

THE BUDDHIST

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“*Sila Paññānato Jayam*”



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THE TEMPLE AND THE LAITY

The Buddhists of Ceylon did not lead a life of piety and righteousness. To be good and to lead a Buddhist life are two different things because one could still be righteous, just, morally correct and pious without actually being a follower of the Buddha. The German gentleman's argument was simply that one could live with a Ceylon Buddhist for days without realizing that he was a Buddhist. It has to be conceded that it is true.

Buddhist practices do not form an integral part of the day's activities in the case of a very large group of Buddhists in Ceylon. Few have set apart even a few minutes of their time for the worship of the Buddha or for quiet meditation as a regular obligation. Few still visit temples even on a Full-moon day. And the only connection which most people have with the temple is limited to the invitation of monks for Pirith and Bana on special occasions, for alms and for funeral rites. The monk is rarely consulted as a spiritual leader and on extremely rare occasions does he volunteer to advise a layman unless specifically requested.

This is not the case in other Buddhist countries, where the Theravada form of Buddhism flourishes. The monk and the layman maintain a much closer relationship. The institution of temporary ordination,

especially in Burma, has made the bond between the Sangha and the laity very strong. While in Ceylon, a Buddhist may merely acknowledge the presence of a monk by a smile or a bow—which will hardly be noticeable, a Burmese, Thai or Cambodian Buddhist will kneel before the monk and pay his respects in the traditionally accepted manner. This, one may say, is an unnecessary exhibition of one's respect for the Sangha. But as long as he does it spontaneously and not with the ulterior motive of impressing those around with his shammed devoutness, it is very important. Beside the manner in which homage is paid to the Sangha, foreign visitors to these countries have also observed how the temple is the centre of many day-to-day activities. There are numerous rites—some of them being survivals of certain pre-Buddhistic rites peculiar to each country—which take the laity to the temple.

It must be here emphasized that our tradition in Ceylon had not been in any way different. Ever since Buddhism was introduced to this country, the temple did play a very important role in the life of the people. It was the centre of learning and culture; it was the hub of the village. The children came to the monks for their daily lessons; the elders came to consult them on their religious and secular problems.

WE met recently a very interesting gentleman from Germany who has spent over twenty years of his life hitch-hiking round the world. He had arranged to see Ceylon in two months; but he was confronted with so overwhelming a treasure-house of things to see and hear that he had decided to come back here for a longer period. One of the observations he made about the life of the people of Ceylon was that there was hardly any Buddhist element in their day-to-day activities. He was, of course, comparing Ceylon with Burma and Thailand, where, according to him, the people led "a true Buddhist life." He did not, however, mean that

The monk had been, on his own right, a leader, who won the respect of the followers by his exemplary way of life. The laity also had a close watch on the affairs of the Sangha and thereby both the monk and the layman benefited. Their association was a source of strength to the Community. The monk was a unifying factor as he kept the diverse elements of the village together. The temple, thus, could be the centre from which decisions to undertake matters affecting the nation emanated.

Foreign rulers—especially the British—realized the importance of the Sangha in preserving the unity of the nation and through a policy which was implemented in subtle and insidious ways succeeded in alienating the loyalty of the laity from the Sangha. The present apathy which characterises the attitude of an average Buddhist to the Sangha is entirely a result of this policy. It has now been satisfactorily proved that the deterioration of both the Sangha and the laity had been solely due to this. But what do we do? Are we making a sincere effort to restore the close relationship which should exist between the Sangha and the laity? Do we genuinely feel that the future of Buddhism in Ceylon is dependent on this vital issue? While we do certainly pay much lip-service to this ideal, we cannot in any way be happy with the progress made by us. The present tendency—at least

among the educated classes—appears to be to adopt an intellectual attitude to Buddhism. Their interest in the religion is purely academic and their knowledge is restricted to what is contained in secondary works. It is from this sector that we often hear the theory that one can be a good Buddhist without ever seeing the inside of a temple and that the purification of the mind is the one and only requirement to be a Buddhist. We dare say that they are right. But?

The Sangha preserves a tradition—unrecorded in books—which is essential for the proper understanding of the tenets of Buddhism and Buddhist practices. This cannot be denied without detriment to the preservation of the religion. The Sangha have been and shall be the true interpreters of the Dhamma. The Sangha, alone, can lead the laity in their effort to promote Buddhist ideals. So, if the Sangha is deficient and is not fully qualified to assume its responsibilities and carry them on under modern conditions, the laity should assist the Sangha to come upto the required standard. The irresponsible denunciation of the Sangha is not the solution. No denunciation with the best of intentions can ever lead to a satisfactory solution of any problem. Nor is fleeing from the temple the answer.

We should go back to the temple. We should accept the spiritual

leadership of the Sangha and Sangha will certainly be worthy of such a position. As Buddhists it is our duty to follow the code of conduct which Ven. Nagasena had laid down in the form of "Dasa Upāsaka Guna"—:

Samāna-sukha-dukkho—of equal pleasures and sorrow.

Dhammādhipateyyo—having the Doctrine as one's chief.

Yathābalaṃ samvibhāgarato—desirous of making offerings according to one's ability.

Jinasāsanaparikhānim disvā abhivaḍḍhiyā vāyamati—strives for the progress of the Order when its decline is noticed.

Sammāditthiko hoti apagatakotuhalamangaliko—is of Right Vision and free from magical rites.

Jivitaheṭṭhi na aññaṃ satthāram uddissati—does not take refuge in another teacher even when threatened with death.

Kāyikaṃ vācasikaṃ cassa rakkhitaṃ hoti—should be restrained in both deeds and words.

Samaggārāmo hoti samaggarato—should be united and fond of unity.

Anasūyako hoti na ca kuhanavane sāsane carati—free of jealousy and hypocrisy.

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hoti dhammam saraṇaṃ gato hoti Sangham saraṇaṃ gato hoti—takes refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

THE INFLUENCE OF BUDDHIST IDEAS AND IDEALS ON EUROPEAN CIVILISATION

By GUNASEELA VITANAGE

BEFORE I proceed to discuss the Influence of Buddhist Ideas and Ideals on European Civilisation, I must say a few words on Civilisation in general, by way of introduction. As we all know, the word "Civilisation" connotes an advanced stage of culture or social development. Now, one of the facts that strikes the student of social and cultural evolution is the essential unity and inter-relationship underlying all civilized communities. There are, of course, diverse patterns of culture, depending on geographical and historical circumstances. It is this diversity that gives the stamp of distinctiveness and identity to each cultural pattern, but

beneath this diversity is a unity and an inter-relationship which no student of Sociology can honestly ignore. All civilized societies, in other words, have a common cultural heritage and what is claimed as the cultural capital or heritage by any one society is to a great extent what it has borrowed from others and assimilated into itself in the course of its evolution.

Diffusion of Culture

As W. J. Perry says in his book, "The Growth of Civilization"—

"For many years now it has been assumed by the general public, that the human mind works differently,

and that it is capable of generating culture wholesale in spontaneous response to the actions of the environment, instead of proceeding by slow and painful steps from one stage to another. The great civilizations are often assumed to be independent products of development in isolation. We speak, for instance, of the civilization of Mexico, of China, of India and often mean something belonging exclusively to the country in question."

Perry goes on to say :

"The doctrine of spontaneous generation of culture is, we are coming to see, false and misleading. Far from spontaneous development

having taken place in all parts of the earth, all that is known of the growth and spread of culture goes to show that most communities in any part of the world which have advanced beyond the food-gathering stage of culture and practice any of the fundamental arts and crafts, owe their cultural capital to some other community. This means, as in the case of organized life in general, that every community in the food producing stage of culture is related ultimately to every other community, by virtue of its possession of a share in the civilization that man has laboriously accumulated. This does not mean that members of any community may not invent some new thing. It simply means that the probabilities against two communities having independently come to elaborate a culture that possesses, say pottery making, and weaving and agriculture are so tremendous that it can be assumed with confidence that this has never taken place."

"As in the case of biology," Perry goes on to say, "students are being forced more and more to believe in continuity, even where it cannot be demonstrated. Every community, with, of course, one exception, owes its culture to some other community, hence, if the process be followed far enough we shall find threads leading from all parts of the world to one centre, the source and fount of civilization. When a wide study of facts is undertaken that is the conclusion to which the argument inevitably leads. Civilization is a thing in itself with its own modes of developments."

What Perry says about the diffusion material culture applies with equal force to the spread of spiritual values. A comparative study of religions shows that there is a kinship and unity between all religions. Unfortunately we are prone to lay greater emphasis on the differences than on the similarities.

A word of explanation is however necessary, lest I be misunderstood. Cultural development is not a one-way process of merely borrowing and assimilating. It also means the creation of new values, and the conservation of existing ones. It also means exercising discrimination in borrowing cultural elements from others and assimilating them, so as not to injure or violate its own cultural identity. The ability to discriminate between what is good and

bad, ultimately lies in the spiritual capacity of the community. Here religion plays a vital part.

European Civilisation which is also called the Christian Civilisation is widely held to be the product of the Greek scientific and democratic spirit, Roman Jurisprudence and Administrative methods and Jewish religions and spiritual ideas. In fact, Christianity itself is said to be a syncretism of Jewish religion, Greek Philosophy and Roman Organizational system. These are, however, not the only factors that have contributed to the building up of the European Civilization or to the development of the Christian religion. In the first place European supremacy would not have been possible but for gunpowder; and gunpowder is an invention of the Chinese people. It was the Arabs who first introduced the use of gunpowder into Europe in the 8th century. The Chinese Buddhists, of course, used gun-powder for the innocent pastime of fireworks displays. Another vital factor that contributed to the rapid advance of science and technology in Europe was the adoption of the decimal system of numerals, wrongly called the Arabic numerals. These numerals were the invention of ancient Indians and it was Arabs again who introduced them into Europe. Again Printing and Paper, two things without which we cannot conceive of any modern Civilization were first invented by the Chinese. As regards Christianity, the Higher and the Form Critics of the New Testament have shown how Gnostic religions such as Mithraism and Orphism and Egyptian Isis worship have influenced Christianity greatly in its formative stages.

Buddhist ideas and ideals have influenced European Civilization directly and indirectly and in both cases the influence has been lasting and profound. The penetration of Buddhist ideas into Europe can be said to have taken place in three waves during three distinct periods. The first wave was during the Graeco-Roman period—roughly between the 5th century B.C. and the 4th century A.C. The second was during the period of Arab domination between the 8th century and the 14th century. The third wave has been reaching Europe since the beginning of the 19th century. In this letter I shall compare myself to the Graeco-Roman Periods,

Graeco-Roman Period

According to the eminent Greek scholar, Professor Gilbert Murray, "The essential postulate of traditional Greek religion was that the world is governed by a number of definite personal gods, possessed of a human sense of Justice and capable of being influenced by normal human motives. In general they helped the good and punished the bad, though doubtless they tended too much to regard as good those who paid them proper attention and as had those who did not." The Immortals lived on the Mount Olympus eating, drinking and merry-making and some times listening to the prayers and petitions of human beings. They bestowed favours on the human beings whom they liked. There was no trace of Asceticism or Mysticism in the Olympian Religion and any talk of union with gods would have not so much sounded blasphemous in the fears of the cultured Greek, but positively ridiculous. To the Greek, religion was essentially a thing of this world—a thing to help him to live this life happily.

Greek philosophy was rationalistic and humanistic. "Man is the measure of all things" was the typical outlook of the Greek Philosopher. The idea of attaining a higher knowledge (Gnosis) by meditation and Ascetic practices was entirely foreign to the Greek spirit.

However, towards the end of the 6th century B.C. that is, in the half century following the demise of the Buddha, we witness a gradual change in the religion and philosophical outlook of the Greeks and this change culminated in the triumph of Gnosticism in the first century before Christ. From this time "we witness a rise in asceticism, of Mysticism and in a sense, of pessimism." There is a pre-occupation with what may happen to one's soul in the next life. There is also the growing belief that this life is but one manifestation of a series of lives, that everyone has lived many times before and will live again and again; that salvation from this wheel of re-birth can be achieved only by the union of the soul with the Absolute and that the way to achieve this was by attaining a higher knowledge (Gnosis) or Buddhi. It was believed that the practice of renunciation and asceticism was a prerequisite for attaining this

higher knowledge. This type of ideas, so utterly at variance with either Greeks or Jewish or Egyptian ideas prevalent at that time had been in the air in Greece for some time, but it was the famous Greek Philosopher Pythagoras who first gave expression to them and who practised the Ascetic ideal. Pythagoras lived and taught in the second half of the sixth century B.C. at Kroton. Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan says in his book, "*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*," "Pythagoras enjoined an ascetic way of living. Abstention from meat was a principal requirement. He believed in rebirth. The earliest reference to Pythagoras is in a few verses quoted by Xenophanes in which we are told that Pythagoras once heard a dog howling and appealed to its master not to beat it, as he recognized the voice of a departed friend. Another anecdote which has become famous through Ennius and Horace tells us that Pythagoras was gifted with a power of remembering his former births, and he claimed to have been Emphorbus among others. Pythagoras believed not only in rebirth but in purification of the soul. The cycle of births is regarded as a means for the growth of man's higher nature. The theoretic for him was the highest form of life."

From where did Pythagoras get these ideas? Iambilius, the biographer of Pythagoras tells us that he travelled widely studying the teachings of Egyptians, Assyrians, and Brahmins." Professor R. G. Rawlinson says in his book, "*Legacy of India*," "It is more likely that Pythagoras was influenced by India than Egypt. Almost all the theories, religious, Philosophical and mathematical, taught by the Pythagoreans were known in India in the sixth century B.C. and the Pythagoreans; like the Jains and the Buddhists refrained from the destruction of life and eating meat and regarded certain vegetables as beans, taboo." Gamperz says in his book, "*Greek Thinkers*," "It is not too much to assume that the curious Greek, who was a contemporary of Buddha and it may be Zoroaster too, would have acquired a more or less exact knowledge of the East in that age of intellectual fermentation, through the medium of Persia."

It is interesting to note in this connection the claim made by Professor Bibhuti Bhushan Datta in his

article on "Vedic Mathematics," in the Ramakrishna Memorial Volume entitled "Cultural Heritage of India." He says that the so-called Pythagoras' theorem was known to the ancient Hindus as early as 2000 B.C. and that instances of the application of this theorem occur in "Satapatha Brāhmana (2000 B.C. and "Baudhayana Sruta" (800 B.C.).

Did Pythagoras copy it from the Hindus?

Plato

Plato is another Greek thinker who breaks away from the rationalistic and humanistic traditions of the Greeks and adopts the mystic outlook of the Indians. No Buddhist who reads Plato's work, "Phaedo" can fail to recognize a similarity of outlook, nay a community of ideas between the Buddha and Plato. Plato says that the true nature of things (Yatha Bhuta) cannot be perceived by the senses at all in other words for Plato "man is not the measure of all things." It is only the mind in pure contemplation; the mind transcending the body; the mind in a "state of illumination that can perceive truth, and that can behold the "beautiful vision," "The body," says Plato in Phaedo," is a source of endless troubles to us by reason of the mere requirement of food and is liable also to disease which overtake and impede us in the search after the true being. It fills us full of loves and lusts and fears and fancies of all kinds and endless foolery, and, in fact, as men say take away from us the power of thinking at all. Whence comes wars and fightings and factions? Whence but, from the body and the lusts of the body?"

Plato also believed in rebirth and also in salvation as the ultimate release of the soul from the wheel of births and death by the Union with the Absolute—Plato with the Buddha argues that whatever is composed (Sankhata) or are put together, is liable to decomposition. The Incomposition or the Absolute suffers no kind of change—Plato's ideas later had a profound influence on Christian Philosophy.

Alexander's invasion of India in 327 B.C. brought Greece and India closer to each other.

Alexander's dream was to effect a Union between the East and the

West and he paved the way for it by himself marrying a Bactrian Princess. Strabo tells us that Alexander sent a Greek officer named Onesicritus, a disciple of Diogenes, the Cynic, to Taxila, the famous seat of Indian learning, to study Indian Philosophy. There were constant cultural contacts between the two countries after this time. The Buddhist Emperor Asoka who ascended the throne of Magadha in 270 B.C. held a Council in Pataliputra and at this Council it was decided to send Buddhist missionaries to preach the Dhamma to all parts of the then known world. According to the 13th Rock Edict, Buddhist Missions were sent to Antiochos Theos of Syria, Ptolemy Philadelpia of Egypt, Cantigonus Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus. The missionaries who were sent by Asoka to the West may not have been so successful in gaining converts as those whom he sent to the South. But there is no gainsaying the fact that they influenced the cultural life and religious ideals of the European people profoundly.

Monasticism

It is, for instance, acknowledged by Archaeologists as well as Sociologists, that Monasticism was introduced into the West by the Buddhists, Sir Flinders Petrie, the famous Egyptologist says in his book, "Egypt and Israel": "Perhaps the greatest effect that Egypt had on the church was at a time when the Agape was disappearing and a new type of brotherhood was eagerly adopted. Monasticism started as a system in Christianity with Pachomios, who founded the first community at Tabernisi in 322 A.D. But this, first Christian monk had been a pagan monk of Sarapis, and for the roots of the system we must go to pre-Christian times. As early as 340 B.C. we find that there had sprung up an ascetic community, in the desert behind the Fayum province. This was in opposition to all the thoughts and feelings of the Mediterranean world at that time. In Egypt, in Judaism, in Greece we look in vain for any ascetic ideal. The only prototype for it is in the Buddhist monasteries, which was already organised, and was actively preached in the West by the date of 259 B.C. This was the contemplative solitary type, like that of the early Egyptian recluses. That such influence of the Buddhist ideal should reach Egypt

is what might be expected during the Persian hold on the Nile Valley; 525 to 405 B.C. The presence of a large body of Indian troops in the Persian Army in Greece in 480 B.C. shows how far West the Indian connections were carried and the discovery of modelled heads of Indians at Memphis, of about the 5th century B.C. shows that Indians were living there for trade. Hence there is no difficulty in regarding India as the source of the entirely new ideal of asceticism in the West."

Flinders Petrie goes on to say "After the mention of a community in the desert behind the Fayum about 340 B.C. we next hear of the recluses of the Sarapaian at Memphis about 170 B.C. and the same class appears in 211 A.D. A development of this life was that of the Egyptian Therapeutae who were mainly near Alexandria, and probably from them branched the Essenes of Judea. It may be, however, that the Essene Asceticism descends from the Buddhist Mission to Antiochos. 259 B.C. That this Indian teaching—the "Law of Piety"—could be assimilated by Jews and Egyptians is seen in the nature of it, that "all sects and creeds are in fundamental agreement about essentials." There was no positive Theism to conflict with any other religion, but only a "Law of Conduct" which all religions might accept with advantage.

"Thus Egypt was the channel by which Monasticism was introduced into the Christian system. After the great step of the monk of Sarapis in 322, B.C. Rome took up the new ideal within a generation and before the end of that century the Roman world was permeated with it."

Incidentally, Sir Flinders Petrie's work is published by the Society for Propagation of Christian Knowledge.

Thanks to the Jewish Philosopher, Philo, who was a contemporary of Jesus, and the Jewish Historian, Josephus, who lived between 37-95 A.C. We have some definite knowledge about the Jewish Sect called the Essenes. Essenes were Jews by birth and strict Monotheists. They also do not appear to have broken away from Judaism entirely; However they renounced the world, abjured marriage, and lived a community life in monasteries. They were vowed to poverty and refrained from possessing more than one cloak

and one pair of shoes. They did not worship at the temple of Jerusalem; an act of obligation for all orthodox Jews, nor did they take part in the paschal feast as it involved animal sacrifice. They were vegetarians and abjured any kind of spirituous drink. Philo says that the Essenes did not dabble in business, or own slaves or make weapons. They were strict pacifists. They went about Judea in pairs, healing the sick and exhorting men to virtue. Admission to the order was both long and difficult, and there were solemn rites and ceremonies attending initiation. They practiced Baptism by immersion and worshipped the sun. Although the Jews believed in the resurrection of the body, the Essenes believed in the transmigration of souls or rebirth.

As Sir Flinders Petrie points out this kind of Asceticism and this type of beliefs were quite foreign to the traditions of the Jews. Most scholars today agree that Essenes were inspired by the Buddhist ideals preached by the Missionaries sent to Antiochos by Asoka in the third century B.C.

Reference also should be made to the Essenes' practice of having meals in common and observing it as a sacrament or a sacred ceremony. The taking of meals together has been treated by the Buddhist monks as a sacred act "a Sangha Karma" from the days of the Buddha and in all probability the Essenes borrowed it from the Buddhists. The "Agape" or the "love feast" was the later Christian version of it.

Confession

In the practice of auricular confession too we have the Buddhist precedent. According to Vinaya Pitaka "Patimokka" which means "unburdening" or confession is an institution established by the Buddha himself and forms a part of the discipline of the monks even today. Any breach of discipline must be confessed by the Junior monks to a Senior monk on the day of the Uposatha. The Senior monk who hears the confession declares the punishment according to the gravity of the transgression. There is, of course, nothing sacramental about Buddhist Confession: It is purely a disciplinary practice.

Baptism

The earliest mention in the *Life of Jesus* suggests that Baptism was

introduced into Judea by the Buddhists. True, the Hindus from times immemorial have practised the rite of Baptism or washing away of sins in the sacred River Ganges. The Buddha on several occasions reminded his followers that sins cannot be washed away by mere ablution. However, the Hindu practice of "Abisheka" or Baptism with the waters of the River Ganges seems to have persisted even among Buddhist kings. *Mahawamsa* has it on record that Asoka sent "Water from the Ganges, among other things, to Devanampiya Tissa with the request "Consecrate, my friend, yet again as King."

This is what Renan says about John the Baptist. "The anchorite life so opposed to the spirit of the ancient Jewish people with which the vows, such as those of the Nazirs and Rechabites had no relation, pervaded all parts of India. The Essenes or Therapeutae were grouped near the birthplace of John, on the eastern shores of the Dead Sea. It was imagined that the chiefs of sects ought to be recluses, having rites and institutions of their own like the founders of religions orders. The teachers of the young were also at times species of anchorities somewhat resembling the "Gurus" of Brahmanism. In fact, might there not in this be a remote influence of the "Munis" of India? Perhaps some of those wandering Buddhist monks who overran the world, as the first Franciscans did in later times, preaching by their actions and converting people who knew not their language, might have turned their steps towards Judea, as they certainly did towards Syria and Babylon? On this point we have no certainty. Babylon had become for some a true focus of Buddhism. Boudasp (Bodhisatva) was reported a wise Chaldean and the founder of Saboism, Sabeism was, as its etymology indicates *baptism*, that is to say, the religion of many baptisms, the origin of the sect still existing called Christians of St. John" or Mendaïtes which the Arabs called el-Mogtasila."

In this connection it is interesting to note what Professor A. Weber says about the influence of Buddhism on Christianity in his book "*Modern Investigations in Ancient India*." He says:

"Hindu Philosophy too exercised a decided influence upon the forma-

tion of several of the Gnostic sects then arising, more especially in Alexandria. The Manichean system of religion in Persia is very evidently indebted to Buddhistical conceptions, as the Buddhists, in the freshness of their religious zeal, carried on by their principles of universalism, had early sent missionaries beyond Asia. The great resemblance which the Christian ceremonial and rites (which were forming just at that time) show to the Buddhists in many respects, can be best explained by the influence of the latter, being often too marked for it to be an independent production of each faith; compare the worship of relics, the architecture of church towers (with the Buddhistic topes), the monastic system of monks and nuns, celi-

bacy, the tonsure, confession, rosaries, bells, etc."

F. B. Jewons in his "Introduction to the History of Religion," quotes a Catholic missionary who witnessed a temple ceremony in Tibet as follows:—

"This I do affirm, that the devil so mimics the Catholic church there, that although no European or Christian has ever been there, still in all essential things they agree so completely with the Roman Church as even to celebrate the Host with bread and wine; with my own eyes I have seen it." Sabaism was as its etymology indicates baptism, that is to say the religion of many baptisms, the origin of the sect still existing called Christians of St. John or Mendaites which the Arabs called el-Mogtasila."

We know for a certainty that Buddhist ideas influenced the Gnostic sects which flourished in the first three or four centuries before and after the Christian Era. Apollonius of Tyana was a Gnostic Teacher and a contemporary of Christ. He is credited with having visited India and studied Asceticism there. He led a strictly moral and Ascetic life and is credited with miraculous powers of healing.

Basilides who lived in the second half of the second century was a Christian Gnostic imbued with Buddhist ideas. He believed that suffering was the fundamental fact of life, and that men suffer because of their evil deeds in former lives. He accepts Rebirth, as a necessary process for the purification of the soul. According to Basilides to put an end to suffering we must put an end to the wheel of Rebirth.

A BUDDHIST'S UNDERSTANDING OF CONSCIOUSNESS

By H. O. WIJEGONAWARDENA

WE very often say the same thing in different words. Sometimes we attach different labels to one and the same thing depending on our understanding of it. Moreover, the same thing is capable of being labelled differently in different circumstances in which it is manifesting itself. Solidified water we label as "ice"; when it melts under heat we call it water again when we go on heating it past its boiling point, we call the same thing "steam." Thus, just as much as different people are capable of attaching different names to the same thing according to their background or understanding, e.g., *aqua*, *l'eau*, water, so is the thing itself capable of being described differently and different labels attached to its manifestations as it has been shown. It is as purposeless to try to prove that ice, water and steam are not manifestations of one and the same thing as to dispute that *aqua*, *l'eau*, water, are not one and the same thing. But, all the same, labels can be confused without a proper understanding and also they have the possibility of making us miss the wood for the trees.*

The terms "consciousness" used by a Buddhist, and "energy" used by a physicist are two expressions in point. The terms connote one and the same thing.

To a Buddhist, the term "consciousness" is an all-embracing one. It is to him the motivating as well as the creative force in everything. It is something that pervades the entire Universe without any limitations of Space or Time in the way we generally take them. Thus to him, "consciousness" is in a state of eternal flux, vibration and evolution. In this eternal process, this "consciousness" goes on manifesting itself and expressing itself on the one hand, and neutralising itself, on the other. The former process, in certain circumstances, finds its being in countless forms and ways—forms and ways we have discovered, shall discover, and might never discover. But this much is self-evident. There cannot be any manifestation without it nor outside it. The physicist expresses the same thing in his language by saying that the Universe is in a throbbing with energy and that this energy

manifests itself in countless forms and ways while at the same time under certain conditions it is capable of neutralising itself, when there will be no more manifestations of it.

We give different names to the manifestations of this "consciousness" or energy. The most commonly attached label is "life"; but it is not exhaustive. The term "life" is attached to what we see is obviously pulsating or throbbing with "consciousness" or energy. We see plants grow, a child developing. We see the solar system in action and say it is alive, and so on and so forth. We also know that this same "consciousness" or energy is manifesting itself in other ways. We give these manifestations such labels as "heat," "light," "sound," "electricity," "magnetism," etc. The physicist says that energy is capable of manifesting itself as a charge or a wave. He has discovered how some of it could be transmuted from one manifestation to another. Hence we have certain things we take for granted today such as the telephone, television and the radio. This very same

energy is called "consciousness" by the Buddhist, and he applies its principles and properties to explaining and understanding its manifestation. His approach is rational and analytical, like that of the physicist.

As an example of the Buddhist approach, let us examine how he views the solar system in which we are.

To him, it is a huge manifestation of "consciousness" in which he himself is an expression. Each manifestation has its own vibration enabling it to express itself in the way it does, it is the same thing as saying that each manifestation has its own particular wave length. As to the physicist, so to the Buddhist, the sun is a centre of "consciousness" or energy—a colossal charge in that bit of space in which we are—itsself the result of antecedent causes, evolving itself and affecting and being in turn affected in a whole chain of cause and effect. Thus, while itself evolving and evolving, it also evolves countless other manifestations of "consciousness" or energy, some of which we have discovered, some of which we have not discovered but yet may discover one day, and some probably which we shall never discover. Even if we are not Buddhists and call ourselves physicists, of at least one fact we are all agreed. All accept that this "consciousness" or energy has also manifested itself in the evolution as well as in the "being" of the planetary system we know—huge masses of matter, whirling in space—evolved and held together by nothing else but by this "consciousness" or energy, but for ever evolving . . . evolving . . . affecting others . . . getting affected . . . and also containing within itself the capacity as well as the capability of neutralisation.

It is exactly in that light that the solar system appears to a Buddhist. It is a case of seeing it in perspective, in proportion and in its stark Reality. The same *pattern* of "consciousness" or energy he sees wherever the latter manifests itself and this "consciousness" or energy is the *core* of such manifestation. In the medium of its manifestation, the "consciousness" or energy may be the preponderating component or it may not be. But, whether it preponderates or not, whether its presence is obvious or not, it is there and it has to be there, in the nature of things. Where this

"consciousness" or energy is predominant or is the sole manifestation, the physicist says the thing is "charged" or is a "charge" (or merely energy) respectively. Where it is not predominant, or its presence not obvious, he calls it "matter," and on analysis (if it is within the range of the advances he is capable of making) *discovers* what a Buddhist already *knows*, namely, that all matter is held together in the way it manifests itself by a "consciousness." The physicist uses his own language to call it an energy or a charge. Both approaches are analytical. One is based on physical analysis, the other on a mental or intellectual analysis. The latter has the advantage of being able to probe those planes of manifestation which are not capable of any physical analysis. That is why the Buddhist analysis is so more complete, and why the expounder of the analysis was called the "Buddha" or the "Enlightened One."

To underline this, let us take a very relevant point. Till not so very many centuries ago the belief prevailed among some that the entire Universe revolved round the earth. This was understandable, as a child gets the same impression today from the apparent movement round the earth of all the heavenly bodies. It is therefore not surprising that such a conception prevailed even among the adults at a time when their understanding of the Universe had not progressed beyond the stage of a child's today. Even today, where knowledge has not reached them, there will inevitably be people in remote corners of the earth who continue to think much the same way. But we, who have had the privilege of acquiring knowledge, know for a fact that things are quite different. Far from being the centre of the Universe, we know that the earth is a hardly recognisable speck in Space.

According to the understanding of a Buddhist, it is not only the earth and the solar system that we know that fall into their perspective, but also the manifestation called Man who dwells upon the earth. For, like everything else, he himself is a manifestation of this all-pervading and universal "consciousness" or energy, and by no means is he the centre of it, as sometimes we, in our ignorance, seem to think. He is merely an evolutionary manifestation of this universal "consciousness" or energy which goes on

vibrating at countless wave lengths—if we prefer to use that expression—to manifest itself in countless ways and which act and react on itself and on others producing in its train a whole chain of cause and effect. Thus, true to the general pattern, Man is a manifestation of "consciousness" or energy vibrating at a particular wave length. This "consciousness" or energy is capable of vibrating with very fine variations within this range to produce the human being in his countless variety. As in all else, the charge may predominate in this being, making his mind more pliable, sensitive and developed. Or alternatively, it may not do so, resulting in the mind not being his most developed component in this combination of mind (or consciousness) and matter (the *nāma-rūpa* of Buddhist philosophy) we call the "human being." The countless variety of these combinations thus prevents two human beings from becoming exactly alike.

The same universal "consciousness" or energy manifests itself or—to say the same thing differently—vibrates at appropriate wave lengths to produce such expressions of "being" as birds, beasts, reptiles, fish, plants, the sand and whatever else of which we can think.

At the plane of evolution that brings man into the picture, there is no necessity to put the word *Consciousness* any more within inverted commas. Man is what he is because this "consciousness" or energy or, as we call it in him, his *Mind* is more developed and capable of further development, in comparison with other manifestations of this "consciousness" or energy on earth. At this different plane of manifestation of "consciousness" or energy we attach a different label to the fundamentally same thing, just as much as we cannot continue to call the manifestation derived from water that boils "ice," but "steam." This transmutation of "consciousness" or energy, in the manifestation called the human being, we therefore name the "mind." It is an engine room, as it were, in him charging his whole being with impulses or vibrations. It is his motive as well as the creative force and the centre of his being. It does the same thing that the sun does in the solar system or a charge (or energy) in a particle of matter. It throbs, vibrates, reacts, is reacted upon, never the same within a matter of

a split second, yet evolving from what it was a split second earlier, and yet for ever changing all the same. When it is no longer capable of working as it did, the matter that had formed the body also ceases to function the way it did. The body, in other words, had lost its *raison d'être* in that particular combination of mind and matter.

The charge, or the vibration of the mind or consciousness is again capable of another manifestation as it is energy. What wave length it will have as it leaves the body is dependent on the strength of the charge or the vibration. On its wave length will depend the form of its re-manifestation. This explains the Buddhist concept that we are capable of being born again and again. That is the same thing as saying that energy is capable of manifesting itself in countless ways. We also have the capacity as human beings, provided we have the right understanding, to neutralise the energy that is within us, so that it would not have the opportunity to manifest itself again. We have spoken of this possibility earlier and the possibility in the present case falls into the same context. This achievement on our part is called the attainment of *Nirvāna* in Buddhist philosophy.

It was because of this possibility that the Buddha attached such significance to what we call the human being. For in this manifestation of ours, more than perhaps

in any other, he felt we were capable of neutralising, or striving towards its neutralisation, as this manifestation gave us the opportunity of taking control of this energy by right understanding. As this was the goal of his analysis, he worked out this point with great care and in detail and showed how it could be done. To resume the present theme—the human manifestation, though without doubt a very very infinitesimal expression of energy in the infinity of Space and Time, is therefore a phase filled with a unique opportunity. But how best it is made use of is dependent on the sum total of the requisite vibrations developed within oneself.

The effort may completely succeed in some, go a long way in others. Some may not try at all. There may be yet others who produce even in their human manifestation feeble vibrations of energy at the moment of their death to only manifest themselves lower down the ladder of cosmic evolution. For, as we have seen, there is a countless variety of vibrations, and where one wave length changes over to another is hardly perceptible. Hence it is that sometimes even in some manifestations we see we are unable to decide whether they belong to the vegetable or animal kingdom, or whether they are alive or not, etc.

Nor is what we can see all there is. There are those energies of whose presence we are aware because we are conscious of their vibrations and which we can perceive through other

avenues of perception than that of sight, e.g., heat, sound, etc. Also this same consciousness or energy within us is capable of manifesting itself as just a vibration or charge. When it does so, we say it is manifesting itself in the world of the spirit. This is no hypothetical surmise as those who can get in touch with this medium know. Moreover, the fact that consciousness or energy can exist in such manner is obvious even in our ordinary daily lives when we turn on the radio or the television and pick up manifestations of such consciousness or energy. Within this wave length of consciousness or energy, as in all else, there are countless variations. Some are capable of their own neutralisation, others are not so, and so *ad infinitum*, in a rich variety as we find within the wave length that we call human consciousness or energy.

To complete the picture we get from the perspective of Space and Time, there is, therefore, yet another perspective—that of Potential. Each is relative to the other two, but jointly taken beget in us the impression of “being,” “existing,” “living,” etc.

The principles underlying all that has been said are the same. It is for each person, however, to put what has been said to the touchstone of his own understanding for, in the true spirit of the philosophy of Buddhism, what is accepted is accepted only because it is acceptable to each individual.

THE THREE CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF EXISTENCE

By AMARASIRI WEERARATNE

ANITYA, *Dukkha* and *Anātma* are the three salient characteristics of sentient existence. In the Buddha-Dharma these are called the *Trilakshana* or the Three Cardinal Features of Life. *Anitya* is the transitory nature of all things. Everything undergoes change, is impermanent and unstable. There is the process of arising, reaching a peak, and passing away. The transitory nature of life is recognised in all religions and philosophies. It

was a crass materialist, Omar Khayyam, who wrote :—

“Each morn a thousand roses
brings you say
Yes, but where goes the rose of
yesterday?
And that same summer which
brings the rose,
Shall take Jamshid and Kaikobad
away.”

Even the so-called eternal hills
are gradually wearing away. Our

own bodies too undergo change and lead to the inevitable decay and death. Thus we see that impermanence is the first cardinal feature of life. The Buddha says that which is not stable is not worth clinging to, and is not worthy of our attachment.

The glory that was Greece is no more, and the grandeur that was Rome is relegated to the limbo of the forgotten past. It is so with all things in this world. Truly as

Thomas Grey said: "The paths of the glory lead but to the grave."

The Buddha points out to the unsatisfactory nature of life, and tells us that its first characteristic feature is Transcency. He advocates the cultivation of the qualities of non-attachment and dispassion to this phantom show that we call life. His doctrine is one which leads to non-attachment (*virāgaya*) and disgust (*nibbidāya*) with the fleeting vicissitudes of life and leads to the most stable and permanent state of happiness—namely *Nirvāna*. *Nirvāna*, as you know, is not a heaven up in the sky, but it is a state of happiness that comes with the eradication of greed (*lobha*), illwill (*dōsa*), and ignorance (*mōha*). The person ground in virtue who treads the Noble Eightfold Path can transcend the impermanence and unsatisfactory nature of all sentient existence and attain the enduring bliss of *Nirvāna*.

In his final admonition to his disciples the Buddha said: "*Vaya dharmā saṅkāra appamādeṇa sampādeṭha*." "Transient are all component things, therefore work out your salvation with diligence." In this message the Master has stressed the fleeting nature of life and its pleasures so that we may not be deluded by their deceptive nature.

Neither life nor any of its pleasures can be said to be stable or enduring. And what is subject to change, unsteady, and impermanent cannot be said to be satisfactory or productive of true happiness.

Dukkha

Dukkha means suffering or the unsatisfactory nature of life. The problem of suffering is universally recognised. It has grappled the attention of thinkers in all climes and ages. It was the celebrated Greek poet Homer who said: "For men on earth, 'tis best never to be born at all, or being born, to pass through the gates of Hades with all speed." Socrates, the Sage of Greece, remarked that if the troubles of men were to be reshuffled and redistributed, each man would be content with his quota and would not like to share that of another. So much steeped and ingrained in suffering is the world.

Let us look at the forests and ocean depths. Here the stronger preys upon the weaker. Amongst men too the economically stronger men prey upon weaker by exploita-

tion of labour. The whole of creation can be summed up by the words "eating and avoiding been eaten."

Sir Edwin Arnold remarks in his *Light of Asia*:—

"Beauteous is the earth, but its forest broods,
Plot mutual slaughter, hungering to live,
Of sapphire are the skies, but when men cry
Famished, no drops they give."

It was Tennyson who wrote:—
"For never morning wore to evening but some heart did break." Instances can be multiplied from the world's literature to show that the one keynote which underlies existence is suffering. It is on this central theme that the Buddha built up his doctrine. He too was concerned with the same problem that confronted all thinkers. "One thing do I teach," declared the Buddha, "and that is Suffering and the way to get rid of it. The Four Noble Truths are the heart core and the cornerstone of the Buddha-Dharma. Of these Four Noble Truths, the first is the recognition of the universality of suffering.

Thus we see that the Buddha-Dharma is founded on facts that are verifiable by our own experience and knowledge and not on any sort of speculative assumption which has got to be accepted on faith alone.

The truth of suffering can be verified by each individual for himself because life is one big picture of suffering. Birth, decay, death, and disease bring suffering. Not getting the things one wishes for and association with those one does not like brings suffering. The process of studying for a profession, competition in profession and protecting the hard earned wealth is suffering. Earning a livelihood is fraught with suffering. In short the whole of existence is suffering.

Anatma

The third feature of all forms of existence is *Anātma* or the absence of anything enduring or an Ego. This is the most difficult of the Buddha's teachings. All other religious systems of the world including the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy teach that there is something enduring permanently in man, and that they call the "soul." The Buddha was the only teacher who was able to overcome this universal illusion. Hence the doctrine of

Anātma is the Buddha's unique contribution to world philosophy.

The Buddha categorically rejected all theories regarding the immortality of the soul. He said that the mind of man undergoes change even more rapidly than the body. He taught that neither men nor any of the animals possess anything enduring or substantial that can be called an Ego. According to the Buddha the Ego-illusion is the greatest of fallacies and is the cause of all the trammels and unrest in the world. "The Ego-illusion is the cause of all passions, and defilements, wrote Santideva in his immortal work *Bodhicariyāvātāra* or "The Journey towards the Light." The Ego-illusion is a deep seated fallacy in the human mind, and can only be eliminated totally by attaining to the first state on the path to Sainthood, namely, the *Srōtapatti* state. Descartes wrote: "*Cogito ergo sum*" "I think therefore I am." He introduced an I to the first part of his equation, therefore beginning with incorrect data he got an incorrect reply. He should have said there is thought, and only a process of thinking is present, conditioned by the mind and mental concomitants. In the Upanishads we read of a permanent entity in man called "the person the size of a thumb." Of him it is said "Know the self to be sitting in the chariot—the body to be the chariot, and the mind to be the reins. The senses they call the horses, the objects of the senses their roads . . ." "The person, the size of a thumb, stands in the middle of the body as lord of the past and the future and henceforward fears no more. This is that "This view is totally unacceptable to Buddhist thought. The *Visuddhi Magga* teaches:—

"There is action, but there is no doer,

There is retribution but no entity received the reward;

Empty phenomena alone roll on,
This view alone is right and true."

The Buddha analyses the mind for a vestige of a soul and declared that only sensations, perceptions, thought processes and consciousness was there. All these he declared to be impermanent, arising and passing away. But their rapid continuation creates the illusion of an Ego-entity persisting in man. Just as when the parts are rightly set we use the term "charriot" to a combination of wheels,

shaft, axle, etc., even so we use the term "man" to a combination of psychophysical forces. "Just as the unity of a triangle or the melody

of an organism consists merely in the special mode in which its parts are connected so as to form a specific kind of complex, the unity of what

we call the individual ego consists in the peculiar way in which what we call his experiments are united with one another."

THE FORUM

THE question of the need for greater understanding between the Theravada and the Mahayana forms of Buddhism was proposed in the opening article in the last issue of "the Buddhist."

Mr. Nihal de Silva of Lumbini, Sri Sumangala Road, Kalutara North, has sent in his views for publication in this month's issue. Our readers are kindly requested to take an interest in the exchange of views, which is the main purpose of this Forum.

SECTS IN BUDDHISM

THE views on the above subject, as expressed in the September issue of *The Buddhist*, indeed call for some comment from those who profess to follow *Theravada* Buddhism.

The first point that strikes one is the mention of tolerance and cordiality among all sects of Buddhists. The Buddha exhorted his disciples: "If others should revile me, or the Dhamma or the Sangha, you should not on such account give vent to anger or malice." He even positively permitted his newly-converted disciples to continue to treat their former religious teachers. And all Buddhists of whatever sect have for the most part remained faithful to these exhortations. To such a people, religious intolerance—especially between sects—would be simply preposterous. As such, the "lack of understanding" between *Theravada* Buddhists and Mahayanists, is more imaginary than real. (As a matter of fact, during the last war there were so many Buddhists in Ceylon who hoped that the Japanese would capture Ceylon—all because the Japanese were Buddhists, unlike the British).

There has also been presented the beautiful simile of a mighty river that springs from one source—the Buddha. No sane person would interfere with this view—for the Buddha is indeed the *sine qua non* of Buddhism. But let it be clear enough that this identicalness refers only to 'Buddhism' and *not* to the Dhamma—certainly not to the *niyanika dhamma* of the Buddha—for as we *Theravada* Buddhists believe, it

is only the Dhamma as we have it that can lead us to Nibbana.

One also understands from the article that we have no right to feel singular in that our version of Buddhism is the only correct one. Going on precisely the same argument one can also say that Buddhists have absolutely no claim that theirs is the only correct religion. There is however one point that I wish to mention. Historical facts indicate, and even the Mahayanists admit that the version found in *Theravada* countries is the original teaching. They only claim to have converted the Buddha's teaching into a *Mahayana*—a great vehicle, that can accommodate a large number, *i.e.* a religion for the masses, unlike the *Theravada* teaching which is "for individual penetration by the wise." (In doing so they have brought down Buddhism to the level of all other religions, which are mere paths to heaven and not to Nibbana).

Let us also take a brief look at the so-called similarities in the two doctrines. I refer to those ones mentioned in the article, *viz.* Four Noble Truths, *Kamma*, Rebirth, *Anatta*. I would go further as to mention the *Paticca-Samuppada*, too. But one who attempts to study these doctrines would find that the similarity is only nominal, (*i.e.* in the terminology), and in no way in spirit or meaning. For instance, the Mahayanist interpretation of the *Paticca-Samuppada* is a supreme example of poverty of thought and understanding. I shall give just two examples. I. All are expected to attain Nibbana through *signes symboliques* under which circumstances the purpose of a *samma-*

sambuddha is defeated. 2. The idea of the 'Living Buddha' is the greatest contradiction to the *anatta* doctrine.

With regard to the *Trikaya* Doctrine one need not say much, but I wish to enlighten my fellow-readers on the said article by the Ven. Vajirana, in *The Buddhist* of April, 1954; namely, that it is the reprint of the original one published in the Bastian's *Buddhist Annual* of 1931 (Vol. 4, No. 1); and that when first published its authorship was seriously questioned, and even ascribed to an individual known to be a faddist, who later joined the Order.

Tolerance is not identical with imbecile indifference. There is no 'tolerance' where principles are involved. As the Buddha was approaching his Demise he discussed the future of the *Sasana*, with his disciples. The Ven. Maha Kassapa suggested that there should be no changes made in the *Vinaya*, after the Buddha's Demise—and the Buddha accepted this. If the Buddha was so scrupulous about the *Vinaya*, need we talk at all about changes in the Doctrine?

Hence the question is not so much whether we *can* achieve a unification of Mahayana and Theravada—but whether we *should* attempt it. There is a very easy manner of settling this. In taking Refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, we accept the Buddha, as the only teacher who can free us from Suffering; Nibbana, as the only state free from Suffering; and the Arahats and other Noble Disciples, as the only true exemplars we have.

If this last-mentioned be so, let us see how they acted with regard to heretical sects. Did not the Arahats actively move to expel these heretical monks from the *Sasana*, after the 2nd and 3rd Convocations? Do

we know better than the Arahats? This should make it conclusive.

Mahayanist literature may certainly hold an irresistible appeal to the literary enthusiast, and no one

would deny him the pleasure of access to it. One may only warn him not to fall a prey to its deceptive charms. But as for relations, let us continue to be cordial—as indeed with all other religions, too.

READERS' QUERIES

BUDDHAGHOSA'S IDENTITY

By Pandit J. SAMARAJEEVA, *Lecturer, Alexandra College, Colombo.*

IN his scholarly and enlightening article captioned "Religious Ties between Ceylon and Burma" which appeared in the August issue of your esteemed journal, Dr. S. Paranavitana adduces copious historical facts which will considerably shed light to unravel the identity of Buddhaghosa, the great commentator. This is all, that I have got to say *re* this controversial point.

The greater part of the Mahavamsa story appears to be legendary. It is said that the "Atthasalini" was written by Buddhaghosa in India. It is doubtful whether Buddhaghosa wrote the book. That he could have written it before the "Visuddhimagga" is impossible since the "Visuddhimagga" is referred to in the opening stanzas of the "Atthasalini," whoever wrote that part of the Mahavamsa had not opened the "Atthasalini." That Buddhaghosa while deserving access to the commentaries should prove his fitness to work upon them by epitomizing the Pitakas together with their commentaries is surprising. Many quotations from the commentaries are fully and accurately given in the "Visuddhimagga." In point of fact, he says in all his "Atthakathas" that he has prepared the "Visuddhi-

magga," an illuminative comment upon all four nikayas. If the Mahavamsa Chronicler did try to verify the legend about Buddhaghosa by examining the Buddhaghosa's works, he got no further than the two fundamental "Stanzas" at the beginning of the "Visuddhimagga."

If the "Nanodaya" had existed, it alone would not have been lost, while all the other works of Buddhaghosa survive. It is nowhere mentioned in Pali literature the Mahavamsa excepted. From the narrative of the Mahavamsa one fact remains: that Buddhaghosa came from India to Ceylon in the reign of Mahanama (end of the 4th century A.D.). This is confirmed by Burmese authorities, but, the latter say that he came to Ceylon from Thaton being a "Mon" (Tailang) by birth. The tradition has an element of truth. I presume that he is a Telanga from Telugu country of South India not a Burmese Telaing. The Telaingas colonized extensively in Burma and Indo-China, the term "Telaing," being a corruption of their original name "Talaing." His birth place was the village of "Morandakhetaka" ("Peacock-egg-village") as is very clear from the Colophon of the "Visuddhimagga" where he is called "Morandhaketu Buddhaghosa." The

method of nomenclature is still followed in Ceylon and Dravidian India. His surname vanished when his fame had made him the "Buddhaghosa."

It is to be noticed that the usually clever scribe of the manuscript belonging to the king Thibaw changes the word "Morandakhetaka" to "Mudantakhedaka" ("Gladness ending in sorrow") the Sinhala manuscripts read "Cetaka" for "Khetaka," a possible confusion of letters. "Khetaka" is Sanscrit for village and remains in the modern South India vernaculars as "Kheda." Buddhaghosa lived for sometime at "Mayarasutta-pattana" as he says in the Colophon at the end of the "Atthasalini." The next bit of information is from the Colophon of the "Atthasalini." "I began this atthakatha at the request of Venerable Jotipala who lived with me at Kancipura." The Burmese tradition that Buddhaghosa came from Thaton may be founded upon a fact possibly Buddhaghosa went there from Ceylon. His works are better preserved in Burma than in Ceylon and though show no particular acquaintance with Burma, the last years of his life might have been spent at Thaton.

231, Cotta Road,
Borella.

All members are kindly requested to donate at least one year's membership fee to the Fort Branch Building Fund, and enrol a new member each month.

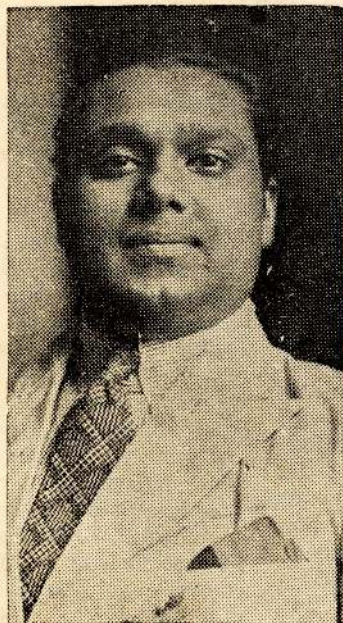
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**Hony. General Secretary,
Y. M. B. A.,
Colombo.**

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

OUR PRESIDENT

WE have the pleasure of announcing the unanimous election of Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya as the President of the Y.M.B.A. He had been a Vice-President of the Association for many years and has earned the admiration of the members through his charming ways and his unflinching devotion to the cause of Buddhism.



Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya



Mr. N. J. V. Cooray,
the new Vice-President.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

MR. N. J. V. Cooray has been elected a Vice-President to fill the vacancy created by the appointment of Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya to the post of President.

Mr. D. L. F. Pedris has been elected a Member of the Board of Management in place of Mr. W. S. Karunaratne, who left for higher studies in U.K.

NEW MEMBERS

Elected on 19.8.57: D. P. Guna-dasa, Shroff Branch, Town Hall, Colombo; D. J. C. Jayasuriya, 50, Wall Street, Kolonnawa, Wellampitiya.

Elected on 26.8.57: F. H. Lord, "Apollo House," 377, Darley Road, Colombo; S. W. Walpita, 192, Havelock Road, Colombo; M. D. W. Jayawardene, "Jayanthi," 17, Nagahamulla Road, Kolonnawa, Wellampitiya.

Elected on 2.9.57: D. P. Abayawardene, Dekatana.

Elected on 9.9.57: H. S. de Silva, 3, Station Road, Egoda Uyana, Moratuwa.

Elected on 23.9.57: Q. A. Wickremesinghe, 66, Kelaniganga Road, Colombo.

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DHARMACHAKRA DAY CELEBRATION AT SARNATH

THE Dharmachakra Day was celebrated on the full-moon day of July at the Mulagandhakuti Vihara, Sarnath. It was here that the Buddha preached His First Sermon to the five disciples and sent forth the first Buddhist missionaries to preach His message of compassion and righteousness for the good of the mankind.

The Vihara premises were tastefully decorated for the occasion with Buddhist flags. An especial puja was held to mark the day which was attended among others by the Bhikkhus of Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, China and Tibet.

Earlier in the day a Dana was given to the Bhikkhus in keeping with the Buddhist tradition on such religious occasions and an illumination wound up the day's programme which was followed by the recitation of the Sutras by the Bhikkhus, headed by Ven'ble M. Sangharatana Thera the Jt. Secretary, Maha Bodhi Society of India.