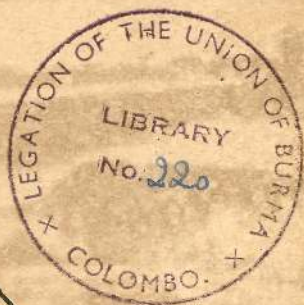


# BUDDHISM IN ASIA



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# Buddhism In Asia

BY

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Ratnamali Dagaba, Ceylon

('Ka ba Aye') World Peace Pagoda, Burma

A Marble Temple, Thailand

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Buddha Image, Japan

A Lama (monk), Tibet

Svayambhu Dagaba, Nepal



# INTRODUCTION

In the 6th century B.C. the world experienced a first class cultural movement in the doctrine of Buddhism. In the first twelve centuries of its existence it was instrumental in spreading the light of this new-born movement from India to Central Asia, South East Asia and the Far East. During that long period the most predominant cultural force in the whole of Asia was Buddhism. Its aim was to improve the inner as well as the outer culture of men and women.

According to Buddhism the basis of inner culture is nothing but the development of mind. Hence Buddhism advocates its cultivation by all. Here it may be mentioned that a person with a well cultivated mind will have numerous great qualities such as Universal Love, Kindness, Sympathy, Equanimity, Sincerity, Determination, Truthfulness, Perseverence, Tolerance etc. These are the corner stones of the highest form of inner culture. The personality of man is primarily built around them.

Apart from improving the inner culture, Buddhism also made many valuable contributions towards the advancement of man's outer culture. With regard to the latter it may be noticed that there are various Buddhist ideas and ideals, art and architecture, customs and manners and educational institutions that help human progress.

The Buddhists were the first religious community who recognised the supremacy of man over all other beings. They are never afraid of telling man that he is his own Lord or Saviour and he should not depend on any God Almighty or any angelic guardian. They reject all myths and superstitions and emphasise on free thinking and independent judgement. The quest for truth is their aim. Their educational system is based on mental discipline and progress of life. This is well expressed throughout their literature. It was because of these factors that the Asian Nations from Tibet to Japan have endeared Buddhism for the last twenty five centuries. In this work my attempt has been to depict the historical and social background of this great movement.

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# BUDDHISM IN ASIA

## BUDDHISM IN INDIA

SOME time ago Sri Jawahar Lal Nehru, the present Prime Minister of India visited a famous Buddhist temple near Colombo. There he stood very silent, and was without moving for some time in front of an ancient statue of the Buddha. This was really puzzling to the large crowd gathered there at that time. The inquisitive people began to enquire about it and asked me whether he had discovered anything extraordinary in the statue. On my intimating this to him he said :

“I was thinking of the greatness of the Buddha. How many nations in many countries have been honouring Him for the last two thousand five hundred years. Am I wrong in thinking that the nation that could produce so great a person as the Buddha must also be a great nation.”

It appears that with this statement Mr. Nehru attempted to realise not only the greatness of the Buddha but also the greatness of his nation.

There is no doubt that India was and is a great country in many respects. But the greatness she achieved by giving birth to the Buddha was unique. In her recorded history there was no greater personality than the Buddha. The Hindus took Him to be an incarnation of God. In that they thought that He appeared on earth in order to reform the

society. But I wish to say that He was more than that. He was born to form a new order of society. Throughout His life He stood against various cults, myths, beliefs, traditional customs, taboos, certain religious practices and unsocial activities.

It was the Buddha who for the first time openly challenged the supernatural Divine Lordship or the Divine Spirit. In His opinion man is his own Lord or Saviour. Practically there is no force, not even an unseen force which has any authority over man. Nor can anyone else save him.

It was this teaching that stirred the minds of millions of Indians during the sixth century B.C. Hence this was taken to be the greatest contribution of Buddhism. But the Brahmins being the predominant religious and social authorities of the time vehemently opposed the Buddha. They were a God fearing lot. So they wished to have God's blessings for their existence and activities in both the worlds.

The animal sacrifice advocated by the Brahmins was taken to be very essential in their religious practices. It is said that this was done in order to please the gods. Those who were accustomed to this thought that even the animals sacrificed in the name of Gods would go to heaven. The Buddha, however, took it to be very harmful, uncivilised and inhuman. He being an all-compassionate one went on condemning animal sacrifice. He advocated Ahimsa or non-violence. This was the most important doctrine that He ever delivered.

According to this doctrine not only the life of human beings but also the life of all other beings must be respected. The first Buddhist precept, the abstention from killing comes

under this. Broadly speaking this deals with the entire behaviour of man in relation to other beings.

Apart from this all the good qualities that stand for making an excellent man are connected with Ahimsa. For instance love, kindness, sympathy, equanimity, tolerance, humbleness, sense of liberty, equality and fraternity are deeply rooted in Ahimsa. Hence the whole socio-religious movement started by the Buddha was based on it. But the Brahmins found it to be against their vested interests. They, therefore, determined to oppose it.

The Buddha without taking much notice of them directly approached the masses and started organising them in a new order. This was known to be the 'Catu Parisa' or the four-fold Buddhist order. Everybody irrespective of caste and class was admitted into this new community. It was so attractive that in no time men and women from different parts of India belonging to different castes and classes turned to be Buddhists.

The Buddha preached and taught them an interesting ethical doctrine called the Eight-fold Path. For some time they followed it to the last syllable. But after one hundred years of the Buddha's demise there appeared sectarian differences among the Indian Buddhists. This was an outcome of the Second Theravada Council held at Vaisali, the capital of the Republican Licchavis. At this Council all Buddhists or monks could not agree on many points of the Dhamma and the Vinaya or the doctrine and the discipline. Those who disagreed with the Theravadins held a separate Council at Kosambi, near Allahabad. Here it is clear that it was this disappointing situation that paved the way for many sects based on different philosophical and ethical views.

At the time of Asoka (277-236 B.C.) there were eighteen sects among the Buddhists. But all of them were divided into two main sections called the Theravada and the Mahasamghika. During the third century B.C. these Theravadins had their third Council at Asokarama, Patna. Although this was organised in order to unite all the Theravadins their unity did not last long.

Thus those disunited Buddhists had to face another danger after the death of Asoka. This came from an orthodox Hindu king called Pusyamitra (187-151 B.C.) He went on attacking the Buddhists in various ways. He said that Buddhism was a doctrine of extreme non-violence and detachment. So the nation might go not only submissive and inactive but also stagnant if it were to follow a religion like Buddhism. The Hindus would be quite safe with their ancient Vedic doctrine.

At the time of Pusyamitra the Buddhists were not strong enough to take up this challenge. They were already scattered and there was no organised leadership. Thus the only course opened to them was to leave Magadha or Bihar at least for some time. Those who were forced to leave their main centre in this manner moved into several places including Sanchi in Bhopal and Urumunda in Mathura. It is said that those who went to Sanchi were Theravadins and the others who left for Urumunda were Sarvastivadins. Both the Dipavamsa and the Kathavatthu say that the Sarvastivadins were an offshoot of the Theravadins.

At this time the main problem before these people was to find out a way of co-existence in India. In other words they had to live peacefully and amicably with the Hindus. In that they had to respect the age old Hindu ideas and

ideals, customs and manners and religion and culture. In short this was very essential for their peaceful living. As a gesture of this attitude the Sarvastivadins decided to compromise with the Hindus. They started writing down the Tripitaka or the Buddhist Scriptures in Sanskrit, the classical language of the Hindus. This was done not only to please the Hindus but also to make them understand Buddhism.

During the first century A.D. there was a powerful king called Kanishka (78-100 A.D.) who gave all assistance to the Sarvastivadins in their various socio-religious activities. It was this king who arranged an important Council of them in or near Kashmir. Just after this Council the Sarvastivadins produced commentaries to their Sanskrit Tripitaka in three big volumes. These works written on copper plates were enshrined in a Stupa built somewhere near the Council ground.

Although the history of this great endeavour is not well written there are ample evidences to prove that it was one of the biggest landmarks of Indian Buddhism. Those who were responsible for this work were later known as the Mahayanists. They went on writing Sutras or discourses in their own way. They interpreted Buddhism in several ways. Their main emphasis was on the Bodhisatva ideals. They used their utmost artistic skill and ability to show the greatness of that ideal.

Here it should be mentioned that it was king Kanishka who took initiative in preparing the first stone image of the Buddha. Thereafter not only the Mahayanists but also the Theravadins went on making thousands of beautiful statues of the Buddhas, Bodhisatvas etc.

Apart from such activities the Mahayana scholars started to write volumes of big books on the Buddhist doctrine.

Upto the present day most of these works are available in different countries of Asia. When we come to study and examine them we find that they are the best fruits of the Indian Buddhist thought.

The Mahayana scholars who flourished between the fifth and the twelfth centuries were the greatest authorities on different Buddhist philosophical systems. Men like Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asvaghosha, Dimnaga, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dharmakirti, Kumarajiva, Shantarakshita, Dipankara Srig-nana etc. were big pillars of Buddhist philosophy. Some of these philosophers are identified with a community called Vajrayanists. But here I am not going to give any details regarding them.

The Buddhist scholars, specially the Mahayana scholars of India organised the world famous educational institutions like Nalanda, Vikramasila, Jagaddala, Odantapuri and so on. The outstanding success they achieved in this field was due to their liberal attitude, broad outlook and religious and cultural zeal.

In spite of all these good qualities and activities there was some weakness among the mediæval Indian Buddhists. This was nothing but the inclination towards the mediæval Indian cults. Once they appeared to have done it intentionally in order to co-exist with the Hindus. But later on they were taken away by the same undesirable force. This means that the mediæval Indian Buddhists were unable to maintain the balance of belief and practice. Instead of following their first class Eight-fold Middle Way they attempted to compete with those who were under mystic beliefs.

Undoubtedly they might have thought of winning the masses. But they did not know that it would bring disaster to their simple way of life.



Most of the mystic people of mediæval India had innumerable misconceptions of life. They were afraid of the unseen or the imaginary beings as well as natural forces. They firmly believed that the Sun, the Moon and the other planets and stars would determine their fate. So they prayed day and night for their help.

The mediæval people every now and then discussed about their life beyond the grave. For them the life in this world was not very real. In order to prove this a man-made religious text was taken as a divine authority. Nobody was permitted to go beyond that. Everybody was asked to believe it or else he was treated as a sinner. Thus the organised belief was imposed on one and all. Investigation, question or criticism was unwanted and unauthorised. In mediæval India man-made idols were indentified as real Gods. People thought that they could get all blessings and salvation by worshipping or perhaps by touching them. In the long run we find, that idolators erecting big buildings by spending millions on their own free will. Their sole aim was to see that they were safe, prosperous and happy in both the worlds.

The other feature developed in India, during the mediæval times was the performance of miracles in the name of religion. Those who were responsible for these curious acts were religious competitors. All of them wanted to show the miraculous powers of their respective faiths. In this the Buddhists also did not like to be back numbers or second rate religionists. They therefore went on competing with their opponants in all possible ways.

This was the beginning of the downfall of Buddhism in India. Thus when the roots of Buddhism were slackened

there was another terrible force that shook them very badly. This was nothing but the Islamic invasion of India. It started from the seventh century A.D., that is during the period of Umara Khalifa (632-634 A.D.)

The Muslim invaders attacked both the Hindus and the Buddhists. Muslim culture was diametrically opposite to the Hindu and Buddhist cultures. In brief the Muslims did not know the meaning of many religious practices and social behaviour of the Hindus and the Buddhists. The worship of idols, religious celibacy and various Hindu-Buddhist customs were quite foreign to the Muslims. They never admitted that the killing of a cow was a greater sin than the killing of a goat. In sex life they had their own peculiar customs and ways. Although they were not opposed to arts they could not appreciate many Indian arts. The Hindu and Buddhist philosophies also were Greek to them. So they went on fighting against the Hindus and the Buddhists.

The Muslims thought it to be their duty to proselytize all heretics. Whenever they were unable to do this clashes followed. This happened in India for over five hundred years. During that long period many Hindus and Buddhists were killed. But both of them were not in a position to understand the seriousness of the situation.

Here one might wonder why apart from the cultural aspect of Muslim invasion the Hindus and the Buddhists did not think of its economic and political aspects? Had they thought of them seriously they could have organised a combined opposition to the common enemy. The reason for this pitiful state of affairs was the disunity of the Hindus and the Buddhists. In fact the Hindus were at loggerheads with the Buddhists. They also had their own weaknesses because of

their caste system. There was only one caste called the Kshatriyas who formed the army of the country. The other three castes thought that it was not their duty to fight for the country. Thus they were so caste-minded that they were not in a position to think of the emergency.

As I mentioned earlier during the period of Muslim invasion in India the Buddhists were disunited and lacked a proper leadership. They also were not militant enough to face the enemies. In the meantime the Hindus attempted to keep off from them when they were attacked by the Muslims. This was really a very hopeless and helpless position for the Buddhists.

In this calamity the Bhikkhus were the pitiest lot. They could be identified easily with their uniform. So they were harassed and attacked everywhere. At last when they had no other go they got disrobed and turned to be either Hindus or Muslims. In India still there are several communities who are the direct descendants of such people.

During the Muslim invasion in India hundreds of prominent Bhikkhus and laymen fled away to hilly countries like Tibet. There they established monasteries, preached Buddhism and wrote books.

It appears that during the seventh and the twelfth centuries India lost most of her Buddhist monks and scholars. And after the twelfth century A.D. Buddhism was dwindling down in that country. From the twelfth to the end of the nineteenth century A.D. very very little was heard of the Indian Buddhists. The little Theravada Buddhist community of Chittagon and the scattered Buddhists of the

Himalayan Provinces were there for the last so many hundreds of years. But they had no enough contact with the outside Buddhist world.

During the last sixty or seventy years along with the nationalist movement of India there had been some Buddhist awakening in that country. This was encouraged by the Buddhists of all Asian countries. Specially the Buddhists of Ceylon and Burma had done much to help the recent Indian Buddhist movement. The learned and intelligent Hindus also think that it is very necessary for India to have an awakened Buddhist community. They feel that it is the best way to improve the cultural connection and friendship among many Asian nations.

In recent years there has been another Buddhist movement in India under the leadership of the late Dr. B. M. Ambedkar. It is still going on and it is in the nature of a challenge to the Hindu caste system. Some of the Hindus therefore seem to oppose it to some extent. But the general opinion in India about Buddhist awakening is that it is a "Must." The country should regain its lost glory.

In my opinion there are three ways to accomplish this.

Firstly the Buddhists who would undertake the propagation of Buddhism in India must understand thoroughly well the historical development of the Hindu and Buddhist cultures. They also should know the similarities and the fundamental philosophical differences of these two religions.

Secondly there should not be any attempt to impose Buddhism on the people. Those who undertake this responsibility should approach the masses as "kinsmen who returned safe from afar after a long absence." They must possess the

humble and liberal spirit found in the Kalama Sutta. That also has been the character of the Buddhists throughout their history.

Thirdly the Buddhists should be able to tell the Hindus why they need a religion like Buddhism. What is its practical advantage? In that it is their duty explain not only its historical importance and its social, cultural and philosophical value but also its greatness. The Hindus will then realise without fail the indispensability of Buddhism.

## BUDDHISM IN CEYLON

**B**UDDHISM was established in Ceylon during the 3rd century B.C. It was a period of great Buddhist renaissance in India. The prime mover of that movement in that vast sub-continent was Emperor Asoka (277-236 B.C.). He was responsible for the 3rd Buddhist Council held in North India under the presidentship of Elder Moggaliputta Tissa. Just after that Council several important missions were sent to different countries of Asia including Ceylon.

The mission that was sent to Ceylon was headed by Elder Mahinda, the loving son of Emperor Asoka. He came to this country along with five monks and a layman. They were received by Devanampiyatissa, the Ceylonese King of the time. He was supposed to be an "unseen friend" of Emperor Asoka. So he was very eager to make all facilities for the new mission sent by his great friend to carry on their many sided cultural activities.

At the time of Devanampiyatissa the capital of Ceylon was Anuradhapura. It was the wish of the King and the head of the mission to make Buddhist headquarters in the heart of the city. They demarcated an area at the Mahamegha Garden for the purpose of opening the first Buddhist Centre known as the Maha Vihara.

This of course was meant specially for Bhikkhus or monks. There was therefore, the need of another centre for Bhikkhunis or nuns. In order to organise that important centre Elder Mahinda wanted to get the help of some Indian Bhikkhunis. And for this purpose he requested Devanampiyatissa to contact Emperor Asoka. The King did it promptly and on his invitation Asoka was kind enough to

send his own daughter, princess Sanghamitta to Ceylon. She came to this island with the historic Bo-sapling that is found at Anuradhapura up to the present day. Just after the arrival of this great nun the Bhikkhuni order was established in Ceylon.

It is recorded in the Mahavamsa, the great chronicle, that on that occasion about five hundred women headed by princess Anula of Ceylon got ordained under Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta. Devanampiyatissa built special nunneries for all of them. Here it should be mentioned that with the inauguration of Bhikkhuni order in Ceylon the establishment of full Buddhist order was completed. Although the Bhikkhunis had their own separate quarters they were guided and directed by the Maha Vihara. In that it was the leading light of all four-fold Buddhist public.

The Mahavamsa records most of the religious and national activities directed by the Maha Vihara. The learned residential monks of this great institution prepared most of the original architectural plans of national importance. But until the 2nd century B.C. neither the Government nor the general public could erect big buildings. They could complete only some important buildings like the Thuparama, the first dagaba at Anuradhapura.

The delay in starting many other projects was due to a struggle between the Ceylonese and some South Indian invaders. In this struggle the Ceylonese, however, were victorious. Their leader was a warrior king called Dutugemunu. He was supposed to be one of the greatest embodiments of Buddhist ideas and ideals, traditions and national character. It was this king who built the well known Svarnamali Maha Thupa and the Lovamahapaya. In short he

tried to complete most of the big plans drawn and designed by the former kings and the monks of the Maha Vihara.

The special characteristic of Dutugemunu was to blend religious spirit with that of nationalism. In that he succeeded beyond expectation. The monks of the time were extremely helpful to him. He also felt and expressed that he was their most faithful servant. That was Dutugemunu's secret of success.

In the history of Ceylon the 1st century A.D. was another period of great Buddhist revival. It was in this period that the Pali Tripitaka was committed to writing on the palm leaves at Alu Vihare, Matale. Up to this time these scriptures and most of their commentaries were handed down orally from generation to generation. There were two reasons for the Ceylonese Pali scholars to write them down in the language in which it was delivered by the Buddha.

Firstly they found that there was a big movement in India to write Buddhist Scriptures in Sanskrit language. This was a Mahayanic move. The Mahayanists wanted to please the Brahamins who were not in favour of Pali. This also was a way for peaceful co-existence. But the Theravadins were afraid of misrepresentation and misinterpretation of facts. They, therefore, were very eager to preserve the original teachings of the Buddha in Magadhi or Pali. Here it should be mentioned that Pali is the reformed form of Magadhi.

The Ceylonese monks also noticed the dawn of Mahayanic variety of Buddhism in Ceylon at the beginning of the 1st century B.C. During this period the Maha Vihara was losing much of the customary state aid for its activities. Even the writing of the Buddhist Scriptures was not encouraged and assisted by the King Vattagamini Abhaya, the head of the state of the time.



Instead of supporting the Maha Vihara the King built another big institution called Abhayagiri Vihara at Anuradhapura. For thirteen centuries from that time this had been the main centre of various Mahayanic sects. It was evident that these people organised themselves in opposition to Theravadins. They, therefore, very often clashed with the Theravadins.

At the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. some Mahayana literature was destroyed on the order of the Government. It was treated as Vaitulyavada or the heretical Brahmanic doctrine. The Mahavamsa says that a minister of state called Kapila was appointed by the King Voharattissa in order to examine all Mahayana works. He was supposed to be a big authority on Buddhism. He found Mahayana works to be un-Buddhistic. So he ordered them to be burnt. After forty years of this incident another King called Gothabhaya got some sixty Mahayana monks banished from Ceylon. He also ordered to burn certain portions of their physical bodies. The Maha Vihara monks were suspected to be the instigators of this cruel act. So the Mahayanists determined to take vengeance on the Maha Vihara. They were able to do it towards the end of the 3rd century A.D. At that time there was a King called Mahasena who had some close connections with Mahayana monks. On their advice the King destroyed the entire Maha Vihara including the Svarnamali Dagaba and built a new Buddhist Centre called Jetavana at the Jotivana at Anuradhapura for the Mahayana Buddhists. Because of this the king, however, had to face a vehement opposition from the Theravadins. It was so great that he was forced to reconstruct the Maha Vihara.

In spite of all these sectarian disputes the North Indian Buddhists took Ceylon to be the safest spot for Buddhism.

The greatest evidence of this was the sending away of Buddha's sacred tooth relic to Ceylon at the beginning of the 4th century A.D. There were various other sacred Buddhist treasures sent by the Indian Buddhists from time to time. They also sent good many scholars, artists and builders to this country. Take for instance Buddhaghosa, the renowned commentator, who was sent to Ceylon for the purpose of writing Pali commentaries on the Tripitaka. He was here during the first half of the 5th century A.D. He first wrote a profound thesis called *Visuddhimagga* in order to show his erudition and capability. Thereafter he was asked to compile all commentaries. He wrote not less than twenty of them and made his name known throughout all Buddhist countries.

Thus apart from the writing of the Tripitaka in the 1st century B.C. the compilation of its commentaries in the 5th century A.D. had been the greatest historic event ever to have occurred in Ceylon. There is no doubt that it made the position of Buddhism in Ceylon very firm. It was the Tripitaka that made Buddhism a living force for the last so many centuries all over Asia. The historical records that are available in Burma, Thailand etc., tell us how those countries managed to get the Tripitaka and its commentaries from Ceylon. This is no small credit to this country.

The common practice of Buddhists throughout history has been the interdependency for their religious needs. Because of this tendency one country could get the necessary help from the other at any time. This was well evident when the King Maha Vijayabahu approached Burma during the early years of the 12th century A.D. for the purpose of getting some monks for the re-establishment of higher ordination in Ceylon. At that time both the orders of monks

and nuns were lost in this country. When the Burmese were informed about this they sent 25 monks to Ceylon. With the help of them the King restored the Theravada order in Ceylon.

It was towards the end of the 12th century A.D. that Ceylonese Buddhists had a remarkable period in their history. It was during this period that they had a famous warrior king called Parakrama Bahu the Great. He called a Council of different sects of monks and begged of them to give up all sectarian differences. By this time the force of Mahayana was declining in Ceylon. So it was not very difficult for the King to bring all monks under the Theravada order. What he did was the amalgamation of the Mahayana sects with the Theravada sect. Those who were not duly ordained were asked to give up robes. This was taken to be a sane step for the upliftment of Buddhism.

The King was also responsible for the first Sinhalese Katikavata or the code of conduct of monks. Some other kings who followed this example up to the 18th century A.D. prepared new codes of conduct of monks.

We seldom hear of Bhikkhuni order in Ceylon after the 10th century A.D. Owing to the sectarian differences, internal conflicts and wars, it was degenerating for some time and finally it ceased to exist. When it was in good order women were not only making tremendous progress but also were sending important missions abroad.

In the 5th century A.D. about 19 Ceylonese Bhikkhunis headed by Bhikkhuni Tissera or Devasara went to China on the invitation of the Chinese Government and established the Bhikkhuni order there. It is still flourishing in that country. Recently there has been a proposal to invite

Chinese Buddhist nuns and to re-establish the Bhikkhuni order in Ceylon. There is no doubt that if the Ministry of Cultural Affairs were to take the necessary interest in this matter it can be materialised without delay. It is one way to regain the lost glory of our country.

During the 2500th anniversary celebrations of Buddhism in Ceylon there were many proposals for the revival of religion. The sum total of all those proposals was that there should be a movement to show the true Buddhist Way of life. In this connection many people turned to Anuradhapura for inspiration, guidance and courage. But this alone won't serve the whole purpose.

What the people really lack is the proper understanding of the problems of life. They may be economic, political, social, cultural and religious. These problems stand in different ages and different circumstances in different ways. In the meantime life goes on changing incessantly. This is to be understood with the ups and downs of Buddhist life in Ceylon.

Undoubtedly there was a wonderful Buddhist life in Ceylon from the 3rd century B.C. to the 10th century A.D. It was evident not only in the outer culture but also in the inner culture of man. There were exemplary monks and laymen during Anuradhapura period. They stood for simple living and high thinking. They never favoured pompous living and outward show. Their manners were charming and ways were sensible. They were after big economic, social and cultural achievements. Their agricultural progress and administrative ability were marvellous.

Although there were many things as evidences of tremendous material and spiritual advancement during the

Polonnaruva period the true Buddhist spirit appeared to be losing its ground. The glamour and beauty of life were overpowered by vain hopes based on mediæval mythical beliefs.

This was due to the contact of Shaivite mysticism. The effect of it was very evident in the art, architecture and religious practices of Polonnaruva period. The aim of all those things seemed to be mystification of life. The South Indian artists who were brought to Ceylon during this period were full of mystic conception of life. That was why many things went non-Buddhistic.

Although this was contrary to the true ideals of Buddhism many people might have enjoyed it thoroughly. Definitely they were out to derive inspiration from this during the last eight hundred years.

In the middle of the 13th century A.D. Ceylon had a Buddhist ruler called Parakramabahu II at Dambadeniya who was a little believer of Vishnu. From that time onward the Buddhists in general went on visiting shrines of Gods and building innumerable Devalayas in the name of well known Hindu Gods as well as the local Gods.

During Kotte period there were two schools of Buddhist monks. The one that was headed by Elder Vidagama Maitreya did not favour the worship of Gods. They ridiculed it to some extent through their literature. But the other school headed by Elder Totagamuve Sri Rahula hailed the worship of Gods. Some scholars are of opinion that the former school was of Theravada origin and the latter had the Mahayanic influence. But it was never identified or classed with Mahayana.

It was in this period that Buddhism suffered a great set back due to the Western Imperialist invasions. During these invasions the monks were disorganised and the higher ordination was lost. But in the Kandyan period the Buddhists were able to re-establish the higher ordination. Towards the middle of the 18th century A.D. they went to Thailand and got some 20 monks for the purpose of re-establishing Higher Ordination in Ceylon.

The King of Ceylon who made it possible was a Hindu by birth and a Buddhist by adoption.

There were some four Hindu-Buddhist kings towards the end of Kandyan period. It was because of this the Hindu influence among Buddhists would have been unavoidable. The construction of the Buddhist shrine with a wing of the Hindu shrine was very frequent all over the country. During the 18th and 19th centuries hundreds of Hindu shrines sprang up specially in Kandyan areas. The peculiarity of this was that they were not recognised as Hindu shrines. They were freely called Buddhist Devalayas.

Now you and I and all of us know that the famous Kataragama Devalaya is predominantly a Hindu shrine. The Hindus might have been worshipping in it even before the arrival of the Buddhists. But a well known Buddhist king like Dutugemunu worshipped in it at the time of a war against some Hindu invaders. This means that both the Hindus and the Buddhists might have equally respected this shrine for a very long period. The king therefore might have thought of encouraging the Buddhists at the time of distress. Thus the worshipping of Kataragama shrine by the Buddhists has been no wonder. The common belief among the Hindus and the Buddhists is that Skandhakumara is a God of war.

Hence they are apt to invoke his blessings at the time of need and difficulty. They believe that He leads people to victory.

What all this means is that the Theravada Buddhists of Ceylon had been changing a lot due to a considerable amount of Hindu influence in different degrees during the last two thousand years. The force of it increased boundlessly after the Polonnaruva period. It was in that period that the Buddhists came in direct touch with Sanskrit literature. This was of course richer than Pali literature. Hence the people were benefited by it to a very great extent. They also could enrich Sinhalese literature with the help of it. It brought them nearer to Mahayana Buddhism, Ayurveda, Logic, various Hindu philosophies and many other subjects. Specially the dramas and novels were made popular because of Sanskrit.

In spite of all this Sanskrit was full of Hindu mythology. And it is the myth that the people imbibed most. They were influenced by the Hindu conception of mythical life.

Apart from this most of the fundamental teachings of Hindu philosophy based on the theory of Soul, Brahman or Paramatman were found in Sanskrit. According to those teachings any being is a part of that unchanging and ever lasting force. Here the Buddhist philosophy of Anatman or phenominality clashes with Hindu philosophy.

Buddhism teaches that every thing is in a state of flux. Things appear and re-appear because of assimilation and dissimilation of fundamental elements like earth, water, heat, air etc. Where there is any cause there is effect of it. Everything depends on conditions.

The man is nothing but a psycho-physical entity. He goes on changing like a stream. When he breaths in he

appears. When he breaths out he disappears. It is desire that makes him breath in and it is desirelessness that makes him breath out.

Although to some extent this has something in common with materialism, Buddhism is quite different from it. It is a philosophy of philosophies. It is so deep that many people are reluctant to reflect on it.

On the other hand the most common and ordinary trait of human nature is that it is desirous of leaning towards something. In that it is after help. Never mind whether it is real or unreal, true or untrue.

But an intelligent Buddhist never takes unreal to be real and untrue to be true.

In this connection the Buddha says in the Dhammapada: "They who imagine in the unreal the real and in the real the unreal, they who abide in the pasture-ground of wrong thoughts do not arrive at the real."

The way of a true Buddhist is to analyse facts. In that he is no believer but an analyst. He enjoys some boundless freedom of thinking. He has the liberty to criticise anything. He is no upholder of any 'ism' or faith or cult. He seeks after truth in order to find out anything and everything real.

There the things that are supposed to be permanent or everlasting are blasted.

Thus the Buddhist begins his investigation where the others end it. That is the main philosophical distinction of Buddhism.



Those who are not in a position to realise this go in the dark. They are like rudderless boats who have no definite direction to advance. That is why they cannot understand the real problems of life. A true Buddhist never leaves a stone untouched without understanding them thoroughly well. That had been the special characteristic of a Buddhist in ancient times. It is better if we realise it before starting anything constructive towards the advancement of Buddhism.

## BUDDHISM IN BURMA

IT is recorded in the Mahavamsa, the Pali Chronicle of Ceylon that the Third Buddhist Council was held at Asokarama, Patna, during the reign of the Emperor Asoka. The chief of this council was a far-sighted personality called the Elder Moggaliputta Tissa. With the assistance of the Emperor the great elder managed to send several missions to different parts of India and abroad. The Mahavamsa says that one of those missions was sent to Svarnabhumi or Burma. The heads of that mission were elders Shona and Uttara. They were well received by the masses and their services were recognised by the rulers of that country.

It is said that with the arrival of this important mission hundreds and thousands of men and women of Burma got ordained and began to practise Buddhism.

We are not quite sure whether the Burmese had any contact with Buddhism before this mission or before the third century B.C. There is, however, a story of two ancient merchants called Tapassu and Bhalluka who were said to have got some hair relics from the Buddha. These relics were enshrined in a Pagoda in Rangoon. Those who believe in this story tell us that the Burmese were in touch with Buddhism before the Third Buddhist Council.

There is no doubt that prior to this the people of Burma like the people of Ceylon were civilised enough to receive the Buddhist Missionaries with great joy and enthusiasm. Of course it was with the introduction of Buddhism that the Burmese came to the fore-front in religious affairs.

Burma is a country of glorious Buddhist History. In that long history she made many cultural contacts with

Ceylon. On more than one occasion she came to our assistance in our religious needs. For instance in the 11th century when Ceylon lost the higher ordination, the King Maha Vijayabahu sent a special mission to the King Anuruddha of Burma and got down a number of elders in order to establish the order in this country.

In the same way during the 15th Century A.D. when Burma lost the higher ordination, the King Dhammacetiya of Burma sent a mission to the King Buvanekabahu of Ceylon. How this mission was received by the Ceylonese king at the Kelani Raja Maha Vihara is well recorded in the historical works of Burma and Ceylon.

It is said that the Ceylonese king invited the newly ordained Burmese monks to his palace and gave certain Sinhala names in honour of them. In Burma the famous Kalyani Inscriptions gave all important details of this historical event.

Hereafter from the 19th Century A.D. onwards various Ceylonese monks and laymen sought the help of Burma for their religious needs. They went on getting higher ordination one after the other from Burma. They also contacted innumerable religious and cultural institutions of that country.

It is always a great pleasure for the Ceylonese Buddhists to visit Svetigun or Svcdagon Pagoda of Rangoon and the religious centre of Mandale. It is the same for the Burmese Buddhists who think of Svarnamali Dagaba of Anuradhapura and the Tooth Relic Temple of Kandy. They come here with large offerings.

In the year 1940, the Burmese Buddhists gifted a valuable gem to be fixed to the pinnacle of Svarnamali

Dagaba. In 1948 an important Buddhist Mission of Ceylon visited Burma with the relics of Sariputta and Moggallana. In 1950, Takin-Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma visited Ceylon, and he was given several valuable gifts including the Buddha Relics. With these kind gestures he was thoroughly pleased.

When he visited Anuradhapura, he said that he would remain at Mihintale for some time for meditation. This expression was nothing but an outcome of a deep impression. He also left Ceylon with such an understanding and goodwill that on returning to his country he made all arrangements to invite many Ceylonese Buddhists to Burma to participate at the well-known Chattha Sangayana and several other functions.

Thus it is crystal clear that the Burmese think that they should maintain the contact and friendship with other Buddhist countries through Buddhism.

There is no doubt that the Burmese as a nation are very religious and over 90% of their population are Buddhists. Among them nearly 100,000 are monks. Generally speaking they are the leaders of all laymen. Their strength lies in the villages.

The social, cultural and religious centre of a Burmese village is the temple or the monastery. The villagers assemble there on poya days. Even on other days they have no other attractive place to gather together. So all men, women and children come to the temple not only for religious ceremonies and duties but also for various recreations. More often than not some of these recreations are connected with religion. Take for instance a dance based on a Jataka story. It is

entirely social in outlook and religious in spirit. It is this socio-religious back-ground that creates an impression in the minds of village folk.

Apart from this the free social behaviour of the Burmese men and women seems to be based on the freedom of thinking in Buddhism. Even in Ceylon or in other Asian countries males and females do not mix so freely as they do in Burma. There the wife is the greatest friend of the husband. She enjoys all equal rights with the husband. In that she is a real partner. It is said that this way of life is highly respected by both men and women in Burma.

The Burmese laymen are generally indebted to monks in several ways. In their young age they are taught at the temples. Usually the boys and girls up to the age of ten attend the temple schools. There they learn reading, writing, language, arithmetic, religion etc., from the monks. After the age of ten the girls join other schools. But most of the boys remain at temple schools even after the age of ten. They also turn to be 'Kappiyas' or acolytes of monks. These boys are sure to be ordained and be monks at least for some time. Their ordination ceremony is called 'Shinbu' and many parents spend money lavishly over it.

The sole purpose of this ordination is to give a religious training to the young ones. The popular belief in the country is that those who undergo this custom would be very useful citizens. So even at the marriage market they are preferred by women of all classes.

Here it is to be understood that those who enter monastic life in childhood remain to be very faithful to the religion. There lies the secret of unity between the monks and the laymen.

During the 19th Century A.D. at the time of the British rule in Burma an attempt was made to separate the laymen from the monks. But it failed miserably owing to the age long social structure of Burma.

The Burmese are well known for building Pagodas and temples. They spend freely millions over them. One cannot imagine how much had been spent over the famous Svedagon Pagoda. It is covered with golden leaves. Its surroundings are full of beautiful buildings decorated by wonderful carvings. The marble works found at the Svedagon and other temples are worth many millions.

At Mandale there is a marvellous marble work. It is said that the Burmese King Mendun (1853—1878 A.D.) organised a grand Buddhist Council at Mandale in the 19th Century. About 1400 monks took part in that Council. The main task they undertook to do was to edit the Tripitaka with variant readings. When this tremendous task was complete the king got the entire Tripitaka inscribed on 729 marble plates. He also built separate sheds for the protection of those valuable plates.

In connection with the Buddha Jayanti or the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha, the Burmese Buddhists organised a large Buddhist Council called Chattha Sangayana. They started it on Vesak Full Moon day of 1954, and in two years they finished the variant reading and editing of the entire Tripitaka. Thereafter all the volumes of those scriptures were printed and published. At present they are editing the commentaries, sub-commentaries and other important non-canonical works. They also have made arrangements to translate all those works into English and Hindi.

It is for this purpose that the Buddha Sasana Council of Burma has erected a number of necessary buildings. Of

them the most important and striking is called Pashana Guha. It is modelled after the style of the famous Saptaparni Guha of Rajagriha, Bihar. Its structure is a mixture of ancient and modern architecture.

Round about this large assembly hall there are four big residential quarters which can accommodate not less than 200 monks. The other outstanding buildings that are found at this place are the world Peace Pagoda, the library, the hospital, the 'sima' or the hall in which the important Vinaya practices take place and the printing press. In order to construct all these buildings in this townlet the Government of Burma has spent an enormous sum of money. Apart from it several philanthropists and some foreign establishments have generously donated millions of rupees.

It appears that the Burmese Buddhists never get tired of spending money over religious activities. Some of them want to build temples in their own names by spending their own wealth. Their ambition is to acquire as much merit for themselves as possible. Those who are motivated in this manner guard their meritorious acts in such a way that others cannot participate in them easily.

## BUDDHISM IN THAILAND

THE Thais believe that the Buddhist Mission that was responsible for establishing Buddhism in Burma during the 3rd Century B.C. went from that country to Thailand in order to give their new message to the Thais. They were well received there and the Thais got the first impression of Buddhism from the elders Shona and Uttara. It is said that even the relics of these two monks were enshrined in a Pagoda at Nakhom Pambom in Southern Thailand.

There is another story which tells us that the Thais came in touch with Buddhism through Mahayana in the 1st Century B.C. It was during this period that the Mahayana doctrine was spreading rapidly in many parts of Asia. So it was quite possible that in those days Mahayana might have reached the land of Thailand. This means that the Thais had the opportunity to come in touch with the Theravada as well as the Mahayana in the interval of two hundred years.

As a Theravada country Thailand made much progress from the 13th Century A.D. onwards. It was during that century that the Thais made some contact with the Ceylonese Buddhists. They came to this country at the time of Parakramabahu II (1250-85 A.D.) and went on studying the Theravada doctrine from the Ceylonese monks. When these Thai monks went back to their own country they started a special monastery at the city called Nagor Sri Dhamraja. It is situated 500 miles away from the south of Bangkok. Most of the buildings of this temple were after Ceylonese style.

This shows how far they established their cultural connections and friendship with Ceylon. It was again during the Sukhodaya period that the relationship between Ceylon and Thailand was largely improved. The Sukhodaya King



Rama Kamhyam was thoroughly impressed by the Ceylonese monks. So he invited them for the propagation of Buddhism in Thailand. This was really a great recognition of the leadership of Ceylonese monks.

Most of the historians admit that after the Sukhodaya period the Theravada order of Thailand was organised after the Ceylonese fashion. There is another interesting evidence that goes to prove this statement.

During the 18th Century A.D. when Ceylon lost the higher ordination it was decided to get it back from Thailand. The reason for this decision was that the unbroken Ceylonese Buddhist tradition was found intact in Thailand. Hence the Ceylonese King Kirtisri Rajasingha (1747-80 A.D.) with the instructions of Ven. Velivita Sri Saranankara made arrangements to get it back from that country. The mission sent out for this purpose reached the capital of Thailand in 1750 A.D. There they were received very cordially by the King Dharmika or Boromakot. It is said that the Ceylonese Buddhists who went there felt quite at home. They also got twenty one monks headed by elder Upali for re-establishing higher ordination in Ceylon. We see the continuation of this order up to the present day in Kandy. This is the secret of religious affiliation between Ceylon and Thailand.

In Thailand the order of monks is very well organised. It is composed of two main divisions called Maha Nikaya and the Dhammayuttika Nikaya. Out of them the first sect has got the largest number of temples and monks. The second sect has got over one hundred temples and three to four thousand monks. And it is supported largely by the monarchy.

According to the latest statistics there are 19,150 temples in Thailand. In those temples there are over 162,000 monks. Out of them novices are over 68,000 and the others are of the higher ordination. All these monks study their mother tongue along with Pali language and Buddhism. Most of them sit for the examinations held in those languages and Buddhism.

The Thai monks have an established organisation of their own. Their chief is called the Sangharaja. He is appointed by the king. He has a cabinet of five monks. One of them is a chief and the others are the heads of different departments. There are the department of religion, the department of education, the department of propaganda and the department of general affairs. These departments have got members according to their needs. There is an advisory board of not less than 45 members to advise and decide all departmental issues and works.

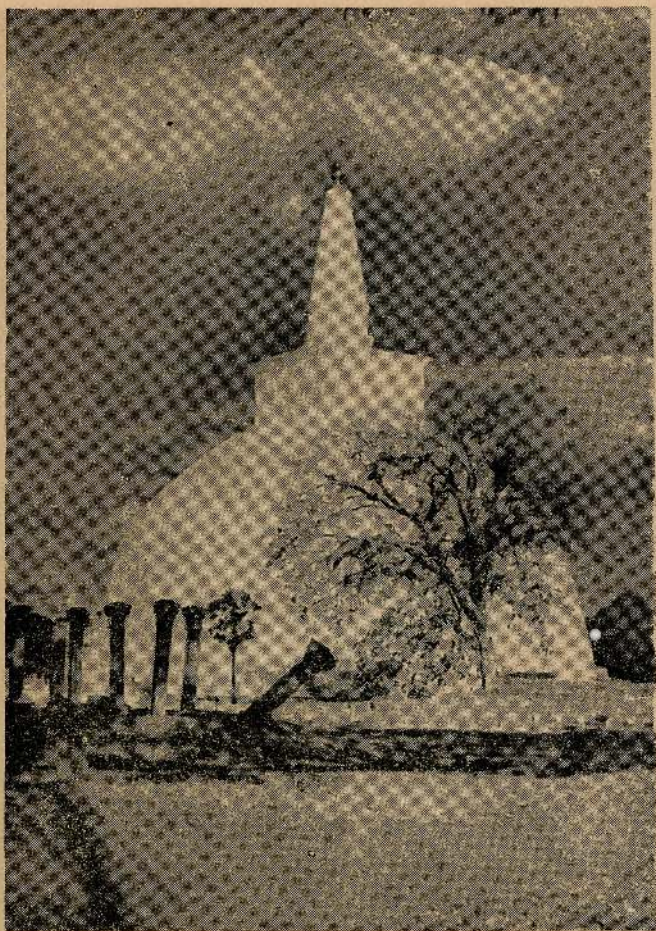
The money required by these departments for their activities is given by the government. In Thailand it is quite feasible because long ago the government had recognised Buddhism to be the state religion.

Although there is freedom of faith and worship in Thailand the head of the state must be a Buddhist. It is because of this convention the Royal members of Thailand and other lay chiefs do support Buddhism above all.

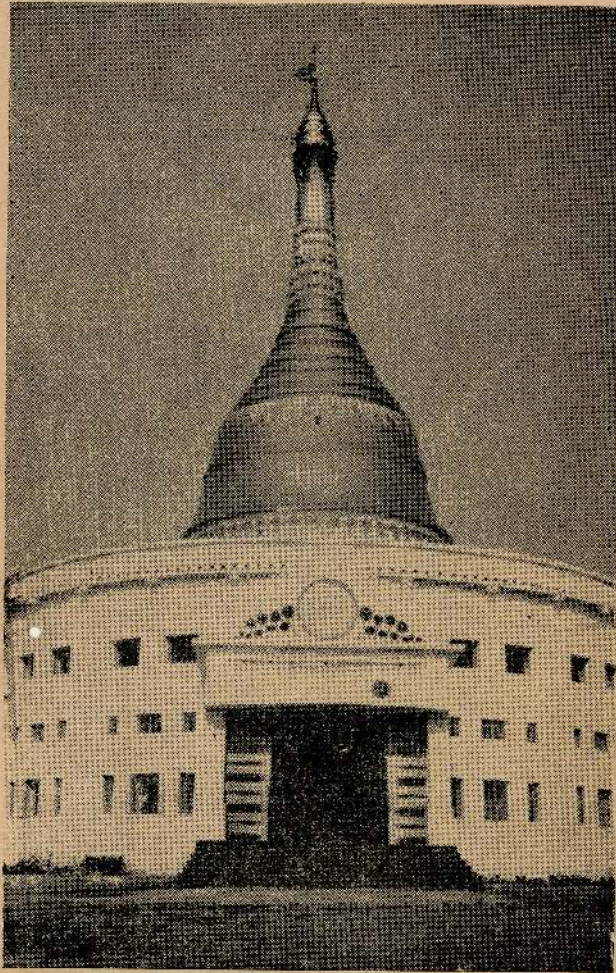
In Thailand most of the temples are looked after by the government. There the Sanghika or common property belonging to the entire Sangha is hardly owned by individuals. When the head of the temple is dead the next suitable monk is appointed by the government. Because of this practice there are very few disputes over temples. When a monk is



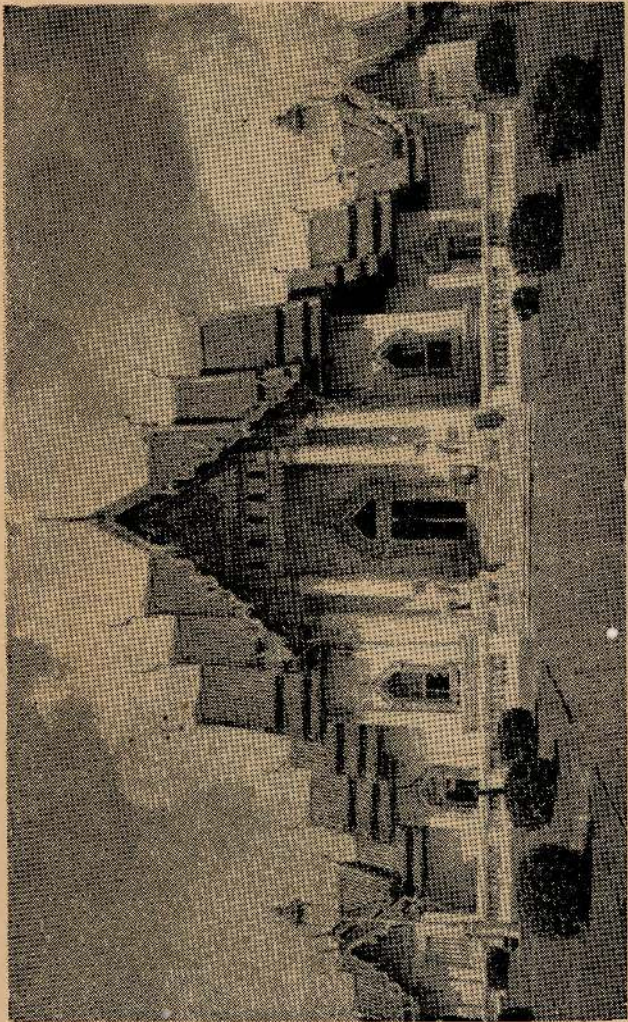
Prince Siddhartha, (learning music) India



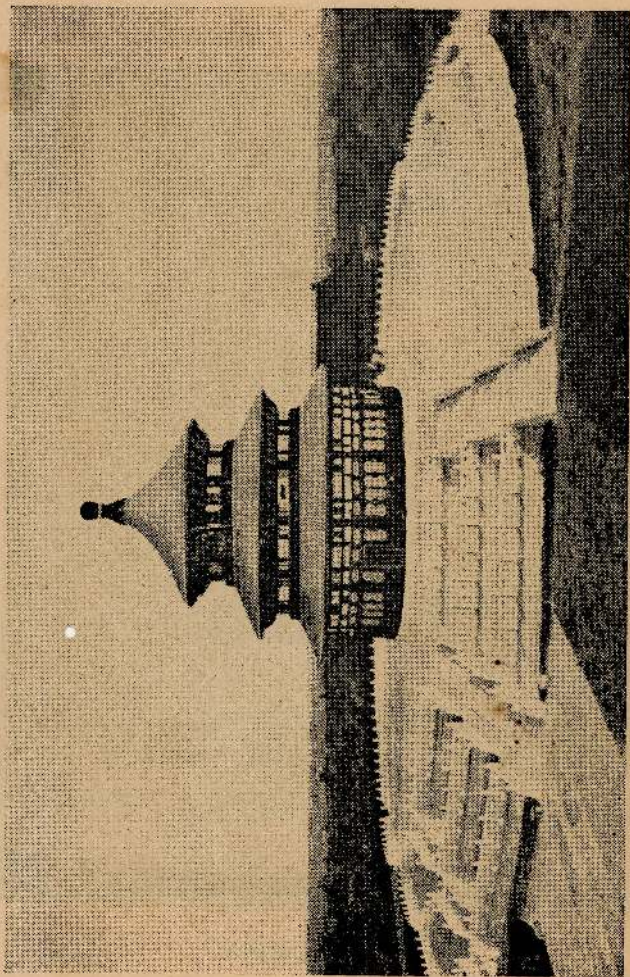
**Ratnamali Dagaba, Ceylon**



(‘Ka ba Aye’) World Peace Pagoda, Burma



A Marble Temple, Thailand



Temple of Heaven, China

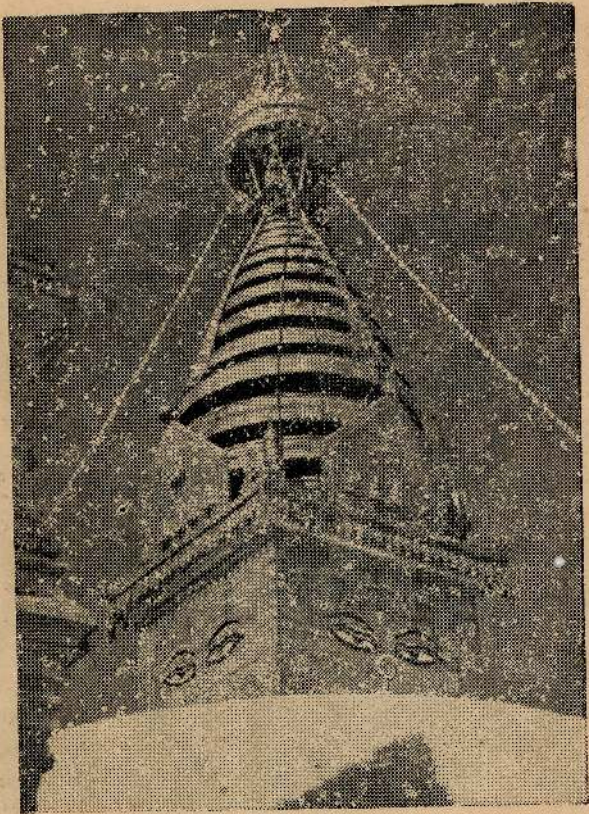


**Buddha Image, Japan**





A Lama (monk), Tibet



Swayambhu Dagaba, Nepal

involved in a layman's case his evidence is to be recorded at a temple and not at an open court. Hence the court is to go to the temple for this purpose.

In Thailand there is a special judicial system meant for monks. Their cases are heard in those ecclesiastical courts in front of Bhikkhu judges. Bhikkhus also appear as lawyers for those cases.

The Thai monks are either teachers or preachers. They have schools at all temples and religion is a compulsory subject in those institutions. It is because of this there are no Sunday schools in Thailand.

It is said that since the Sukhodaya period all laymen used to attend the temple schools. There they are given the best instructions of their religion. Those who belong to the ruling class are highly benefited by these teachings. In the opinion of the ordinary man when a king is taught Tripitaka he is sure to be a first class ruler. He also becomes much more qualified, when he enters the order of monks before the coronation. Hence in Thailand, a prince is never made a king unless and until he gets ordained and remains in the order at least for three months.

Even a man in the street respects this custom and enters the order and remains a monk for some time. He is taken to be a virtuous man even after he gives up robes. Specially women wish to marry such men. Their belief is that when a man gets ordained he becomes full of excellent qualities such as kindness, sincerity, straightforwardness, humbleness and so on.

In some Theravada countries including Ceylon this practice has been on the decline during the last 450 years. It

was due to the Western influence and alien faiths. But in Burma and Thailand the people were not so badly affected by those forces. They therefore could preserve their own traditions. In this case Thais were in a better position to maintain their customs and manners because of their national independence.

The Thais were very fond of Jataka stories. The Vessantara Jataka is read and heard by one and all. It is said that this was highly popularised during the reign of King Trailokanada (1350—1767 A.D.). He invited several writers and poets and requested them to rewrite the Vessantara Jataka in an elaborate way. That was how it became a household story.

The basic idea of popularising this story was to implant the idea of charity and selflessness in the minds of masses. The story tells us how a man can give up all what he possesses without any grudge. Vessantara gives away his entire movable and immovable property to the needy people and at last he offers his beloved wife and loving children to a very unpleasant man. The readers and listeners are deeply moved at this point.

The Vessantara Jataka is very prominently painted on the temple walls of Thailand.

Even in Ceylon this is one of the most attractive wall paintings in many temples. I think it is not out of point to imagine that it might have been another sign of Ceylonese influence in Thailand. There is one more interesting evidence to show the enormous Ceylonese influence in Thailand. It is nothing but the story of a Ceylonese monk called Pramali. He was supposed to be an Arahanta. Although this name is not known to Ceylonese Buddhists there is a similar name called Maliyadeva. He, too, was a famous Arahanta. There

is no doubt that this great monk might have visited Thailand in the latter part of the 13th century A.D. His story was written in Pali by a Thai monk who lived in the North of Thailand. During the Ayodya period this work had been translated into the Thai language by a Thai Prince called Sri Dharmadhibes. The sum total of this story is to teach the people the results of meritorious deeds and sinful deeds.

Here it must be mentioned that the Thais appeared to have selected their ideal man from Ceylon. In that they had done a great honour to this country. They knew that it was Ceylon that gave them the Buddhist scriptures. Had there not been an Alu Vihara in Ceylon they would have never got a Tripitaka. In the same way it was Ceylon that gave them the entire Pali commentaries of the Tripitaka.

Apart from this the Thais could improve their sculpture with the help of Ceylon. They had got the best sculptors from Ceylon and carved marvellous figures in wood, ivory, metal and stone. It is said that the most valuable statue, 'THE EMERALD BUDDHA' was carved after Ceylonese style.

What all this means is that the Thais had a very great cultural affinity with the Ceylonese for the last 800 years. They also well preserved what they possessed during that long period. That was largely due to their political freedom. In Ceylon we lost most of our valuable cultural treasures during the last 450 years.

We had to struggle against various odds. Hence the Thais were more fortunate than ourselves.

Thais are a race of simple people. Their simplicity is due to Buddhism. They think that the Buddhist way of life is the best and most excellent. It shuns all extremes and maintains moderation. Sense of proportion is its theme. So those who follow the doctrine of the Buddha are sure to be very sensible men. It is such sensible people who bring happiness to the entire mankind.

## BUDDHISM IN CHINA

**W**HILE commenting on the history of Buddhism in China an author of a short cultural history of that country says :—

“Buddhism is the only foreign element in the Chinese culture which has penetrated every class of society, maintained its hold over long centuries and become accepted as an essential part of the national civilisation”.

The foregoing statement shows how far Buddhism has succeeded in such a vast sub-continent like China. This was quite possible because of the liberal spirit and the policy of the Middle Way of Buddhism.

Wherever the Buddhist Missionaries went for the propagation of the Dhamma there they adopted a very conciliatory attitude towards men and women of the respective countries. In fact the Buddhists wished to win the hearts of the people through brotherhood and kind appeal. Hence they never attempted to impose their doctrine on anybody. This was the attitude of the Buddhists throughout their history.

When this highly agreeable quality of the Buddhists was known to the Emperor Han Ming Ti of China during the first century A.D. he sent an Embassy to the West or to India to bring Buddhism to his country. The Ambassador managed to get two great Mahayana monks called Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmaraksha or Dharmaranya along with many Sanskrit Buddhist texts and images. The Emperor was highly pleased with their arrival in China. He, therefore, built a special temple called the White Horse Monastery at Lo Yang. He also arranged the translation of Buddhist texts into the Chinese language.

Towards the middle of the 2nd century A.D. a great monk called Lokagra went to China for the propagation of Buddhism. He translated several important Buddhist texts into the Chinese language. With the result a large number of people began to study Buddhism. Some of them were so convinced of the new doctrine that they wished to become monks immediately. From the 3rd century A.D. the number of monks increased. In the beginning they did not have the particular institution called "Sima" for conducting higher ordination. In the year 250 A.D. this could be organised with the help of a monk called Dharmaraksha who went from India to China for this purpose. He established the first "Sima" for conducting all important activities of Vinaya at the White Horse Monastery.

This was, however, meant for the higher ordination of men. So women had no way of getting into the same order till the beginning of the 5th century A.D. It was in the first quarter of the 5th century that a band of nuns headed by Bhikkhuni Tessera or Devasara went from Ceylon to China and established the Bhikkhuni order there. It is gratifying to note that this order of nuns is still in existence in that country.

The story of Chinese Buddhism is incomplete without reference to the adventurous traveller and pilgrim called Fa Hsien who came to India and Ceylon early in the 5th century A.D. It took nearly 15 years for him to complete his travels.

Fa Hsien comes from a very poor family. Although he had three brothers all of them died when he was still a child. This was really a great shock to his father. So he thought that even Fa Hsien might die unless he was made a monk. This was how Fa Hsien had to enter the order of monks. But after the ordination his father died and there was nobody

to look after the mother. Therefore there was a suggestion that he should disrobe and take care of the mother. Fa Hsien however did not agree to give up robes. His sole intention was to devote his time and energy for the sake of Buddhism.

Fa Hsien came in contact with a famous Indian scholar called Kumarajiva. It is said at the end of the 4th century A.D. he was taken to China as a prisoner. But later he was made a Chinese citizen. Fa Hsien got the opportunity to study Buddhism from this great person. He also got all necessary information and instructions for his travels abroad from Kumarajiva.

Fa Hsien left Chang An in 399 A.D. and reached India in the same year via Central Asia and Afghanistan. In India he made further studies of Buddhism for several years. While studying there he collected a number of Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist texts. And with all these works he came to Ceylon via Bengal.

Here in this country he went on studying the Theravada for two years. After finishing his studies in Ceylon he collected many Pali books and relics and left for China by sea. When he reached his country he made Nanking the main centre of his activities and began to translate all books he had taken with him into the Chinese language.

There were several other monks who were very enthusiastic in organising Buddhists in China from the 4th to the 6th century. One of the most courageous of these popular monks was Taon. He was an eloquent speaker and leader. He was responsible for organising the Sakya or 'Siha' community of monks. The first Chinese Buddhist catalogue is one of his works. It is said that he had encouraged many scholars to write books on Buddhism.



The other great Buddhist monk who conquered the hearts of millions of Chinese was Bodhidharma. He left South India for China in 520 A.D. as a Buddhist propagandist. He was highly honoured by the Emperor Wu. Hence he could achieve tremendous success in his mission.

There was another well known monk called Gunavarma. Once he was a Crown Prince in Kashmir. There he gave up his princely comforts and left for Java in 423 A.D. and propagated Buddhism very successfully. It was this grand success that made him go to China for further Buddhist activities.

Sometimes there was some opposition to the Buddhist Missionaries here and there in China. This was not only due to the denial of God but also due to the non-existence of prayers, injunctions and offerings in early Buddhism. In spite of this the Missionaries carefully avoided all clashes with the natives. Very often than not they used to respect native deities. In that the Buddhists used to mix with others freely. In fact they never prohibited free association, inter-marriage etc., because of religious differences whereas other religionists did it in order to safeguard the interests of their own communities.

Because of this liberal Buddhist policy the people who embraced Buddhism newly got some impression that they could practise it along with the other cults. Hence in different countries we see different Buddhists respecting various cults while believing in Buddhism.

In this respect the Chinese Buddhists are a unique class by themselves. Most of them practise Buddhism in their own way. That was how they wanted to do it from very early days. Otherwise some of their Kings would have never

supported the Buddhist movement in China. Specially the Sui and T'ang dynasties were eager to support Buddhism because of its liberal outlook and the policy of the Middle Way.

It was during the periods of these dynasties or in between the 7th and the 9th centuries, thousands of Sanskrit Buddhist books including the whole of Tripitaka were translated into the Chinese language.

It was at this time that the Chinese Buddhists were divided into eight sects called Vinaya, Madyamika, Dharmalakshana, Padma, Hva Yen, Dhyana, Sukhavati and Tantrayana or Vajrayana. Along with these sects there also were two Theravada sects in China. Most of these sects followed strict rules of discipline.

The famous Chinese Buddhist traveller Hiuen Tsiang who came to India in 629 A.D. in search of Buddhist books also was a thorough disciplinarian. It is said that he was to have visited Ceylon during his travels but owing to some internal conflicts already existing in this country, he had abandoned it and returned back to China. He also took some large number of books and images from India. He himself translated most of those works into the Chinese language.

Thus the Chinese Buddhist literature was getting enriched from century to century till the 12th century A.D. After that time i.e., during the dynasties of Yuan, Ming and Ch'in almost all Buddhist literary activities in China were on the decline.

It is said that the main reason for this lamentable situation was the general negligence of cultural activities. The kings were after luxuries. They did not care for any

greater or higher life based on deep philosophical teachings. During this time the Chinese Buddhists also were losing contact with India. There the Indian Buddhists were also facing the beginning of the downfall of Buddhism in their country. This meant that the Buddhists of both these countries suffered a big set back simultaneously.

It was only at the beginning of this century that the Chinese Buddhists were re-awakening. In that they got some sufficient encouragement for their activities after the establishment of the Chinese Republic with Dr. Sun Yat-sen at its head. Under his regime several prominent Buddhists started a successful Buddhist movement. This had been well continued for the last four decades. In 1952 the famous Chinese Buddhist Association was established under the patronage of the People's Republic of New China.

This Association is responsible for establishing the Chinese Buddhist Academy. The Association also has invited many foreign Buddhists to China during the last six years. It has represented Chinese Buddhism at various International Conferences all over Asia and some other parts of the world.

Today there are over 500,000 monks and nuns and 100,000,000 followers of Buddhism in China. The monks and nuns reside either in private temples or in Sanghika or common temples. The private temples are managed according to the system of pupillary succession. But the common temples are managed in a different way. There the heads of the temples are elected or selected by the chief monks. The term of office of such monks is limited to three years. Apart from this they also cannot recruit permanent pupils. The usual practice of the Chinese monks and nuns is meditation.

But there are many monks who are accustomed to various kinds of manual labour. They eat at night whereas those who do not work refrain from eating after mid-day.

There are several varieties of monasteries in China. Most of them follow the age long traditions. They think that it is of no use to study books in order to understand the doctrine. They take up to devotional methods by way of worship of images, relics etc.

Those who have faith in education do teach religion and train their followers how to teach with the help of commentaries and sub-commentaries.

Those who have a great regard for Buddhist discipline train their followers how to observe strict discipline and to keep up the best ethical conduct.

Those who believe that the Buddha is still living and enjoying the eternal bliss in a celestial plane recite certain injunctions such as 'Namō Amitabhaya' in order to be born in that ever lasting heaven.

Those who advocate preaching are trained for that with the help of musical instruments. They think that it is the best and the most successful method of propagating Buddhism.

Although the Buddhists belonging to the above sects are one sixth of the entire population of China, there are several millions of non-Buddhists who are influenced by Buddhism. This was a statement made by Chou En-Lai, the present Premier of the People's Republic of New China when he was questioned by me during his visit to Ceylon in 1957.

## BUDDHISM IN KOREA AND JAPAN

IT is admitted that China was responsible for introducing Buddhism to Korea. This took place during the 4th century A.D.

The first Buddhist missionaries who reached Korea went there in 372 A.D. At that time the country was divided into three parts called Simlo, Ko and Piki. It was the king of Simlo who first embraced Buddhism along with his subjects. He made Buddhism the state religion in his presidency. In a short time the other two parts of the country followed the lead given by Simlo and thereby the entire country turned to be Buddhist. The immediate effect of this movement was unification of Korea.

The Korean Buddhists went to China for further studies of Buddhism. They got their culture enriched with the help of Buddhist literature, painting, sculpture etc., and had a golden period of their own Buddhism between the 10th and the 14th centuries A.D. But after this i.e., with the coming of Confucianism, Buddhism began to decline in Korea.

Before this i.e., during the middle of the 6th century A.D. a Korean Buddhist delegation was sent to Japan. It was at this time that there were some conflicts between Korea and Japan. Hence there was a feeling among Koreans that they should make peace with the Japanese through Buddhism.

On the other hand Japan too was very willing to have a new religion like Buddhism. She knew that it was an easy passage to get the contact of Chinese culture. In spite of all this there was a considerable opposition to Buddhism from the followers of Japanese Shintoism. They knew that

Buddhism was a religion that would stand against their ancestral worship. The Japanese Emperor of the time, however, did not care for this opposition. So he was pleased to discuss on Buddhism with the Korean delegation. Thereupon the Premier of Japan declared that the new religion should be accepted without any condition. With the full consent of the Emperor he also arranged at his own home the ceremonial worship of the Buddha images and other Buddhist relics.

Right at this time an unfortunate fire caused a terrible famine in Japan. The Premier suspected that the new faith might be the cause of this calamity. Hence he burnt the Buddhist books and threw away the images into a river. Still the famine continued. So he changed his mind and ordered to take the images from the river again. This time the famine disappeared and the people began to believe that it was undoubtedly due to the miraculous power of the new religion. In fact it was this belief that made the position of Buddhism stronger in Japan.

The most glorious period of Buddhism in that country begins with the famous Crown Prince called Shōtoku or Umayado (593—621 A.D.) This learned man was a grand son of the Japanese Emperor of the time. He studied Buddhism very thoroughly and told his country men that it was an excellent doctrine. Although many theists were in opposition to this new move the Prince was not perturbed by them.

He started a big movement to build temples and to organise Buddhist activities including the writing of some commentaries to the Tripitaka. The Prince himself compiled a valuable book of social laws and ethical conduct based on Buddhist teachings. It is said that this work was the background of the mediaeval constitution of Japan.

Prince Shotoku was supposed to be the Asoka of Japan. He was really on the foot-path of Asoka. Apart from constructing Buddhist temples, he went on to build hundreds of hospitals, orphanages, rest houses, industrial centres, roads, wells, gardens and so on. He made all arrangements for the Japanese Buddhists to go to China and learn the arts and crafts, architecture, sculpture, painting etc. This was a very sure way of improving cultural connection and friendship between the two countries. The Japanese people realised this very quickly. So most of them began to respect Buddhism.

At present the Japanese Buddhism is known as the Eastern Buddhism. It is merely to differentiate the Northern Buddhism of Tibet. But in all these countries various forms of Mahayana are found by several conventional names. All of them have the same customs, manners, ideals and ethics.

In Japan there are a number of different Buddhist sects. But the most important six of them all are called Tendai, Shingon, Zen, Nichiren, Jodo and Shin. Out of these six sects the first four are recognised to be Jirikists. The other two are Tarikists.

The main instructions given by the Jirikists are based on,

“Tumhehi kiccam ātappam  
Akkhātāro Tathāgatā;  
Patipannā Pamokkhanti  
Jhāyino Mārabandhanā”.

That is “You yourselves must strive. The Buddhas are only teachers. The meditative ones who enter the Path are released from the bondage of Māra (death)”.

Those who follow this teaching try to cultivate many prerequisite (Bodhisatta) qualities and thereby hope to attain Buddhahood. The Tarikists depend on the good words and deeds of others. They hope to get salvation through external sources.



Here it is to be mentioned that sometime ago there were two Theravada sects called 'Kusa' and 'Ritsu' in Japan. But they were never popular in that country. It is said that owing to some materialistic conception of life and orthodox customs, manners and observations, the Japanese do not favour the Theravada form of Buddhism.

In Japan almost all Buddhist sects are very active. Most of the monks belonging to different sects are social workers. They serve the society by various ways. Some of them are teachers. They organise their monasteries as first class schools. Boys and girls of the country receive their complete education at these institutions.

Here it must be mentioned that some Japanese Buddhist monasteries have succeeded in establishing a number of national universities at their premises. The peculiarity of these universities is that they maintain a high scholarly tradition. The students who pass out from these institutions are able to contribute to the general cultural advancement of the country. They produce innumerable important works.

The Japanese as a nation are very fond of reading. Those who come out of the universities supply sufficient books, magazines, etc. in order to fulfil the national demands. The Government of Japan spends much money over these publications. Hence even an ordinary labourer can buy a book at a cheap rate.

Moreover the practice of the Japanese Imperial Government for the last 70 to 80 years was to send selected students to different countries in order to study different subjects. It was these persons who have contributed largely for the development of Japanese language and literature. So it is no wonder that such a people could enrich their religious literature in the best possible way.



As far as ordinary religious practices and ceremonies are concerned the Japanese cannot be surpassed by other Mahayana or Vajrayana sections. Their religious ceremonies are very simple and charming. They have well decorated altars for offering flowers and incense. At the time of offerings the people gather together in a very orderly way. There are leading monks or lay ministers to officiate all ceremonies. They are like the best commanders. Their orders are well followed by the congregation. The devotees are accustomed to have the best musical performances and devotional songs at their important ceremonies.

In Japan the Zen Buddhists are of a special variety. They are very fond of meditation. They believe that it is not through books or ceremonies but through meditation that one can realise Buddhism. In Japan this community is highly venerated by almost all Buddhists and non-Buddhists. They also command a very great respect because of their way of discipline and calm behaviour.

There are certain Buddhists in Japan who do not believe in the worship of many Buddhas or Bodhisattas. They pay their due respect to one great personage called the Buddha. But He is not necessarily the very same historical figure called Gotama. He is a bit different from him.

Earlier I have mentioned that there are some Buddhists in China who believe in 'Amitabha'. In order to get salvation through Him they recite His name as many times as possible in a day. The Prototypes of these Buddhists are found in Japan. Very often they recite the words 'Namu Amida Butsu'. By this practice they think that they can improve the faculty of devotion and with the meritorious results they acquire from this they expect to be born in a heavenly plane after death.

## BUDDHISM IN TIBET

**B**UDDHISM spread over all Asian planes in about ten or eleven centuries after the passing away of the Buddha. But it took a little more time to reach Tibet, the highest mountainous country of Asia, situated 17,000 feet above mean sea level. It is a snow-capped hidden region with a population of about 4,000,000. Although it is adjacent to Nepal, the land of the birth of the Buddha the Tibetans were not in a position to receive the blessings of Buddhism until the 7th century A.D. It was during that century that the king of Tibet, Sron Tsan Gampo brought Buddhism to his kingdom.

The story current among the Tibetans is that the King Gampo came to know of Buddhism after his marriage with a daughter of a Chinese Buddhist Emperor. It is said that he also married another Nepali Buddhist Princess called Dhrukuti. Her father, Amsuvarman was King of Nepal. Thus it appears that there were two Buddhist queens to assist the king in bringing Buddhism to Tibet.

Even today the Tibetans regard the Chinese queen as the 'White Star' and the Nepali queen as the 'Blue Star'. Both these stars are famous for their mercy.

There is no doubt that the Tibetan king might have got much inspiration through this Chinese queen. By that time, i.e., by the 7th century A.D. China was making tremendous progress in Buddhism. She invited several Indian Buddhist scholars who could assist the Chinese scholars in their translations of Buddhist texts into the Chinese language. All these works were available to the King Gampo since the time he made contact with Chira.

The Tibetan Buddhists also had the chance of getting some well known Indian Buddhist scholars from the 8th century onward. In fact these scholars were forced to go to Tibet owing to the Muslim invasion of Northern India. Those who went there under such circumstances had to make Tibet their permanent home. Along with it it was essential for them to learn the language of the land. When they achieved mastery over it, they went on translating specially the Sanskrit Buddhist texts into it. Even today these works are well preserved in Tibet.

Before the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet, there was a wide spread cult called 'Bon'. The believers of this cult were known as Bonpas. They were found throughout the country.

The peculiarity of Bon cult is that it is based on the faith of spirits such as ghosts, goblins; devils, demons, sprites etc. The believers of these spirits pray in their names in order to invoke their blessings.

The Buddhists who had to migrate to Tibet by force were not in a position to criticise the mythical beliefs of the Bonpas. In fact they wanted to avoid all antagonism arising out of any belief. Their aim was to live with the Bonpas amicably. Apart from those migrated Buddhists there were some others who were invited to Tibet for the propagation of the Dhamma. They, too, adopted somewhat a liberal policy towards the Bon cult and lived with the Bonpas peacefully. With the result the Tibetans got ample liberty to mix Buddhism with the Bon cult.

Strictly speaking, it is this mixture what we call the Vajrayana form of Buddhism. When we go deeper we find that it is based on Tantric system. It is "a religious treatise

teaching magical and mystical formularies for the worship of the deities or the attainment of superhuman power".

Those who follow this system are accustomed to various observances, ceremonies and rites. In Tibet it is very difficult to differentiate these practices from those of the Bon cult. For example, a funeral ceremony in Tibet is mixed with Bon cult and Buddhism.

The Tibetans believe that a house of a deceased is an abode of hordes of spirits. They, therefore, perform several rites in order to please those spirits. When a man dies the first thing to do is to invite an astrologer. It is this man who decides the date and time of removing the dead body from the house. Whenever there is no immediate auspicious time for the removal of the corpse it may be kept at home for any number of days. There is a record of keeping of a dead body for forty nine days.

So long as the dead body is at home the entire family and other relations and friends go on mourning. In the meantime the Lamas or the priests are invited to perform religious duties and services. Their main duty is to drive away the spirits by chanting Buddhist sutras and Bon Mantras. Even after the cremation the priests continue to perform certain services in order to prevent the spirits from getting into the house.

Most of these practices are found not only in Tibet but also in Mongolia, Manchuria, Central Asia, Ladak, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan etc. Even in Russia on the Volga there are some Vajrayana Buddhists who follow the religious observances of Tibet.

The peculiarity of Tibetan Buddhists is that they believe in the reincarnation of soul. Originally this was a belief

prevalent among the Hindus. Undoubtedly the Tibetans might have borrowed it from them. This serves somewhat a useful religious and political purpose in Tibet. There the Buddhists wish to maintain the unity and solidarity of the people. And for this it is very essential to have a supreme head of the entire nation. They have got him in the person of the Dalai Lama — “the priest vast as ocean”. He is the most powerful religious and political head of the country. His supreme position is well recognised even by the foreigners.

There is another superior personality called the Tashi Lama in Tibet. In a sense his spiritual position is higher than that of the Dalai Lama. He is said to be the reincarnation of Amitabha, the boundless light, the father of Avalokita. This great personage, however, appears to be in the rear because of lack of political power.

The Dalai Lama is the reincarnation of Avalokita, the Bodhisatta of mercy, who sits in a celestial plane. He has no time to come personally to earth. He, therefore, is incarnated in the human being called the Dalai Lama in order to assist all men and women to find their path of salvation.

It is believed that just after the death of the Dalai Lama, his soul reincarnates into a newly born infant in the country. Here it should be noted that this baby is always born in a rich family. He is searched for in a careful way.

First of all it is investigated whether the baby is born under certain miraculous circumstances. Next to this some relics of the deceased Dalai Lama are shown to the baby and he is presumed to be able to recognise them instinctively.

When there are several babies who are able to do this the selection is made through lots. Thereafter the baby is

adopted in a monastery. There the mother is allowed to attend to him for some years until he attains matured state of boyhood. The father of the baby is given the title "King" and he is highly respected by the public.

From the very childhood the Dalai Lama is treated as a living Buddha. He is so sacred that even his hair, parings of his finger and toenails, urine and excrement are considered as relics by the people. The articles used by him are bought at high prices at the market. He is saluted with "Om Mani Padme Hum", i.e. "Hail! Jewel of the lotus flower, Hail".

The Dalai Lama lives at a large palace called Potala in Lha-sa, 'the place of Bodhisattas or Gods'. This is the capital of Tibet. It is supposed to be so sacred "that no life can be taken within its precincts: the shambles of the butchers are situated outside the city limits".

Tibet is a country of Lamas. There are thousands of them in all cities and provinces. They are celibate and clean shaved. They wear long robes or special vestments. Their temples are well built and decorated with beautiful paintings. Their main job is to perform various religious duties and services. Apart from these religious practices some of these Lamas are used to manual labour. They earn their living by cultivating lands or by various other means.

The Tibetan Lamas are very famous for devil-dancing. There are certain monasteries where the Lamas are trained for dancing and music. Large numbers of spectators assemble to see their performances. They appear in the shape of terrifying devils, monsters and demons. The best dancers in the world are of opinion that the dancing of these Lamas is very realistic. It is therefore mentioned in the curriculum of some Indian Universities.

Here the most of our Buddhists may argue whether it is proper for such shavan headed spiritual leaders like Lamas to dance. But before this enquiry, they ought to know that these Lamas come from Bonpas, the pre-Buddhist primitive people of Tibet. The dancing was one of the most magnificent indigenous arts that they ever possessed. And as the inhabitants of Tibet the Lamas had the right to preserve it. They improved it in their own way. Today they "blow long horns and conch shells, play flutes, thump drums and cymbals".

In this respect the Lamas appear to be poles apart from the Theravada monks. With some of their peculiar practices they also do not go together with many Mahayana monks. But so far as the Bodhisatta ideal is concerned, the Vajrayanists and the Mahayanists maintain a long standing fellowship.

There are galaxies of Bodhisattas in different Mahayana and Vajrayana lands. Some of them are idealised or personified figures and others are historical men.

In Tibet there are numberless Bodhisattas who are highly venerated by one and all. One of the most well known of them all is Avalokita or Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisatta of mercy. He is supposed to be an emanation from Amitabha, the Buddha personified. His wife is Tara, the star of mercy. Both of them are ever ready to wipe out the miseries and sorrows of countless men and women.

Vajrapani or the Bodhisatta of thunderbolt is another popular figure in Tibet. He holds a 'dorge' or a thunderbolt in his hand. It is said that with this all powerful weapon he drives away all evil spirits and save human beings. The story of this weapon is that it "came flying through the air

from India" and is preserved upto the present day at the Sera Monastery of Lha-sa. This is treated as the most sacred relic of Tibet. It is taken in annual procession to the Dalai Lama for veneration.

Here it is not out of point to mention that there is a reference to a devil called Vajirapani in the Ambattha Sutta of the Digha Nikaya and the Cula Saccaka Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya. It is said that he came through the air in order to frighten Ambattha and Saccaka and to safeguard the position of the Buddha. It appears that there is a great similarity between the Bodhisatta and the devil. Both of them have the same name and same weapon. They also stand to serve the same purpose.

Among the many Bodhisattas in Tibet there is one called Manjusri symbolising wisdom. He is more or less like Indian Ganesh or Greek Janus. Sometimes he resembles Sarasvati, the Goddess of learning. It is believed that he can untie all knots or solve all problems. He is so popular in Tibet that his images are found at every nook and corner of the country.

The Tibetans worship another Bodhisatta called Maitreya. He is the hope of future. He resembles the Indian 'Kalki'. The Hindus possess an age long belief that God incarnates in the form and name of Kalki in order to destroy evils of society and to uphold all good. The simple meaning of the word Kalki is 'tomorrow' or 'The last incarnation of Vishnu which is yet to come! That shows that it is based on a future hope. The common Buddhist conception of Maitreya Bodhisatta is exactly the same as Kalki.

As far as Tibet was concerned it was this Bodhisatta ideal that made the basis of many religious activities. It is



admitted that the Bodhisattas are the best and the greatest saints. In course of time they would attain Buddhahood. This is achieved through many good qualities such as perseverance, morality, tolerance, universal love, equanimity, wisdom and so on. The Bodhisattas or the aspirants of Buddhahood are full of these qualities. Hence the ordinary Buddhists pay their due regards to them. They also try to cultivate those qualities as far as possible.

This is one of the main reasons why they love learning. They know that it is the best medium to acquire wisdom. From a very long time it was Buddhism that bestowed on them the best of knowledge. So they went on studying it with a great zeal. As I stated earlier they also got the acquaintance of first class Indian and Chinese scholars who could enrich their knowledge by way of translating valuable Buddhist books into the Tibetan language. The Tibetans treat these works as very sacred.

Painting, too, is a great source of knowledge in Tibet. In the Tibetan Gumphas or temples, there are various instructive paintings. Almost all of them are based on Buddhist teachings, historical incidents and fine stories. Take, for example, a painting that depicts the interconnection of lust, anger and delusion.

In this picture there is a serpent on a pig, and a pigeon on a serpent. The tales of the serpent and the pigeon are in the mouth of the pig. Here the painter's attempt is to show how far delusion overpowers lust and anger. In other words, a lustful man as well as an angry man may be finished at any time because of delusion. Again the lustful man should know that he stands on anger and delusion. In the same way the angry man rests on delusion. Hence it is to be realised that the roots of all these sins are inter-woven.

Those who observe a painting like this get a better understanding of certain teachings of the Dhamma. The Tibetans therefore decorate their temples with such interesting pictures. They also paint on their temple walls the pictures of saints, great scholars and social and religious workers. These are very useful to those who are less educated. Specially the children are highly benefited by them.

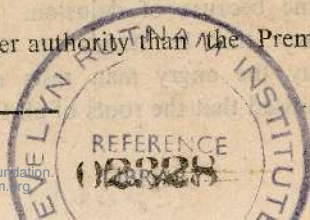
With the foregoing details it is to be understood that the Tibetan way of life is organised on both the Bon cult and Buddhism. But it should be admitted that the place of Buddhism in Tibet is predominant. It gives much light to eliminate the forces of darkness.

Since some years another new light has dawned in Tibet. That came from New China. This is nothing but the light of Socialism. It may take some time for the Tibetans to grasp its full meaning. And still more time may be taken to get used to it. The reason is the isolated situation of the country for several centuries. During her long history she seldom got the opportunity to study the other systems of life.

I remember a little discussion that took place between Sri Nehru, the Indian Premier and Chou En-Lai, the Chinese Premier just after the Federation of Tibet with the People's Republic of New China.

Sri Nehru asked Chou En-Lai whether the Tibetans have become Socialists by that time. Chou En-Lai replied: "My dear friend, you lack either a clear cut knowledge of the Tibetans or a full understanding of Socialism. Take it from me, it may take a long time for the Tibetans to come to line with Socialism.

I suppose there is no greater authority than the Premier of New China on this subject.



## BUDDHISM IN NEPAL

NEPAL is a Himalayan region situated in between India and Tibet. It is well known as the land of the birth of the Buddha. Even before the Buddha, there were several great sages including Nemuni and Kapila. The latter was supposed to be the author of famous philosophical system called Samkhya. In that there are some points that are very similar to Buddhism.

There is no doubt that there would have been many Buddhists in Nepal at the life time of the Buddha. Specially the people of Sakya clan had every reason to make Buddhism their own religion. Even to this day they are the traditional followers of Buddhism. Most of them take to the robes at least for a week. During that short time they go for alms and abstain from eating meat etc. Those who do not follow these customs are not recognised as real Sakyans. They also experience various difficulties at the time of marriage if they fail to observe those traditional Buddhist customs. At present these Sakyans are known as Nevaris.

The Nevaris were a very great Buddhist community in Nepal at the time of Emperor Asoka (277—236B.C.) The Emperor made a historic visit to that country in 239 B.C. with his daughter Carumati and gave her away in marriage to a Nevari chief called Devapala. Apart from this he also built five Buddhist monasteries in that country and did many other things for the upliftment of Buddhists. Even today one of those monasteries built in his honour can be seen at Asokapatan. There exists another temple which was built in honour of his daughter.

There are many historical Asokan pillars including the famous pillar of Lumbini which proves Asoka's visit to

Nepal. The words, "hi da bu dhe jā te Lum mi ni gā me" — "Here was born the Buddha in the village of Lumbini" are found inscribed on the pillar erected at Lumbini.

Carumati, the daughter of Asoka was such a pious woman that later on she entered the Bhikkhuni order and dedicated her whole life for the sake of Buddhism.

With the results of these grand Buddhist activities, Nepal had a golden period of Buddhism from the 3rd century B.C. to the 11th century A.D. I mentioned earlier that Nepal also was responsible to some extent for establishing Buddhism in Tibet during the 7th century A.D. From that period onward those who left India out of fear of Muslim invasion went on getting shelter in Nepal before entering Tibet.

During the 17th century A.D. there was a Nepali King called Yakshmal who had three sons. He divided the country into three parts and gave them away to his sons. By this act the position of the country became very weak. In 1775 A.D. a Gurkha King called Prithvi Narayan seeing this opportunity attacked the country very easily. He being a staunch Hindu did not like Buddhism at all. He used all his might to crush the Buddhists. In that he succeeded because of the encouragement given by the caste ridden Brahmins.

Even today out of the 9,000,000 people of Nepal, there are over 5,000,000 Buddhists. But they cannot be easily identified. They follow numerous primitive customs of various hilly tribes. So they have their own peculiar ways of Buddhism.

During the last 150 years as a community they went from bad to worse. Very often they were looked down upon with contempt by the rulers. Since some years due to the good offices of some world Buddhists, including the Ceylonese Buddhists, the King of Nepal has consented to help his own Buddhist subjects. They also got a considerable assistance from him in 1956 when they had a World Buddhist Conference in Nepal.



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