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SRI LANKA AND HER NEIGHBOURS—IV. THAILAND (SIAM)

By
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WHEN His Majesty King Bhumi-pala Atulateja—Protector of the World of Incomparable Glory—to give the English rendering of his name—visited Lanka a few months ago he was only following the gracious footsteps of his honoured predecessors in the recent past. The names of Chulalangkara, Rama and Prajadhipok are familiar to the people of Ceylon, particularly to those who profess the Buddhist faith. I well remember as a boy, gazing curiously at the pictures of Siamese Royal families which were a familiar feature in many of our village houses. King Ananda Mahidol, of tragic memory, also visited our fair land not many years ago to offer his worship at our shrines and to draw closer together the bonds of friendship which have for many centuries existed between our two countries.

In recent times it is with the Dipaduttamaramaya in Kotahena, near Colombo, with its graceful nine-pinnacled dagoba that we associate our cultural connections with Thailand. For here it was that at the end of the last century a prince of the Siamese Royal Family, Jinavaravansa by name, renounced the pleasures of the palace to don the yellow robes of a bhikkhu and follow the way of life laid down by the Lord Buddha. We cannot also forget the great scholar-statesman, Prince Damrong whose visit to the Island remains a fragrant memory. I do not know how many are aware of the fact that King Chulalangkara once made a very handsome contribution towards the restoration of the Buddhist monuments at Anuradhapura. Thuparama, oldest of Ceylon's dagobas, and Mirisavetiya built by Dutugemunu early in his career after his conquest of Elara, pro-

fitied by their benefaction. The Thuparama has been completed but Mirisavetiya remains a mere shell because something went wrong with the plans of the engineers who were entrusted with the work. Some of the money given by Thailand's King was also, I believe, spent on restoring the Maha Seya on the top of Mihintale's summit, but that work proved too stupendous and had to be abandoned. I am glad to be able to say that the Minister for Education has now given a mandate to our energetic and enlightened Archaeological Commissioner to complete the restoration of this beautiful monument which will then dominate the landscape from Mihintale to Anuradhapura.

Lanka's connections with Thailand go back many centuries. In the last century or so, with our eyes looking largely out of windows turned towards the West, we had forgotten them. Thailand was to us a far away country from which we occasionally got some rice and a few pilgrims. Once again, however, it has come to loom large on the horizon and, if the recent visit of our peripatetic and tireless Minister of Transport, Sir John Kotelawala, is any indication, the ties binding the two countries are to be greatly strengthened. As a matter of historical record, Thailand has been connected with Lanka for nearly a thousand years. We have documentary evidence for that period; but there is good reason to think that the links go back many centuries further. The strongest connecting link was, of course, Buddhism, and great was Thailand's debt to Lanka on that account.

It was about the 10th century that the Thais, as the Siamese

prefer to be called, came into their own in the valley of the Menam, after overthrowing the Kamboja empire. The Thais founded the Kingdoms of Sukhodaya and Ayodhya. They are believed to have come originally from somewhere to the South of China. They had not been a particularly religious people, but rather warlike, and what religion they had was concerned with the worship of the powers of nature and of dead ancestors. In their new country they found a religion which was an admixture of Hinduism and the indigenous cults but, already, the influence of Buddhism had begun to be felt and the Kamboja emperors were followers of Saivism and Mahayanism. There was also evidently very frequent intercourse between Siam and South-East India from early times and Buddhist settlements originating from that region has established themselves. Thus, there was a struggle between the "Southern" form of Buddhism, which came to be called Theravāda, and the "Northern" or Mahayana. The exact course of this struggle it is not possible to follow because of lack of data, but by the time, the Thais came into the notice of history, they had embraced the Theravāda form of Buddhism. Now, from the earliest times, Lanka has been known as the stronghold of Theravāda and it is not surprising, therefore, to find that almost immediately after the Thais had secured their power, they had come into contact with Ceylon.

This contact finds very forcible experience in the time of one of the earliest Kings of Sukhodaya, Rocarāja. About this King there is an event of great interest to us. It has been narrated in an absorbing poem, written in Pali, by a Siamese

monk, Ratanapañña. The poem is called *Linakālamālinī* and its date is 1516 of the Christian era. This monk calls himself a member of the "Sihala-sangha," in Siam, i.e., the order of monks who derived their ordination from the Mahāvihāra at Anuradhapura.

The poem refers to an image which was taken from Ceylon to Siam. It had been worshipped in Lanka for several centuries with great veneration, and its fame had reached the ears of a King of the Malay Peninsula, Siridhamma. This Siridhamma is identified with Chandrabahu, who, according to the *Mahāvamsa*, invaded Ceylon twice and was defeated at Yāpahuva. Siridhamma told his friend Rocaraja of Sukhodaya about the famous image which was considered a living likeness of the Buddha himself. Rocaraja was consumed with a desire to possess the image, in spite of Chandrabahu's warnings that Lanka was protected by the four gods, Sumana, Rama, Lakhana and Kātaragama and that it could never be harmed by an invader. But, nothing undaunted, Rocaraja sent an embassy to the King of Lanka, and our King, greatly impressed by the piety of the ambassadors, gifted to them the sacred image. One tradition has it that what was given was only a very faithful copy. Another says that Rocaraja came himself as a pilgrim to Ceylon and that his request for the image proved irresistible.

Be that as it may, the *Sihala Pāṭimā*, or the Sinhala Image as it was called, once it reached Thailand, became an object of the greatest veneration. It was originally in Ching Mao which for a brief while was the capital, and there the image received the name of Pra Sihing or the "Venerable Sinhala" and the Vihara in which it was deposited came to be called the Wat Pra Sihing. The successor to that Vihara is still there at Ching Mao where I saw it last year when I visited Ching Mao. But the image is no longer there, though the monks of the place fondly believe that the present image is the one actually transported from Lanka. Of the subsequent history of the *Sihala Pāṭimā* it is difficult to speak with accuracy. There is an image in the Bangkok National Museum which claims to be the original. It is a remarkable piece of sculpture, one of the best Buddha

images I have seen, and it certainly bears all the characteristics of Sinhala craftsmanship. Another image at *Nskhon Sri Thammarat*, or to give its Pali name, Siridhammapura, also makes a claim, but not convincingly. The Sinhala Image is regarded as having the mysterious power of causing rain in a drought if it is bathed after due ceremonial. That is because it is believed to contain authentic relics of the Buddha which were once in the possession of Ajatasattu, King of Rajagaha. The tombs of the three Sinhala monks who took the image to Thailand are still preserved in great honour at Ching Mao. Many of the best images (not only of the Buddha) of the Sukhodaya period bear distinct traces of the influence of the Sinhalese school of sculpture, one of the finest example being the famous 1,000-year old Pattini image now in the British Museum, of which there is a fine copy in the Colombo Museum. So great is the fame which the Sinhala craftsmen obtained for their sculptures in Thailand that even the Emerald Buddha, which is considered their most precious national possession (comparable to our Holy Tooth Relic), is acclaimed by the Thais as the work of Sinhala sculptors.

From the time of the Rocaraja and the Sinhala Pāṭimā cultural intercourse between Thailand and Lanka became even more frequent. It was a two-way traffic and just as Lanka influenced Thailand so did Thailand leave its impress on Lanka. One of the most remarkable examples of the latter is the so-called Sat Mahal Prasada at Polonnaruwa which is an almost exact replica of the undoubtedly clear San Ma Pan at Lampur in N. Siam, which unfortunately is now far removed from its original condition. But when I saw it I was taken aback because it was so like our Sat Mahal Prasada. Now, there is no doubt at all that the San Ma Pan is a stupa or dagoba, and it is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the so-called Sat Mahal Prasada is also a dagoba. Mention in an inscription of the Polonnaruwa period of Kambojan fowlers or bird-catchers in Ceylon indicates that the exchanges between the two countries were not exclusively confined to matters of religion.

In the reign of Parakramabahu of Kotte, in 1423 C.E. to be more exact, a mission visited Ceylon from

Thailand when 25 monks from Ching Mao, reinforced by eight monks from Cambodia, came here seeking ordination. There was a movement in Thailand for the purification of religion. The King of Thailand had become a demon-worshipper and the mission was not under royal auspices. The Sinhalese gave the visitors a great welcome and when they returned to Thailand they started a strong revivalist movement. Subsequently, the worthless King was deposed and in 1442 Buddhism received a great fillip when 500 sons of noble families entered the order of bhikkhus. Their ordination was supervised by Theras from Ceylon.

The story of how Thailand repaid its debt to Lanka in more than generous measure when Buddhism in Ceylon was probably at its lowest ebb in the reign of Kirti-sri-rajasinha, and earlier in the 18th century, is too well-known to need recital. Inspired by his spiritual adviser, the Samanera Saranankara—there not being a single monk in Ceylon who could claim to possess the higher upasampada ordination—the King of Lanka sent ambassadors with rich gifts to Dhammika, King of Thailand, who has his capital in Ayodhya. In this mission the Dutch Government in Ceylon, let it be said to their credit, helped willingly. Dhammika, in consultation with his own Sangharaja, sent to Ceylon a Chapter of ten bhikkhus under the leadership of the Thera Upali. These monks were welcomed by the King of Lanka and his people with great pomp and ceremony and they took up their residence in the Puppharama now better known as Malwatta in Kandy. The upasampada ceremony was held once more in Lanka and the religion of the Buddha firmly established. It was thus that the Malwatta Chapter came to be founded. It is now the largest and most influential in Lanka and its monks came to be called members of the Upalivamsa, after its founder, the Thera Upali Saranankara was appointed the first Sangaraja in that Chapter and his services for religion and for the advancement of scholarship were stupendous. As a result of a later mission to Thailand, in the same reign, copies were secured of many of the sacred and secular books which had completely disappeared in Lanka. Among the books so strange to say obtained was the Mahavamsa. Once more the two

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is even free to do harm, provided it be advantageous to himself. This can properly be termed ingratitude—behaviour which is akin to that of an animal which has nothing finer than its instincts to guide it in its relationship to its fellows.¹ Animals, in fact, have no sense of gratitude, for in their attachment to the person who feeds it and the place which gives it shelter, they are never ungrateful. A proof of possessing the virtue of gratefulness is the ability to be ungrateful.

One is not truly grateful if one renders a service to another who has been of service to him solely on the grounds of his obligation to that other. True gratitude should find expression in complete voluntariness, and the doing of a service to the benefactor should bring happiness to the doer. Acts performed in the name of gratitude where this voluntariness is not spontaneous in the doer, and where this happiness is nothing more than that of a debt repaid are not true acts of gratitude—they savour too much of the give-and-take of business morality. To be grateful does not necessarily imply the performance of a service in return for benefits received; it is possible to be truly grateful without doing so, as it may often happen that the beneficiary may never have a suitable occasion or the means to be of service to the benefactor; but if he is happy in his happiness and sympathetic in his trouble he may be considered as truly grateful as he who repays a good turn with another. The same may be said of ingratitude: we can be quite effectively ungrateful without doing harm in actual deed to our benefactors if we wish them ill. The unwinking gaze with which the Sakya-Muni for seven whole days bathed the Bo-tree that gave him shade was of no real use to it, but the spontaneous joy with which the offering was made imbues that act with more than material value makes of it a pure act of perfect gratitude.²

Ingratitude may arise from any one or combination of the following causes:

(i) Some of us are ungrateful because we consider the favour received as our due. This is often the case where women, old men and

great men are concerned. A woman who is helped with her luggage into a train on the point of moving off seldom considers the man who helps her worthy of gratitude. In her opinion a man should always help a woman in such circumstances—it is part and parcel of his gentlemanliness. Old men are also apt to treat services rendered them in the same way. They think that their days of serving are over and whatever services they receive are their due. Great men, especially those regarded as public benefactors are great offenders in this respect. They consider the general benefits they have conferred upon the community as entitling them to all the individual services they receive. If these persons would realise that gratitude need not necessarily take the form of material service, and that services already rendered by one do not absolve one from being grateful, there will be more happiness in the world. In this respect, it must be mentioned, that parents, children, wives and husbands, teachers and pupils, and employers and employees are constant defaulters.

(ii) Some of us are ungrateful because it is to our advantage to be so. This is, of course, a grave blemish of which any decent person would be ashamed. To be served was to our advantage, and apart from the mean selfishness of not serving the server in turn because we will lose thereby, it is an unwise procedure for we stand to lose all future services by our remissness.

(iii) Some are ungrateful because they think (and it may be actually so) that the benefaction was made through selfish motives, perhaps for greater gain. It is no doubt true that many who are in a position to render services make use of that position to grow in power by getting as many persons as possible under obligation to them, generally with the ultimate object of self-aggrandizement through the aid of those whom they have served. Many persons who hold office in government or other big institutions, or are the employees of persons in power and authority, resort to this practice; and therefore whenever we avail of the services of such persons it is far more prudent to pay what is due for their services there and

then rather than be put off by their oily affability. This is a device of crafty, craven persons who use their office and the name of the master they serve as a cat's-paw for their own ends. The service actually costs them very little, but it is often of great value to the recipient. Hence, in these cases very little gratitude is really due to the server for most of the service comes from the institution or master, nevertheless, it is far better that we should say 'thank you' than not. Here we are also often likely to make the mistake that we pay directly or indirectly for the running of the government machinery or institution and therefore we need not be grateful for services rendered by them. This should not be allowed to interfere with our sense of gratitude, for such institutions make life easy, and their well-ordered administration is of great benefit to us; therefore we should express our gratefulness to their servants by a word of thanks, and to the institutions themselves by not attempting to corrupt them and being always ready to guard and defend them.

(iv) Almost all of us, at one time or another, may be ungrateful through genuine forgetfulness. As stated earlier this characteristic of forgetfulness is innate in all of us to some extent not only with regard to benefits but also with regard to injuries. This forgetfulness is definitely of use to us, and if not for its presence life would not be livable on present lines. I do not think it possible for us to deliberately forget anything, but some things do slip out of memory into the limbo of the unremembered, and if we are not careful too many things would thus slip off. Although we are not likely to succeed in forcing ourselves to forget, we can to a certain extent with effort succeed in keeping in mind what we want. Therefore, it would be wise if we try our best to remember all good turns done to us, not so much in order to repay every one of them as that the very remembrance of the services is a form of gratitude and it is a thing that the weakest and humblest of us can do. In this connection it may be mentioned that those of us who remember these good acts and even without a return

1. Cf. "Poetry and Truth," Goethe.

2. It may perhaps not be wrong to conclude that the offering of the light of his eyes to the Bo-tree was of real value to it for a tree obtains energy from light, and it may be that the wonderful vitality of the Bo-tree which has enabled it to live to the great age of over 2,500 years is a result of the energy which it absorbed from the pure light of the rays of the Buddha's gaze.

merely recall them at proper times, are those who are best loved by their fellows—such are the men and women who are deemed great personalities.

(v) Some of us are ungrateful because we do not realise that any gratitude is due. This comes of ignorance, and children and foolish persons fall into this class. Children, for instance, have no gratitude towards their parents because they do not have a proper realisation of all that their parents do for them; they have an attachment to their parents or anybody else who provide them with what they need just as animals have, but gratitude does not come into that attachment until they arrive at years of discretion. The foolish and the thoughtless are also ungrateful because they do not realise that gratitude is due. For instance, a foolish person would hardly think of being grateful to the Earth for its grain and fruit, the Sun for its light and warmth, to the State for the peace and security he enjoys, to the labourer for the innumerable necessities he provides, or to the cow for its milk and the sheep for its wool. If we are devoid of the capacity to think a little deeply about these things we can scarcely be grateful for these great and numberless benefits which we receive from nature, the State and our fellow-beings with whom we have no immediate contact. The child can be excused for its want of gratitude, but the adult cannot be excused for his state of ignorance is of his own choosing. Man, who is a social being, should be sincerely grateful for these benefits, and the proper form of his gratefulness would be to perform his own part in society to the best of his ability in gladness of heart, be that part the work of a weaver, miner, constable or scavenger, or any other of the numerous services which must be performed for the well-being of all. The better such workers perform their parts, the better do I consider them to have discharged their debt of gratitude to the rest of the world, and in so doing the happier they will make this world and themselves.

(vi) There are some of us who expect our benefactors to help us more and more, and when such help is not forthcoming they turn against the giver. This class of ingrate, it is sad to say, is far from small. They are like parasites and blackmailers—the leeches and lice

of society. So long as they are hungry they will search you out and attach themselves to you and feed upon you and when they are full leave you and digest their feed in lazy indifference; they will come back to you when they are hungry again but if you have no blood they will leave you for others who have. They will sponge upon you with flattery and truckling so long as you consent to be their milch-cow, but if the milk does not flow at their tickling they would sell you without compunction to the butcher. This breed of ingrate is a very bad type, not only is his ingratitude of the first water but also his kind is of that nature which will not blench at extortion through intimidation and threats; and then if you still desist from helping him he will harm you without a qualm. There is little that we can do with regard to them except keeping them at arm's-length, and attempting in a kind manner to prove to them the error of their ways.

(vii) Almost one-half of humanity are born beggars of favours, and gratitude is more often than not alien to their nature. The majority of women by reason of their dependence on men belong to this class; they have for so long being living on the favours of men, obliged to do so by the economic, physical and traditional mastery men have held over them, that they have made a fine art of the winning of male goodwill, sympathy and favour; and some of them are so clever at it that bewitched men often feel as if they were not conferring but receiving benefits as women slyly fleece them of their substance. The nature of the conjugal life we have evolved is largely responsible for the development of this characteristic in woman. The making of a home and the rearing of a family should be entered upon terms of perfect equality and all its burden borne share and share alike by husband and wife, but the patriarchist slant we have given to the realm of domestic affairs has brought about this greater obligation of the wife to the husband than the husband to the wife. In actual fact there is generally an even division and fair balance between the male and female side in most families, but man through a proud egotism and love of authority by means of law and custom has made woman agree to accept her part as the lesser and more dependent one. This is a not just and

so woman in order to keep up the farce has to play the hypocrite quite a lot. Women are gradually establishing their right and responsibility for their share of family life and men are gradually growing accustomed to concede that much. The sooner we accept this equality of the sexes as a matter of fact the grander will humanity be. Women, of course, should not obtain what they require of their men-folk as favours for which gratitude is due; they should develop the state of conjugal life into one of balanced give-and-take, and then the apparent one-sided debt of gratitude will naturally disappear. By this I do not mean to imply that there should not be a bond of gratitude between wife and husband, but that a debt of gratitude should not devolve on any woman as a necessary part of her share in the marriage contract. Apart from that there will arise occasions in the lives of all couples which call for service from both husband and wife alike, and for these acts of kindness the one should be grateful to the other and *vice versa*. This reciprocal gratefulness should act as a sweetener and cement of domestic life. The more gratitude of this nature there is between man and wife the more happiness and solidarity there will be in our homes. As for beggars and mendicants, if we confer benefits on them in answer to their prayers and solicitations, I do not think that we are justified in expecting them to be grateful for such benefits. Nevertheless, as concerning the beggar, he does owe a debt of gratitude to his benefactor. There is a deeper and more complex aspect to this which I shall treat of later.

(viii) There are some of us who resent being made the objects of benefaction; they are angry with themselves if ever they get into a position where they would have to be under obligation to others for help received. They think that the benefactors look down upon them for having availed of their help and so avoid meeting them in future. This type of person is abnormally proud, self-reliant, and a firm adherent of the tenet that one should look after one's self. These are persons generally holding positions of authority or affluence, and some of them quite rightly try to get through life with least obligation to others, for such obligations often prove a hindrance to

the proper discharge of their duties. Some others follow the same course because they are afraid of having to pay much for a little service; and there are others who consider it shameful to have got under obligation to another, particularly of a lower status than themselves. It is undoubtedly an admirable quality to have some pride of this nature, for it makes for greater self-reliance and circumspection which are qualities sadly underdeveloped in a great many of us. Even so, it must be said that no man could possibly go through life, as it normally is, without ever having reason to be grateful to his fellows for some service or other, and therefore I consider it unreasonable to be ashamed of accepting the help of others. Everyone of us is bound to meet with circumstances and be faced with needs which it is impossible to get through or supply without the aid of others. I often feel that persons who lay undue stress on this trait are to a certain extent misanthropic in their outlook. It is good for human beings to go through life indebted to one another for acts of service kindly rendered and thankfully accepted, for such a condition erases differences and increases unity.

(ix) There are some of us who are really not ungrateful, but they appear to be so to those who have served them; these are persons who do not get a suitable opportunity to show their gratitude. We should not judge them too hastily nor too harshly. For instance, I may be touring by car in a distant country when I may meet with an accident or break-down. Some unknown person may come to my aid and with a simple word of thanks for his help I may leave him, never to meet again. I am actually deeply grateful to him but I may never have an opportunity of doing him a service in return. Therefore he should not consider me as ungrateful, and I can best show my appreciation of his kindness by helping any other person in a similar difficulty. We often benefit by the kind acts of persons who die before we have a chance of doing them a kindness in return. Now in such a case as some of us Buddhists often think, it is quite unreasonable to presume that we will die in debt to such persons and will have to make good our default in after-life. This belief which is held by a considerable number is rather absurd, for, if the

person acquires merit by his good deed he gets a double payment if I too, have to render unto him what I had received. I have often heard people say with pride that they have never yet being indebted to another for a meal. It is good if such persons would realise that, there is little in that to be proud of but somewhat to be sorry for in that such persons have never provided their fellows with an opportunity of experiencing the joy and satisfaction of having shared a meal with them.

(x) Lastly, some of us are ungrateful without knowing it: that is to say, in the course of our everyday life we may sometimes do or say or write somethings without any premeditation which may have adverse effects upon those who have been of service to us. I do not think that our benefactors can rightly hold us to blame for such happenings. Thus it may happen that a member of Parliament may vote in favour of a motion which may have an adverse effect on the business transactions of a person who had been of service to him. This brings up an aspect of benefactions which I had touched upon earlier: that a benefactor cannot expect to curtail the freedom of action of those who benefit through him. A member of the police force may have to charge the driver of a vehicle belonging to a person who has rendered a service to him. Here, too, the benefactor will not be justified in branding the beneficiary with ingratitude. From this it will be observed that it is very rarely that a good man will be repaid with a bad turn for one of goodness, so long as his ways of life and dealings are good and just.

Somewhere I have read that the rungs of the ladder to heaven are formed of the backs of the poverty-stricken and distressed. This is a statement in which there is much truth. Leaving aside the question of going to heaven, I wonder how many of us would ever have a chance of gaining the gratitude of a fellow-being if not for the incidence of poverty and distress, imprudence and unthriftiness among men? Just as there must be accidents or wars for heroes to perform the gallant act of life-saving, there must be people who get into trouble for many of us to do acts of goodness and have the satisfaction of earning their gratitude. It is just here that most of us err. The doing of

an act of goodness may be considered as a matter of choice, but the relieving of poverty and distress is, in my opinion, a moral liability of the wealthy, the undistressed and those in power. Hence, if any, in a position to do so by reason of their surplus wealth, well-being and power, engage in acts contributing to the relief of poverty and distress, such persons would not be acting within their rights, if they expect the relieved to be materially grateful for such acts: in the first place the poor have not the means to do so, and secondly, it is seldom that the distress is of their own seeking. By this it should not be understood that the poor and distressed are entirely released from all obligation to their benefactors; they have been helped at a juncture where they could not help themselves by voluntary helpers, and so they are bound to be grateful. And if they are truly grateful, not only will they bear goodwill towards the benefactors, but they will make efforts not to be beholden to the kindness of others for relief from trouble in the future. We must take care not to be guilty of this charge: A few of you make many among you poor, weak and helpless and then bring them under obligation to you by curing the ills you yourselves have caused. If all of us will act in such a manner as to be innocent of this charge, instead of ill-will, non-co-operation, and subversion among us there will be peace, fellowship and amity.

Apart from the aspects of gratitude mentioned above there are ample ways in our daily lives in which as equals in our common quality of humanity we can be of help to one another and further develop the oneness which unites all men by ties of gratitude and friendship. Little acts inspired by pure goodwill such as respect for the old and infirm, love and kindness to the weak and young, and tolerance and consideration for our equals and yielding up one's own comfort and advantage to the alleviation of the needs and sufferings of our fellows. All of us desire to have friends than enemies, and gratitude is a potent factor in the building up of friendship just as ingratitude is a leaven for breeding animosity and ill-will. We should never let slip an opportunity for doing a kindness on the assumption that it is trivial—in fact our little acts of goodness are the purest for they have their roots in the unsullied

depths of our hearts—and it is by the practice we gain by the doing of these little things that we learn to do big acts of intrinsic goodness. We are kind in many ways peculiar to our land: we are ever ready to give a meal to a stranger and a bed to a benighted traveller, these are matters of real pride to us, but we are woefully indifferent to the smaller things of everyday life. When we see more aged people being ferried across congested streets, more strong men helping weaker persons with their burdens on and off trains and buses, more men and women supple in the back picking up things for those grown stiff in the spine, those more fleet of foot volunteering to bear a message for slower feet, those with keen sight helping to read a sign-board or address for the less clear-sighted, and those with better knowledge giving little bits of useful advice to a villager in a city or a city-dweller in a village, or a foreigner in a market-place or a simple person in a fix, then shall we know that we have grown wiser in the ways of gratitude and goodness.

“We betake ourselves to a woman, forgetting our mother in a wife, and the womb that bare us in that which shall bear our image. This woman blessing us with children, our affection leaves the level

it held before, and sinks from our bed unto our issue and picture of posterity: where affection holds no steady mansion; they growing up in years, desire our ends; or, applying themselves to a woman, take a lawful way to love another better than ourselves. Thus I perceive a man may be buried alive, and behold his grave in his own issue.”¹ The above quotation provides a partial explanation to the Shakespearian jeremiad with which I commenced this essay. We, however, owe a debt of gratitude to our parents which we can never repay them in its entirety—it is too big and unique, and therefore the great bard’s denunciation of Lear’s ungrateful daughters is not unjustified in the mouth of the ill-requited father. I really think that next to our children who are yet young our parents have the greatest claim to our help and kindness. We as parents are able to discharge to the full our obligations with regard to our children, but as sons and daughters none of us can pay back all that we owe our parents—it is impossible. There is only one way of squaring the account, and that is to bring forth children of our own and make of them, in their turn, parents as perfect as we are able to.

Gratitude is like the lubricating

quality of oil, and kind deeds, words, and thoughts arising from the purity of our hearts are like soothing oil. The more of this oil we distil in the refineries of our being the more peaceful, smooth and harmonious will be the flow of our lives. And ingratitude is like the effect of grit in machinery which increases the friction and waste of its parts hindering its smooth functioning: we must not cause this grit to arise in the complicated mechanism of life by injurious deeds, bitter speech and evil thoughts.

“To know gratitude is the root of great compassion. It is the gate to open up good deeds and to be beloved by others.”²

There are four kinds of gratitude according to the *Mulajata-hridaya-dhyana-sutra* of the Mahayanists: they are gratitude due to parents, to other beings, to rulers, and to the Tree Treasures. This last should make us mindful of the irredeemable debt of gratitude we owe to the Thathagata for the incomparable Dhamma which he preached for the good of all humanity during forty-five long years, and we should understand that the best manner in which we can show our gratitude to the great Master is by our endeavour to live according to his teaching.

BUDDHISM IS NOT COMMANDMENTS—BUT AN EXPOSITION OF WAY OF SALVATION

SOME people make the mistake of regarding the Buddha as the *author* of a “religion,” as if he enacted a code of commandments and enjoined a blind faith in, and compliance with, them. This is far from being the case. He was a mortal like ourselves, who, by a tremendous effort, life after life, acquired sufficient wisdom and knowledge to discover a way—the only way—of escape from the boundless Samsara or continuity of life, and attaining emancipation and blissful spiritual Peace—Nirvana, short of which there is no deliverance from suffering which life admittedly connotes. Out of kindness and compassion to all life he disseminated

his Enlightenment in a most vigorous and effective manner. That is why he is designated the Compassionate One, and the Enlightened One.

By E. T. GOONEWARDENE

Some scholars have called Buddha a teacher of morality; he is rather a teacher of the wise way of living, for his emphasis was always on the wisdom aspect of life rather than on its moral morality, because to him morality and sin were simply

the wise and the foolish ways of living. He did not think that men needed a code of ethics so much as they needed an enlightened mind. He disbelieved in any personal God, or in any such thing as the soul as an entity having eternal life; therefore there could be no such thing as any legalistic relation between them, or any idea of penalty or reward. What the Christian thinks of as sin that calls for judgment, the Buddha thought as ignorance and foolishness that needed enlightenment and sympathy.

The teaching of the Buddha was directed almost entirely to the discernment of highest mental values

1. Cf. Essay on “Universal Charity,” in *The English Essayists*, p. 81.
2. Cf. “Mahayana Buddhism,” by B. L. Suzuki, p. 122.

and to persuade men to seek and accept the highest. Because external things were transient and unsubstantial and led to suffering, they were of less value and significance than the inner visions of the mind; his whole heart and mind, therefore, were directed to these mental states, seeking to discriminate between the good and the bad, and to develop and strengthen those that tended toward emancipation and clarity of insight.

Many a time he refused to answer profitless questions, and because of it threw himself open to a charge of ignorance that he *could not* answer; but all unperturbed he would reply that the question could not be answered by a simple Yes or No; often he declined to answer because the answer would involve something that could not be known or could not be proved—as, for instance, the being or nature of God. Again and again he urged his disciples to avoid any speculation or discussion about things that were essentially unknowable, because such discussion tended to dissention and unrest of mind, conditions which were prejudicial to the search for knowledge and peace of mind. He cautioned his disciples again and again: "Do not accept what you heard by report, do not accept tradition, do not accept a statement because it is found in books, nor because it is in accord with your belief, nor because it is the saying of your teacher."

The Buddha's teaching was scarcely a system of ethics concerned with outward behaviour, although it involved suggestions for behaviour; it was essentially a mental discipline that would lead to enlightenment and spiritual experience. Any follower of his was at perfect liberty to interpret his experiences in philosophic terms. The Buddha's teaching is a method of mind-control and leads through the restraint of physical desire, the encouragement of thoughtfulness, the practice of mental concentration, to a self-realisation within one's inmost nature of highest truth.

The supreme enlightenment that came to the Buddha as he sat through the night in perfect concentration was what made him Buddha. As in a flash he saw all the past and the present and future, all the relations and processes and stages and culmination of an endless and beginningless and all-inclusive unfolding. He saw it all with "eye of wisdom," but it could not be described in understandable words. It was pure experience; he could point out the way to the experience, but he could not tell what it was. It is that experience of Enlightenment that is the reward of right concentration. It behoves us, therefore, to be earnest and steadfast, not so much as an intellectual discipline, as an act and habit. The attainment of Enlightenment lies along that path, and the measure that will be ours will all depend on our capacity to

receive. If we faithfully follow that path we can do no more, and in the long last it will bring us to Enlightenment and its blissful peace.

Thus the Buddha: "Therefore, O Ananda," be you lamps unto yourselves. Be you a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as refuge to the Truth. Look not for a refuge to any one besides yourselves. It is they, Ananda, among my disciples, who do this, who shall reach the topmost height."

Unlike the fortuitous *founders* of other "religions," Buddha was not the author of a previously non-existent cult with "All Rights Reserved."

Buddhahood is a culminating *state* to be attained, it is not any one's prerogative. All of us are potential Buddhas only if we could put forth the necessary determination and effort—a steadfast determination and a stupendous effort. Thus it is a cosmic law, as it were, that a Supreme Embodiment of Universal Truth, in the person of a Buddha, comes to be at distant intervals of time for the benefit of those steeped in ignorance. This Personification of knowledge and wisdom first discovers the cause of suffering inherent in all life and then a remedy to end it. This remedy lies in doing no evil but only good and purifying the mind. Thus, mind-culture is the keynote of the teaching of every Buddha.

LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA

AROUND a date reckoned in the East to have been 630 B.C. in the West, 550 B.C., there was born to Suddhodana, a raja of the Provinces, in the Kingdom of Kosalan a son whom he named Siddhartha, his own family name being Gotama, his clan, the Sakyans. The son was evidently no ordinary young squire. His father may have been chief of a province; the post may have been hereditary, and hence serious duties of administration may have lain before him in the future. We know that in his twenty-ninth year Gotama abandoned his home, his young wife, and his infant son, and went into the world to become a homeless wanderer, and to spend his life, first in thinking out for himself the

By
The Hon.
Md. HABIBULLAH BAHAR,
DACCA

deepest problems of experience, and then in spreading abroad to others the good tidings of the salvation which he deemed himself to have discovered. Having "gone forth," as the technical expression runs, Gotama went first to Rajagaha, the capital city of the neighbouring Kingdom of Magadha. His visit is described in the Pabbajja Sutta. He met five recluses in his wandering. They accompanied

him for sometime but ultimately forsook him and went away to Benares. Though he was left alone, one day under the Bo-tree, Gotama the recluse attained Buddhahood and Nirvana and discovered the right solution of the mysteries of life, Gotama, then, resolved to preach his gospel to the world. The doctrine was preached peacefully. Throughout the long history of Buddhism, which is the history of more than half the people in the world for more than two thousand years, the Buddhists have been uniformly tolerant; and have appealed not to the sword but to intellectual and moral suasion. We have not a single instance, throughout the whole period, of any religious persecution.

One. But we should be glad when we observe that the majority of those attending Buddhist Sunday Schools take a delight in practising the Dhamma in imbibing the essence of it. This is why I say that the life in a Sunday School is invaluable to a child to lead a good life, a life which would be a blessing to himself as well as to the country at large.

The Enlightened One, says in the Parabhava Sutta, "*Dhamma-kāmo Bhavam hoti, Dhamma-dessā Parabhavo*—One who is attached to the Dhamma prospers and one who abhors the Dhamma falls." Therefore, it is the important duty of our parents who wish to see their children prosper along the right lines to send their children to the Sunday School to enable them to have the way to prosperity from the early days of their lives.

At this age it appears very essential that the parents should keep an eye on their children in order to safeguard them from the evil atmosphere. They should not en-

courage their children to despise the good customs of this country and follow the so-called social customs which are opposed to the Buddhist life.

The religious influence at home should be strong enough to direct the child's mind towards the Buddha Dhamma.

It is a pity that some of our Buddhists lead such lives so as to reveal that there is an inherent weakness among them which prevents them from appreciating the greatness of Buddhism.

Blind faith has no place in Buddhism. It appears that some of our people think that it is possible to become good Buddhists by offering a few flowers to an image or dagoba occasionally or by going on a pilgrimage or by offering a dana to the monks, conducting a pirith pinkama or pahan pinkama, etc., without inculcating in them those virtues which are associated with Buddhism.

There is another class of Buddhists who anxiously await the coming of Maitriya Buddha so that they may attain the goal, without paying much attention to live a Buddhist way of life from now itself. The wise and earnest seeker of the Truth, understands the Enlightened One when he sees the Dhamma in its true light.

"Yo Dhammam passati So mam passati—mam passati So Dhammam passati"

"He who sees the Dhamma, he sees me—He who sees me he sees the Dhamma"

says the Buddha.

The right way to honour the Buddha is to follow the Dhamma. At the Pari-Nibbana when He saw showers of sal-flowers falling upon Him, when He heard the heavenly music in honour of the Tathagata, the Buddha addressed Ananda and told him that the best way to honour Him was to live the Truth.

May all living beings be happy.

METTĀ (MAITRIYA)

"METTĀ TO ALL BEINGS IS THE BUDDHIST WAY OF LIFE"

"Namo Buddhaya"

Mettā or Maitriya being so comprehensive, cannot easily be translated into English. It is something much more than Love, Humanitarian, Compassion, Charity or Service. It is Love without desire to possess, without selfishness, without discrimination, without any limit and qualification. It is that kind of Love which combines it with Sympathy, and gives coolness, warmth, strength, goodness and liberation described by the Buddha as The Most Sublime Beauty.

THE IDEALS

THE disintegrating influence of foreign civilization on the religion, conceptions, social structure and economy of Asian countries is evident. True Buddhist thought, culture and living has given place either to materialistic-selfish thoughts and actions or apathy and ignorance.

The so-called, but firmly established, 'high' standards of civilization has completely changed our

By

TUN HLA OUNG

(With acknowledgments to my gurus
in Lanka)

former social conditions. Social services such as homes for the aged, the poor and delinquents, schools and orphanages, not necessary in the past, are now very essential, and the majority of those that exist are maintained by foreign religions who are ever quick and persistent to exploit misery with the chief object of propagating their own faiths.

Political policies originally based on national welfare and culture, have since the gaining of independence, changed to the materialistic-class-bias and, power-at-any-price, category. The impetus for national welfare organisations has visibly relaxed by a false sense of national prosperity and security. Our Buddhist duties have wavered from the path of the True Dhamma. Ceremonials—outward demonstrations—are over-emphasised. Continued lack of correct patronage and

indifference shown by Government and dayakas have created a very wide gap, even to the extent of expressed hostility, between the Sangha and the laity. The efficacy of the Dhamma has not at all been sufficiently proved. True Buddhism is on the wane and is in more danger than during foreign rule. The collapse of the great Japanese Empire is a glaring example of the inevitable result when Buddhist principles are discarded in favour of foreign materialistic ideologies.

Lest we should find ourselves left behind in the unceasing march of progress, we should, in complete keeping with the teachings of the Buddha, strive to bring that earnestness of aim and high-keyed aspiration more into contact with the affairs of the living, breathing, suffering and yet so heart-moving marvellous world. Numerous teachings of the Buddha exist for relentless energy, developing clarity of thought about material matters, importance of health, social duties, and the accumulation of knowledge and its applications to the improvement of the conditions of life on earth.

We must, therefore, revive these fundamental Buddhist teachings and the characteristics of Mettā and Karuṇā, and all individual and casual *ad hoc* efforts of service which exist must be organised and widened to suit and to meet existing social conditions. Further deterioration must be prevented, and a thorough renovation must be effected.

Spirituality and practical living must go together. We must completely change the materialistic creation of an atmosphere charged with Greed, Ill-will and Delusion leading to Hatred and Violence, and contribute towards a stabler and completer civilization for our countries and the World. *Buddhism can provide the solution. Buddhism is practical.* True Buddhism will, however, have to be revived, and scattered and weakened forces must be collected and strengthened. For the effective and sustained working of the noble principles, Buddhist work must be organised. All Buddhists must be devoted to the Buddhist way of life—a life of purity, observance, and learning. Observance, Service to all Beings, is the Buddhist way of life and the Buddha, His Doctrine, and His Order is the inspiration. Buddhists should, one and all, get themselves trained and go forth to serve all Beings in all possible ways—religious, philanthropic and humanitarian—for the good, gain and welfare of the many. True Buddhism is the application of noble ideas to practical life. If it merely ends in fine emotion or eloquent sentiments, it fails. Ideas are ghosts that mock until they are organised in the service of Truth.

About a third of the world's population are Buddhists. Living the True Buddhist way, they form a great and powerful force. They can meet all the problems of the human race. By making Buddhism pervade all programmes and policies, they can find Happiness for the World.

Live the Buddhist way of life and render service to All Beings. Our Adhithhāna must be "*This body of flesh and blood I bear: Just for the world's good and welfare.*"

THE PROBLEMS

The peoples are emaciated, disease-ridden, criminal, ignorant, poor, apathetic yet amongst themselves quarrelsome, selfish and miserable.

Greed, Ill-will and Delusion are the causes that have produced selfishness, sorrow and suffering.

The degeneration in moral, intellectual, physical, economic and social are the problems.

THE METHOD

All those who call themselves Buddhists must inculcate :—

- (1) Observance of Sil.
- (2) Cultivation of Mettā and Karuṇā, and
- (3) Practice of the Ten Paramis in their daily lives, and thus follow the Three Modes of Conduct (Buddhicariyā, Nātyatthacariyā and Lokatthacariyā).

The activities of the Buddhists must be organised into five channels of service directed to prevent or alleviate moral, intellectual, physical, economic and social disruptions. Activities of existing organisations should be widened to include these five aspects and unstinted co-operation given. New organisations should be formed where none exist.

Regional Centres of Buddhists must see that all such organisations exist and function. All members must actively participate in at least one movement of Maitriya, whosoever may be the organisers :—government, or any other religious denominations. Give each aspect of the service one of the five independent colours of the six radiances. 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 Regional Centres should establish training centres, and encourage and assist in the organisation and functioning of institutions such as schools, colleges, orphanages, hospitals, sanitoriums, dispensaries, homes for the distressed, infirm and the weak; societies aimed at removing moral, mental, physical, economic and social shortcomings; organisations and bodies established to relieve distress and to protect victims of War, Disease and Famine and disasters due to Water, Fire, Unjust Rulers, Thieves and Enemies.

THE PLAN

(1) **Organisation.**—The Mettā Committee or Samiti of each Regional Centre should establish a Headquarter which should (a) direct, co-ordinate, organise and/or co-operate all maitriya works within the country and (b) form divisional,

district, sub-divisional or township branches, each directing and co-ordinating the work of the ward (in towns) or, village centre.

(2) **Types of Service.**—that can be rendered are :—

(a) Activities ministering to *Moral* needs, e.g., religious schools, classes, lectures, and examinations, distribution of religious pamphlets, organised pilgrimages, sil, temperance, peace, anti-animal slaughter and thrift campaigns, etc. (white).

(b) Activities ministering to *Intellectual* needs, e.g., schools for children and workers, classes, lectures, technical institutes and courses on agricultural and cottage industries, reading rooms, libraries, issue of journals, etc. (blue).

(c) Activities ministering to *Physical* needs, e.g., hospitals, dispensaries, sanitoriums, convalescent homes, asylums, nursing, health visitors, pre and post-natal clinics, child-welfare centres, physical exercises, games and organisations of sports, etc., meetings, first-aid, ambulance and nursing units, home-nursing classes, etc. (red).

(d) Activities ministering to *Economic* needs, e.g., as for (b) together with distribution of literature, holding of displays and exhibitions, co-operative and food, etc., distribution schemes, etc. (orange).

(e) Activities ministering to *Social* needs, e.g., art and cultural classes, lectures and exhibitions, rural development work, relief works, homes for the aged, orphans, delinquents, etc. (yellow).

(f) Activities ministering to needs of *Animals*, e.g., hospitals, dispensaries, homes and animal welfare centres, etc.

Note.—Plans should also be made during peace-time that existing organisations can be developed to meet conditions of War, Disease and Famine, not only in our own countries, but also to render service in countries afflicted by such pestilences. The sick and wounded will have to be attended to, the homeless, the prisoners, internees, the starving, the penniless must be looked after and provided for spiritually, physically, etc. It should not be necessary for Asian countries to seek foreign aid of doubtful partiality and aim as, in the present

case of insurgency in Indonesia, owing to the absence of Asian organisations, the aid of the Dutch and the Swiss Red Cross has been sought.

(3) **The Leaders.**—Leaders must first be trained, they in turn will organise and train the workers.

Leaders will be from the Sangha, Upasakas and Upasikas. Sanghas wield a tremendous influence and will lead, guide, inspire and provide the high spiritual relief. Sanghas may be both Thera and Samanera and form a new 'Maitriya' Order of 'gantha duras.' The Upasaka and Upasika leaders will be from volunteers who are prepared to devote their lives in the service of the Buddha. As leaders must be wholtime they must be specially trained and provided for—the lay leaders must be given a minimum wage.

(4) **The Workers.**—All Buddhists will be the Workers. Some will render part-time service but *all* will give their maximum spare time to Service, even if only to practise the parami of dana and that, wholeheartedly and liberally.

Headquarters shall welcome suggestions and proposals from the Regional Centres and envisages that Centres, when formed, would like to attend a special conference of Maitriya Workers to perfect their details?

Meanwhile the Headquarters should exhort all Buddhists to get on with it without delay through existing institutions or even from scratch with the true Buddhist spirit of 'Viriya' and 'Appamada.'

Where there are existing organisations, the plan for the Headquarters, would merely be to form a bond of union for the purpose of co-ordinating the efforts of existing societies, etc., and of individuals throughout the country, and to fill gaps found. The Headquarters is designed to be a centre for the exchange and co-ordination of news, views and literature.

THE APPEAL

Buddhism is not a religion of devotion, but one of actions. "Warriors! Warriors we call ourselves!" 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 be the emblem of humanitarian work in our countries instead of the Red Cross, the 'Sivaka', instead of 'St. John,' the 'Maghas' take the place of 'Salvationists,' and 'Maghakumaras' and 'Maghakumaris' formed into Sri Arahau, Sri Ananda, Sri Mogallana, Sri Sariputa, Sri Rahulas, etc.—and Visakha, Sujata, Yasodhara, etc., troops of Young Warriors.

(Note.—In Muslim countries and in Israel the Red Crescent and the Red Shield of David has replaced the Red Cross.)

Let all Buddhists dedicate their lives for the noble purpose of serving the World. The World can be made Happy by correct effort, enthusiasm and endurance. Let us endeavour to work disinterestedly for the good of ourselves and others, having as our object in life—The Noble Ideal of Service and Perfection. *All* can be 'Viriya-dhikas,' though many of us cannot straightaway be 'Sad-dhadikas' or 'Pannadhikas.'

Since Karma has cast us into this material world, let us align our lives for the time we dwell here to the purpose of our betterment, the betterment of all lives that animate it.

"Serve to perfect; be perfect to Serve."

"May All Beings be Well and Happy."

SRI LANKA AND HER NEIGHBOURS—IV

(Continued from page 86)

countries of Thailand and Lanka have begun to draw close together. May that contact prove to be as fruitful as the similar contacts of old.

(Concluded)

Postscript.—Since the above was written a very representative delegation came from the Thailand to the World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference held in Lanka in May-June this year. The delegation was sponsored by the Thai Government and included a personal representative of the Sangharaja of Thailand, a Minister of State, a Prince of the Royal Family and officials of several Buddhist Associations.

Buddhist Association Foundation.
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COLOMBO Y. M. B. A. NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

5.9.50: J. A. Julius Perera, C. P. Singarayay, Stephen Almeida, P. Sarasinghe, Hermon L. Perera.

12.9.50: M. M. Mohideen, M. P. Rodrigo, M. B. H. Mendis.

19.9.50: J. Dharmapala, C. Karunayake, U. P. Perera, P. S. Perera.

LITERARY ACTIVITIES

Gate-Mudaliyar U. Wickremeratne delivered a lecture on "Was Vijaya's Landing in Ceylon an accident?" He put forward certain theories based on his observations in the course of his wide travels in India, and hoped that students would work on them to arrive at some definite conclusion. He thought that Vijaya came to Ceylon according to plan. Mr. N. J. V. Cooray presided.

Mrs. Shirin Fozdar, of the Executive Committee of the All-India Educational Federation and a Vice-President of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of India, Burma and Pakistan, delivered a lecture on "The Religion of the Future." Dr. G. P. Malalasekera presided.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge with thanks Vol. I, No. 2, of "Stepping Stones," a monthly journal of "Himalayans Religion, Culture and Education," issued by the Young Men's Buddhist Association, Dharmodaya Vihare, Kalimpong.

OBITUARY

We offer our sympathy to Muhandiram and Mrs. P. Wakwelle on the death of their son, Percy.

NEWS AND NOTES

Bhikkhu Walpola Rahula, of the Vidyalankara Pirivena, Kelaniya, is now at the Sorbonne University, Paris.

H. Dhammananda Thera, of Bahu Jana Vihare, Bombay, has been appointed by the Governing Body of the Maha Bodhi Society of India as Bhikkhu-in-Charge of this Vihara.

He delivers weekly lectures in the Vihara Hall, both in English and Hindi. Harijans show a great interest in studying Buddhism.—*Cor.*

TAMIL BUDDHISTS

A large number of South Indian Tamils in Ceylon have embraced Buddhism, following the exhortation of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The first batch of about 200 was led to the Vidyalankara Pirivena, Peliyagoda, by Mr. Osmund de Silva, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, a silent but strong and sincere worker in the cause of the Dhamma, during the recent Dhamma Sangeetiya. After making offerings to the sacred relics, which were exhibited at the time, the party went over to the Raja Maha Vihare, Kelaniya, where they received "Pansil" from Kiribathuduve Pannasara, Chief High Priest of the Vidyalankara Pirivena.

The second batch, comprising a much larger number, received "Pansil" at the Kelani Vihare in the latter part of September.

Dr. G. P. Malalasekera, President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, was present at both ceremonies.