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“Sila Paññānato Jayam”

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CASTE AND SOCIETY

THE institution of caste is essentially Hindu, and being purely a Vedic institution, it is invariably connected with the Vedic social polity and may perhaps remain a permanent factor in the evolution of the Indian people which in Brahamin-ridden India was and still is an obsession.

The earliest reference to the division of society is found in the Purusa Sukta, and thereafter we find the class system gradually developing into the rigid caste system as found today. In the earlier Vedic period the four divisions of society were the four Varnas, that originated from the body of Brahma; the Brahamins from the mouth of the Brahma, the Kshatriyas from the arms of the Brahma, the Vessas from the thigh of Brahma and the Sudras from the feet of Brahma.

Although the belief is such, the Bhadaranayaka Upanishad states that in the beginning there was only one caste. All people belonged to one class; there was no privileged class. However, during a later period this complexity of life led to a division of society. But even this division of men into different castes came about as we see according to the social needs of that time. The Brahamans were the priests. They were to have no property nor executive power. They were the seers who constituted the conscience of society. The Kshatriyas were the administrators. The Vaisyas or Vessas were the traders and craftsmen—men of technical ability who aimed at efficiency. Last, but not least were the Sudras, the routine workers—the proletariat.

A close examination of these facts would reveal to us that these caste groups or divisions of society were more of trade guilds in charge of the cultural, political, economic and

By
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industrial sections of the community. Dr. Sarvapali Radhskrishnan says that among the four Varnas “there was a healthy social mobility, and for long Varnas did not become hereditary, crystallised castes.” Although the division of society was based on the caste system, caste then did not know its modern rigour.

During the Rg. Vedic period we find caste system only in a nebulous form. There were no rigid restrictions with regard to occupations, inter-marriage and inter-dining. Coming on to the period of the Brahamanas we find the caste system consolidated and what was originally a social institution was now a religious one. A divine sanction was given to it and the laws that developed around this caste system gave way to rigidity and the individual who transgressed the rules of caste came to be known, as a rebel and an outcaste.

By the time of the Buddha, the subject of caste was a burning problem. The Brahamins and the Kshatriyas were claiming ascendancy over each other. Society was torn asunder in the caste jumble. The Buddha, however, was not prepared to accept a division of society as “high” and “low.” He vehemently protested against that degrading caste system which was firmly rooted in the soil of India, and became the pioneer to abolish that unworthy scourge. The Buddha based recognition not on the aristocracy of birth but on the aristocracy of the *Intellect*. After

enlightenment, the Buddha organised the monastic order of the Sangha which was the first of its kind in the world. Caste nor colour did withhold anyone from joining this Holy Order. People from all walks of life who joined the Sangha met on a common platform and lived in fraternal affection enjoying equal privileges. Sunita an honoured member of the Sangha was only a scavenger. Angulimala was a criminal. Upali, the chief exponent of the Vinaya was a barber.

Up to the time of the Buddha there was none to protest against this unwanted division of society. But the Buddha refuted this selfish classification of the Brahamins and based his contention on moral and ethical grounds. In the Vasala Sutta the Buddha clearly lays out his views on the caste system. To the Brahamin Aggika Bharadvaja who insultingly called Him, Vasala (outcaste), the Buddha with his unflinching love explained the attributes of the outcaste and in doing so, he enunciated all those immoral and anti-social tendencies and actions that go into the making of a menial and summed up emphatically by saying “Not by birth is one a Vasala, not by birth is one a Brahamin. By birth is one a Vasala, by deeds is one a Brahamin.”

Following the footsteps of the Buddha, King Dharmasoka emancipated his subjects from the chain of Brahmanical tyranny, by abolishing the caste system and securing easy inter-marriage. Asoka thereby raised the dignity of his lowest subjects and in the words of Prof. Dodwell, “he gave a validity and a reality to the life of millions who were so far only beasts of burden.”

The abolition of caste system taught the equality of man and gave equal opportunities to all to

distinguish themselves in every walk of life and thereby united India into a homogeneous unit. This speaks for the prosperity of India under Asoka.

Sri Lanka though a predominantly Buddhist country has always been overshadowed by her mighty neighbour India, from whom she has derived this Hindu caste system. The reason for this is not for to seek. Ceylon's proximity to India has caused her to be continuously influenced by India and every great change in India political, religious, social, or economic had its repercussions in our Island home and every wave of Indian civilisation in ancient and medieval times made its way to this Island and left its indelible mark on the life and thought of our people.

With the advent of foreign invasions from South India there came the infiltration of the caste system to Lanka. The South Indian kings who ruled Lanka were great patronisers of Hinduism and it is said that during the occupation of the Cholas, Hinduism received a great deal of encouragement. Even at a later period with the expulsion of the Tamils, Hindu influence did not disappear, as we see from the fact that the spread of caste system, which had begun simultaneously with the spread of Hinduism, had by now gained a permanent footing in our Island home. Our ancient Sinhalese kings, too, were influenced by the laws of Manu which among other things deals with caste. History tells us of a Sinhalese King Vijaya Bahu by name who built on Adam's Peak a lower terrace from which people of the so-called lower castes could worship.

In the past, however, the caste division existed on account of tribal family system and this system was a sheer necessity for the life of the individual, as it gave him protection and satisfied his social needs. Its members may have therefore upheld the interests even at the expenses of their own. But today there is no need for such an observance as conditions have vastly changed.

Though the people of Lanka influenced by Hinduism have adopted a caste system and cling on to it, the observance of it is one of the many evils that Buddha discountenanced both in precept and practice. It is rather unfortunate to see that in spite of the denunciation of caste by the Buddha there exists even today in Buddhist Lanka, a very strong caste feeling among the Sangha and laity who claim to be the close followers of the Blessed One.

It was only recently that newspaper reports brought to light the sorry plight of the so-called Rodiya people who were harrassed and starved as a sequel and reprisal to having sent their children to schools. There were again reports still more recent of a communal feud in Kadurupokuna in the Tangalle District, which began as a result of the so-called Berawa caste children wearing banians. It was further alleged that these unfortunate people who are ostracised were harassed in many other ways; for instance, private roads and footpaths were closed to them. Another story of how a child belonging to a "low" caste on his way to hospital with influenza was prevented from wearing a coat by the so-called "high"

caste people was related by a certain M.P. in Parliament. Yet another case was brought to the notice of the House of Representatives by another M.P. where a monk in charge of a temple protested to the authorities against the appointment of an educated "low" caste boy as a teacher of a Government School situated in the temple premises.

There are just a few of the many instances, where we find the unfortunate members of the depressed classes being harassed. And yet we Buddhists talk of Maitri, compassion and tolerance. What tolerance could we boast of, if one has not the bear minimum freedom of attending a school, or the right to walk on a road, or wear a banian.

This custom of observing caste divisions is really repulsive to any civilised and cultured nation. We have been often reminded that caste is the canker that will be the end of our religion our culture and our traditions. Hence it is the duty of every sincere Buddhist in particular, and every right thinking individual in general to eradicate this scourge which is sucking the life blood of our erring nation. This unwanted and outmoded custom has not only disintegrated society but destroyed the very structure of our national and political unity.

Let us once and for all remember that it is our deeds that count and not our Birth. It is time that this hoary and tenacious relic of the past must die.

"Gotama Ashrama,"
Wellawatte.

A BUDDHIST EMPIRE—A MESSAGE TO STUDENTS

ONE of the greatest empires that the world saw in the past was the Roman Empire.

The Emperors of Rome ruled from Spain in the West to Egypt and Asia Minor in the East; from Britain in the North to Carthage (North Africa) in the South. They spared no country to which they could send their armies. No one could face in fight the drilled and disciplined armies of Rome. Whole

By

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countries went under their yoke often without a fight.

You must read in history books some day of "the grandeur that was Rome" during the days of their

glory. Emperor and plebian gloried in Pageants which showed to the world that there was "none invincible as they." The sights that the ordinary Roman citizen enjoyed were combats where gladiators or men like Androcles were put to fight wild beasts in the arena. In private life well-to-do Romans used to have orgies of eating and drinking and night-long feasts where wine, women and song provided entertainment.

Men, women and children from the conquered countries were sold as slaves in the market place in Rome. A British king was taken along a street chained to the wheels of an Emperor's chariot. A British queen was once whipped by Roman soldiers. An English poet tells how she cursed these "Romans, pitiless and proud"—

Rome, for Empire far renowned
Tramples on a thousand states ;
Soon her pride shall kiss the ground—
Hark ! the Gaul is at her gates!"

Actually, hordes of enemies stormed the very gates of Rome in 453 A.C., and soon the great Roman Empire crashed.

Here now is the map of another Empire that the world saw, but of a different kind. No wars were fought to win over so many countries. No force of arms kept this great Empire together. No one ever cursed this Empire. Time alone broke up this great family of free peoples who were all brothers in one Faith and in one Way of Life.

This was the Buddhist World as it was from the first century after the death of the Buddha all the long period during which dynasties like Tsings and the Tangs ruled in China, the Sailendras ruled in the islands of the South Seas, the Kushans, the Mayuras and the Guptas ruled over India, the Mahavansa and the early Suluvansa kings ruled in Ceylon. This Empire spread as far north as the of the Caspian sea, and Russian and Chinese Turkestan in the north, and China and Japan in the East. From Persia in the West it stretched across Afghanistan and India and Lanka to the islands of South-East Asia. It embraced Burma, Siam and Indo-China.

Who were the soldiers who waged the wars that won such a vast Empire ? We do not know all their names, but we do know that their only armour was the yellow robe and that their only weapons were thoughts of love, for the orders they received from their General were—

Go ye, my Warriors, Wander !
Go forth where warriors can !
In great compassion strive ye
For the good, for the gain of
Man.

Proclaim the Doctrine Glorious !
Live ye My Way of Life—
Perfect and pure and holy ;—
Forth, Warriors ! to the strife !

The adventures of these monk-warriors marching on their mission of mercy have yet to be told in full. Some day you will marvel at the courage of these men who braved the dangers of the desert wastes, of the rough seas, of the wild mountains and of wilder men they encountered in their journeys into the unknown.

Many that went out died like Moggallana at the hands of wild men. Many may have never arrived. Most of them never saw their native land again. But we have no doubt that each one gloried in the Great Adventure—a mission of Love, undertaken "in compassion for the world, . . . for the welfare of mankind."

These early pioneers of travel did not have the advantages that we have today of a knowledge of the Geography of the places to travel to. We read of perilous voyages made by missionaries from Lanka—one was a party of Sinhalese nuns—to far China. We read of missionaries crossing the mountain fastnesses from India-east to Burma, Aramanna and Siam, north to Kashmir and Tibet, and north-west to the caravan routes that led across the desert wastes of Turkestan to China. Along such ways did the first missionaries trek arduously, if fearlessly, with the injunction of the Master a proud song on their lips—

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සමානසන්තා මම බමම ගෙරි.
සංඛි. බලෙන්තා මම බමම සංඛි.
වරදා වූමනෙ සන්තරමරායා.

"Proclaim with zest the Import of the Noble Teaching ; beat loud, far and wide, the Tabor of the Truth. Let the Trumpet of the Sublime Doctrine be heard in every quarter ; live ye for the good of gods and men."

And wherever they went, sowing the seeds of Love and Brotherliness, the deserts and fastnesses bloomed into prosperous colonies of contented, happy people. and wild men turned to the Paths of Peace.

The remains of great Roman roads and buildings, public theatres and private villas, monuments and memorials, mighty walls put up against enemies and temples built for their gods, and above all their writings tell us everything about Roman ways of life and thought.

Even so, scattered all over Asia are ruins that speak eloquently of

our ways of life when we thought and lived in the Buddhist Way—Danasalas and Dharmasalas for monk and mendicant, viharas and dagobas and preaching halls for the pious, caves and retreats for the recluse and student, hospitals for man and beast. The ruins found of our monastery-universities show us that they served more than with book-learning. They produced better types than learned men.

In Bamien and Hadda in Afghanistan are remains of colossal Buddha *rupas* built when Buddhism was a living force in that country, and of Kandahar (the Buddhist city of Gandhara) with its Buddha-rupa famous throughout the world. In the Punjab are Peshawar (Purushapura) and Taxila, the famous Buddhist University. In the deserts of Russian and Chinese Turkestan have been unearthed from the sand a Temple with a thousand Buddha-rupa and old Buddhist writings on scrolls of silk. On the Oxus river (on whose sands Sohrab fought Rhustum) was the Buddhist country of the Yeuchis during the time of Christ, and further North-east more Buddhist countries, Kotan, Ferghana, Ngansi, (Parthia) and Takhia (Bactria) on the ancient highway to China. China itself received Buddhism in the third century before Christ, and with Tibet, Siam, Burma remain yet the land of Monastery and Pagoda. In Indo-China are the Temples of Angkor Vat and Khmer, and in Japan the colossal Buddha at Kamakura and the ruins of Horiuji and Nara.

In Java is the marvel of a temple at Borobudur where the Jataka stories are carved in three miles of stone as beautifully as at Anuradhapura or Polonnaruwa. In the islands of Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes, Bali and in the Maldives are not only Buddhist ruins but literature and songs and dances that began with ceremonies of Buddhist worship. In India the Emperor Dharmasoka alone is said to have built 84,000 Viharas, Temples and Hospitals. The ruins found at Amaravati, Ajanta, Nalanda and elephants are world-famous.

In our own country are the sacred Bo Tree sent by Dharmasoka,—the oldest historic tree in the world—the relics of the Buddha enshrined in so many dagobas, the world-famed ruins of our buried cities, and in every nook and corner a temple, and in every temple, pious devotees yet. Buddhists are

the largest number of people in our country, and we are even more proud of the fact in Lanka we first put down in writing and preserved ever since the word of the Buddha as it was first uttered.

The passage of centuries has broken down the friendships that existed for several centuries among these brother Buddhist countries. Many of these peoples have been conquered by foreign nations and have had to give up the faith of their fathers and forget their old culture. But still in this vast area in Asia alone are 300 million Buddhists—almost one-third of the human race,—yet following the Religion of the Buddha in their own way. Many, even like the Sinhala

of today may have strayed from the good ways of life; many may have copied foreigners in their modes of life and thought. But ingrained in the character of a people that once lived right and thought only thoughts of love is always a nobility of behaviour that cannot be destroyed by a generation or two of change.

An Englishman* who lived many years in Ceylon in the 19th century saw in our ordinary people a trace yet of this dignity of carriage and behaviour and wrote that the ordinary Kandyan villager, washed of his mud, was dignified enough and fit to rule a kingdom. Almost yesterday a greater student of human nature and a great writer,† spoke,

after a world-tour, of "the extreme attractiveness of the Sinhala people who appeared manifestly to be the most successful human bodily type . . . produced by the life-force in the form of man, not only by reason of physical grace and charm, but by natural good humour, courtesy and quickness of sympathy and intelligence.

Thus, as in our case, a great past is always "pulsing hot in these peoples' veins, and they cannot help showing—

"In pose, in word, in bearing
A grace of other years"

lived—long years in higher, better ways than now—"in the ways of religion and truth."

THE THIRST FOR BUDDHISM

THE evergrowing thirst for Buddhism is realized not only in the East, but also in the West. To quench this unending thirst of the Buddha Dhamma various missionaries from time to time visit this thrice blessed isle of "Dhammadvipa." Sri-Lanka is the fountain-head which bubbles out the holy water of peace and happiness to quench the thirst of the many and the suffering. That is not all. It is the radiating centre which shoots out the sublime rays of the "Torch of Truth." The World Fellowship of Buddhists, which was inaugurated for the first time in Ceylon opened a new chapter in the annals of Buddhism.

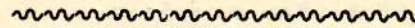
In Buddhism the spread of the doctrine was from the very outset regarded as the permanent and immediate duty of the disciples. The trained elder should not only instruct the young novices within the Community, but he must also carry the message of deliverance far and wide. Missionaries to propagate Buddhism is the only solution to bring peace and happiness to this troubled world of ours, and it only through the "Buddhist Way" that this end can be achieved.

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 was a vast one. The Emperor's early 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 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.

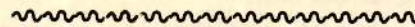
In the history of the world, Asoka gained immortality by his famous edicts which he caused to be engraven on rocks in the different



By

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parts of his dominions. 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. To Ceylon, which in time became the home of Buddhism, he sent his royal son, Mahinda and his daughter, Sanghamitta, both of whom had joined the Order and attained "Arahantship." When one

looked back on the history of Buddhism one cannot help marvelling at the rapidity with which Buddhist missionaries won the hearts of over millions of people in many countries.

Dhamma is the practical synthesis of the Buddha's experiences. Is Dhamma a religion of Law as some think? If so, then Dhamma means merely uniformity and cohesion, this belief kills as mere stability is death. Without Law, of course, there is anarchy, death. Dhamma is posed between the two extremes. The Buddha was not only one of the wisest, but developed one of the most penetrating minds rarely seen within the human family.

According to T. H. Huxley "Buddhism is a system which knows no God in the western sense, which denies a soul to man, which counts the belief in 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 in its original purity knew nothing of vows of obedience and never sought the aid of the secular arm, yet spread over a considerable moiety of the world with marvellous rapidity—and is still the dominant creed of a large fraction of mankind." There are over 300 million adherents of Buddhism and many more are on the search of this true Dhamma. In the Dhamma there is no compromise, "as a man sows, so shall he reap."

* Robert Knox.

† Bernard Shaw.

Buddhism is not merely a religion, but a "true life of good living." From the very outset, Buddhism appealed most strongly to the cultivated and the intellectual. The Master says "Veditabbo Vinnuhi"—best appreciable by the wise. The greatest triumph was the indelible sway it exercised in mouldering the character of the millions who became its votaries, instilling into them its noble ideals of peace and gentleness. It is Buddhism's proud boast that not a single drop of blood has ever been shed in its name.

The thirst for Buddhism is ever increasing and it is to the young Bud-

dhist leaders to pave the path to *Nibbana*—May I lay an emphatic stress on the young people of "Sri Lanka" to rise up to the clarion call of the Enlightened One. There is an urgent need for young men and women of education and true piety to qualify themselves as leaders in the promotion of the "Sasana."

The young generation is the backbone of a Nation and it is left to every young man and woman of Sri Lanka to unite and join together, go arm in arm to regain this lost prestige of ours—and make this little Isle of ours the "Dhammadvipa" the beacon light to illuminate the dark corners of the

globe. The young of today is obsessed with the idea of different isms, and by adhering to the wild thoughts of some of these revolutionists, their sweetness of youth is lost in the desert air. What better remedy is there than the pristine purity of the "Dhamma" of the "Sakyamuni."

Wake up! Shun all drowsiness and dear brethren! and sisters! make thy "Dhamma" the Guiding Star and quench this evergrowing thirst of those not only in the East, but also in the West.

May all beings be *Happy*.

THE SACRED BO-TREE AT KALUTARA

SILENCE, which is a mute rebuke to us of a sophisticated modern generation, is an attribute of most objects of antiquity, be they ancient inscriptions, engravings depicting some historic saga, legends of a hoary past, or artistic carvings out of limestone, wood, laterite, gneiss, or even precious metals which are enveloped in an atmosphere of death, destruction, and destructibility, and of the evanescence of material things.

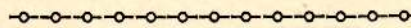
Nevertheless, when such monuments of a by-gone age are things of life and growth struggling to retain its place among other organism, then indeed are they far more than silent symbols of a forgotten age. Having outlived the allotted span several times over they become at once an inspiration and a memorial. Such is the sacred Bo-tree (*ficus religiosa*) of Kalutara.

The oldest living member of the vegetable kingdom is believed to be the sacred Bo-tree at Anuradhapura which has grown out of a sapling from the parent tree at Gaya beneath the shade of which the Great Thathagatha attained Enlightenment. Only second, in antiquity, according to traditional lore, is the subject of these rather desultory notes.

Standing majestically on the bank of the Kalu Ganga, this venerable landmark has been as some tireless sentinel of the destinies of the town of Kalutara. In more centuries than one can tell, defying the historian and the antiquarian, the lonely Fig has cast its shadows

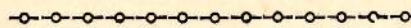
on the rippling silvery waters below, today carrying down in its wavelets millions of seeds of the *Hanea—Braziliensis* which now swarms the wooded hills on either side of its upper reaches. This venerable tree is believed to have been a religious adjunct of a palace called "Gangatileke Maligawa" of old.

What a wealth of story, the Kalutara Bo could tell if it had the faculty of speech! What endless change and constant vicissitude are wrapt in the very leaves and twigs! The river like Tennyson's "Brook" goes on; but the lonely Bodhi stands transfixed to the ground by



By

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its gnarled roots, declining to forsake the fertile spot which gives it sustenance and life.

"Meditation Tree" is the American name for *ficus-religiosa*, and how rightly so! The cousin of the Bo, the fig-tree bearing edible fruit has many a reference to it in the Christian Scriptures. In similar manner the Bo is all that, and more, to the Buddhist. Its association with the enlightenment of Gautama has been mentioned. The canopy of green quivering foliage above provides a fascinating shelter to the man of meditation and contemplation.

Standing beneath the hospitable branches of this Bo that must have afforded shade to countless numbers one could not help his thoughts running away with him in a fancied past, to conjure up the panorama of centuries of life and activity to which this tree has been witness. Here indeed, is something that has come to acquire an individuality; a thing of almost unending life, for none can tell how long the Bo may live.

Lanka's Kings from the interior capitals who preferred the mountain fastnesses to the dreary sweltering plains below have stood here in reverent contemplation. Holy men and ascetics of many an oriental faith and cult have knelt at its base. Three foreign governments have encountered the Kalutara Bo; yet faithful to its ward and watching over the town notwithstanding the changes to which it had to adopt itself to it goes on Portuguese soldiers, Dutch merchants and warriors, including the great Gerard Halft, have gone past this monument of endurance. The British came and still this giant of the vegetable kingdom did not yield its place. Pious Ceylonese chieftains and peasants of old have paid homage to the sacred Bo-tree. What a diorama of history and event for the present generation to visualize!

About half a century ago, at the instance of the Ceylon Government Railway authorities, the then Assistant Government Agent of Kalutara, Mr. H. W. Grodhurst, made an

attempt to cut down this venerable tree. A most vehement protest by the Buddhist of peaceful Kalutara and of stern Waskaduwa, as well of the surrounding villages, rendered abortive the threatened outrage, but not before the local Government and Queen Victoria herself was appealed to.

Legend and lore have accumulated round this ancient tree. It is popularly believed that a Golden

Eel haunts the waters bordering the tree and zealously guards a treasure (*Nidhana*) dedicated to the Bodhi.

In earlier days a Devotee affectionately called the "Mahanta" used to sweep the premises round the Bo, whilst a religious sister (*Dasasil Upasika*) paid similar homage there. No true Buddhist now goes past this wayside spot of devotion without paying homage thereto.

Today the artistic parapet wall round the tree and the beautiful shrine room, built by its side for the use of devotees, not only lend dignity and lustre to the holy spot, but also serve as a monument to the religious devotion and energy of Senator Cyril de Zoysa, who has placed entire Kalutara under a debt of gratitude to him by ensuring the safety of a living relic of the past.

A CRISIS IN BUDDHISM

FROM some quarters, also Christian, we hear about a crisis in Buddhism.

After the resuscitation of Buddhist activity in the Southern Buddhist countries of Theravada Buddhism by the Mahabodhi Society and the Young Men's Buddhist Association in Ceylon with their very good periodicals and by the moral support of many western Buddhists we may only speak of a crisis in the Far Eastern countries: Japan, China, Korea and Indo-China. The final cause of this crisis can be found in the existence of sects which deviated from the pure teachings of the Buddha. The Chinese, Japanese and Koreans did not know the pure doctrine of Buddha as they were influenced by Mahayana Buddhism and its sects and so they could easily fall to Christianity and unreligiosity. Of the students of the Royal University in Tokyo confessed for instance, before the second world war: Agnosticism, *i.e.*, interested only in science 3000, Atheism 1500, Buddhism 300, Christianity 60, Shintoism 8 and Confucianism 6.

The most regrettable harm Christianity and also Mahayana sects are doing is, that rational and logical thinking adherents after abandoning the incredible doctrines of their religion, obtruded by education, at the same time loose all moral support and become easy prey to inhuman political movements as well

as to cruel, scientific methods like vivisectional medicine, and atomic bombs. The terrible cruelties committed by Japanese soldiers in the second world war and the brutal killing of prisoners of war, civilians, women and children in Korea can be comprehended and explained now.

The blame for these terrible consequences can be laid on the Buddhist Bhikkhus who altered the pure teachings of the Buddha. The Indian Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru accuses the monks of the extirpation of Buddhism in India by yielding to the desire of the people for a mystical creed.

By

ERWIN PREIBISCH

The printing of books about Zen and mystical Buddhism has caused great damage to the spreading of the true teachings of Buddha in Europe. Buddhists are pacifists as they refuse to take life or hurt any living being. They ought to cooperate with the pacifists in all countries and especially with the most active, the Esperantists who fight for international understanding and real fraternisation by spreading the brother-and world-culture language *Esperanto*.

Deserving of consideration is the plan of a Metta-organisation proposed by Tun Hla Oung in *The*

Buddhist, October, 1950, who wrote

"Buddhism is not a religion of devotion, but one of actions. All Buddhists should lead the Buddhist way of life, and serve all beings irrespective of class, creed and race. The Sangha, the men, the women, the boys and the girls of the Buddhist world should join and actively take part in at least one branch of Maitriya service. Let the Yellow or Red Chakra (wheel) be the emblem of humanitarian work in our countries instead of the Red Cross. The badge of Buddhist service shall be the Dhamma Chakra—The Wheel of Life that revolves on the True and Noble Path of the Buddha."

The Indian Minister of Law, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, gives the following suggestions in his article "Buddha and the Future of His Religion" in *The Mahabodhi*: "We want fewer Bhikkhus and we want Bhikkhus highly-educated. Bhikkhu Sangha must borrow some of the features of the Christian priesthood, particularly the Jesuits. Christianity has spread in Asia through service educational and medical. How can the ideal of spreading Buddhism be realized? (1) To produce a Buddhist Bible; (2) To make changes in the organisation, aims and objects of the Bhikkhu Sangha; (3) To set up a World Buddhist Mission. The proposed Gospel of Buddhism should contain: (1) a short life of Buddha; (2) The Chinese Dhammapada; (3) Some of the important Dialogues of Buddha; (4) Buddhist Ceremonies, birth, initiation, marriage and death; Its style must be lucid, moving. It must become an incantation instead of being read as narrative or ethical exposition.

SARNATH ATTRACTS MANY VISITORS

By

The Ven. M. SANGHARATANA

DECEMBER and January have been quite busy months for the workers at Sarnath. It was anticipated that after the rush of work in connection with the anniversary celebrations which were held in November, there would be a short respite, but this was not to be.

Three days after the celebrations, we had an official visit from the Governor of West Bengal, His Excellency K. N. Kayju, with his staff. The Governor is, a real lover of Sarnath and this was by no means his first visit, though it was the first in his official capacity. He was, as always, charmed by the peace and serenity of the place and only regretted that he was not there as a simple pilgrim without any of the formalities attending the visit of a Governor. He assured us that it was his intention to make such a private visit in the near future. It is encouraging to find that the men at the helm of India's affairs find inspiration and spiritual help and guidance amidst these leafy glades strewn with the relics of India's great past and vibrant with the undying spirit of the Lord Buddha and His disciples.

On Christmas Eve we had a visit from General K. M. Cariappa, O.B.E., Commander-in-Chief, Indian Army; and in January from Air Marshal Ivelaw-Chapman, C.B., C.B.E., D.F.C., A.F.C., who was accompanied by his wife and personal staff. Both expressed their delight at the beauty and peacefulness of Sarnath and they were charmed by the Vihara with its frescoes. The Air Marshal and his wife were particularly impressed by the many parallels between the lives of Lord Buddha and Jesus Christ, many of which are depicted in the frescoes.

Other visitors to Sarnath during these months included:—Prof. and Mrs. F. C. S. Northrop, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A., Prof. and Mrs. A. D. Ross, University of Western Australia, Mr. and Mrs. D. N. Cleary, U.K. High Commission, New Delhi, Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair, U.K. High Commission, New Delhi. Many delegates to the Theosophical Congress, held in Banaras, visited us

and 300 delegates from all countries of the world, who were attending the Dam Engineers' Conference, at New Delhi, visited in two groups. It was encouraging to find how well Buddhism was understood and appreciated by many of these Western visitors. Their questions and remarks shewed a great appreciation of the philosophical teachings of the Buddha, and one felt that the thinking minds, at least, among the Western peoples were in a great many cases, ready to accept the rationalistic teachings of Buddhism.

December and January are, of course, the favourite months for Buddhists from Ceylon to visit India and make the pilgrimage to the sacred shrines, including, of course, Sarnath. This year has been no exception and we have had several parties from our neighbouring island, who travelled the long distance, in many cases in discomfort, and endured the intense cold of the North Indian winter in order to pay their homage to the spots hallowed by the feet of the Master. May this pilgrimage add to their store of merit and may they all soon attain Nibbana.

To the Ceylonese Bhikkhus residing at Sarnath the visits of these pilgrims from their own country is indeed a happy event: Many of the parties gave dana to the Bhikkhus, preparing with their own hands Sinhalese dishes, the ingredients of many of which were brought all the way from Ceylon for this special purpose. These danas were much appreciated and provided a very welcome change from the normal Indian diet of the missionaries here.

These winter months are also favourite ones for our friends—the Mahayana Buddhists of Tibet and Ladakh—to visit Sarnath. The garden of the Dharmashala and sometimes even the Mango Grove adjoining the Dharmashala—has been enlivened most nights by the glow of their cooking fires and the sounds of their devotional chanting, which is done to the accompaniment of bells and gongs of varied tone, drums and horns (in the case of one particular sect these are made from human leg-bones). The

quaint costumes of these pilgrims and their gypsy-like way of living make an interesting interlude in life at the Dharmashala. A conspicuous feature of their visits is the large number of oil lamps which they light around the shrine in the vihara, the sacred bo-tree and the Dhammakh stupa; on some nights thousands of lights were lit and the effect of these twinkling flames in the still evening air was truly beautiful. This year as a result of the troubles in their own country more pilgrims than ever have made the journey to Sarnath and other sacred places in India.

The Free Primary School at Sarnath which is run by the Maha Bodhi Society for the village children of the locality has for a long time suffered from want of accommodation. At last it has been possible to obtain a grant from the District Board for an extension to the school and work is well in hand towards completing the additional accommodation. The work will be finished before the rains come and the children will be enabled to carry out their studies under dry and sheltered conditions instead of in an open verandah where they are exposed to driving rain and winds.

We are very grateful to the District Board and their engineers for the help they have given us in this connection. We have also to thank the Inspector of Schools and the Government of U.P. for a very substantial grant towards the cost of finishing the construction of the Maha Bodhi Inter-College buildings. The work has for some time now been at a standstill and the buildings have looked more like part of the ruins than a modern college. However, thanks to the generosity of the Education Department, the work has recommenced and soon the college will be completed and in keeping with the other buildings here.

When Mr. and Mrs. E. P. A. Fernando of Bogala, Ceylon, visited Sarnath, they brought with them two films of Ceylon. One dealt with the Sacred Cities of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, etc., showing views of and describing the ancient da-

gobas and other ruins of Buddhist culture; the other film was of scenes from the "Pageant of Lanka" showing the bringing of Buddhism to Ceylon by Mahinda, son of the Emperor Asoka, and the subsequent episodes from the history of the Island, all of which were intimately connected with Buddhism. Both the films were in technicolour and accompanied by a very lucid and

sympathetic commentary. The films were shewn at a public performance in one of the leading cinemas of Banaras and later at a special show given at the Banaras Hindu University to a large and appreciative audience of students and others. All were very grateful to Mr. Fernando for the opportunity of seeing these fine films of Buddhist art and history.

In January two of our workers left Sarnath—K. Seevalie Thera went to take charge of the Society's activities at Buddha Gaya and H. Saddhatissa Thera left to take over the work of the Society at New Delhi. Our best wishes go with these two bhikkhus in their new sphere of work and we hope that their missionary activities will be very successful.

COLONEL OLCOTT AND CEYLON'S BUDDHIST REVIVAL

By

C. JINARAJADASA

President of the Theosophical Society, and one of the early collaborators with Colonel Olcott.

I IMAGINE that very few really know much about Colonel H. S. Olcott, President-Founder of the Theosophical Society. It is definitely worthwhile putting on record the great services rendered by Colonel Olcott to the revival of Buddhism.

The Theosophical Society was organized in New York in 1875, and in the two years following, Colonel Olcott's colleague, Madame H. P. Blavatsky, wrote her monumental work "Isis Unveiled." A well-known high priest, Mohottiwatte Gunanda of Kotahena Temple, better known as Megittuwatte Unnance, at once joined the Theosophical Society. This priest was a strong character, a powerful preacher, and extremely militant on behalf of Buddhism.

Also, the high priest Hikkaduwe Sumangala had joined the Theosophical Society even before its founders came to Ceylon and among the earliest, also before Colonel Olcott visited Ceylon, were Mr. John Robert de Silva and Mr. Thomas de Silva Amarasuriya. Naturally a large number, particularly of the principal Buddhist monks likewise, joined among them the best known being the high priest, Subhuti.

Colonel Olcott, Madame Blavatsky and several others, invited by the Buddhists of Galle, left Bombay for Ceylon, arriving on May 17, 1880. One week later the two formally became Buddhists by taking Pancha Sila from the high priest, Akmemana Dhammārāma

Thera of Vijaynanda Vihara. Colonel Olcott wrote the fact on the wall of the temple.

First Visit

Colonel Olcott saw that Buddhism was definitely on the wane in Ceylon. Buddhist children went to Christian schools, as did I myself to two schools. His first act was to see that the Buddhists knew something of their own religion, and so he composed the Buddhist Catechism in the form of questions and answers. This was translated into Sinhalese and carefully revised by the high priest Sumangala. It is strange to remember that it was an American who did the work, which was translated into several languages.

Colonel Olcott's next work was to initiate a movement to start village schools under the direction of Buddhists, where Buddhism could be taught. Of course, everybody went to temples on poya days to listen to three-hour sermons, but none of these seemed to have much effect on character building. But Colonel Olcott began organizing the Buddhists and created the Buddhist Educational Society.

A Second Asoka

It is interesting that the high priest Sumangala recorded Colonel Olcott's work as "that of a second Asoka." Regularly, more than once a year he visited Ceylon. What is most striking is that though he was an American, a colonel in the administrative service of the United

States, the moment he landed in Galle he seemed in some mysterious way to get the confidence of Buddhists, and they worked most gladly under his direction.

The Buddhists organised themselves into a Buddhist Defence Committee under the leadership of Colonel Olcott. Various distinguished Buddhists acted as chairmen, etc. Certain representative powers were given to him by various high priests, including those of Malwatte and Asgiriya. With these he went to England on a mission on behalf of the Buddhists. Much correspondence took place between him and Lord Derby, the Secretary of the State for the Colonies.

At this period Buddhist children had no teaching given to them about Buddhism, and furthermore, there was a definite persecution. My elder brother, who attended a Christian college, was disciplined by the college authorities because he had absented himself on Vesak Day. One result of Colonel Olcott's mission on behalf of the Buddhists was that he obtained for them a holiday for their chief festival of Vesak.

The Flag

Another action of his was most striking. He had heard that it was said in the traditions that within the limit of three miles of where the Lord Buddha was, those who were psychic would see certain colours in the air—what the Theosophists now call the aura. These colours appeared in certain concentric bands which are described

in the old books—blue, yellow, crimson, white, orange, and the final band composed of the same colours of the aura, in striations of smaller bands as the rest of the aura. It occurred to Colonel Olcott that here was something that could be utilized for Buddhist propaganda, and so he created a flag using these colours.

By this time the Sinhalese weekly, "Sarasavindaresa," had been started and an almanac was to be issued for New Year's Day, with the flag to appear on it in colour. A line-block was printed, but the colours had to be printed by hand, and I was one of the small group of boys who was called by Mr. C. W. Leadbeater to help in this work. Of course, now the flag is displayed everywhere in Ceylon on Wesak Day.

Colonel Olcott went steadily on developing the Buddhist schools movement; but as with his many duties he could not travel continually to Ceylon, he sent various leading theosophists to help. The first was Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, who had been a clergyman of the Church of England, but became a Buddhist in 1884. He was acting as the Secretary of the Theosophical Society, but Colonel Olcott sent him to be Manager of Buddhist Schools.

Whenever Colonel Olcott came to Ceylon, the two travelled from place to place collecting money. Many of the villages were off the beaten track of the regular coaches, so Colonel Olcott constructed a large cart drawn by two bullocks. Inside were an upper and lower berth, and the sides were fitted with small cupboards. The Colonel slept in the upper and Mr. Leadbeater in the lower berth, and during the night they would travel, but in the morning they were ready to do the work of addressing the people and collecting money.

Soon after, Mr. Leadbeater found that Colonel Olcott's catechism was too advanced for the children in the Sunday schools which he had founded in Colombo, so he wrote an introductory catechism, "Buddha Sisubodhaya." He wrote in English, but the translation was carefully checked by the high priest Suman-gala, and authorized as representing genuine Buddhism. It has been translated into Tamil, and into French by the Theosophists of Viet-Nam. Mr. Leadbeater then learnt enough by transliteration of the Sinhalese questions to ask the child-

ren in Sinhalese, and of course, they would answer according to the form in the catechism.

It was in 1889 that Mr. Leadbeater organized the Buddhist high school, of which I was one of the first students. Far later, this became Ananda College, of which I became Vice-Principal for a year and a half after my return from England. When Mr. Leadbeater had had to leave for England in 1889, taking me with him (as had been directed by his occult Guru), Colonel Olcott sent various other theosophists to help the work.

During these years, an English theosophist, a Cambridge graduate, Mr. F. L. Woodward, wrote Colonel Olcott offering himself for work. He was sent to Galle to build up the high school there into a college. This has been done, and it is today Mahinda College. After retiring, Mr. Woodward settled in Tasmania, where he spends much of his time working in his apple orchard, but also gives a great deal of his energy to editing various texts for the Pali Text Society. He has just completed the monumental work of a concordance to the Buddhist Scriptures.

Mr. Woodward is as ever a staunch theosophist, and a remarkable article by him on the coming Buddha Maitreya has just appeared in the January issue of "The New Lanka."

Unification

A further very striking work done by Colonel Olcott was his attempt to bring the Buddhists of the Southern Church of Ceylon, Burma and Siam nearer to the Buddhists of the Northern Church, especially in Japan. He left for Japan in January, 1889, accompanied by Mr. H. Dharmapala, who had been attracted to the theosophical leaders from 1880. I knew the family fairly well, as his family and mine are in some way related. I knew all the four brothers.

Unfortunately, Mr. Dharmapala (he did not then call himself Anagarika) had evidently not provided himself with enough warm clothing for the cold winter climate of Japan, and he fell seriously ill with rheumatic fever, so that he could not accompany Colonel Olcott from place to place in his five months' tour in Japan.

Colonel Olcott drew up a statement of the common beliefs that existed between the Northern and Southern Churches and he got an

endorsement to it by the chief leaders of the Southern Church and also the endorsement by leading priests of nine sects in Japan and the Buddhists of Chittagong.

An important gift made to Colonel Olcott and his Adyar Library was from Mrs. Fredericka Cecilia Dias Ilangakoon of Matara. She had a series of copyists transcribe the whole Tripitaka in spite of the opposition of the theas, and these palm leaf manuscripts are one of our precious possessions at Adyar. A few years ago, at my request, Dr. E. W. Adikaram came to Adyar and made a complete catalogue of the manuscripts. We have also the two Tibetan Encyclopaedias, *Kagyur* and *Tanjur*, in 327 volumes.

Miraculous Cures

One noteworthy part of Colonel Olcott's work during the first visits to Ceylon were the cures which he performed. He had been trained in mesmerism or animal magnetism, but his occult Guru used him to throw healing forces through him, and both in Ceylon and in India he performed various miraculous cures, reports of which were published in the papers.

Ceylon Buddhists by hundreds joined the Theosophical Society. More than three hundred did so between 1880 and 1882. But they were not interested in the wisdom of theosophy, but only in Buddhist revival. In a diary, Colonel Olcott has entered a comment that the Buddhists in Ceylon were not metaphysical or mystic. Of course, they are much given to good works, worship of relics, etc., but this is not all there is in Buddhism.

It is invariably the case that every Japanese priest spends a good deal of his time in meditation. So Colonel Olcott created a special Buddhist Theosophical Society (which is a contradiction in terms, as the word "Theosophical" cannot be identified with any one religion). But he regularly published the annual report of the Buddhist Theosophical Society and its schools along with the reports of theosophical work all over the world.

A Great Record

Though Colonel Olcott's name may be little mentioned in Ceylon today, nevertheless this brief summary of what he did for Buddhism will show that a great deal of the present strength of Buddhism is due to the work done by him and other theosophists whom he sent to help.

Colonel Olcott was the first Buddhist President of the Theosophical Society and I, also a Buddhist, am the fourth. My predecessors were Dr. Annie Besant and Dr. G. S. Arundale. My term of office will end in 1953, as I was elected for seven years. Except for repeating Pancha Sila and building a Buddhist Temple, I belong to all religions and worship in them all. There is one Truth, though to me the Lord Buddha (but not His present theras) is the most

inspiring of all teachers.—*Times of Ceylon*, 23-2-51.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

BUDDHIST SCHOOL IN SINGAPORE

Miss Pitt Chin Hui, Secretary of the Singapore Buddhist Federation writes:—I have great pleasure in informing you that the foundation stone of the Maha Bodhi School was

laid on January 21 by the chief abbot of Malaya, the Ven. Ean Poon.

The construction of the building will take not more than five months to be completed. We are expecting that the annual celebration of the "Vesak" will be possibly taken place at our new school building.

Yours, etc.,

PITT CHIN HUI,
Hony. Secretary.

COLOMBO Y. M. B. A. NEWS

OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 53rd Annual General Meeting of the Colombo Y.M.B.A. was held in the Association Hall, at 3 p.m. on Saturday, February 24th, 1951. Sir Ernest de Silva presided.

The following office-bearers were elected:—

President:—Sir Ernest de Silva (re-elected).

Vice-Presidents:—Rt. Hon. D. S. Senanayake, Mr. R. L. Pereira, Hon. Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya, Senator Cyril de Zoysa and Dr. G. P. Malalasekera (re-elected).

Hony. General Secretary:—Mr. V. S. Nanayakkara.

Hony. Treasurer:—Mr. D. W. G. Ranasingha.

Committee of Management:—Mr. D. N. W. de Silva, Mr. H. S. Gunasekera, Mr. N. J. V. Cooray, Mr. E. S. Amarasingha, Mr. D. L. Dissanayake, Mr. L. Piyasena, Mr. D. S. Samarasingha, Mr. L. R. Goonetilleke, Mr. D. S. Abeyasingha, Mr. Daya Hewavitarnne, Mr. W. H. de Zoysa, Mr. Walter Wimalachandra, Mr. T. B. Dissanayake, Mr. J. A. Dharmadasa, Mr. Bernard Mendis, Mr. W. P. Daluwatta and Mr. B. M. Perera.

The following Branch Committees were also elected:—

Religious Examinations:—Dr. W. E. A. Fonseka, Mr. A. Pelpola, Dr. D. E. Hettiaratchie, and Mr. S. Kuruppu.

Religious Activities:—Mr. H. D. Peiris, Mr. D. A. S. Nanayakkara, Mr. K. D. C. Goonetilaka and Muh. D. S. C. Umagiliya.

Social Activities:—Mr. D. C. Sri Dillimuni, A. Pelpola, Mr. Don Kuruppu and Mr. D. S. D. Samarasekera.

Literary Activities (Sinhalese):—Messrs. C. C. S. Seneviratne, Mr. A. P. Gunaratne, Mr. D. A. Kolonne and Mr. D. S. D. Samarasekera.

Literary Activities (English):—Mr. D. C. Sri Dillimuni, Mr. P. Weerakoon, Mr. W. S. Karunaratne and Mr. D. S. D. Samarasekera.

Sports:—Mr. D. A. S. Perera, Mr. D. S. Samarasingha, Mr. R. Wijayasingha and Mr. M. C. F. Abeykoon.

Auditors:—Messrs. Lawrie Muthu Krishna & Co.

TABLE TENNIS

The Y.M.B.A. Table Tennis Team beat the Co-operative Department Team by 7 games to 1. The match was played on our tables.

The results are:—

Singles.—C. Premaratne (Y) beat Ibrahim (C) 21/8; 19/21; 21/19; Stanley Peiris (Y) beat Sheriff (C) 21/15; 21/17; Vernon Jayawardena (Y) beat Somasundaram (C) 21/9; 21/17; M. V. Gnanasekera (Y) beat Mubarch (C) 21/15; 19/21; 21/18; Stanley Peiris (Y) beat Ibrahim (C) 21/16; 21/11; C. Prema-

ratne (Y) beat Sheriff (C) 21/19; 13/21; 22/20.

Doubles.—Stanley Peiris and C. Premaratne (Y) beat Somapala and Nadarajah (C) 21/17; 21/11; V. Jayawardena and Gnanasekera (Y) lost to Somasundaram and Mubarch (C) 16/21; 19/21.

BILLIARDS

Y.M.B.A. Tie with Moors' Islamic Cultural Home "A"

M. J. M. Lafir (M) beat Ashley Perera, 250/109; Azceez C. Cambal (M) beat M. C. F. Abeykoon, 250/176; A. J. M. Jabir (M) beat D. A. S. Perera, 250/191; M. F. Idroos (M) beat L. Wijeyesekera, 250/236.

SNOOKERS

D. E. Welaratne (Y) beat O. A. Haleem, 25/44, 48/34, 54/40; J. W. Hewavitharne (Y) beat M. S. M. Lafir, 58/30, 35/53, 57/36; Benny Perera (Y) beat M. S. M. Ashroff, 62/42, 60/35; R. Wijayasinghe (Y) beat M. M. Thawfeeq, 45/11, 36/45, 49/41.

AT GALLE

In a friendly match at Billiards and Snookers against the Galle Gymkhana Club, the Y.M.B.A. was beaten by eight games to two.

The Y.M.B.A. Team was entertained to a sumptuous lunch at the Boossa Club Pavilion and later to a tea party at the Gymkhana Club.

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