapitiya—March 1954.

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