

Tipiṭaka meṃ Samyak Saṃbuddha (Part One)

by Satya Narayan Goenka,
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It would not be an exaggeration to say that no other Indian religious figure has received greater attention in the modern world than Siddhartha Gautama, known simply as the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism in the fifth century B.C. In the last hundred years, scores of books dealing with his life and teachings have appeared. In 1885 the great poet Edwin Arnold introduced the Buddha to the Western world as *The Light of Asia*. With the publication of the Buddhist texts from Sri Lanka, called *Tipiṭaka* in the Pāli language, by the Pali Text Society of London, the academic world began a serious study of this ancient Indian religion. Henry Warren's *Buddhism in Translations*, published in 1922, contained selections from the vast material of this *Tipiṭaka*. In 1948 the great art historian Coomaraswamy and the Pāli scholar Miss Horner produced *The Living Thoughts of Gautama the Buddha*. In recent times, in 1978 Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli compiled a biography called *The Life of the Buddha*, based on the Pāli canon, in which the Buddha's own disciples act as narrators. Most recently Michael Carrithers has published *The Buddha* in the Past Masters Series in 1983.

While it is true that the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* was discovered in Sri Lanka and in Burma, it should not be forgotten that it was brought there from India, the land of its origin. Unfortunately for reasons that are not yet fully known, this great Buddhist heritage did not survive in India. The Indian Buddhist *saṅgha*

disintegrated long ago, and its literature was lost. The only remaining memory of the Buddha in the minds of the millions of Indians was as the *avatāra* of Lord Vishnu. However, the historical Buddha's authentic teachings were discarded as inappropriate and thus forgotten.

The awakening of India to the true life story of the human Buddha, in contrast to the *purāṇic avatāra*, was a task that needed to be taken up by Indians themselves. In the early thirties, a pioneering effort was made in this direction by Buddhist monks Rahula Sankrtyayana and Ananda Kaushalyayana, who translated several Pāli texts into Hindi. Another monk called Dharmananda Kosambi from Maharashtra went to Burma and Sri Lanka and returned home to introduce the study of Pāli in Indian universities. In the forties he wrote his *Buddha Līlā Sāra Sangraha* in Marathi.

In the fifties Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap published a version of the entire Pāli canon in the Nalanda Devanāgarī-Pāli-Series from Bihar. This seems to have been the extent of the study of Pāli Buddhism in India in our times.

It is therefore fortunate that an excellent outline of the Buddha's biography has been presented in Hindi by Satya Narayan Goenka in his *Tipiṭaka meṃ Samyak Saṃbuddha* in three parts, Part One of which has now been published by the Vipassana Research Institute. Born in a Rajasthani Vaishnav family but



brought up in Burma surrounded by vast numbers of Buddhist temples and monks, Goenkaji turned his attention to the discovery of the true nature of Buddhism. He did not come into contact with the large monastic establishment, but as he narrates in his brief *bhūmikā* (introduction), in 1955 he met a renowned layman (*upāsaka*) named U Ba Khin, a teacher of an ancient meditational practice known as *vipassanā*. From him Goenkaji learned the method of cultivating this form of Buddhist meditation. This eventually led him to a study of the original Buddhist scriptures in Pāli.

After his return to India in 1969, he devoted his entire life to the reintroduction of *vipassanā* meditation to its place of origin. Seeing that thousands of men and women had benefitted from this meditational practice, he decided to establish the Vipassana Research Institute at Dhammagiri (in Igatpuri, Maharashtra). With the help of his dedicated assistants, the entire *Sutta Piṭaka* and its commentaries in Pāli have now been published in Devanāgirī script. The present Hindi work, *Tipiṭaka meṃ Samyak Saṃbuddha*, is his own introduction to this edition of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. Here he presents in his own inimitable manner the life and teachings of the Buddha.

The book begins with a brief description of the Buddha's form (*rūpakāyā*), endowed with the thirty-two auspicious marks of an enlightened person. The second chapter describes the

impermanence of this very body and how the Buddha suffered various pains and met his final death (*parinibbāna*) as a human being. The third chapter is called *Dhammakāyā*, where the Buddha himself is shown teaching his mourning disciples that his true body is his teachings, the Dhamma. This *Dhammakāyā* is the subject matter for the remaining two hundred pages in which the author develops the Buddha's teachings of *sīla* (conduct), *samādhi* (meditation), and *paññā* (wisdom) using the words of the Buddhist litany, "*iti pi so*," etc. The teachings are then divided into the framework of the epithets *bhagavā*, *arahaṃ*, *samassambuddho*, *vijjā-caraṇa-saṃpanno*, and *sugato*.

While the teachings themselves cannot vary much from author to author, what distinguishes this presentation is Goenkaji's sparkling enthusiasm for spreading the message of the Buddha. This he does most skillfully giving precise quotations of the words of the Buddha in response to the questions of his lay and mendicant followers. The entire work thus becomes a garland of flowers, to use a Buddhist metaphor, in the form of the Buddha's own great utterances. Goenkaji's eagerness to share his happiness in *vipassanā* and his insights into the sublime essence of Buddhism will inspire and uplift those who read this book. The Hindi-speaking world owes deep gratitude to the author for this lucid and enlightening introduction to the heart of Buddhism.

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