

B U D D H I S M

in

South India

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BUDDHISM IN SOUTH INDIA

Pandit Hisselle Dhammaratana Mahathera

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with an Appendix

Extracts from the Manimekhalai

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The Introduction of Buddhism to South India

It is not generally known that Buddhism flourished in South India in ancient times. The ancient chronicles of Ceylon such as the *Dīpavamsa* and *Mahāvamsa* are silent on the subject.

While studying Tamil literature I became interested in this subject, which is one on which we should not be ignorant. Therefore in order to acquaint myself with it I had to peruse books on the history of South India and Ceylon, the Pāli texts and commentaries, in addition to studies in Tamil literature. The Tamil book entitled *Baudhamum Tamilum* ("Buddhism and Tamil literature") by Seeni Vengadasamy of Madras was particularly helpful to me.

In this work I propose to deal with the arrival of Buddhism in South India, its spread and its decay. I shall also touch on famous Buddhist cities, the impact of Buddhism on the local Hindu religion, and on Buddhist teachers and their literary work. There is division of opinion regarding the period in which Buddhism was introduced to South India. However on perusal of Tamil literary works a solution to this problem can be found.

The earliest literary work in which Buddhism is traceable is a book called *Puranānūru*. No trace of Buddhist influence can be found in books written prior to this. In the *Puranānūru* there is reference to the *Sivi Jātaka*. The full impact of Buddhism in South India is unmistakably shown in *Silappadhikāram* and

Maṇimekhalai, which are two epic works of the 3rd Sangam period* in Tamil literature (2nd century C. E.) Of these, *Maṇimekhalai* is a purely Buddhist work, which, in addition to the narrative, contains also expositions of Buddhist doctrine.** Extracts from other poems written by the author of *Maṇimekhalai*, *Sithalai Sāttanār*, are found in other Tamil literary works. Quotations from *Ilambodhiyār*, the Buddhist poet, are found in the *Natrinai* (p. 72). Thus we are able to arrive at the conclusion that Buddhism came to South India before the 3rd Sangam period of Tamil Literature (2nd century C. E.).

Tamil literary works provide a clue to finding the time of the advent of Buddhism. Apart from this, the inscriptions of king Asoka also shed much light on the subject. Two inscriptions of King Asoka found at Girinar in Surashtra are particularly helpful.

“The merciful Emperor endowed with favours from the gods, has arranged for medical facilities to be provided to men and beasts, in Chola, Chera, Pandya, Ceylon, and in the kingdom of the Creek king Antiochus.”

From this it is clear that the Emperor Asoka provided medical facilities in the kingdoms of South India. Nothing is mentioned here of the spread of Buddhism. Yet in Edict number XIII found near Peshawar, there is reference to the Buddhist missions of Asoka. Among the countries referred to are Chola, Pandya, and Ceylon. This inscription was written in B. C. 258 and is direct evidence of the Buddhist missions of Asoka to South

* The *Sangam* was a convocation of Tamil poets and literary critics to whom poetic works were submitted for their approval or otherwise.

** See Appendix.

India and Ceylon. As Buddhist missions to Ceylon had to come by way of South India, the spread of Buddhism in Ceylon and South India should be considered contemporary events.

At the third Buddhist Council convened under the patronage of King Asoka missionaries were selected to be sent to various countries round about India. The Emperor Asoka's son Mahinda Mahā Thera was selected to propagate Buddhism in Ceylon. In the 3rd century B. C. the Venerable Mahinda arrived in Ceylon with his Buddhist mission. He ordained many disciples and started missionary activities on a big scale. His chief disciple was the Venerable Ariṭṭha who assisted his teacher in his missionary endeavours.

It is unfortunate that Ceylon's ancient chronicles, which have taken pains to give details of the life and missionary activities of King Asoka, should have omitted to record the introduction of Buddhism to South India. The historian Vincent Smith has advanced the view that as South Indian Tamils constantly harassed the Sinhalese with invasions, the Buddhist monks who wrote the chronicles were prejudiced against them and did not wish to give them a place in their books.

Despite this omission it is now accepted by all scholars that Buddhism was introduced to South India by the Venerable Mahinda himself. The aforementioned facts are alone sufficient to establish this assumption. Although our chronicles say that the Ven: Mahinda arrived in Ceylon through his supernormal powers scholars are of opinion that he travelled by sea, and called at Kāveripattinam in South India. He sojourned there in a monastery called Indra Vihāra, which was one

of the several monasteries constructed in this part of the country by the Emperor Asoka.

The celebrated Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang arrived at Kānchipura in South India in A. C. 640 during the course of his travels. He mentions a stupa 100 feet in height which existed there. With regard to the Buddhist monuments in the Pandya country Hiuen Tsang writes as follows :

“Near the city of Madura there is a monastery built by Mahinda Thera, the brother of King Asoka. To the east of this there is a stupa built by King Asoka”

The monastery and stupa were in a dilapidated condition at the time. Tamil literature does not mention anything about these two shrines.

The commentator Dhammapala Thera mentions in his works that he resided in a monastery which was built by King Asoka in a place called Bhadaratirtha.

Several Sinhalese princes including Mahā Aritṭha were ordained by Venerable Mahinda in Ceylon. All of them assisted the Mahā Thera in his missionary activities. Further there is evidence that they assisted the Mahā Thera in propagating the Dhamma in South India.

Early in the history of Buddhism in Ceylon rock caves were made habitable and offered to the Sangha. Such caves are still to be seen at Vessagiri, Chetiyaḡiri, and Tonigala. Similar caves are to be seen in the Madura district of the Pandya country. Beds cut in the rocks for monks to rest upon are seen in these caves, inscriptions are also found indicating the names of the donors. The Brahmi script used by King Asoka in his inscriptions has been utilised in some writings. One such cave in the Pandya country is situated in a place called Aritṭapattī. This name is derived from Venerable

Ariṭṭha who resided in this particular cave conducting his missionary activities.

From the aforementioned facts it may be concluded that Buddhism was introduced to South India by King Asoka and his son the Venerable Mahinda, about the same time as the introduction of Buddhism to Ceylon.

The Rise, Spread, and Decay of Buddhism in South India

It is well known that the three Buddhist Councils held in India contributed much to the spread of Buddhism throughout India and in other countries. In particular the third council convened by King Asoka delegated various Arahants with the task of leading missions to selected lands. Both in the time of the Buddha and in subsequent times Buddhist monks went about from village to village spreading the word of the Master. Those who went to South India had to take up the challenge from Jain and Hindu opponents and engage themselves in debate with them, apart from struggling against other difficulties and obstacles. The monks thus endeavouring to spread the Dhamma met with encouragement and support from kings, wealthy merchants and noblemen. As a result of this they went out to each and every village and city of South India and propagated the Buddha-Dhamma, building monasteries and erecting centres of Buddhist learning. Some of the monks residing in the monasteries became skilled medical practitioners. They provided free medical services and free education in the monastic schools, thus rendering invaluable service. They got the people to assemble at the monastery premises, and

preached Jātaka tales, the life of the Buddha, read Suttas from the Buddhist scriptures, and thus increased knowledge of the Dhamma by explaining and clarifying what the people could not understand. With the help of kings and rich men they maintained alms-halls for the benefit of the blind, deaf and maimed. Thus on account of their social services and devoted work in the propagation of the Dhamma, Buddhism spread rapidly in South India.

Another point in their favour was that these monks ignored caste differences, and this was a great relief to the masses of depressed classes who suffered acutely on account of caste - discrimination. The oppressed classes found their emancipation in Buddhism. Opposition to the rigid and inhuman caste system was one of the major reasons for the popularity of Buddhism.

One can gain a good idea of the popularity of Buddhism in South India by reading the *Silappadhikāram* ("The Book of the Anklet") by the Jain poet Ilango Aḍigal*, the *Manimekhalai* by the Buddhist poet Sāttanār, the *Thevāram* hymns of the Hindu saints such as Appar, Sundarar, and Tirugnānasambandhar. All these poets lived in the 2nd to 7th century C. E. Further the works of the Vaishnavite saints of the 8th and 9th century, extolling the virtues of their god, and the *periyapurāṇam* by the 12th century poet Sekillār, and the *Nīlakēsi* written by the Jains against Buddhism, give a clear picture of the popular place Buddhism held for several centuries in South India.

Buddhism which flourished in South India from the 3rd century C. E., began to decline gradually from about the 7th century for several reasons.

* Translated by Ramachandra Dikshitar. Oxford Union Press 1939.

The Vedic religion of North India, Jainism, and the Ājīvaka faith had preceded Buddhism in South India. These religions had turned South India into a debating ground. It is not clear what was the indigenous religion before the arrival of these faiths from the North. The religions contending for popularity vied with each other to win over kings and influential men. At the start it was Buddhism that emerged triumphant from this struggle for popularity.

The Ājīvaka religion was left behind in this struggle. Only the Buddhist, Jain, and the Vedic religions were left to contend. Now Buddhism had to contest with two rival faiths which were envious of its popularity and planned to destroy it. The Buddhist position was undermined by the combined efforts of these two rival faiths. Buddhism itself split into several sects. The Nīlakesi mentions three rival Buddhist sects, Mahāyāna, Srāvakayāna, and Mantrayāna. The Hindu saint Tirugnānasambandhar mentions in his Thevāram that during his time Buddhism was divided into six sects. This disunity itself contributed to the decline of Buddhism.

Further the Buddhist monks gave up the social and welfare work which had brought them popularity. They became self-centred and deteriorated from their high principles. Hence they lost the support of the kings and influential men. Thus a weakened Sangha found itself unable to withstand the combined onslaught of the two rival faiths. With the decline of Buddhism in the 5th and 6th centuries Jainism gained ascendancy. At this time the Vedic religion was not influential in South India. With the upsurge of Jainism the Jains concentrated their attack on Buddhism. The Buddhist monks found

themselves not equal to the task of defending Buddhism. It is mentioned in a Jain work that the Jain teacher Akalankar defeated Buddhist monks in controversy and chased them off to Ceylon. But in spite of these setbacks Buddhism was by no means eradicated. For several centuries Buddhism still survived, though in a state of decline.

The Vedic religion of the Brahmins which had hitherto been in a weak position began to make headway and gain the support of the kings and men in high positions. Thereupon Brahmanism got the upper hand over Jainism. It was at this stage that Buddhism disappeared from South India. This Brahmanism had been unpopular for several centuries on account of its animal sacrifices and observance of the caste system. The depressed classes detested this religion as it forbade them to study the Vedas. After the 5th century Brahmanism began to change its emphasis on these unpopular doctrines. It also incorporated popular South Indian gods such as Kāli, Skanda, Ganapati, and Vishnu into its pantheon. This new phase of the Hindu religion adopted hymns overflowing with faith as a means of gaining popularity. Just as the Jains when they gained power directed their attacks on Buddhism, Hinduism with its new orientation directed its onslaught on Buddhism as well as Jainism.

Hindu saints such as Tirugnānasambandhar, Appar, Sundarar, Tirumangaiyālvār, Peyālvār, and so forth, appeared in the 7th and 8th century C. E. and were responsible for the renaissance of Hinduism. They successfully engaged Buddhist and Jain teachers in controversy. Hinduism at that time was not broken up into sects such as the Shaivaites and Vaishnavaites. Hence Buddhists, divided among themselves, were

unequal to the attack of the united Hindus.

The Thevāram psalms of Tirugnānasambandhar mention that he engaged Buddhists in controversy and converted them to his faith. Tiruvāsagam written by Mānikkavāsagar of Sidambaram mentions that he defeated Buddhist teachers in controversy and made them flee to Ceylon.

Tirumanga-yālvār mentions in his works that he stole a golden image of the Buddha from a monastery in in Nāgapaṭṭaṇam and offered it to build up the Tiruvarangai Hindu temple. Though Buddhism suffered such hazards and became weakened it was not until the 14th century that it disappeared from South India.

The continuation of the Mahāvamsa mentions that in the 13th century King Parakramabahu of Dambadeniya got down Buddhist monks and scriptures from Chola to revive Buddhism in Ceylon. During this period there was a great deal of cultural intercourse between South India and Ceylon. The chief of the monks who were brought from South India was Venerable Dhammakitti. He wrote the continuation of the Mahāvamsa from the time of King Sirimevan up to his time. He is also considered to be the author of the Pāli poem Dāthavamsa, though there is division of opinion about this. The Venerable Dīpankara of Chola, known as Buddhappiya, also came to Ceylon for his studies in Buddhism. The Pāli poem "*Pajjamadhu*" (Nectar of Verses) was written in adoration of the Buddha by him. He is also the author of "*Rūpasiddhi*", a Pāli grammar.

The Venerable Buddhamitta and Mahā Kassapa were also two Cholian bhikkhus who came to Ceylon. They studied the Dhamma here and rendered great service in the cause of the religion. From these facts it

will be seen that up to the 13th century Buddhism was still strong in South India. Up to the 14th century there were Buddhists, monasteries, and centres of Buddhist learning in some parts of South India. After that Buddhism disappeared, leaving only traces of its heyday in the many ruins, and the influence it brought to bear on Hinduism.

Buddhist Monuments in South India

In order to find out where Buddhism flourished, and in what condition it existed prior to the 14th century it is necessary to study the ruins of Buddhist buildings in the chief kingdom of South India, namely the Chola country.

The capital of Chola was Kāveripattinam. It was so called because it was situated on the mouth of the river Kāveri. From the very start this city was a centre of Buddhist activities. The Jātaka book mentions this city as the home of the sage Akitti who gave away his wealth to the poor, became a hermit and lived in a wood close to the city. As large numbers of people flocked to pay him homage he found no leisure there. Therefore he left the place and went to Kāraitīvū island off the North coast of Ceylon.

The Venerable Mahā Mahinda while leading the Buddhist mission to Ceylon sojourned in this city. I have previously mentioned a monastery here. The Tamil poems Silappadhikāram and Maṇimekhala refer to this monastery as the Indra Vihāra. It is derived from the elder's name Mahā Indra (Mahendra) in its Sanskritised form. In the 2nd century a bhikkhu called

Aravaṇa Aḍigal occupied this monastery. It is mentioned in the poem Maṇimekhalai that there was a small Buddhist shrine in a park called 'Upavana', and a replica of the Buddha's footprint was worshipped there. In the same poem it is said that King Killivalavan, who reigned in the 2nd century, became a Buddhist and converted the prison to a preaching hall at the request of the nun Maṇimekhalāi. Later he built a Buddhist monastery there.

Rasavāhinī, a Pāli book of Buddhist stories written in the 13th century in Ceylon, mentions that a king of the Chola country erected a temple to the god Siva, but being converted by Buddhist monks, he made the temple a Buddhist Vihāra. The Venerable Buddhadatta, a commentator of great fame, mentions in his books that he resided in a monastery at Rāveripaṭṭinam. He was supported by the king of the time. Among the Tamil commentators and Buddhist teachers he stands out preminent.

In the introduction to the Pāli Abhidhammāvatāra Venerable Buddhadatta says that he lived in a monastery at Kāveripaṭṭinam constructed by a minister named Krishnadāsa. He describes in verse this flourishing city with its wide streets filled with busy people. Again in the "Madhurattha Vilāsini", his commentary to the Buddhavaṃsa, he mentions that he wrote this book while residing in the same monastery.

Among the famous Buddhist centres of ancient Chola was the city of Bhūtamangala. Here too Venerable Buddhadatta resided in a monastery built by one Vishnudāsa. The Pāli work Vinaya Vinicchaya was written by him there. He describes the city of Bhūtamangala in the same strain as he wrote of the Cholian

capital, Kāveripaṭṭinam. Bodhimangai was another city where Buddhism found a foothold. It was here that the Buddhist teachers Buddhānandi and Sāriputra lived. The Periyapurāṇam mentions a debate between Tiruḡṅāṇa-sambandhar and these two teachers. The very name Bodhimangai is suggestive of its Buddhist associations.

Ponpaṭṭri of the Tañjai district was another Buddhist stronghold. Here the Buddhist teacher Buddhamitra lived in the 11th century. The Tamil grammar Veerasolium was written by him. The book was so named in honour of the Cholian King Vīrājendra.

Nāgapattanam

This city, situated near a port of the Chola country, was an important Buddhist centre from ancient times. Here a monastery called Badarotīrtha Vihāra was built by King Asoka. In the 8th century B. C. Venerable Dhammapāla resided here and wrote the Nettippakaraṇa commentary. In the year 720 A. C. a vihāra was constructed with the assistance of king Narasinhapothavarman for the use of Chinese mariners who called over here for purposes of trade. This was known as the Chinese monastery. Marco Polo, travelling from China to Venice, mentions this monastery.

In the 8th century the Vaishnavite teacher Tirumangai yālvār stole a golden Buddha image from a Buddhist Vihāra in Nāgapattanam and used the gold for renovating a Hindu temple. This fact is mentioned in the Guruparamparai Parbhāram, a Tamil work of the period. During the reign of the powerful Chola king Rājarāja (A. C. 985 - 1014), a monastery called Siri Sailendra Cūḍāmaṇi Vihāra was built here. The King of Sri Vijaya in Sumatra had helped the Cholian king to

put up this shrine. A copper plate on which was engraved the lands endowed by this king to the monastery was removed to Leiden museum where it is preserved.

In the 14th century, too, Chinese merchants called at this port for merchandise. They engraved an inscription at the vihāra. Chinese records also make reference to this inscription.

In the 15th century eleven Burmese bhikkhus and one envoy despatched to Ceylon by the Burmese king Rāmpatirāja were shipwrecked while returning to their native land. Fortunately they reached Nāgapattāṇam and resided in the Chinese Vihāra. This is confirmed by the Kalyāṇi Sīma rock inscription in Burma.

Sir Walter Elliot mentions that to the north of Nāgapattāṇam a large gopuram (temple tower) existed by the sea in 1836. It served as a lighthouse for mariners. In 1867 the government of India permitted Christian missionaries to demolish this Buddhist structure, and erect one of their buildings. While the large tree by the Gopuram was being uprooted, five Buddha statues were found. Four of them were of metal and one was of porcelain. One depicted the Buddha in the posture of expounding the Dhamma. When Lord Napier the British Governor visited the place, the missionaries presented him with these antiquities. In the pedestal of the Buddha-rūpa an inscription in 12th century Tamil was found. It read, "May it be auspicious! The Teacher to whom Agama Paṇḍitar went for refuge for emancipation from Saṃsāra".

There is at present a Brahmin village in Nāgapattāṇam called Puttaṃkoṭṭam. Mr. S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar mentions that this village was constructed after

demolishing a Buddhist monastery there. In Madras museum are to be found several types of Buddha images and Buddhist carvings. From these facts one can conclude that Nāgapattanam was a stronghold of Buddhism. It was the pride of Indian Buddhists for several centuries. The great commentator Buddhaghosa embarked for Ceylon from this port. The village Buddhakuḍi, as the name implies, was the abode of Buddhists. After the 15th century, particularly with the arrival of Europeans, Buddhist remains are lost.

Of the ancient Cholian cities, Uraiyūr, called Uragapura in Sanskrit, was the home of the celebrated commentator Buddhadatta. This city too was a Buddhist centre from the time of the arrival of Buddhism in the South.

So far we have discussed only the celebrated centres of Buddhist learning in the Chola country. Apart from these there were also a large number of minor towns where Buddhism was active. Of these Buddhamangalam, Sanghamangalam, Kumbakonam, Mayūrapattanam, Ālamkuḍipatti and so on are also important centres of Buddhist culture. Towns having names including the words Buddha, Sangha, Ālam (i. e. Bodhi tree), unmistakably reveal their Buddhistic past. In some of the Hindu temples of these cities Buddha statues are seen with Hindu variations.

The Thoṇḍaimaṇḍala region of South India was also an area inhabited by Buddhists, but unlike the Chola country it had no great centres of Buddhist activity. Only a few Buddhist cities such as Kūvam, Sanghamangi, Tiruppāḍirippuliyūr, and Kañcipuram existed there. Of these Kūvam was a Buddhist stronghold from the early days. A large Buddha statue which was found here is to

be seen at the Madras museum. Even today Sanghamangai is considered a Buddhist village. The very name indicates its connection with the Buddhist Sangha. This is the birthplace of Sākiya Nāyakar, a Buddhist teacher who is said to have embraced Shaivaism at a later stage. Tiruppādirippuliyūr was a centre of Buddhist learning. A Buddhist University is said to have existed there.

Kānchipuram.

The chief city of the Tondaimaṇḍala region, Kānchipuram occupies an important place in South Indian Buddhist history. From early times it was a meeting place for the four chief religions which contended for supremacy in this region. By far most of its population was Buddhist. Hiuen Tsang, who visited it in the 7th century, mentions that king Asoka had erected a stūpa there. In the Tamil classic Maṇimekhalai it is mentioned that King Killivalavan built a cetiya in the city in honour of the Buddha. It is further mentioned in the same work that the king offered a park named 'Tarumadavana' to the Buddhist order. A shrine containing an imprint of the Buddha's feet was erected in the park. The Buddhist teacher Aravaṇa Aḍigal is reported to have migrated from Kāveripaṭṭaṇam to the city.

• Maṇimekhalāi, having become a Buddhist nun, lived in this city to the end of her days. Even today there is a Hindu temple called Maṇimekalāi Amman Kovil in this city. This is a Buddhist temple converted into a Hindu shrine. Ācārya Dharmapāla, rector of the Nālandā University, and Anuruddha Thera, author of Abhidhammattha Sangaha, were natives of this city. The well known commentator of the early 5th century Ācārya Buddhaghosa mentions in the concluding stanzas to his

commentary on the Anguttara Nikāya (Manorathapūraṇī) that at the time of compiling the work he lived at Kañcipura with his friend Bhikkhu Jotipāla. Again in the 'Papañcasūdanī', the commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya, he mentions that the book was written when he was residing at Mayūrapaṭṭanam with a bhikkhu named Buddhhamitta. In the Samantapāsādikā the Elder states that when residing at Kāncipura he saw the Telugu commentary known as the Andhaṭṭhakathā.

Hiuen Tsang, who arrived at Kānchi in A. C. 640, mentions that about 100 Buddhist monasteries were there at the time with about a thousand monks in them. He also mentions that the Buddhist teacher Ācārya Dīgnaga was a native of Sinhavaktra (modern Siyamangala) near Kāñci. Mahendravarman the Pallava king wrote his Sanskrit work "Mattavilāsa-Prahāsana" in the 8th century. In this he refers to the existence of many Buddhist vihāras at Kāñci, the chief of which was Rāja vihāra.

Of the Pallava kings who reigned at Kāncipurā Buddhavarman was a Buddhist. He erected Buddhist monasteries and supported them. It is mentioned that King Himasītala of the 8th century was a supporter of the Buddhists. The Jain named Akalanka defeated the Buddhist monks in a debate in the presence of the king. He converted the king and made the Buddhist monks flee to Ceylon.

At present there is a shrine called Kāmākriyamman. kovil in Kānchi. This was originally a shrine of the Mahāyāna Buddhists dedicated to the goddess Tārā. Indian archeologists are of opinion that it was later converted to a Hindu place of worship. In fact even today there are Buddha statues in the kovil. There is a standing image there called "Sāttan", a word derived

from the Pāli word *satthā*, teacher, namely the Buddha. According to the Hindu story this Sāttan was the son of their goddess Kāmākriyamman. The present Kacchīsvara kovil, Ekāmbaresvara kovil, and Kurukāṇil Amaranādā kovil, are converted Buddhist shrines. In these are found Buddha images done up as Hindu gods. The Buddhist temple at Kaccikkunāyanār kovil has been so demolished that nothing of it remains. There are inscriptions which mention land endowments to this Buddhist Vihāra.

An eminent poet of Java writing in the 14th century mentions the existence of thirteen Buddhist monasteries in Kāñchi. He mentions that at this time Buddhism and Vaishnavism had got so mixed up that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. The conversion of Buddhist vihāras to Hindu kovils, the parading of Buddha statues in the guise of Hindu gods, and the transferring of the Buddhist history of these shrines to Hindu ones, is a source of grief to the Buddhist who sees them. Apart from the many statues found broken up, the use of numerous Buddhist images for building walls, foundations, and other building work is also a source of grief to the Buddhist. Apart from the loss sustained by Buddhism, Buddhist art in Asia has been deprived of valuable treasures.

From these facts it is seen that Kānchipuram was a great centre of Buddhism even as Anurādhapura was in Ceylon. Renowned Buddhist teachers such as Aravana Adigal, Manimekhalāi, Dinnāga, Bodhidharama, Commentator Āchārya Dharmapāla, Anuruddha and Buddhāditya lived in this city. The present Tirumāliruñcolai Vaishnavaitē shrine was formerly a Buddhist centre. Here too are found a large number of rock

caves. Asoka characters (of the Brahmi script) are found in them. Mr. V. R. Ramachandra is of opinion that these were occupied by Buddhist and Jain monks.

Similarly Buddhist towns and villages existed in the Pandya country. This region was the birthplace of Ācārya Dharmapāla, Vajirabodhi, and other Buddhist scholars. There are many rock caves here which were once inhabited by Buddhist monks.

Finally we have to consider the Chera kingdom and its Buddhist centres. This region is also called Kerala, or the Malayālam country. King Elāra who conquered and ruled Ceylon (220 B. C.) was a native of Kerala.

City of Vañchi

This was the capital of the Chera country. *Sillappadhikāram*, the Tamil poem, describes the capitals of the chief kingdoms of South India, Chola, Chera, and Pandya. It is mentioned in the Maṇimekhalai that the great grandfather of Kovalan, hero of the *Sillappadhikāram*, built a Buddhist shrine (stūpa) at Vañchi. He was won over to Buddhism by a bhikkhu living in a place called Pādapanka jamalaya. He spent all his wealth on Buddhist causes. In the 2nd century this chetiya and several others existed at Vañchi. It is mentioned in the poem Maṇimekhalai that Kovalan's father, Maṇimekhalai, and the bhikkhu Aravaṇa Aḍigal went to Vañchi and worshipped its many Buddhist shrines.

Several Hindu temples bearing such names as Sāttan Kāvu and Aiyappan kovil, exist today in the Malayāla country. All these were former Buddhist shrines. Sāttan as mentioned before is a name for Buddha. Kāvu is a garden or monastery. Hence Sāttankāvu means the Monastery of the Buddha.

Madhurā

Another region where Buddhist cities and villages existed is found in the Pāṇḍya country. Its capital Madhurā was a centre of Buddhist activity. "Madhuraikkāñchi", a work written in the last Sangam period of Tamil literature, mentions the existence of Buddhist monasteries and Buddhists in this city. In the poem Maṇimekhalā the existence of a shrine dedicated to Cintādevi is referred to. Historians are of the view that this is a shrine dedicated to the Mahāyāna goddess Tārā. This view is confirmed by the fact that Tārā was also known by the name Cintādevi. Hieun Tsang, who arrived here in the 7th century, mentions that he saw the ruins of a monastery built by king Asoka. He also saw the ruins of a vihāra constructed by Mahinda Thera close to to this. No reference to these monasteries is found in Tamil literature. Whoever built these vihāras, the fact that Buddhist monasteries existed in Madhurā is established. Reference has already been made to Ariṭṭapatti which derived its name from the rock cave used by the Buddhist teacher Ariṭṭha from Ceylon. Inscriptions in Brahmi characters have been found in the rock caves that were occupied by Buddhist monks.

Podiyakanda, mentioned in Tamil literature, also became a centre of Buddhist activity. The Mahāyānist teacher Vajrabodhi (661-730) was born here. He went out to China and Japan to propagate Dhyāna (Zen) Buddhism. The present Tanjore district was known in ancient times as Tanchai. Ācārya Dhammapāla, who wrote commentaries to thirteen books of the Khuddaka Nikāya (Sutta Piṭaka), was a native of this province. There is evidence of this region being inhabited by Buddhists.

It was the custom from the Buddha's time to erect monasteries in parks and gardens. This practice prevailed both in India and Ceylon. Further, Manavūr and Tuḍitapura were Buddhist cities with numerous shrines. In a paraphrase written to the Tamil poem "Yakka yāgapparani" there is reference to a city called Buddha-pura (Buddhist city). This has so far not been identified.

From the foregoing one can get a glimpse into the flourishing state of Buddhism in Chola, Pandya, Chera (Kerala) and the Thondaimandala regions which comprise South India. From the available literature and the ruins we get the impression that Buddhism was prevalent all over South India. Sekkilār, the author of the Periyapūrānam, a Hindu religious work, mentions that in the 7th century the Shaivaite religion was moribund, Buddhism was triumphant and victorious. He says that the Shaivaites prayed to Shiva to destroy Buddhism and build up Hinduism. By Shiva's divine providence Tirugnānasabandhar was born to redeem Shiva's faith. Sekkilār cannot be incorrect with regard to the flourishing state of Buddhism that he refers to.

The Impact of Buddhism on Hinduism

When Buddhism made its exit, it left behind indelible impressions of its impact on the life and religious thought of South India. Buddhist ideas were incorporated into the Hindu religion. Modern Hinduism is imbued with Buddhist as well as Jain ideas. Not only this, the Hindus made an attempt to absorb the Islamic faith. During the time of King Akbar a new Upanishad named 'Allāh-Upanishad' was composed.

Let us now consider the Buddhist ideas that have been introduced into Hinduism. Many South Indian Hindus even do not know that some of their ideas have come to them from the impact of Buddhism when it flourished in their land. Although Buddhism was wiped out the fact remains that the Hindus worship the Buddha as the 9th Avatār, or incarnation of their God, Vishnu. That became necessary because worship of the Buddha was popular among the masses, hence the necessity to incorporate him into the Hindu pantheon. One cannot say with precision during which period this occurred. In Amarasinha's Sanskrit dictionary of the 8th century it is mentioned that the Buddha was the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Maya. In the book on Vishnu's nine Incarnations (Dasāvataralarita) written in the 11th century it is mentioned that the Buddha is the 9th incarnation of Vishnu. Therefore we may conclude that this incorporation of the Buddha into the Hindu pantheon occurred between the compilation of these two works.

While one branch of Hinduism, the Vaishnavaites, made the Buddha an incarnation of their god, the other branch, the Shaivaites, not to be outdone by them, also made the Buddha one of their gods, calling him Sāstā Aiyānār, and Dharmarājan. Again the Buddha was called Vināyaka and was equated to the elephant-faced god Ganesh. Vināyaka was a name used by the Buddhists for the Buddha. The Hindus call Ganesh, "Vināyaka". The Dharmarāja Vihāra and Vināyaka Vihāra were converted into Dharmarāja kovil and Vināyaka kovil.

The Buddha categorically denounced animal sacrifices which the Vedic Brahmins taught were highly

meritorious. On account of the Buddhist influence some Hindus renounced the slaughter of animals, and adopted the first Buddhist precept. Thus with the help of Buddhist teachings the Hindus managed to reform their religion which was losing ground and became moribund.

The Bodhi tree is a sacred object to Buddhists because the Buddha attained Enlightenment under one such tree. Tamil Buddhist poets writing in adoration of the Master referred to him in such terms as, "the Noble One who attained Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree," and "the mine of mercy who sat under the Bodhi tree." The Shaivaite teachers Apper, Sundarar, Tirugñāṇa-sambandhar, in their Thevāram hymns refer to Buddhists as "bodhiyar" or worshippers of Bodhi-trees. One of the Buddhists poets of the Sangam period was called Ilambodhiyār. In the anti-Buddhist poem Nilakesi written by the Jains, reference is made to the worship of Bodhi trees by Buddhists. This Buddhist practice is retained up to date by the Hindus of South India. They do not even know that this practice of theirs is a legacy from their Buddhist ancestors.

Buddhist monks erected monasteries in villages, resided there and taught the Dhamma. This practice was adopted by the Hindus who opened "madams" (resting places) for similar purposes. It is also a well-known fact that the Advaita-vāda of Sankarāchārya which also goes by the name of Māyā-vāda, Ekātma-vāda and Smārtavāda was influenced by Mahāyana philosophy. Having studied the Buddhist philosophies of Sūnya-vāda and Vijñāṇa-vāda he adopted these systems to his teachings. The Hindu teacher Rāmānuja called Sankara's Advaitavāda "hidden Buddhism". Mādha-vāchārya, an exponent of Dvaita-vāda, refuted Sankara's

philosophy, saying it was Buddhism in a different garb. The Padmapurāṇa too calls this teaching "hidden Buddhism". Thus from the very mouth of Hindu teachers we have evidence of the strong influence exercised by Buddhism on Sankara. Further, popular gods and goddesses of the Mahāyāna Buddhists were given Hindu names such as Kāli, Pidāri and Draupadi and were worshipped in the original shrines. The shrine of the Buddhist goddess Maṇimekālāi at Kānchi became Kāmākriyamman Ālayam". The shrine of the Mahāyāna goddess Tārā became Draupadiyamman Kovil. These are two more of the many Hindu kovils in South India which were originally Buddhist shrines.

These are some of the legacies which Hinduism derived from Buddhism. The erection of 'madams', Sankara's Advaita-vāda, the conversion of Buddhist deities to Hindu gods, Buddha being made an incarnation of Vishnu, the reduction of animal sacrifices, are the six items where the influence of Buddhism is seen to advantage. These practices and teachings are carefully adhered to even today. Though Buddhism was expelled from South India, yet many vestiges of it have remained. Buddhism lost in South India. Yet the Buddha's teachings and philosophy did not fail to win over the minds of men.

Tamil Literary Works by South Indian Buddhist Authors

South India produced many Buddhist teachers who made valuable contributions to Tamil, Pāli, and Sanskrit literature. They composed numerous works on a variety

of subjects such as religion, philosophy, history, grammar, etymology, astronomy, and medicine. Reference to their works is found in Tamil literature and other historical records.

It is most unfortunate that of the large number of books written from the 3rd to the 14th century only very few are available today. One literary work and a book on grammar are all that remain to us. The names of some other books are available. The large number of books that were destroyed are lost to posterity.

The Jains and Buddhists propagated their faith in the local languages. The Buddhist monks who came to South India studied the local language, preached, and wrote books for the edification of the native population. Though their literary works were destroyed by enemies they have left enduring marks of their influence.

In the 4th century the celebrated commentator Ācharya Buddhadatta lived in Buddhist cities such as Urugapura (Uraiyūr), Kāveripaṭṭanam, and Bhūtamangalam, and wrote several commentaries in Pāli. Rhys Davids mentions that he took materials for his commentaries from the Buddhist literature available to him in Tamil. In the paraphrase of the 'Nīlakesi' and Vīrasoliyam there are extracts from Tamil Buddhist poems which existed at the time. Today it is not possible to say from which books the extracts were taken. There is no doubt that many Buddhist works in Tamil existed during the heyday of Buddhism.

It is possible that books were destroyed during religious controversies. This happened several times in Ceylon, too. The Jains and Shaivaites opposed Buddhism tooth and nail. It is likely that these adversaries destroyed Buddhist books. After the decline of Buddhism

the tussel for supremacy was between the Jains and Hindus. In this the Hindus came out triumphant, while Jainism began to decline. The Jains, who were scattered all over, took sufficient precautions to preserve their Tamil literature. The Buddhists were not able to do even this, and all Buddhist books except two were lost. Although the Tamil books were destroyed, the Pāli books written by Tamil Buddhist scholars are preserved in Ceylon, Burma and Siam, even today. As Tamil Buddhist books were not used outside India these books perished with Buddhism in South India. In the 14th century Venerable Toṭagamuve Rahula, Buddhist scholar in Ceylon, made use of a Tamil glossary to the Jātaka when he wrote the 'Pañcikāpradīpa'. Even this book has been lost. The loss of Tamil Buddhist literature was a death blow to Buddhism in South India.

The Poem Maṇimekhalai.

The five Epics in Tamil literature are Silappadhikāram, Maṇimekhalai, Valaiyāpathy, Kuṇḍalakesi, and Jīvaka Cintāmani. It is a strange fact that not one of these was written by Hindu Tamils. Maṇimekhalāi Valaiyāpathy and Kuṇḍalakesi are the works of Tamil Buddhist poets. The remaining two are Jain works. Although the epics of the Jains are preserved intact, of the Buddhist works only Maṇimekhalai remains to tell the grandeur and glory of Buddhism in a land where it is no more. The story of Maṇimekhalā is unknown in Pāli, Sanskrit and Sinhala literature. It is a treasure house of Buddhist doctrinal expositions, and a narrative of unusual charm. It is a monument of the glorious days of Buddhism in South India.

The beautiful Hindu maiden Maṇimekhalai studied the six systems of philosophy in Hinduism, and other

prevalent religions of the time. She compared them to the teachings of the Buddha, and became impressed with the latter. Later on hearing doctrinal expositions from the Buddhist teacher bhikkhu Aravaṇa Aḍigal she became a Buddhist nun and devoted her time to the propagation of Buddhism in South India. These are the highlights of the story. There is doctrinal exposition in the poem dealing with the Four Noble Truths, Paṭicca Samuppāda (Dependent Origination), Citta and Cetasikas (Abhidhamma) and Buddhist practices like sīla and non-violence (ahiṃsa) are well explained.

The aim of the author was to compare Buddhism favourably with the other prevailing religions. He takes the occasion to criticize Jainism, the chief opponent of Buddhism at the time. While exposing the weaknesses of the contemporary religions he enthrones the Buddha-Dhamma as the perfect religion. His intention was thereby to propagate Buddhism. The poem contains 30 cantos and its story is a continuation of the Silappadhikāram. This poem is invaluable to the student of South India's Buddhist history. Maṇimekalai is a mine of information on the history of South India, Buddhism and its place during that period, contemporary arts and culture, and the customs of the times. Its author was Sīthalai Sāttanār, bard of the Buddha in Tamil literature.

Kundalakesi

This is one of the five great classic epics in the Tamil Language. It is now lost, but quotations from it are found in books by authors who had access to this classic. The poem was written for the purpose of showing to advantage Buddhist philosophy by comparative evaluation with Vedic and Jain philosophies. The Jains wrote

'Nīlakesi' as a reply to this book, and this is still preserved intact. That Kuṇḍalakesi is a Buddhist work needs no further proof. The biography of the bhikkhuni Kuṇḍalakesi is found in the commentary to the Therīgāthā, Dhammapada-commentary, and in the Anguttara Nikāya. The story of Kuṇḍalakesi in the Tamil work is the identical biography with a few differences. The commentary to the work Nīlakesi also touches on the story of Kuṇḍalakesi. The story was taken from the Kuṇḍalakesi in order to present the Jain reply to Buddhist criticism. Kuṇḍalakesi was originally a Jain nun who went about India expounding Jainism and challenging anybody to refute her views. Venerable Sāriputta, a disciple of the Buddha, took up the challenge one day and in the ensuing debate Kuṇḍalakesi was defeated. She renounced Jainism and became a Buddhist nun. The author of the poem depicts the Buddhist nun Kuṇḍalakesi championing the Buddhist doctrines and refuting Jainism. This drew the Jain reply 'Nīlakesi' which alone is now available. Kuṇḍalakesi was written prior to the 5th century. It is said the author was a Buddhist named Nāgaguttanār. The Vinaya sub-commentary named 'Vimativinodanī' refers to the Kuṇḍalakesi, as a work by a Tamil Buddhist teacher written to refute heretical views. The Pali text is as follows:-

“Pubbe kīra imasmim̐ Damila-raṭṭhe Koci bhinnaladdhiko Nāgaseno nāma Thero Kuṇḍalakesi vatthum̐ paravāda-mathanañāya dassanattham̐ Damila-kabbarūpena karonto”

“Formerly in this Tamil country an elder named Nāgasena compiled a work in Tamil containing the story of Kuṇḍalakesi, for refuting heretical doctrines,

adducing arguments for demolishing the views advanced by non-Buddhists.”

The Pali name Nāgasena may have been Tamilised to Nāgaguttanār. The destruction of ‘Kuṇḍalakesi’ was a severe blow to Buddhism. A splendid source of Buddhist history, the record of the culture and other details of the times was lost with that work.

Valaiyapathy

This work too is now lost, and no details can be given. It is not even certain whether this is a Buddhist or Jain work. Some scholars are of opinion that it was a Buddhist book. They base their evidence on quotations from the Valaiyāpathy found in other literary works. As the author of Valaiyāpathy has quoted the Tirukural, it is possible that the author drew his inspiration from the latter.

Vīrasoliyam

This is a Tamil grammatical work written on the lines of the Sanskrit works on the subject. The author was Buddhamitra, a Mahayanist bhikkhu. A commentary to this was written by his pupil Perum Devanār. The work was so called in honour of the king of the time who was a patron of the author. This book is now in disuse. Being the work of a Buddhist author who used examples from lines describing the virtues of the Buddha, it became distasteful to Hindu scholars. It was compiled in the 11th century. With the help of Vīrasoliyam and its glossary one can get a glimpse into Buddhism in South India at the time. Some of the historical facts mentioned in this work about Cholian kings are confirmed by inscriptions engraved on rocks.

Moreover in the glossary one comes across the names of several works in Tamil literature. Even in examples given for the purpose of elucidating rhetorical devices there is always mention of the Buddha and his virtues. This work enables us to get a general knowledge of Tamil literature and its history. Like all other Buddhist works it was on the verge of extinction when it was rescued by a Ceylonese Tamil scholar, C. Y. Thāmōtharam Pillai. Even now this book is not available in South India.

Siddhāntattokai

This too is a Buddhist work which has now been lost. From the name it appears to have been a work on the Abhidhamma. It is not certain whether it is the work of one author or several authors. In a paraphrase to the Shaivaite religious book named “Sivagñāṇa-Siddhiyār” its author Gñāṇaprakāsar, Shaivaite scholar, makes reference to some quotations from this poem. In a paraphrase of the Jain work ‘Nīlakesi’ there is reference to Sidhāntattokai. From these facts it can be concluded that it was a Buddhist work. Apart from this there is no other source of information about it.

Tiruppadigam

From the title it can be inferred that this was a panegyric on the Buddha. Gñāṇaprakāsar, who wrote a paraphrase to the Hindu work ‘Sivagnāna Siddhiyār’ quotes a verse and says ‘this is taken from the Tiruppadigam’. The author of the paraphrase to the Nīlakesi quotes two verses from this work, but does not mention from where he got the quotation. But as he has quoted one of the verses which Gñāṇaprakāsar has acknowledged

while quoting, it can be assumed that he was quoting the Buddhist work mentioned above. These two verses are hymns in praise of the Buddha, referring to his dāna, and sīla pāramitā. Hence this was probably a Tamil book of Buddha-hymns, which is now lost. No details of its author, its length or when it was written, are available.

Bimbisāra kadai

That such a book existed can be seen from a reference to it in the paraphrase to the Nīlakesi. There, four verses are quoted, and the remark is made, "this quotation is from the 'Bimbisāra kadai' a Buddhist work".

The Hindu scholar Gṇāṇaparakāsar too quotes verses from this Buddhist work and acknowledges the source. Details regarding this book too are not available, as it has been lost and is now forgotten. The theme of the book must have been the life of king Bimbisāra who was a devoted follower of the Buddha. From the available quotations one gets the impression that like the Maṇimekhalāi this was written in the Āsiriappā metre in Tamil poetry.

Eminent Buddhist Teachers who Lived in South India

The fact that Buddhism flourished in South India is amply proved by Buddhist ruins, the present day customs, manners and ideas of Buddhistic origin, and the books written by Buddhist authors of South India. In addition there is evidence of many South-Indian Buddhist

teachers both lay and monastic who graced the land of their birth. We shall here include brief references to them.

1. Ilambodhiyār

The last Sangham of Tamil literature was held in the 1st or 2nd century A. D. Ilambodhiyār, the Buddhist poet, lived during this period. Several of his verses are found in the 72nd verse of a work called Naṭṭrinai, composed during the last Sangham period. His very name indicates that he was a Buddhist.

2. Aravana Adigal

Information about this Buddhist teacher is found in the Maṇimekhalāi. He lived for a long time at Kāveri-
paṭṭanam. During his youth he travelled north up to the river Ganges and South to Sripāda in Ceylon. The author of Maṇimekhalai portrays him as a versatile exponent of the Dhamma who engaged himself in Buddhist missionary work. He was the head of the Buddhist monastery at Kāveripaṭṭanam. It was to him the bereaved Mādhavi, mother of Maṇimekhalai, went for consolation after the murder of her husband Kovalan. There both mother and daughter were instructed in the Dhamma and undertook to observe the Buddhist precepts. Later when Maṇimekhalai was imprisoned by the Queen of the Chola country, it was the intervention of this Buddhist teacher at the palace which obtained her release. From the story it is evident that even the royal family held him in reverence. When Kāveripaṭṭanam was ravaged by a tidal wave, he left for Vanchi. After living there for a short time he finally settled down at Kānchipūra. He lived during the latter part of the 1st century, or in the early part of the 2nd century.

3. Bhikkhuni Maṇimekhalai

She is the heroine of the Tamil classical poem Maṇimekhalai by Sīthalai Sāttanā. In Kāveripaṭṭaṇam there lived a wealthy man named Kovalan. He had a mistress named Mādhavi who was a dancer by profession. Their daughter was Maṇimekhalai. She grew up amidst riches and became a skilful musician and dancer. Attracted by her beauty and talents, the king of Chola's son, Prince Udaya, fell in love with her. In order to get rid of her father, he had him charged on a false accusation when he went to Madhurā. On this charge Kovalan was executed. When his wife came to hear of this horrible crime, she was deeply moved and became disgusted with the world. She went with her daughter Maṇimekhalai to the Bhikku Aravaṇa Aḍigal who consoled her in her grief by preaching the Dhamma, and both mother and daughter became Buddhists. Maṇimekhalai's grandmother tried to persuade both of them to continue their profession as dancers, and Prince Udaya, too, made advances to Maṇimekhalai. But this was of no avail. Sensual pleasures had no appeal for her, and her mind being firmly set upon the religious life, she became a Buddhist nun. The prince visited her several times and tried to persuade her to revert to the lay life. On a pilgrimage to Ceylon, Maṇimekhalai worshipped at the Nāgadīpa shrine on an island off the northern coast of Ceylon. There she worshipped the Buddha's footprint, and while at the shrine saw a vision of her previous birth wherein the prince had been her husband. A deity at the shrine gave her a miraculous bowl from which she could feed any amount of people without the supply of food becoming exhausted. When she returned to Kāveripaṭṭaṇam she gave alms daily to the poor in a public hall. The king of Chola was pleased with her good work, and gave her permission to

ask for a boon. She asked that the royal prison be converted to an alms-hall, and this was done.

A woman named Kāyacaṇḍikā left her husband and came to Kāveripaṭṭiṇam where she lived on alms along with other beggars fed by Maṇimekhalāi. She was beautiful and resembled Maṇimekhalāi in some ways. Her husband too arrived at Kāveripaṭṭiṇam in search of her. He saw the Prince Udaya speaking to Maṇimekhalāi in the alms-hall. During this conversation Maṇimekhalāi spoke of the transient and worthless nature of the human body, and urged the prince to renounce his passion for her,

Kāyacaṇḍikā's husband mistook Maṇimekhalāi for his wife. He thought a young man was paying amorous attention to his wife. He hid in the alms-hall and when a suitable occasion came he attacked the prince and struck him with a sword, killing him on the spot, not knowing his true identity. This incident became known to the public and religious men residing at the alms hall reported it to the king. The king ascertained the facts and saw to it that Maṇimekhalāi was given protection from men who might try to avenge the death of the Prince on her. The queen managed to get Maṇimekhalāi imprisoned on a false charge. Later when the true facts of the case were known, the Queen relented; she freed Maṇimekhalāi and begged her pardon.

Maṇimekhalāi, finding that she was not safe in the city, went on a pilgrimage to Jāvā. Returning from there she arrived at Vanchi, where she studied various religions under several teachers. Finally she returned to Kānchi where the Buddhist teacher Aravaṇa Adigal lived. She pursued further studies in Buddhism and lived the holy life of a Buddhist nun to the end of her days. She lived in the 2nd century A. C.

4. **Sītlai haSāttanār**

He was the author of the Tamil epic *Maṇimekhalai*. A Buddhist poet of the Sangam period, he was a master in the exposition of the Dhamma. The three Sangams were convocations held under royal patronage of the Tamil kings of Chola, Chera, and Pāṇḍiya. These convocations were organised on the lines of the Buddhist Councils. Sāttanār is called a Sangam poet because he took part in one of those convocations. The full name of the author of "Maṇimekhalai" was *Madhurai Kūlavāṇikan Sīthalai Sāttanār*. *Madhurai* refers to his native city, Madhura. *Kūlavāṇikan* indicates his profession as that of a grain merchant. *Sīthalai* means "from whose (fore) head pus flowed". It is told that when he found mistakes in the works of contemporary poets scrutinized by him, he used to strike his forehead with his iron style, and this caused frequent wounds which suppurated. *Sāttanār* was his personal name, often abbreviated to Sāttan. He was not only a first class poet and an eminent literary critic, but also an able exponent of Buddhist doctrine.

Well versed in religion, logic and philosophy, he showed the superiority of Buddhism, evaluating it against the background of contemporary religious thought. He was held in honour by Ilango Aḍigal the distinguished author of the Tamil classic *Silappadhikaram*. His classic *Maṇimekhalāi* is a lasting monument to his scholarship, encyclopaedic knowledge, and excellence as a Tamil poet. From chapter 27 of the *Maṇimekhalāi* one can see his proficiency in the six systems of Hindu philosophy. There were several other poems by him, verses from which are found in poems such as *Nattriṇai*, *Kurunthokai* *Puranānūru* and *Ahanānūru*. The aim of writing

the Maṇimekhalāi was the propagation of the Buddha Dharma. It is seen that Maṇimekhalāi was written after the Tirukkural was composed, because there are two verses from the Tirukkural quoted in Maṇimekhalāi. Therefore it can be assumed that Jhattanār lived in the latter half of the 2nd century.

5. The Cholian bhikkhu Sanghamitta.

Well known to all students of Ceylon history, he was a Mahāyānist bhikkhu who caused a great upheaval there in the 3rd century. He was a Tamil who hailed from Chola. King Gotabhaya (A. C. 253-266) expelled 60 bhikkhus from Ceylon for being incorrigible heretics. They went to South India and lived in the Chola country. Sanghamitta met them and made up his mind to avenge his brethren of the Mahāyāna sect. He came to Ceylon and started to propagate the Mahāyāna faith. The bhikkhus of the Mahāvihāra, the sect of orthodox Theravāda reported him to the king. The king asked them to debate with Sanghamitta in his presence and promised to support the victorious party. The Māhāvihāra bhikkhus were led by the Elder Sanghapāla, an uncle of the king. Sanghamitta triumphed in this debate and the king kept his promise. The king entrusted the teaching of his two sons to this teacher, who found the younger and more able prince receptive to his influence. The elder prince disliked his teacher.

When the elder prince Jetṭhatissa became king, Sanghamitta left the island as he felt that he was not safe. Ten years later when the king died and his younger brother ascended the throne, Sanghamitta returned and he himself crowned Mahāsena as king of Ceylon.

Now Sanghamitta planned to destroy the Mahāvihāra, the seat of Theravāda Buddhism. He told the king that the Mahāvihāra monks were not following the true teachings of the Buddha, and got the king to forbid his subjects to support them. The monks of the Mahāvihāra finding that the people did not support them with their daily necessities of life, left the capital, Anurādhapura, and went to the southern part of Ceylon. Sanghamitta now pointed out that property without an owner belonged to the state and the king handed over the monastery to Sanghamitta. He had the great monastery demolished, and made use of all the articles that were in it to build up the Abhayagiri Vihāra, the centre of the Mahāyānist teachings.

The queen was grieved to see the ancient religion of Ceylon, the pristine doctrines of the Buddha, ruined by this monk from South India. She had him and his collaborator, the minister Sona, assassinated. Thus ended Sanghamitta's scheme to convert Ceylon to the Mahāyāna. There is no report that he had written any book.

6. Nāgaguttanār

He was the author of the Buddhist poem 'Kuṇḍalakesi'. We know him as the author of it, because in the commentary to Nīlakesi, a verse is quoted from the Kuṇḍalakesi, and it is followed with the remark, "this is a verse from "Nāgaguttanār" Yet according to the Pāli commentary called 'Vimativindani', the author of Kuṇḍalakesi is called Nāgasena. It is possible that this name was converted into Nāgaguttanār by Tamil writers. No further details about this poet are available. As the Nīlakesi was written early in the 10th century, we

have to conclude that Kuṇḍalakesi was written prior to this.

7. Commentator Ācārya Buddhadatta

Ācārya Buddhadatta, held in profound veneration by Buddhists as a commentator of the Buddha-word, was a Tamil from South India. He lived in the famous South Indian Buddhist cities Kāveripaṭṭaṇam, Uragapura, Bhūtamangalam, Kānchi, and also at the Mahā Vihār monastery, Anurādhapūra, Ceylon. The commentary called “Madhurattha Vilāsinī” was written when he resided in a monastery built by a Buddhist minister named Krishnadāsa, at Kāveripaṭṭaṇam. ‘Madhurattha Vilāsinī is a Pāli commentary to the Buddhavaṃsa of the Sutta Piṭaka. He wrote the renowned treatise on Abhidhamma, ‘Abhidhammāvatāra’ at the invitation of a bhikkhu named Sumati. He is also the author of the Pāli work on the Vinaya called ‘Vinaya Vinicchaya.’ It is mentioned in the book that this was written in the reign of the Cholian king Acyutavikrama. While residing in Anurādhapūra, Ceylon, he wrote the Uttara Vinicchaya. The Pāli poem of adoration to the Buddha ‘Jinālakāra Kāvya’ is another of his excellent literary works.

In this work he describes his native Chola country and its cities such as Kāveripaṭṭaṇam and Bhūtamangalam in mellifluous verses. He was a senior contemporary of the great commentator Buddhaghosa, who has paid a glowing tribute to him in one of his works. “After his (Buddhadatta’s) demise even men like me are considered scholars” says Ācārya Buddhaghosa. Ācārya Buddhadatta is second only to the great Buddhaghosa in erudition, scholarship, and ability as a commentator to the Buddha-word. He lived in the 5th century.

8. The Mahā Thera Buddhmitra

He lived in South India in the 5th century. He should not be confused with the bhikkhu Buddhmitra, the author of *Vīrasoliyam*, the Tamil grammar. This Mahā Thera resided at Mayūrapaṭṭaṇam (the present Māyavaram). At that time the celebrated commentator Buddhaghosa was his guest. 'Papañcasūdanī', the commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya, was written at his invitation. In the conclusion to the 'Papañcasūdanī' Ācārya Buddhaghosa says :-

Āyācito sumatinā Therena Bhadanta Budhamittena
Pubbe mayūra-rūpa paṭṭanamhi saddhim vasante

"When I was formerly living at Mayūrapaṭṭaṇam, with the Thera Buddhmitta, I was invited to write this".

9. Bodhidharma

He was formerly a prince hailing from a royal South Indian family. A Mahāyānist Buddhist teacher named Pragñottara won him over to the Mahāyāna faith, and ordained him as a monk. During his youth he worked for the propagation of his faith, in South India. Towards the latter part of his life he left for China as a Buddhist missionary. At Canton he met the Emperor Wu-ti, but failed to impress him. Thereupon he went to the North of China and founded the Dhyāna school of Buddhism (Chinese; Ch'an; Jap.; Zen). He lived there till he passed away. He deprecated the making of offerings to the Buddha, it was purity of the mind and enlightenment that he stressed.

10. Ācārya Dignāga

Hiuen Tsang in his 'Records of the Western World' gives an account of this teacher. He was a native of

Sīyamangalam which is situated to the south of Kānchi. He studied comparative religion and philosophy and became a monk of Vātsīputrīya Nikāya. Later he went to North India and became a Mahāyānist under the influence of Vasubandhu. At Nālandā he defeated non-Buddhists in a debate, and won the admiration of the monks of the university. A philosopher and a debator of great repute, he toured India, lecturing and debating. Finally he settled down at Kānchi. He is the founder of the 'Viśvānavāda' school of Buddhist philosophy. Among his pupils was the vice-chancellor of the Nālandā university, Dharmapāla Mahā Thera. His numerous works include the 'Nyāyapravesa' ("Introduction to Logic") and Nyāya Samucchaya ("Compendium of Logic") two Sanskrit books. There is no mention of any books in Tamil by him. He lived between A.C. 345 - 425.

II. Vice-Chancellor Dharmapāla of Nālandā

He should be differentiated from the commentator Dharmapāla, who lived at Badaratīrtha and was a master of the Theravāda. The Thera Dharmapāla of Nālandā on the other hand was a distinguished exponent of the Mahāyāna doctrines. He was the third son of a Tamil king who ruled at Kānchi. Although his father arranged to have him married, he secretly went to a Buddhist teacher and entered the Order. He travelled in India and abroad and acquired a great store of knowledge. He excelled in all arts and sciences.

Whilst on a lecture tour he arrived at Kosambi. There Buddhists were locked in a great controversy with their opponents and were faring badly. Coming to the rescue of the Buddhists he displayed his brilliant oratory and encyclopaedic knowledge, tearing to shreds the arguments of his Hindu opponents. By this victory he

won over the king, who was on the spot with a large number of distinguished visitors. The Elder's fame spread far and wide and he was offered the vice-chancellorship of Nālandā University, a position reserved for India's foremost Buddhist scholar.

His pupil was Sīlabhadra, himself a versatile scholar under whom Hiuen Tsang studied Sanskrit when he was at Nālanda. Sīlabhadra succeeded his teacher.

The vice chancellor died young at the age of 32. It is a great mistake that some scholars have made trying to identify Aravaṇa Aḍigal, mentioned in Maṇimekhalā, with the vice chancellor Dharmapāla.

12. Badaratirtha Dhammapāla

He is the Ācārya Dharmapāla mentioned in Pāli literature as a great commentator. A native of South India, he lived in the city of Tañjā where the river Tāmraparni flows. This is identified with Tanjore of the Chola country. Other scholars are of opinion that Ācārya Dharmapāla was a native of a town by the name of Tañjāvūr in the Pāṇḍyan country. It is also evident from the Nettippakaraṇa commentary compiled by him that he also lived at Badaratīrtha Vihāra at Nāga-paṭṭaṇam. He went to Ceylon and resided at the Mahā Vihāra, Anurādhapura. During this time the commentaries on the Thera - and Therigāthās, Udāna, Itivuttaka, Peta Vatthu, Vimāna Vatthu, Carigā piṭaka and the Nettippakaraṇa were written. All these commentaries are named Paramattha Dīpanī'. He also wrote a voluminous sub-commentary to the Visuddhi Magga, called "Paramattha Mañjusā". He lived somewhere about A. C. 796. In the 'Nettippakaraṇa' commentary he says :-

“Saddhammotaraṇaṭṭhāne
 Paṭṭane nāga savhaya
 Dhammāsoka Mahārājā
 Vihāre vasatā mayā.”

“(I wrote this commentary) while I was residing at the monastery built by King Asoka at Nāgapaṭṭaṇan, which is like unto a port for embarking on the ocean of the Dharma”.

The Sāsanavaṃsa refers to him as follows :-

“Ācārya Dharmapāla, who compiled a number of commentaries such as the one on the Itivuttaka, was a resident of the Badaratittha Vihāra in the Tamil country. Hence he may be considered as a Ceylonese bhikkhu. Further he is the author of the subcommentaries on the Visuddhi Magga, Dīgha Nikāya, Majjhima Nikāya and the Saṃyutta Nikāya”.

13. The Theras Buddhānandī and Sāriputra

These two Elders are reported to have lived at Bodhimangai in the Chola country. We have an account of them in the ‘Periyapurāṇam’ a Shaivaite work which records a debate between Buddhists and Shaivaites. During this time the Shaivaite teacher Tirugñāṇasambandhar went round the city which was a stronghold of Buddhism. He rode in procession raising triumphal cries, blowing conch shells and trumpets. The Buddhists of Bodhimangai told him, “You cannot thus go in triumphal procession through our city. Come let us debate on religion”. Tirugñāṇasambandhar accepted the challenge. The Buddhists retained the Elder Buddhānandī as their spokesman. Tirugñāṇasambandhar’s assistant, by exercising his magical powers through a mantram, caused a thunderbolt from heaven to strike down the Elder. The

Buddhists persisted saying, "Do not come to display magical powers, come to debate on doctrinal matters".

Tirugnānasambandhar is said to have defeated Buddhānandi Thera. No further details of these two Elders are available. Tirugnānasambandhar lived in the 7th century A. C.

14. Vajrabodhi

He was a native of Podiyakanda in the Pāṇḍya country. His father was a royal chaplain. He went to Nālandā in North India for his studies, and returned when he was 26 years old. At that time his country was in the grip of a severe drought, and the king Narsinhapothavarman appealed to Vajrabodhi for help. He was able to cause rain to fall by the exercise of his occult powers. Vajrabodhi was a Mahāyānist bhikkhu adhering to the Vajrayāna faction. He visited Ceylon and resided there for six months, at the Abhayagiri Vihāra. During this time he attempted to spread Mahāyānism in Ceylon, but returned soon to his native land. From there he went to China with his pupil Amoghavajra and did missionary work there. He passed away in the year 730 A. C. In accordance with his wishes his pupil returned to Ceylon and India to propagate the Vajrayāna doctrines. He is said to have been received with honour by Silāmegha, King of Ceylon.

15. Buddhāmītra

Apart from his name the concluding verses to his Tamil grammar "Vīrasolīyam" reveal his deep faith in Buddhism. He was the local ruler in a province of South India. His book was named after Vīracola, alias Vīrarājendra, the Chola king who invited him to write this work. This king ruled from 1063 to 1070. The

inscriptions of the time eulogise him very highly. So does Buddhmitra who calls him "the ruler who subdued the whole earth." Both Buddhmitra and his royal patron lived in the 11th century. Buddhmitra was a Mahāyānist bhikkhu. He should not be confused with another Theravāda bhikkhu of the same name, with whom Āchārya Buddhaghosa resided when he wrote the 'Papañcasūdanī'. The paraphrase to Buddhmitra's Vīrasoliyam was written by his pupil Perumdevanār. He too was a devoted Buddhist.

16. Dipankara Buddhappiya Thera

In Ceylon he is known as the Cholian Buddhappiya Thera, or Cholian Dīpaṅkara. He is the author of the Pāli Grammar 'Rūpasiddhi', used in monastic colleges even today. This is a very popular book written on the lines of Kaccāyana's grammar. His book of the Pāli verses in praise of the Buddha is called 'Pajjamadhu' (Nectar of Verses). It is a standing monument to his excellence as a poet and his deep love for the Buddha. In Ceylon he studied Buddhist scriptures under the Venerable Ānanda Vanaratana. He returned to Chola and lived as the abbot of the Baladitya monastery.

In the concluding stanzas to his "Rūpasiddhi" he mentions that he was born in Chola and resided for some time in Ceylon. He was a master of Pāli literature and grammar. While he sojourned in the island "he was like unto a banner hoisted over Ceylon." He lived in the 12th century.

17. Choliam Kassapa Thera

He was a master of the Tripiṭaka and the Pāli language. Among his works are the commentary on the Abhidhamma, works called "Moha Vicchedani", the

commentary to the Vinaya Piṭaka "Vimati Vinodani", and the "Anāgatavaṃsa". In the Sāsanavaṃsa (History of Buddhism), and a Burmese Pāli work called the Ganthavaṃsa, it is mentioned that he was a Tamil from Chola. In the concluding stanzas to 'Mohavicchedani' he mentions that he was a resident of a monastery called "Nāgana" in Nāgapattanam of the Chola country.

18. Anuruddha Thera

He lived in the 10th or 11th century and his birth-place is said to have been Kāveripaṭṭanam. His most famous work is a manual of Abhidhamma, the *Abhidhammattha-Sangaha*, which has served as an introduction to the Abhidhamma philosophy for over eight centuries. It is still very popular, e. g. in Burma and Ceylon. Throughout the centuries, many commentaries have been written on it, and in our times it has been translated into Western languages. Another two treatises on Abhidhamma, written in verse, have been attributed to Anuruddha Thera, *Paramattha-vinicchaya* and *Nāmarūpa-pariccheda*; but his authorship of these two is doubted by some scholars, as also that of the *Anuruddha-sataka*.

19. Dhammakitti Thera

He was a Cholian Bhikkhu of the 13th century who came from South India to Ceylon. He wrote the first part of *Cūla-vaṃsa*, which is a continuation of the Mahā-vaṃsa, the famous chronicle of Ceylon. His addition to it extended from King Sirimevan up to his own time. Also a Chronicle of the Tooth Relic (*Dāṭha-vaṃsa*) has been ascribed to him.

Further we could infer from historical information that a large number of learned Buddhist monks and laymen lived in the various cities and villages of South

India. Most of the books they wrote, except two, have perished. From the list of names of the Buddhist villages and hamlets, from the names of Buddhist monks and laymen still available, from the large number of Buddhist ruins still surviving, we can draw the inference that Buddhism once flourished in South India from the 3rd to the 13th century of the Christian era.

From the history of Ceylon we can get further information about the state of Buddhism in South India in the 14th and 15th centuries. King Pandit Parakramabāhu early in the 14th century got down a learned bhikkhu who was a linguist, to help in the translation of the Jātaka book to Sinhala. A minister of King Bhuvanekabahu IV of Gampola, named Sendhilankāra, caused a Buddhist monastery to be built at Kānchipūra. This is evidence of Buddhism in South India even at this late stage. From these facts we can conclude that right up to the coming of the Europeans Buddhism lingered in South India.

Though Buddhism in India had to yield to Hinduism, yet the period when Buddhism flourished was one of which the Tamil nation can rightly be proud in view of its outstanding contribution to Buddhist literature in Tamil, Pāli and Sanskrit. Now, after the time of religious rivalries is passed, this period may well be remembered as a strong bond between the Tamil nation and the Buddhist countries.

* * *

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APPENDIX

Extracts from the MANIMEKHALAI

Translated by

Rao Bahadur Krishnaswami Aiyangar

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publishers, Messrs Luzac & Co., Ltd., London, from
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Extracts from the Manimekhalai

Modern inter-religious conferences seem to have had a precursor at the time when the "Maṇimekhalāi" was composed. Book I contains the royal announcement of the annual Indra Festival celebrated at Puhār (Kāveripattinam), in which we read :

"Let those well-versed in the holy teachings take their place under awnings, or in canopied halls. Let those well-versed in various religions assemble in the halls of learning set apart for discussion. Give up feelings of enmity even to those who are inimical to you."

(Book I; transl. p. 115)

From BOOK V

The hermit Sanghadharma taught her (i. e., Maṇimekhalāi's friend, Sutamati) the teaching of the Buddha:—'My king possessed of all good qualities by nature, the embodiment of all good qualities without diminution, having learned by experience various kinds of life in this world, took it upon himself to use his life not for the attainment of his own salvation, but for the exercise of kindness to things living, in order that the whole mass of living beings might attain to that salvation. Thus turning the wheel of the law he conquered desire.' (p. 123).

... Just then appeared in the guise of a lady of the city, the goddess Maṇimekhala, with a view of witnessing the celebration of the great festival just then taking place in the city. She went round the pavilion

containing the seat of the Buddha, reciting the following laudation :—

‘Shall I describe you as the knowing One, the pure One of good deeds, the ancient One, the exalted One, who knew how to lead life in this world? Shall I describe you as the One who got beyond the reach of love, who was the sure guardian of all, as the One who destroyed the enemy, evil conduct? How shall I describe the feet of him who set the wheel of thousand spokes in motion, without a thousand tongues to describe with?’ * (p. 124)

Book VI relates that for protecting young Manimekhalai from Prince Udayakumāra who was in search of her, the goddess Manimekhalā put her to sleep by a charm and “carried her through the air thirty Yojanas south”, to an island called Manipallavam which has been identified with the island Nāgadīpa, off the coast of Ceylon. The story continues:

* *An alternative rendering of this passage :*

“O Lord! You are the Wise, the Pure, Pious and the Ancient, above all others in austerity’

O Lord! You destroyed the evils and discarded anger; you are the Omniscient.

“O Lord! You conquered Mara; you are the Blissful; and you condemned the unholy and false ways.

O Lord! Your feet are marked with thousand-spoked wheels.

I do not have thousand tongues!

How shall I praise thee?”

From “Story of Buddhism, with special reference to South India”, Publ. by the Dept. of Information and Publicity, Govt of Madras, 1960.

...Manimekhalai woke up from sleep on the sandy beach of Maṇipallavam. Looking round she found nothing that was familiar to her, and felt herself as strangely placed as a soul in a new birth. . . . She wandered about till she came to what seemed to be a Seat of the Buddha. The seat had been placed there by Indra, and had the miraculous power to let those who worshipped it know their previous life, as Buddha Himself had delivered a sermon sitting on it. This happened on the occasion when two neighbouring Nāga chiefs, related to each other, fought for possession of it. As the war proved destructive Buddha appeared before them and pacified the combatants by preaching a sermon. (Book VIII; p. 131/132)

At sight of this, Manimekhalai forgot herself in wonder. Her hands automatically folded over her head; from her eyes flowed tears of joy; she circumambulated the divine seat three times, and prostrated before it. Getting up, she looked at the seat again, and began to recollect all that had taken place in her previous existence. (Book IX; p. 132)

Manimekhalai walked about admiring the beauty of the sand dunes, flower gardens, and cool tanks. In a short while there appeared before her a lady who accosted her: 'Who are you that have arrived here alone like a woman who had suffered shipwreck?' (after replying to her, Manimekhalai) wished to know who the other lady was. The lady said that in the neighbourhood of that island was another called Ratnadvīpa ('the island of Jewels'). 'There on a high peak of the hill Samantakūṭa* there are the footprints of the Buddha. Having offered worship at the footprints I came to this island long ago.

* This refers to the Sri-pāda peak in Ceylon ("Adam's Peak")

Since then I have remained here keeping guard over this "Dharma Seat" under the orders of Indra. My name is Tīva-Tilakai (Dvīpa Tilakā). People following the Dharma of the Buddha strictly, offering worship to this "Buddha Seat" will gain knowledge of their previous birth, knowing their past as a result of this worship. It is only those few who are fit to acquire *Dharmapada* forsooth. Since by such a worship you have acquired knowledge of your previous birth, you must be such a great one. In front of this seat there is a little pond full of cool water, overgrown with all varieties of water-lily. From that will appear a never-failing "begging bowl" by name Amuda-Surabi (Amṛta Surabhi). The bowl appears every year of the day (of full moon) in the season of the early sun, in the month of Rishabha, in the fourteenth asterism, the day on which the Buddha himself was born. That day this year is to-day and the hour is just now. That Bowl, I ween, will come into your hand. Food put into it will be inexhaustible. You will learn about it from Aravaṇa Aḍigal who lives in your own native city.' Manimekhalai on hearing this, making her obeisance to the Buddha-seat, went along with Tīva Tilakai, and, circumambulating the pond, stood in front of it. The Bowl emerged from the water, and turning round to the right reached the hands of Manimekhalai. Manimekhalai felt delighted beyond measure and uttered the following chant in praise of the Buddha:—

‘Hail! holy feet of the Hero! that subdued Cupid,
 Hail! holy feet of Him! who destroyed the evil path,
 Hail! holy feet of the Great one! Labouring to set
 others in the path of Dharma!
 Hail! holy feet of the Perfectly Wise! who gives to
 others the eye of wisdom,

Hail! holy feet of Him! whose ears are deaf to
evil words,

Hail holy feet of Him! whose tongue never uttered
other than truth,

Hail! holy feet of Him! who visited hell itself
to destroy suffering there,

Hail! holy feet of Him! that destroyed the sorrows
of those of the Nāga world!

‘To praise you is beyond the power of my tongue;
to bow at your feet is alone possible for my body.’

To Manimekhalai in this attitude of prayer, Tīva-
Tilakai expounded the sufferings of hunger and the merit
accruing to those that enable creatures to appease hun-
ger. ‘Hunger,’ she told Manimekhalai, ‘will destroy
good birth, will kill nobility, will cut off the hold that
learning has upon the learned people as the great
support of life, will deprive people of all feeling of
shame, will spoil qualities that are beautiful, will make
people stand at the door of others with their wives.
Such indeed is the nature of the sinful craving hunger.’

‘Food provided to allay the hunger of those that
cannot otherwise satisfy it, is true charity, and all right
kind of life in this world comes to such people. Among
those that live in this world those that give food are
those that give life. Therefore to those that are hungry
that which will destroy hunger.’ (Book XI; p. 137)

BOOK XXX

Maṇimekhalai who had already learned all that had
happened in her previous birth, after having taken upon
herself the duty of giving gifts (dāna) and walking in

the path of right conduct (sīla), worshipped three times the triple jewel of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, placing herself entirely under its protection, and then saluted the bhikkhu Aravana Adigal. The bhikkhu, in expounding to her the righteous path of the Dharma said :

“At that time when the world was full of beings poor in understanding, the Buddha, at the earnest entreaty of all the celestial beings of Tushitaloka, appeared on earth, leaving that heaven of joy empty. Then, seated at the foot of the Bodhi tree he conquered the enemy Māra and became the Victor (jina). The good teaching of the Four Truths which the beautiful victor imparted after having pulled out by the roots the three faults¹, were taught with ineffable beneficence in the past by innumerable other Buddhas. These Truths provide the means of crossing the ocean of existence by destroying the twelve Nidānas.² These latter appear one from the other in order as cause and effect, and being capable of reappearance, (each link) as consequent upon that which is before it, assume the form of a never-ending circle. When in this order of cause and consequence the first ceases to exist, the next follows in cessation; when it comes into existence, that which follows it does so inevitably. So these are properly described as a chain of causes and conditions. Thus arranged these twelve Nidānas fall into four divisions³, showing three joints⁴. Appearance in birth or rebirth is of three kinds (human, heavenly or of the nether world), and is of

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1. The three Roots of Evil (akusala-mūla): greed hate and delusion.
 2. The twelve links of the Dependent Origination (paṭicca-samuppāda).
 3. The four sections (Cattaro sangahā), see Visuddhi Magga (tr. by Nyanamoli), Ch XVII, § 290.
 4. The three joints (ti-sandhu), see VisM XVII, § 289.

three divisions in time, past present and future.⁵ These also produce the faults, deeds and there consequences⁶, and are impermanent and cause only sorrow. He who gets to understand this character of these Nidānas, he knows what will assure him the permanence of release (Nirvāṇa).

“Further it becomes the means for the cultivation of the Four Truths⁷, and is constituted of the five Skandhas. It is capable of being argued in the six forms beginning with the ‘assertion of truth’.⁸ It results in the four forms of excellence. It is open to question in four ways and being capable of respective answers in four ways similarly. It is without origin and without end. It is a series of continuous becoming without ever reaching final destruction. It neither does, nor can it be described as being done. It is neither self nor is it possessed by another self. It is nothing that is gone, nothing that is to come. It cannot be brought to an end, nor is it to end itself. It is itself the result of the deed, birth and cessation. Such is the nature of the twelve causes and conditions beginning with ignorance, and called the Nidānas. These twelve are :-

- (1) Ignorance (*Pedamai* Sans. *Avidyā*),
- (2) Action (*Seykai*, Sans. *Karma*),
- (3) Consciousness (*Uṇarvu*, Sans. *Vijñāna*),
- (4) Name and Form (*Aru-uru*, Sans. *Nāmarūpa*),
- (5) Six organs of sense (*Vāyil*, Sans. *Saḍāyatana*)
- (6) Contact (*Uru*, Sans. *Sparsa*),
- (7) Sensation (*Nuharvu*, Sans. *Vedanā*),

5. See VisM. XVII. § 287.

6. See in VisM XVII, § 298 the threefold Round’ (ti-vaṭṭa) of defilements (kilesa), kammic action (kamma) and kamma-result (vipāka).

7. See VisM XVII. § 300.

8. “Six Forms”, see ib., § 299.

- (8) Thirst or Craving (*Veṭkai*, Sans. *Trsṇa*),
- (9) Attachment (*Parru*, Sans. *Upādāna*),
- (10) Becoming or existence (*Pavam*, Sans. *Bhava*),
- (11) Birth (*Torram*, Sans. *Jāti*),
- (12) The result of action, old age and death (*Vinayppayan*, Sans. *Jarā-maraṇa*).

“If people understand the twelvefold nature of the chain of cause and effect, they then understand the supreme truth and will enjoy permanent bliss. If they do not, they are bound to suffer in the depths of hell.

(1) Ignorance consists in not understanding what was explained above, in being liable to delusion and in believing in what one hears to the neglect of that which one is able to see for himself, as believing in the existence of the horns of a rabbit because someone else says that they do exist.

(2) In the three world, life is illimitable, and living beings in them are of six classes. They are men, gods, brahmas, the inhabitants of hell, the crowd of animals and spirits. According to good deeds and bad, life takes its birth in one or other of these. Ever since it assumes the form of embryo, the result of these deeds will show themselves either in the happiness of mind or in anxiety of suffering. Of these evil deeds—killing theft and illicit sexual behaviour show themselves as evils springing up in the body. Lying speaking ill of others, harsh words and useless talk, these four show themselves as evils of speech. Desire, anger and illusion are three evils that arise in the mind.* These ten the wise would avoid. If they should fail to do so, they would be born as animals or spirits or beings of the nether

* These are the ‘ten unwholesome courses of action’ (*dasā akusāla kamma-pāṭha*).

world, and make themselves liable to extreme anxiety of mind and suffering. Good men, on the contrary, would avoid these ten, and assuming the good discipline (sīlam) and taking upon themselves to do deeds of charity (dānam), will be born in the three higher classes of beings, such as devas (gods), men or Brahmas, and live a life of enjoyment and happiness as a result of good deeds.

(3) Consciousness (Uṇarvu) consists in feeling like one asleep, without the feeling leading to any action, or to any satisfaction *

(4) Name and form consist in that which has the feeling described above, and constituting mind and body.

(5) Organs of sense are, on examination, those that carry consciousness to the mind (vijñāṇa or Ullam).

(6) Contact consists in vijñāṇa and the organs of sense experiencing touch with other things (veru pulangal).

(7) Sensation (Nuharvu) consists in the mind or Vijñāṇa enjoying that of which it has become conscious.

(8) Thirst or craving consists in not feeling satisfied with that which is thus enjoyed.

(9) Attachment consists in the desire for enjoyment impelling one into action.

(10) Becoming consists in the accumulation of deeds indicating the consequence to which each leads.**

* This might be a reference to the definition of Consciousness, in this context, as Rebirth Consciousness (patisandhi citta) which is a kind of subliminal consciousness bhavaṅga citta).

** This refers to a twofold division of Becoming (bhava), the Kamma—process (kamma-bhava) and the Rebirth-process (upapatti-bhava).

(11) Birth (Tonral) consists in the result of deeds leading to the conscious taking of birth in one or other of the six forms of birth in the inevitable chain of cause and effect.

(12) Disease (Piṇi) consists in the suffering of the body by a change from its natural condition in consequence of the result of deeds. Old age (Mūppu) consists in the loosening of the body as one draws nearer and nearer to the end. Death (Sākkaāḍu) ultimately consists in the human body, composed of life and body, disappearing as the setting sun.

“From ignorance arises action; from action springs consciousness; from consciousness come name and form;* from name and form spring the organs of sense; through organs of sense contact becomes possible; contact results in sensation or experience; experience produces desire; from desire springs attachment; from attachment comes into existence collection of deeds; as a result of this collective deed arise various other forms of birth; birth inevitably brings along with it age, disease and death, and the consequent anxiety and the feeling of incapacity to get rid of it. This never-ending suffering is the ultimate result.

In such a never-ending circle of experience, when ignorance ceases, action will cease; with action consciousness will cease; with consciousness name and form (mind and body) will cease; with the cessation of name and form, organs of sense will cease; with the cessation of the organs of sense, contact will cease; contact ceasing, sensation or experience will cease; with sensation or experience ceasing desire will cease; desire ceasing to exist, there will be no attachment; without attachment, there is

* i. e., mind and body.

no accumulation of deeds; without the accumulated mass of deeds, there will be no becoming; with the cessation of becoming, there will be no birth, no disease, no age, no death, and in consequence, no anxiety and no helplessness. Thus this never-ending series of suffering will be destroyed.

Of these twelve Nidānas, the first two, ignorance and action, are regarded as belonging to the first section. All those that follow spring from these two. The following five, namely, name and form, organs of sense, contact experience, these five, as springing from the former two, are regarded as constituting the second division. Thirst, attachment and the collection of deeds constitute the third division as the result as evil in the enjoyment of the previous five, and, in consequence, as action resulting therefrom. It is from the folly of desire and consequent attachment that becoming arises. The fourth division includes birth, disease, age and death, since these four are experienced as a result of birth.*

Action is the cause of birth and consciousness springs out of it, where these two meet they mark the first conjunction. Where sensation and craving meet, it marks the second conjunction. The third junction comes in where the accumulation of deeds results in birth. Thus are marked the three points of junction in this chain of twelve causes and conditions.

The three forms of birth are those of men, gods and animals. These result from the consciousness in previous birth as a result of the conformations springing out of ignorance. This happens either from the delusion that this kind of birth is actually cessation of birth or the taking of birth in a new form without the consciousness,

* See VisM XVII, § 290.

or the new birth coming with consciousness and the new form existing together. The three times are the past, present and future. Of these the past includes ignorance and action. To the present refer consciousness, name and form, the organs of sense, contact, sensation, thirst (or craving), the becoming and birth. To the future belong birth, disease, age and death. The resulting anxiety and helplessness are evils that spring out of the previous series of present action.

Desire, attachment and ignorance, these and the birth resulting therefrom, constitute action in the present and cause future birth. Consciousness, a name and form, organs of sense, contact, sensation (or experience), birth, age, disease and death, these are the consequential experience in life, both present and future. These are full of evil, of deeds, and of consequences resulting from these deeds, and thus constitute suffering. Being such, they are all impermanent. While the nature of release (Vīḍu) consists in the understanding that there is nothing like a soul in anything existing.

Consciousness, name and form, the organs of sense, contact, sensation, birth, disease, age, and death, with the resulting anxiety and helplessness, these constitute disease. For this disease the causes are ignorance, action, desire, attachment and the collection of deeds. For suffering and birth, attachment is the cause; for bliss and cessation of birth, non-attachment is the cause. Words that embody this idea constitute the 'Four Truths', namely, suffering, the cause of suffering, removal of suffering, and the way to remove suffering.

There are four kind of questions and answers :-

(1) To give a definite reply; (2) to separate the component parts of an issue and answer these separately;

(3) to answer by a counter question; and (4) to keep silence in answer to a question.*

To a question whether a thing that comes into existence will also go out of existence, if the answer is 'it will', this is to give a definite reply.

To a question whether a dead man will be born again or not, the inquiry whether in life he was without attachment or not, is to answer by separating the issues involved, and to give separate answers to it.

To a question whether it is the seed that is first or the palm-tree, the enquiry which seed and which particular tree, is answer by a counter question.

To a question whether 'the sky flower' is new or old, silence is the best answer; this is one way of getting round an inconvenient question.

Bondage and release result from the Skandhas (the aggregates of things). There is no agent outside entitled to bring them into contact. For the Skandhas and their manifestations as described above, the cause is the group of three evils: desire, anger and illusion.

Examine separately and understand that everything is impermanent, full of suffering, without a soul and unclean; thus treating it, give up desire ! Realizing that friendliness, compassion and joy (at the well-being of others) constitute the best attitude of mind, give up anger ! By the practice of hearing (sruti), mentation (cintana), experiencing in mind (bhāvanā) and realizing in vision (darsana), reflect, realize and give up all illusion ! In these four ways get rid of the darkness of mind !"

* See Anguttara-Nikāya, Threes, No 68; Fours, No. 42.

In these auspicious words, free from inconsistency, (Aravaṇa Aḍigal) exhibited the illuminating lamp of knowledge. Manimekhalai having assumed the habit of an ascetic (*tāpasi*) and having heard the excellent exposition of the Dharma, devoted herself to penance * that she may get rid of the bondage of birth.

* *Noṭṭal*; better to be translated by "religious life".

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