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The Light of the Buddha

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Volume 6

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THE LIGHT OF THE BUDDHA

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JOURNAL OF

BURMA BUDDHIST SOCIETY, MANDALAY

A monthly Magazine in the world movement of spiritual awakening and universal brotherhood, contributing helpful service towards religious, educational, cultural and social progress founded on freedom of thought, exchange of views, moral, intellectual and spiritual developments in the light of scientific discoveries and philosophical deductions.

EDITORIAL.

ULTRAMUNDANE ASPECT OF LIFE

IN our previous editorial, we have discussed at some length the nature of liberation from the Three Signs of Being after making a special comment on the way of attainment quite independent of outside influence.

A comparative study of religions will surely convince a reflective mind that each doctrine holds its own concept of Salvation quite different from the other. While Buddhism relies on wholesome volitional actions (Kusala Kamma) and mental purity through self-reliance, self-exertion and self-perfection, the theistic doctrines simply advocate complete surrender to a certain divine power. This idea clearly implies the complete fulfilment of human desire and inclinations while living on earth and then

gaining admission into the heavenly kingdom after death. If these hopes will materialize, they are well and good but not the highest good.

For those who deny rebirth, a question arises “Can’t we call it rebirth in heaven when someone really enters there on dissolution of physical body?” Whatever may be the answer, this aspiration itself is not the highest aim or final goal of life according to Buddhism. Still there is a divergence in regard to authority for the passport. The supreme deity “Allah” of the entire Islamic world cannot be identified with the Creator-God of the Christendom. At any rate, we find a common ground in Western concepts which appeals more to the mediocrists who shun self-reliance and self-exertion.

For example, a ‘wicked soul’ can readily get absolution even at the last moment from ‘sin and hell’ by simple form of repentance and single prayer for divine mercy. This psychological effect is most tempting and spontaneously soothing for all types of character who embrace faith to muster courage with confidence. Theoretically, this prerogative has been well augmented by several ancient laws and conventions, rites and rituals which are really easy, pleasing and comforting with the result that the poor, destitute and helpless can no longer think of any other method of liberation but to follow the line of least resistance.

The explanation for this is simple. Naturally, human tendency expects outside help which is more welcome and preferable than self-help. In the same way, a free gift is more inviting and encouraging than the product of personal labour, that is, with the sweat of one’s brow. The question of right or wrong is not to be touched here, save the reminder that all things easy to procure can very seldom prove their worth and reliability.

Buddhism, independently, teaches that each one should study his situation, choose his ideal and resolve the strains of thought, emotions and circumstances in the pursuit of his ideal. In any case, one should remember that what is good is easy of performance by one who is good, but difficult by one who is bad; in the like manner what is bad is easy of performance by one who is bad but difficult by one who is good and righteous. A deep thinker will realise that a religious doctrine must be accessible to all beings rather than meant for the ‘Chosen’. On no account, it should exhibit any form of threat, command, intimidation and inducement losing all sense of independence of thought and freedom of action. A religion must also have its own philosophy, both social and spiritual, and moral instructions for the good of the people and not for the personal gain of any deity or his selfish mediators. So the issue for our consideration is, “Will it be one-sided or high-handed if a person is being instilled with tormenting fear of eternal condemnation for the sake of impression that human destiny lies in the hands of a personal deity who shuts the

gate of heaven to all unbelievers?” The idea may be too primitive for modern high intellectuals with an independent thought.

In this connection, Buddhism shows no discrimination in the way of treatment as everyone is equal before the eye of the Dhamma. It expounds universal facts pertaining to all sentient existence within the Saṃsāra and all virtues to be performed for better life here and hereafter. Millions of people who believe in another world (Para Loko) will probe carefully to find out whether any religious teaching about the existence of only three worlds in the entire Universe, namely, earth, heaven and hell is really sound and credible for general acceptance. Galileo and Bruno met their fate for pointing out the actual result of these findings on world systems.

Of all the major religions, Buddhism gains the unique distinction of being the only one wherein thirty-one planes of existence are prescribed in full detail. There are eleven in the world of sense-desires (kāma loka) including four of the lower realms, sixteen in the world of Forms (Rupa loka) and four in the formless world (Arupa loka). Furthermore, in Buddhism alone, one can find full classifications of hell, different grades of heaven and a complete list of lower worlds (Apāyas) together with their way of life, average span of life, and the paths leading thereto. (For details see Vol. I, No 4, P. 44-45)

It should be borne in mind that in none of these realms, there exists such a thing as endless bliss or eternal suffering. This means each case stands on its own merit, that is to say, everything depends on the amount of virtue performed or in proportion of the gravity of offence committed in the previous existence. Again, the strong belief in divine will and pleasure runs counter to a self-explanatory mandate “Men are given strength and free will, he who stood stood and he who fell fell,” which is akin to “What thou soweth, so much thou shalt reap”. The high standard of reason and conclusion is involved in all these spiritual problems for probables and improbables, possibles and impossibles which need occasional introspection for our right determination.

Without any criticism, we are simply showing the main points of intransigence between the Eastern and the Western spiritual concepts. Our presentation of the subject relates to what lies in store for the humanity after death and what can be their hopeful future beyond the grave. Especially for the foreign students of Buddhism, our review will be in terms of a simple principle that everything has a cause and produces an effect. This is analogous to the spirit of the motto “Evil be to him who thinks of evil.” A proverbial saying “Blessed are those who follow the path of virtue” also points to the same Karmic Law from the bright side of things.

True it is that we are forever fashioning our own moral world for good or evil. Mankind is continuously fashioning itself and thus every thought, feeling and volition counts for something in our personal development. Therefore, the thoughts and acts of a remote and invisible past have actually produced the contents of the present world for better or for worse. This is simply because “As a man acts, so shall he be” without divine influence or interference.

This is due to Kamma which is the reality that preserves the past and evolves the future with immutable justice. Its scope and application is so wide that its operation extends not only to the sphere of sentient life but also to the world of all phenomenal existence. Heavenly beings—angels, devas and Brahmas are no exemption from the operation.

Buddhism regards all things are born of Kamma, heirs of their Kamma, relations of their Kamma which is also the Refuge and Arbitor of the destiny of all beings whether gods or men. This passage may now be elucidated in a more elaborate form:-

“It is their good and bad deeds which are the properties, the legacies, the causes, relations, the refuges that accompany sentient beings in their many existences.” This means, whatever good or evil actions are done by deed; word or thought, the doer is followed by the legacy of such actions throughout his existence.

By oneself evil is done, by oneself is one injured.
By oneself evil is left undone, by oneself is one Purified.
Purity and Impurity belong to oneself.
None can purify another. —Dhammapada, 160.

This simple law governs the whole universe, gods and men, heaven and earth alike. Next when we take up the Fluxion theory, we find that on account of change, movement and activity, everything is in the state of continued transformation. The world itself is in the state of unceasing process of becoming and dissolution as if “Old order changeth yielding place to new.” It is asserted that there is neither creation nor entire destruction. There is neither beginning nor end, yet nothing happens without a cause and nor is anything produced by itself.

In our line of review, an interesting question arises: How are we to account for the beginning and end of fire (heat) or wind (motion)? The same principle holds good for water (cohesion) and earthly matter (solidity) the atoms of which are so vast and immeasurable in endless space and in countless number of planets of the Universe, they cannot be produced out of nothingness. The results of scientific investigations known so far, are very definite about it and the proof seems to be conclusive.

In the next decade, more important data about the Universe may be available through greater organized effort of world scientists now seriously undertaking studies in various fields of geophysics to find out gravity measurements, activities of solar systems, cosmic rays, exploration of outer atmosphere and the space beyond it preparatory to future travel to the Moon and other planets.

The same subject will further be dealt with in the next issue.

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

By

Rev. U Kumara, Thaton.

DEEP-ROOTED in man is the instinct to search for Truth, a desire for knowledge and understanding. The nobler and finer the character of an individual, the loftier is the goal of the Search. It is a noble instinct, a lofty desire and it makes for conquest of the physical world, by intelligence, the ascendancy of mind over matter. This search for Truth is a manifestation of one of the deepest aspiration and enthusiasm of the human mind and one that goes back to the remote period. The same aspiration guided the thought of the earliest Greek philosophers. Socrates identified and proclaimed it four centuries before Lord Christ. It occupies the mind of psychologists, physicians and other men of education, the need to reduce suffering and improve the condition of existence. It is one of the essential characteristics of the human race, and the cause of man's superiority over all other living creatures in our planet; everyone has an inspiration for eternal peace known as Nibbāna and happiness in life.

Its triumph is to foresee facts hitherto unknown, created in the image of our thoughts, could not escape the power of reasoning. Newton enunciates the law of universal gravitation and later calculation proves that the force retaining the moon in its orbit is the same as that acting upon all heavy bodies on the surface of the earth. Leverrier assumes that a planet as yet unknown will appear at a certain point in the sky, and Galle, the astronomer, turns his telescope towards the exact spot and beheld the planet Neptune. But it must be remembered that in the beginning of the world the Brahmas of the highest

abode, disguising themselves as Brahmins, came down to the world of men and taught astrology, astronomy and other sciences.

Scientists and philosophers however wise, may not be able to save world unless they know the secret and the science of the wrong, the transitory, suffering and the lack of substantive reality. It was the Lord Buddha who formulated these three characteristics for uncovering the basic truth, doing away with all the shams and make-believes that adorn our so-called religious life. There is a growing desire in the West to get to this basic fact. The more we are attached to this body, feeling, volition, activities of mind and consciousness the more we identify ourselves with our personality the more we are entangled in misery. “Nan dukkhan tad anatta tam Netan mana neso ham asmi na meso attati” This does not belong to me, this am I not, this is not my self”. This formula is the magic key with which the Buddha opens the gate of Deathlessness. It is the great formula which one has to gain by intuition in order to realize the highest liberation (Nibbāna).

It is wealth and economic power that some are after. Others aspire for military glory, power of dominion and leadership. Others crave delight in senses, or concupiscence and roam the world in search of sensual pleasures. There are mortals who revel in the quest for beauty, finding their happiness in arts, music, poetry and aesthetic harmonies.

But of all adventures and searches of spirituality the noblest by far is the search for Truth.

There are many ways and means of spirituality to identify and describe itself to be devoted to Truth. The same may be said of scientific laboratory and even the daily press.

The rationalist mind works its own way unaided by god or teacher. Its only guide is an honest and sincere search for Truth. The true knowledge that destroys the bond of ignorance will lead the mind to the supreme goal of wisdom. This stage can be reached when the mind has honestly struggled and grappled with facts and fictions in its search for Truth. There is nothing mightier, more beautiful, more useful and as necessary as eternal Truth.

In our search for Truth, the use of sense consciousness invariably leads to error and therefore we must see that they are not tainted by anger, ignorance and greed. When the sense impressions operate upon our sense organs we must hold back our attentions and view each object of sense in the light of *vipassana* knowledge.

It is, however, an adventure or exploration into metaphysical Truth. Metaphysics is defined academically as the inquiry into the nature of the ultimate reality and more popularly it may be called the study of mind, consciousness, its elevation and unfoldment

into spiritual realization. In fact, there is no other means of knowing the Truth than one's own intuition, without which we can have no conception. Intuition is one's own supreme knowing faculty. To be guided by intuitional knowledge is to feel the direct imprint of Truth upon one's life. Metaphysics teaches us to elevate and regularize our state of mind. So in our search we are seeking self- possession and self-control. Every one pursues happiness, almost instinctively one might say, but very few find it permanently. It is not to be found in the great libraries of the world, but only in religious meditation in suitable environment.

Let us show a contrast in Christianity and Buddhism faith that paradoxically is the greatest influence. The former is the religion of revelation while the latter is the religion of enlightenment. Belief in revelation is apt to include a negative of knowledge beyond which is revealed. Revelation cannot be poured into the hearts of men unless the chances are given to them to study things in the light of their own vision. No man was ever born with enlightenment. Meditation shapes everything. It opens a wide channel of spiritual progress, builds happiness, contentment and peace of mind. Knowledge of Truth promotes happiness, just as error results in sinfulness and misery. The true Buddhist has been made to understand that in the last analysis he must stand on his own feet, or his own merit.

Be kind to yourself, be kind to others. Hard work is a great thing. It keeps out of mischief, but it would be unhealthy for anybody to keep on meditation through the whole night. The best hour for peaceful reflection at home is between midnight to 4 A.M. when the whole world is in asleep—peace and quiet, no noisy street traffic. You must indulge in mental task, only when your mind is fresh, and cease when you become weary. Then you will be able to give your best consideration to the subject of meditation with the least strain to yourself. Refrain permanently from overloading your stomach on any occasion. Refrain from physical effort immediately after eating, and do nothing that will make you short of breath. If at any time you begin to breathe or experience a constricting chest pain, lie down and rest.

In the field of fruitful exploration, our advice is vegetarian which will give bodily relaxation that helps profound sleep, keeps up strength and restore appetite. All must have faith in a future life and be prepared to practise the teachings to the best of their ability, otherwise the sojourn here on earth must be meaningless. Many of my friends had come to my age without finding anything in life really worthwhile except work.

The discipline of Vinaya is the best training ground to cultivate holy life. It is essential for the control of the mind, the mind-control for self-abnegation, self-abnegation for joy, joy for self-cheerfulness, for calmness, calmness for bliss, bliss for meditation,

meditation for the understanding of the reality, the understanding of the reality for the disgust for the vanity of the world, disgust for the worldly vanities for the annihilation of the desire for emancipation, saintship for the realization of Nibbāna. Thus it is the Vinaya that has been inculcated by Lord Buddha for the good, for the perfect discipline of monks and priestess, who having renounced all worldly desire, comforts and possessions, aspire to become an Arahāt or attain Nibbānic state.

Not only did Buddha preach the discipline for the homeless aspirant, but He went on preaching a system of moral discipline for the laymen and laywomen. For these He preached the Sigalovada Sutta, the Vyaggapajja Sutta and Mahāmaṅgala Sutta and inculcated a lot of discipline for the proper guidance of those who, while living the householder's life, aspire to attain Nibbāna.

It was the German philosopher Schopenhauer, who first made Europe acquainted with Buddhism as a living faith. The idea of the philosopher, expressed in a lively and readable style, have had a great influence on Europe. Richard Wagner was deeply impressed by the teachings of Buddha, and in recent years Albert Schweitzer lived the life which Schopenhauer only recommended.

The history of Buddhism has in each generation, attracted a considerable number of scholars of great ability.

Mme. Blavatsky spoke about Buddhism in terms of highest praise. She was the founder of the Theosophical Society. To the ranks of the theosophists belongs the noted Sir Edwin Arnold, whose poem, *The Light of Asia*, has led many hearts to love and admire the Buddha for the purity of His life and for His devotion to the welfare of mankind. He says, "The scriptures of the saviour of the world, prince Siddhattha styled on earth, and heaven and hells incomparable. All honoured wisest best, most pitiful. The Teacher of Nibbāna and the Law. Thus came he to be born among men."

One of the first scholars to begin the work of translation of the Pāli literature into English, was Dr. Rhys Davids, the son of a well-know clergyman. His object in undertaking the work was to prove the superiority of Christianity over Buddhism. He failed this task but he achieved a greater victory than he expected. He became a Buddhist. He says, "I have examined every one of the great religions of the world and in none of them have I found anything to surpass the beauty and comprehensiveness of the Noble Truths of the Buddha. I am content to shape my life according to that Path."

Mr. Wells, scientist and historian, gives high praise to Buddhism as an ethical system and places the Buddha as first among the greatest men who ever lived. We require a greater space to quote further.

What is the origin of Dhamma? Question whose main purpose is to stimulate discussion. Dhamma means Doctrine or the Teachings of Buddha. No one knows what Buddha is and what He taught by going through the Tipiṭaka or the three Baskets. That would be to limit Him. It is only by proper meditation that one will realize the Dhamma by intuition. “He who sees the Dhamma sees me and vice versa.”

I prefer the English method, which misses nothing beginning with the egg from which the Dhamma was hatched.

On the death of Buddha, an old Bhikkhu named Subaddha happened to utter in the presence of Mahā Kassapa, “Now that Buddha passed away, we can do what we like.” This ominous pronouncement has hastened the convocation of the First Buddhist Council under the presidency of the said Mahā Kassapa and the auspices of king Ajatasatthu of Magadha. It was read sentence after sentence by an eminent Elder and chanted after him in chorus by the whole assembly of five hundred priests. The convocation continued for seven months, that is a few months after the demise of Buddha.

The Second Council was held at Vesali, in Kutagara Hall under the patronage of king Kalasoka, which lasted eight months. Twelve hundred priests took part in the proceedings.

From the time of Second Council, the religion of Buddha, had been split into two sects viz:- the Southern Buddhist of Hinayāna and the Northern Buddhist of Mahāyāna. Each has its own ordination and religious practices and no measure of unity has been taken in any of the Councils. The great dissimilarity still exists although some attempts were made by Colonel Olcott in 1891, when he drafted fourteen propositions to be discussed. As the result of good understanding a number of Japanese Bhikkhus and Samaneras have been sent to Ceylon to study Pāli and Sanskrit.

True Buddhist shall be ever ready to see the false Doctrine purged away from the Truth, and to assist, if he can. Five great Councils of the Sangha were held for the express purpose of purging the body of teachings from all corrupt interpolations.

The scripture was at first handed from teacher to pupil, since Buddha attained Nibbāna. With the mission of Bhikkhu Mahinda, the son of king Asoka, the Pāli Tipiṭaka was for the first time put into writing in 80 B.C. in the reign of Wattagamini, Abbaya Walaganbahu at the Aloka Vihara, by 500 Bhikkhus. Buddhaghosa, a Brahman priest born near Buddha Gaya, became a monk and went to Ceylon where he compiled the Atthakathā. He also compiled the Visuddhi Magga and translated the commentary from Singalese into Pāli in 403 B.B. and brought to Thaton.

According to Buddhism we came into this world to realize the Truth and enlightenment and enter Nibbāna in this self-same existence. Remember that the highest punishment that can be inflicted on a faithful Buddhist is “rebirth”. The life of a person in this world is exceedingly short, far shorter than a thought lasts. In the end death must come and all must die. It is only a matter of time. The uncertainty of death demands constant readiness to meet the King of Death, who calls all to account for one’s evil work and, from whose hands the sceptre of an authority will never fail. Even at the height of one’s might, like Hitler of Germany or Benjamin Franklin of America or Stalin of Russia, then found in the end they are unable to issue the slightest command and are as useless and substantial or empty as flickering shadow with no power to help in their salvation, which is the supreme need of the life and has been found to lay down their sinister records bore him more helpless than a new born child.

None is purified and saved by philosophical, political and virtuous works. Enlightenment came from purity of life and heart by solemn meditation, physical side of mind by tranquilising its restlessness and by abandoning all unprofitable desire, craving and power.

The future is dark and we are not in a position to enter the field of wild prediction, but we have the warning what have been received from time to time, just long the fire of death will smoulder again and again. The signs are not wanting as we grow older and older. If a person is afraid of death he ought to be much more afraid of old age for old age drives the life of a man to death; and we also know that at the appointed time the end shall come and the signs of incident are always multiplying.

In this world, as I have already remarked, a person who is endowed with fame and glory with a great retinue of followers just as a rising sun with glorious splendour to enter into the filthy and despicable womb of the mother in the seminal fluid of the parents in the present existence as well as in the next to continue on and on with rebirth is extremely a dreadful and shameful affair.

Mankind remain outside the holy path because of ignorance, they do not like to throw themselves with ardour into spiritual work; they are quite content to follow the lead of others in whom they place their trust. From all points of view, there is nothing existing in the whole universe—neither the mind nor the body. They are always changing, mere illusions, divested of all realities. The holy man who is disgusted the ever-changing body and mind, try to destroy the seeds of existence. He feels no attachment to objects which are but illusions and deceptions, including his own self. It is absolutely useless to cling to transitory and perishable things the things which men hold so dear. Lost in the enjoyment

of self, mankind do not make an attempt to find out its cause and its cure and disentangle themselves from the world of appearance.

In their search for materialistic power the West set up science as a god, and it is the same science that has destroyed them. It is a pity that the majority do not care to know and practise them how to overcome it. Religion will save them from the impending danger. They must learn the Bibles of Lord Jesus and Lord Buddha and put them into practice so as to grasp the Truth by perception of and insight. Mere reading does not impress upon their minds and wash off the stains of sin embedded in their bodies. It is to be regretted that in their selfishness, their egotism, they have gone astray, thus they are sinking below the ordinary Western standard of civilization. If they don't wake up and devote their energies to spiritual work, they are doomed.

The sages of old never worried about politics, neither cared for material prosperity. They have found out the sciences of all sciences, the philosophy of all philosophies they had been seeking and remain contented. Men can never be able to find salvation in politics, theories and logic. Politics are a web of organization, rivalries, exclusives and quarrels. In 1951 Cassdra of the Daily Mirror, wrote "Politics whether you like them or not, are the machinery of everyday affairs. Life unfortunately does not go on under the dictates of men of goodwill. The conduct of present affairs is dominated by the lust for power, the shattering force of economics or just plain quivering fear. But to approach this problem on the basis of men of simple goodwill is childish nonsense."

Many of us might think that to approach this problem on the basis of party politics, or party and national interests, not to mention bigger and better bombs and armies, is also childish nonsense, if such a mild epithet can, in truth, be applied to men who persist in advocating measures for settling disputes which have been proved a failure time and again for thousand of years. Truth can never shine in the heart which is impure. Without self-culture, the question of spirituality does not arise. The duty of an individual, therefore, is self-culture. So much for the present.

BUDDHISM AND MENTAL LIFE

By

U Hla Maung, B.A., B.E.S. (retired)

Continued from last Issue.

IN all our attempts to lay down the law in these matters, we do our measuring with the very thing that is to be measured. To sum up briefly: The entire mental life of mankind in its phases or current meaning as science, morality and religion resembles a ship that drifts about without helm, compass and proper pole.

Buddhism occupies a peculiar position in the fluctuating movement called the mental life of humanity. Does Buddhism lie in the domain of science? Is it mere philosophy? Does it lie within the field of ethics, i.e., is it a mere moral doctrine? Or is it within the teaching of future, i.e., is it a mere religion?

Before we go into detail, let us state tentatively that the characteristic mark of Buddhism is deliverance as spoken for each individual; life-deliverance from life strictly through (Pacattam) itself. Its characteristic value is strictly individual and confined to the (deluded) I-ego. Therefore in both the characteristics of mark and value it ever turns upon the factor of an immediate living process and experience of the same.

For this reason, we who follow the Pāli Canon, and for whom the noble odour of the teaching of the Buddha, has not passed into the form of Mahāyāna or Great Vehicle, should be proud of the term, the Little Vehicle. The Great Vehicle has dragged into Buddhism (a) Amitabha, the boundless glory (b) Paradise in the west. These are great ideals and prizes for human spirit which hunger after the eternal. In this hungering is lost the true light of the teaching of the Buddha.

Let us proceed. Buddhism is not moral teaching in the ordinary sense. It does not teach a definitely-held Good and a definitely-held Bad. In its closest context, Buddhism is concerned with the life and mentality of individuals. It concerns itself with the little vehicle of individual life, no more and no less. In its broader aspects it recognises Bodhisattahood in the great round of samsaric life. But every Buddha has to obtain enlightenment through and out of his own little vehicle. The fact that every Buddha-to-be thinks and acts in terms of larger units is altogether another aspect.

Morality figures largely as motives and impulsions for innumerable successive lives in the thirty-one planes of life. But, when one is being driven by the one impulse of

Nibbāna, morality as a stepping stone is left behind, or, at least, subsumed in the highest knowledge.

Thus in the 22nd discourse of the Majjhima Nikāya, the Buddha says: “Right things (Dhamma) you have to give up; how much more the not-right or A-dhamma”. “Thus the Buddha distinguished (I) between a good and a bad deed along with a deed neither good or bad, (II) a deed which leads to the ceasing of all deed, good as well as bad. Why? Because those who are perfect in insight (such as the Arahats) and thereby are free from impulsion towards evil as towards good are finally extinguished (parinibbanti) out of Samsara-becoming.

Next Buddhism is not a religion in the ordinary sense as that which points beyond this life to one which is essentially different, i.e., in terms of some kind of eternal being and existence. Buddhism is not a philosophy in the sense of an epistemological system which furnishes an answer to the question, “What is life?” The Buddha describes his doctrine as “Attakkavacara,” i.e. it does not lie within the domain of Takka or conceptual thinking, if we may say so, the doctrine avoids ‘Imponderables’, Whatever conceptual thinking there is in Buddhism it is used to show that conceptual thinking is Dependent upon an Antecedent Condition:

The Pāli Canon (the tripitakas) has no historical development or refinements. Neither the progress of science nor the swinging pendulum of philosophy has necessitated any change in the tone or tenor of Pāli. Buddhism. Sanscrit Buddhism or Mahāyāna is a divergence. Our Buddhism holds fast to the fact or aspect of Actuality. And Actuality is sung in one triple chord: Anicca-Dukkha-Anatta.

With or without Buddhism the World has to face the natural law, the law of all actuality, namely, all constructions, all composites and even the so-called elements are subject to the above three characteristics.

This law of actuality is perceived and penetrated by the Buddha-mind, and the Buddha-word centres itself on this one theme of Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta. One thing alone the Buddha teaches: “Pubbe c’aham, bikkhave, etarahi ca Dukkham c’eva pannapemi dukkhassa ca nirodhami (M.N 22). In short, he teaches the Actuality of suffering and of the joy of cessation of suffering.

This doctrine of Actuality is presented as a teaching in the form of (I) the Four Noble (aryan) Truths and (II) Dependent-simultaneous Arising and Ceasing (Paticca-samuppada). These two form the heart and backbone of Buddhism.

As the Middle Path (which avoids the two ends or extremes of things) the Buddha points out the middle position of his doctrine. It is a middle path between contradictions. Buddhism goes its way through the contradictions of all mental life-contradictions which on the one hand, exhibit themselves as Faith, on another as science, on another as spiritualism and another as the Machiavellian Materialistic view of the world.

“All Is, Kaccayana, that is One End,

All Is Not, Kaccayana, that is the Other End.”

These two ends overcoming, the Accomplished One, points out the Middle Doctrine (Samyutta N. 11)

This is how Buddha avoided the doctrine of the pure spiritualists (the Niganthas) as well as the doctrine of pure Materialism (Makkhali Gosala).

Here is an example of how the Buddha dealt with the questions of Self.

“Is there a Self (atta)? asked a wandering monk called Vacchagotta. At these words, the Exalted One remained silent. The question was repeated, and for the second time, the Buddha remained silent. Then Vacchagota rose from his seat and went away. Thereupon, the Buddha explained to his disciple, the Venerable Ananda, the reason of his silence.

“If, Ānanda, to the question, ‘Is there a Self?, I had answered ‘No’, I should have been agreeing with those who preach Annihilation”.

“If, to the same question, I had answered, ‘There is a Self’, would that have been in agreement with the knowledge of non-self of things? “No, Lord,” was the answer.

“Again, if to the same question, I had answered, ‘There is not a Self’, the infatuation of the already infatuated Vacchagota would only have become greater, in this wise: ‘Alas! Before, I had a Self; now, I have it not’.”

The crux of the matter is: do not speak of Self as a positive ‘yes’ or ‘no’ but as a delusion which grips life. Under ‘delusion’ you feel the grip of Self. When delusion is gone (as for the wise) the grip is no more. Thus is the teaching of the Buddha.

Paccattam Veditabbo Viññūhi”

The doctrine is to be understood by the Wise, each for himself.

The delusion is caused (under the veil of ignorance) by the life-forces technically known as the Kilesas and the Nivaraṇas. The life forces which constitute the individual and which enmesh or implicate him in his environment.

Unfortunately for all of us, we have a conception of an ego, and we cling tenaciously to it. Self represents the sum of the relations between the inner life-forces, which work unconsciously and those which manifest themselves as Conscious thoughts desires and volitions.

Through all these relations run that tremendous primitive craving of a living creature. There is a compulsion to keep the present existence going more, to keep on going and going. This craving for life is strong enough to carry the individual across the gulf of death into a new Becoming. The delusion (not suspected as such) is a tangible one. It is a terrible complex. Our very constitution of 'mind-body' in contact with the world is responsible.

Let us close this section. The Buddha in his time was denounced as a 'nihilist,' as a denier of life, as teaching destruction and no further existence.

On the contrary, at the present day, some find pleasure reading into the Buddha's teaching the mysteries of an eternal life.

These points of view will be cleared up step by step as we go on, especially in the later sections.

PART TWO

We pick up the thread with;

(I) Paccattam Veditabbo Viññūhi". The doctrine is to be understood by the wise, each for himself.

(II) In the Parinibbāna Sutta, the Buddha says:

Be ye lights to yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves; seek not for refuge in others. Let the doctrine be your light and refuge.

Of one who has cognised (as in the person of a wise) it is said,

"No further dependent upon the teaching of a Master."

Now in regard to 'yourselves' in the first quotation, there is some interested wrangling. On behalf of the 'Self', the wranglers say that the correct text is 'Self', and that 'yourselves' is the result of tampering.

We see that the words are addressed to Ānanda, who, at that time, was not yet an Arahāt, a fully wise. Ānanda was still depending upon the Master. Probably because Ānanda was not yet completely out of the wood (out of the palpable delusion of 'I' identity) the Buddha addressed these words. He advised his disciple to disentangle

himself from the delusion of self. It is the light of Veditabbo Viññūhi which is to be depended upon.

Buddhism treats of Viññanam consciousness (a constant of the ever-flowing and changing mind) as a Pabbasara (light). It is the light of the identity-less Viññanam that the Buddha speaks and not the light of the so-called soul or atta.

There is only one thing which the Buddha asks of his disciples, who have confidence in him. Is he worthy of high confidence? This is also your own Paccattam affair. What is that one thing? He asked of you to sacrifice your own 'I' - your delusion. Now and again rings the admonition:

“What does not belong to you, that give up. That which you give up will long contribute to your good, will long contribute to your weal.”

“Rūpaṃ (form) does not belong to you. So with Vedanā (sensation); so with Saññā (perception); so with Saṅkhāra (the concept-formations); so with Viññanam (consciousness). None of these belongs to you. In short what you know as your 'I', that give up. It is not 'yourself', but only an I-delusion (Asmi-Mano).”

“If with due confidence in me, you let go what you in your experience feel a delusive 'I', you shall also experience why all this is not demonstrable and not accessible to conceptual thinking. I cannot prove for you this I-delusion.”

By way of analogy, Buddhism is like a bitter pill which a physician prepares for a sick man. If for want of confidence, the sick man were to say, “Prove to me that this medicine will heal me”, the physician must leave the man to his fate. The Buddha asks of his disciples confidence (Saddha) and not blind faith. Saddha will set up 'healing and corrective process' to the final goal.

The question arises: Is there any form of thinking outside of logical, conceptual thinking?

When one holds a light in the darkness, one recognises things as they are. What have they to do with logic? When the Teacher points out, 'Thus it is', and one recognises: 'Yes, thus it is', what has that to do with logic? Logic presupposes conceived objects, and produces new concepts. But what about that by which the conceived things are to be evaluated? That is to say, the power or actuality of conceiving? That power is not accessible to logic.

(To be continued)

THE PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS

Section II of a Course of Information on Buddhism in Western Terms

Compiled by Leonard A. Bullen.

BUDDHISM as a way of life involves a process of self-training, a continual application of mental discipline based on right understanding and embracing thought-control, morality, and mental development. No mental discipline can be carried out without unremitting mindfulness, for right mindfulness—the seventh step on the Noble Eightfold Path and the subject of the present section of this course of information is the key to the whole practice of Buddhist mind-training.

Running through all phases of the Buddha-doctrine is one central theme, one fundamental feature; and this is the teaching that no being in the universe possesses a fixed and unchanging self, soul, or ego.

This doctrine—the doctrine of egolessness—is the focal point of all Buddhist teaching and its most distinctive characteristic.

When we consider the practice of Buddhism (as distinct from its doctrinal aspect) we find that its central aim is the realization of the fact of egolessness, a realization that takes us far beyond the intellectual comprehension of the doctrine and becomes a direct penetration into its full fundamental meaning.

To understand the teaching of egolessness is a matter for the intellect, but to understand the fact of egolessness—as distinct from the teaching—is a matter for direct insight.

In the Noble Eightfold Path, the practice of right mindfulness is the seventh step. It is of such supreme importance that it is called “the only way,” for as an essential ingredient in each of the other steps, it is the only way in which they can attain their ends.

Thus it is only when the first two steps of the Path, right understanding and right thought, become suffused with the awareness of the egoless nature of existence, that they become really effective in the work of liberation.

Similarly, the next three steps of right speech, action, and livelihood may tend to remain at the level of mere outward conformity unless accompanied by the awareness of egolessness.

Again, right effort, the sixth step in the Path, finds its culmination in the effort to become aware of the fact of egolessness; and the final step of right concentration functions fully only when the ultimate penetrating insight arises and the fact of egolessness is fully discerned.

Thus, throughout the Eightfold Path in each of its phases, it is the mindfulness of egolessness that is the principle factor in taking us forward towards the final liberation. In this sense, then, right mindfulness is spoken of as the only way to liberation.

Right mindfulness in its simplest form is the development and perfection of the normal faculty of attention, while in its higher form it is the continual awareness of the illusionary nature of the self.

Without this awareness of egolessness and the continual prevention of self-assertion, other steps in the Path lose their point.

To practise mindfulness in the Buddhist sense, we must endeavour to become fully aware of whatever we are doing all of our waking life, whether working or relaxing, speaking or keeping silent, standing or sitting; and above all, we must try to realize that there is no true self doing these things, but only an ever changing process of bodily states, feelings, perceptions, determinants (or active mind-factors), and states of consciousness.

We must admit from the beginning that to succeed in all this is normally beyond us. To become fully aware of everything we do throughout our waking life is much more than we can ordinarily achieve, and the more we try to develop this enlarged awareness the more we realize our inadequacies.

Similarly when we try to become aware of the egoless nature of our own personal existence, we gradually come to realize just how strong and how tenacious is our concept of selfhood, for once we develop sufficient self-honesty we find that self-assertion lies at the root of much of our apparently altruistic conduct.

However, if our efforts along the lines of right mindfulness do nothing other than make us more aware of our own unawareness, they are thereby fulfilling a very important purpose. We come to realize the automatic and mechanical nature of much that we do, and we begin to see that we have hitherto been largely caught up in the unthinking drift of life. Only when we begin to become aware of all this can we start our fight to become free from the unthinking drift.

One of the most important aspects of mindfulness in Buddhism is called “bare attention”, which means attention stripped bare of all emotional biases, prejudices, and associated thoughts. Bare attention is essential for seeing things as they really are,

because all emotional biases, prejudices, and associated thoughts bring about falsifications or distortions of perceptions, and it is necessary to become free of these falsifications before we can make much progress in mind-training.

Bare attention thus means the bare uncluttered awareness of a perception, without any reaction to it in the form of deed, speech, or mental comment.

If we were to examine our normal everyday perceptions, we would find that they are often muddled; they are cluttered up with mental material that belongs elsewhere; and they are often incomplete, obscured, or distorted.

Sometimes these falsifications of our perceptions with their consequent emotional biases cause misunderstanding, conflict, and discord.

We can see, then, that if we can apply the principle of bare attention to our everyday thinking, we will reduce the misunderstandings that sometimes occur together with the consequent conflict and discord.

Some of our everyday experiences arouse a variety of prejudices and misconceptions, because of our own emotional biases; and it is often not until we analyse our minds that we realize just how widespread and deep-seated these emotional biases really are. They are, in fact, so widespread and deep-seated, that without special self-training it is impossible to perceive a sense object or to form a clear idea of a situation, or to recollect an event, without some distortion due to our emotional biases.

As a definite exercise of the practice of mindfulness, we can endeavour to apply the principle of bare attention to just one sphere of our daily life, namely our relationships with other people. Sometimes we misunderstand something that another person says or does, perhaps because we happen to be upset or annoyed about something quite different. We give to the other person's meaning a completely false colouring.

In this practice, then, and in our daily contacts with other people, we set out to pay bare attention—unbiased or dispassionate attention—to the other person's meaning, uncoloured by our own preconceived ideas, emotions, or prejudices. We will find that the true meaning is often quite contrary to our own interpretation of it.

We must recognise, of course, that this is not bare attention in its fullest and truest form: it is merely an adaption of its principles to ordinary situations. In its monastic applications, bare attention goes a great deal further, and in its extreme form it reaches a point at which perceptions become so completely separated from associated thoughts that—for the time, of course—they lose all meaning. While such an advanced degree of

bare attention has no direct value in daily life, the ability to completely liberate the mind from its conditioning is of the utmost value in the work of enlightenment.

While the achievement of the extreme form of bare attention is not generally practical in ordinary life, any possible adaption of the practice is likely to be of some direct value. Since the aim is to free the perceptions of emotional biases, it is a good plan to practise the suppression of the mental comments that arise when we are casually observing the people around us. Occasions often arise in the routine of ordinary life during which we make mental comments on the people around us. Sitting in a railway carriage, for instance, and gazing idly at the other passengers, or walking along the street we often find that we form likes and dislikes of them, or in a sense, we pass judgement on them by making either critical or approving mental comments about them.

These likes and dislikes, judgements, and mental comments may be correct or incorrect, kind or unkind; but this is not the point. They may, under other circumstances, be of use to us in our business and social contacts with people; but this, also is not the point. The point, in the present connection, is that the situation provides an excellent opportunity for the practice of bare attention. Instead of forming likes and dislikes and idly making mental comments, we can endeavour to suppress all mental comments and to observe them quite dispassionately. We then try mentally to register them purely as visual objects and to observe their facial shapes, the colours of their hair and eyes, the shapes of their noses, and so forth, all without any emotionally-biased mental comments.

Bare attention appears in many of those forms of mindfulness which have been set down in the traditional classification.

Since in the Buddha-way the final objective of mindfulness is the full awareness of egolessness, it is necessary to direct that mindfulness towards the apparent ego or personality, otherwise called the mind-body combination. Therefore the ancient writings describe the various, practices of mindfulness under four headings, called the “four foundations of mindfulness”, which are these:

- 1: reflection on the body,
- 2: reflection on the feelings,
- 3: reflection on the mind-states,
- 4: reflection on the mental contents.

Some of these practices are meant for constant everyday use, and others for use under special conditions. All of them are directed towards the achievement of that clarity of mind which is not only essential for direct insight into reality—the final aim of the Buddha-way—but which is also helpful in the conduct of everyday living.

Of the various forms of mindfulness practised with regard to physical things in general and the body in particular, one of the most important is mindfulness on breathing, in which the breathing process is quietly observed without any special interference with its natural rhythm. Carried through to its full development, the practice brings the mind into such an extreme degree of tranquillity that the final insight into the ultimate reality of existence is attainable.

This is the primary aim of breathing-mindfulness, the complete tranquilisation of the mind; and a full description of the full practice belongs under the heading of right concentration, the eighth step of the Noble Eightfold Path. There is some degree of overlapping between the material of the seventh and eighth steps, and mindfulness on breathing appears in both. In right concentration, the practice is carried to a fuller degree of completion than in right mindfulness.

However, a brief outline of it may be given here. In the earliest stage the breaths are counted as an aid to concentration, while in the next stage, the course of each breath is followed from the nose down into the lungs and from the lungs up through the nose. Then, later on, bare attention is focused on one point, the nose-door at which the incoming breath enters, and finally (after that stage has been perfected) the breathing fades from consciousness and becomes imperceptible.

At this point the mind has reached an advanced degree of concentration and tranquillity, and can then be switched to the discernment of the true nature of existence. Such doctrines as those of egolessness and impermanence then become no longer doctrines but matters of direct insight.

Another form of physical awareness which is readily adaptable to workaday conditions is the awareness of posture. In the simplest adaptation of this practice, bare attention is given to the postures of the body in order to discover any unnecessary tensions and thus make possible a more complete relaxation of both body and mind.

In its advanced applications, the observance of posture is intended to assist in breaking down the self-concept. We tend to regard the body as the vehicle of a so-called self, whereas the Buddha-doctrine teaches that the illusion of a permanent self is nothing but an ever changing continuum of mental and bodily states. Every device that can emphasise this teaching and enable us to realize it in actuality instead of in theory is of value, and posture-mindfulness is one such device. By consistently applying the practice the body gradually appears less and less as the manifestation of a so-called self, and comes to be regarded more and more as a vehicle for a fluctuating sequence of bodily and mental states.

In order to apply this form of mindfulness to that end, we give bare attention to such postures as standing, sitting, lying down, and the various postures assumed in the course of walking and carrying out normal activities. This involves a considerable slowing down of these activities, and during the period of the practice the exercise itself must be given first place and the aims of the various activities must be placed second.

For this reason those of us who have little time free from work and domestic responsibilities will find that the most valuable application of posture mindfulness will lie in the detection of bodily tensions and in the relaxation of them. In adapting the practice for this purpose, we can apply its principles in any posture, but the best of course is one in which we are lying down. We allow the focus of consciousness to move slowly over the various muscle-groups, searching for sensations of tension, and, when they appear, relaxing the muscles concerned. To a large extent, the mere application of mindfulness or attention to the muscles will relax them without any special effort, but when the tension in the jaws, the chest, or the arms, for example is very marked it becomes necessary to apply more deliberate methods to break down this tension. However, the first step in relaxation is to become aware of excessive and unnecessary tension, and posture-mindfulness can be put to good use in this respect.

Since with most people the circumstances of ordinary life helps to bring about and maintain unnecessary tension of mind and body, this adaptation of posture-mindfulness, coupled with a non-assertive mental attitude, forms a good starting-point for Buddhist mind-training; and in fact it might be truthfully said that (with those of us who are normally too tense) little real progress can be made until some degree of relaxation is achieved.

There is a very important form of mindfulness, under the general heading of the awareness of bodily processes and activities, called clear comprehension. It has considerable scope for application in the course of everyday concerns, and can be made an integral part of them, since it related specifically to all volitional actions.

It is described under four headings:

- 1: the clear comprehension of the purpose of a line of action;
- 2: the clear comprehension of the suitability of a line of action for its purpose;
- 3: the clear comprehension of the fact that every action provides an opportunity for mindfulness; and
- 4: the clear comprehension of the absence of a permanent self as the doer of an action.

The first type, the clear comprehension of a purpose, presupposes that we have some fundamental purpose in life, whether it be to break free from the cycle of birth and death (the ultimate goal in Buddhism) or, at a lower level to lead a happy and efficient life. In fact the clear comprehension of purpose is a means of regulating the efficiency of life, in a sense, for when—through lack of mindfulness of purpose—we spend our energies on activities that take us into unprofitable side-issues, we are merely being caught up in the unthinking drift of life.

It is much the same with the second type of clear comprehension, that of suitability. We may sometimes find that, because of family responsibilities and obligations to other people, we must do things that cut across our fundamental purpose in life. We may be obliged to do things that are not suitable to our central objective. We are under such circumstances, fully aware of the unsuitable nature of these activities in relation to our central purpose, even though they may be perfectly suitable for their immediate purpose.

However, these situations are largely unavoidable in ordinary household life. It is when we unmindfully and unnecessarily take on lines of activity which take us aside from our fundamental purpose, without any degree of clear comprehension as to their unsuitability for that purpose, that we sink back into the unthinking drift.

Clear comprehension is necessary, not only in relation to remote or fundamental aims, but also in connection with immediate purposes. In fact, every activity throughout waking life is an opportunity to apply mindfulness in one form or another, and the continuous awareness of the need and the opportunity for mindfulness is the third form of clear comprehension. The whole life, not only the periods when we are free from other concerns, is called the “domain of mindfulness”.

Clear comprehension, then, means a well-defined and continual awareness of the purpose—immediate or remote, mundane or spiritual—of all activities, of the suitability of those activities for their purpose, and of each of those same activities as the domain of or opportunity for mindfulness. But, above all those considerations it means also the awareness of the absence of any permanent self as the doer of the actions concerned. This awareness of egolessness is the culmination of all forms of mindfulness, for the “sense of ego”, the delusion of selfhood, is one of the major factors which keep us bound to the wheel of birth and death. It is the salient feature of the primal ignorance that keeps us from seeing the true nature of existence and the reality beyond the illusion of personal life.

It is this same sense of ego, together with the self assertive tendencies that go along with it, that allows us to be offended when we are left out of things, or, when our friends

make statements about us, to suffer from hurt feelings because these statements are untrue, or perhaps because they are true. It is this same sense of ego, this same illusion of a personal self, which is at the root of many quarrels and petty disturbances.

But because this self seems so real and important in actuality, although so unreal according to Buddhist teachings, we fail to realize the harm it does. In the path from the cycle of birth and death to the Unconditioned, it persists up to a very advanced stage and until that stage has been passed it stands in the way of ultimate attainment: how much more, then, in the course of everyday events must it stand in the way of inner and outer harmony.

Thus we see the importance (either from the Buddhist point of view or from any other) of striving to gain a clear comprehension of the illusionary nature of the personal self throughout the course of all activities.

There are three other kinds of mindfulness whose objects are various aspects of the body. One of these is the mental analysis of the body into its parts, and another kind is the analysis of the body into its primary material elements. Both of these practices are intended to break down the tendency to identify one's true nature with the body, and thus to assist in the realization of the egolessness of one's existence.

Finally, in the last group of types of mindfulness on the body, come the various cemetery contemplations. In these exercises, the dead body, in various degrees of disintegration, is contemplated. Here the aim is to break down the sense of identification with one's body and to emphasise its impermanent character.

In household life (as distinct from monastic life) there is generally little opportunity or scope for these three kinds of mindfulness, but the various other practices provide more than ample material for practice.

Every form of experience is potentially an object of mindfulness. Bodily experiences, such as the sensations involved in breathing and in various postures and activities, as well as the purposes of these bodily activities, together form one, main aspect of experience as a whole, while its other main aspect consists of the mental aspect of it, subdivided for present purposes into the feelings, the mind-states, and the mental contents.

With regard to the first of these groupings, feelings in Buddhist terminology means simply the pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral content of a physical or mental experience. It is extremely important, because the pleasure in an experience provides the conditions on which craving for personal life depends, and when this craving gives rise to unbreakable

attachment to personal life, then the life-current with all its suffering is renewed, nurtured, and kept in motion.

It may be helpful here to refer to several links in the formula of the dependent arising of suffering. This formula tells us that the process of ageing and death with their attendant suffering depends on birth, which in turn depends on the life-current with its continuous discharge and replenishment of reaction forces. The life-current in turn depends on the mental conditions of attachment to the personal existence, and this attachment is an intensified form of craving.

Now craving consists of desire and aversion, or greed and hate, which arise respectively from unwise reflection on pleasant and unpleasant sense objects. It is the pleasure in an experience which may—if we allow it—lead on to craving, attachment, and all that depends on attachment. Similarly, it is the displeasure in an experience (again, if we permit it to do so) which brings about this craving to be separated from the unpleasant situation; and the “negative craving” similarly leads on to attachment.

This attachment leads on to the life-current, being the fuel that keeps the life-current burning, so to speak, and the life-current leads on to personal rebirth, ageing, death, and suffering. But we do not have to take rebirth into account to see the adverse effect of attachment: it becomes apparent whenever we consider how we are affected, whenever we lose the objects of our attachment, or when these objects of attachment, are denied us. The stronger is the attachment, the greater is the pleasure we experience when circumstances allow us to keep and enjoy the possession of the objects of attachment; but when they are wrenched away from us our suffering is as intense as was our previous enjoyment. We cling to our attachment- objects, we grasp them and clutch at them, and we long for their return when they are absent; but all this clinging, grasping, clutching, and longing does is to vitiate our enjoyment and to make the sorrow of loss greater.

If we can reach even an incomplete state of non-attachment, if we can even partially lessen our grasp on the things that give us happiness and cease longing for them, we are more free to enjoy them when they are with us but we reduce the sense of loss when they are gone. It is axiomatic in Buddhism that at some time or another we must part from all that is dearest to us, and the stronger is our attachment to them, the harder will be the wrench when it comes.

But once attachment is established it is not possible to break it by philosophising. Once craving has gained a foothold it cannot be dislodged by mere theorizing. Once the feelings—that is, pleasure and displeasure—are allowed to lead on to craving, and craving is allowed to lead on to attachment, then the chain of suffering continues; and if

the chain is to be broken it must be broken at the link of feeling. That is to say, the chain of suffering must be attacked at the link called feeling, or in other words, at the phase of liking-and-disliking, love-and-hate, desire-and-aversion.

We can see, then that the full awareness of feeling is of great importance. This means that if we can give bare attention to our feelings of pleasure and displeasure and thus keep them clear of all emotional biases, prejudices, and associated ideas, we will be able to evaluate them properly and thus to react (in terms of action or non-action) in accordance with our central aim in life and with a greater degree of non-attachment.

Little can be done in this direction, however, until we learn to strip each feeling bare of its emotional associations as it arises, and this demands a considerable degree of self-training in mindfulness and will-development.

We have so far discussed various forms of mindfulness on the body and one form of mindfulness on mental things, namely on the feelings of pleasure and pain. We can now move on to a second group of mindfulness-practices directed towards the mind and its working. This group of practices is called reflection on the mind-states.

For you, for me, and for other people living the average workaday life, it is difficult to keep the mind entirely free from delusion, greed, hate, and other adverse mental factors.

Of course, we do not always allow our greed and hate to show in apparent ways: we do not take the biggest slice of cake, nor do we throw stones at our neighbours because they turn their radio sets up too loud. In most of us, certain of our adverse qualities exist in subtle and disguised ways.

The awareness of the mind-states is a form of self-analysis in which the dual object is to bring to the surface adverse mind-states so that they can be dealt with, and to uncover dormant good qualities so that they can be improved and developed.

Because the human mind is much given to self-deceit, we frequently tend to excuse and justify our weaknesses. We speak of righteous indignation when we consider our anger justified, whereas from the Buddhist point of view, it is a contradiction of terms. Indignation can never be righteous because, however justifiable it seems to be it is always an adverse mind-factor, dragging the mind down and preventing its progress, and righteousness can never involve indignation because in its truest sense it is complete freedom from anger and all of its derivatives.

Again, as another example, we often regard pride as a virtue. We take pride in our pride, so to speak, and feel proud of our pride of race, pride of family, pride of

possession, and pride of achievement. But in Buddhist terms, pride is just a form of conceit or self-assertion, which is a derivative of greed and delusion.

A major working principle in the Buddha-way is to strive always to see things as they really are, to work always for the opposite of that state of delusion from which spring a multitude of retarding mind-factors.

Hence the need for that form of mindfulness called reflection on the mind-states. Various mental conditions are listed in the ancient writings, such as the greedy and the not-greedy mind: the angry and the not-angry mind, the scattered mind and the concentrated mind, and the freed mind. The contemplation of the state of mind, then, as we can see, is a form of self-examination in which we give bare attention to the general condition of our mind at a particular time in order to assess without bias or prejudice the degree to which the adverse mind-factors exist and the degree to which the wholesome mind-factors have been developed.

Often we are unaware of our faults because we make no special effort to examine ourselves dispassionately; and, not knowing our faults, we can make no special efforts to correct them. Similarly, not knowing our good points, we can make no special efforts to develop them. By practising the awareness of the state of mind, however, and dispassionately seeing our faults and our good points clearly, we provide ourselves with the basic material, to enable us to correct the one and to develop the other.

Let us take as an exercise just one of the states of mind mentioned, namely the angry mind, and make it the subject of a mindfulness-practice. In the unnatural tempo of life it is difficult to maintain a condition of tranquillity under all circumstances, for there are often too many petty annoyances in the daily routine, and in consequence the mind is too often aroused to a state of anger. Now this anger does not have to take the form of rage or fury to be anger; very often we are merely mildly angry; and we fail to realise just how often in the ordinary course of the day our anger is aroused.

This practice, then, is a matter of watching ourselves critically and dispassionately, with a view to realizing just how often and under what conditions our anger is slightly aroused. In this practice, we are not interested in the major displays of anger that sometimes occur; for we are fully aware of them; it is the small annoyances, the petty irritations, that should be the object of increased awareness in the daily routine, for once these become well-controlled as a matter of habit the major occasions of anger are easier to control.

If we can develop the habit of bare attention with respect to our mental state at all times, we can progressively increase our control over our reactions to the outside world and gradually find a greater degree of inward balance and tranquillity.

Having formed the habit of self-examination with regard to anger and its various derivatives and minor manifestations, we can then turn our attention to other unwholesome mind factors such as conceit and envy, again paying specific regard not to the bigger and more obvious exemplifications but to their subtle and disguised forms.

We have now discussed three of the four foundations of mindfulness, namely reflection on the body, reflection on the feelings and reflection on the mind-states.

The fourth one is called reflection on the mental contents, and it consists of various forms of self-examination whose aim is to discover the extent to which the contents of the mind have been affected by self-understanding and self-training.

The first of the mental contents to be mentioned in this connection are certain obstacles to mental progress called the five hindrances. These are, respectively, sensory desire, ill-will, non-exertion, remorseful agitation, and scepticism.

Our object in this form of self-analysis is to discern just how much of each hindrance is present in our mental make-up. Thus we seek to discover just how much of our mental and physical activity is governed by our desire for sensory enjoyment and how much it is influenced by ill-will towards others; we observe ourselves to discover if we fail to exert ourselves in the search for liberation; or whether we are worrying over things of the past; and we watch for signs of that kind of scepticism which may become an unwillingness to understand. All of these mental factors are hindrances to progress, and until we know them and recognise them in ourselves we cannot take the steps necessary to deal with them.

Next under the general heading of reflection on the mental contents comes a form of self-examination whose object is to bring to the surface the degree to which we understand the egoless nature of existence.

The doctrine of egolessness is frequently presented in terms of the five component groups—the material components, the feelings, the perceptions, the determinants or dynamic factors of the mind, and the various forms of consciousness; and this practice is directed towards discovering just how much of this egolessness-doctrine has penetrated the deeper layers of the mind.

We must remember that an intellectual grasp of the doctrine is not enough, it is only a beginning, and until the teaching begins to alter the whole attitude towards life, or until

the life-style begins to conform to the teaching, no real progress has been made. Sometimes we believe in the doctrine of egolessness—that is, we believe that the so-called self is nothing but a continuum of bodily states, feelings, perceptions, determinants, and states of consciousness—and yet we act as though the self were all-important; and this shows that there is still a great deal of ground yet to cover.

Next we consider a form of mindfulness by which we endeavour (by the application of bare attention) to discover the presence or absence of certain mental elements which, because they bind us to the wheel of birth and death, are called the fetters.

Several of these fetters may be mentioned here by way of example. Scepticism is a fetter as well as a hindrance to progress because, as it is to be understood in the present context, it prevents us from thinking outside of the framework of our present beliefs. The tendency to cling to established observances is a fetter because it places the emphasis on external things and makes it seem unnecessary to reach down further into the depths of the mind. The hindrance called sensory desire is also a fetter because our desire for sensory pleasures keeps us in bondage to those sensory pleasures; in a similar way, the fetter of ill-will binds us to those things we hate. Other fetters are conceit (because it both feeds on and feeds the self-delusion), restlessness or discontent, and ignorance, which is at the root of all adverse mind-states.

From the fetters we pass on to the seven mental factors which when fully developed will lead up to the final enlightenment. We examine the extent to which each one is developed in our mind and how to bring it to perfection.

The first of the seven factors of enlightenment is mindfulness in its various forms, and the next is called investigation, or the faculty for continually probing and searching for the true nature of things. Thirdly we find energy; then interest (which is sometimes called enthusiasm); and then tranquillity. Concentration—the ability to focus the mental energy on to a single point to the exclusion of all extraneous ideas —comes next; and finally we have equanimity, a state of complete equal-mindedness towards all things.

The last to be mentioned of the forms of contemplation of the mental contents brings us right back to the beginning of the Buddha-doctrine, right back to the Four Noble Truths. Here our task is to examine ourselves to see just how far our understanding of the Four Truths has penetrated to the deeper recesses of our mental make-up.

Thus if we are immersed in a situation involving suffering, we use the situation to exemplify to ourselves the universality of suffering: we try to recognise its origin in craving; we strive to attack craving at its source; and in so striving we realize to what extent we are treading the Noble Eightfold Path.

This, then is the way in which the Buddha-doctrine sets out its system of mindfulness. We can see that, in its completeness, it covers a tremendous field, and although in the course of the average person's normal day there will be little opportunity for any practice which requires seclusion and quietness, there will be a correspondingly broad scope for many forms of mindfulness which apply to the ordinary feelings, mental states, and mental contents as they come into consciousness.

* * * * *

The next and final section in this Course of Information deals
with Right Concentration, the eighth step of the
Noble Eightfold Path.

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WHY I TURNED TO BUDDHISM

By

Marianne Collier

(Western Australia)

WHAT is very easy is seldom worth much. Yet, whereas a man will spend days and nights of hard work to gain success in business, he is only too prone to assume that a few moments a week are good enough for religion. In temporal matters he realises that great effort is normally needed to achieve great results, but in spiritual matters he hopes to get along with the minimum of effort. To quote the Venerable Piyadassi Thera, "Religion, if I may use the term, is something to be approached but by individual reasoning, mature consideration and weighty reflection." When is a human being ready to reason intelligently? When is he mature enough to reflect upon the mysteries of life and to question his relation to the universe? For a few, these questions present themselves when they are young, others begin to wonder about it in later years, and many never, question at all the creed of their ancestors: "What is good enough for my parents is good enough for me." We are not concerned with those who accept the beliefs of their fathers and forefathers without question, but with those who have at one stage of their lives questioned such beliefs, who have not been satisfied with the answers given to them. What causes anyone to think on those lines?

Our Lord Buddha Himself began his questioning by observing suffering, sickness and death in others, i.e., by observing an external event or circumstance. Although the last world war ended 15, years ago for many of us it was a turning point in our lives in more than one way. Even today I still wonder that so many can square their Christian faith with the cruelty of war. What kind of god is he who forgives a German soldier before the battle for going to kill an English soldier, and who being the same god forgives an Englishman for killing a German? In every country which was then at war, parents prayed for their sons, wives for their husbands, sisters for their brothers, etc. When the war invaded their country itself, homes were destroyed, men, women and children killed or maimed for life. The old philosophical question: if god is omnipotent he cannot be good or he would not let it happen, and if he is all good then he cannot be omnipotent, was answered with: god is not responsible for wars, but we are. Then why pray to him at all if he cannot help that some are killed, others wounded and again others escape without a scratch? Is it not far more logical that each one of us, no matter who we are and where we are, is responsible and that our life will be lived according to our own Karma, that

each one of us has the power to abstain from doing evil? We may not appear to influence the greater world by doing so, but each one of us has his own orbit. He is responsible for it; he created it as he watched that which was unreal and un-enduring in it fall away, so may he re-create it now. “No one does wrong voluntarily”, was one of Socrates’ famous sayings and according to this, vice is therefore only due to ignorance. But this ignorance can provide us with untold suffering for the future in this life or in lives yet to come. Karma is not changed by whether we are aware of the fact that we act wrongly or not. If someone has burned his hands by holding them accidentally in a fire, would he be foolish enough—knowing the consequences—to do it again? Of course not. Knowing the effect of an evil action and its cause and realising that we sooner or later would have to pay for it, should that not make us more aware of how important it is not to harm anyone, as by doing so we merely harm ourselves? Although we cannot redeem our bad Karma it is in our hands not to add to it.

I would like to add another aspect of Buddhism: The Oneness of life. My love for all animals manifested itself at a very early stage. Later I could not understand why animals have not an “immortal soul” and today I wonder at people who are living in close relationship with house-animals and still maintain that they are something apart from themselves. Perhaps it is understandable if we compare a blind person with a seeing person. No matter how carefully we are able to describe to such a blind person the beauty of a flower he will very rarely realise and comprehend its beauty to the fullest extent. Even Psychology should have shown to many the similarities between men and animals which find expression especially in their early stages of life. With great pain in my heart I have to hear and read how many animals are used to prove a point in Psychology (thinking for a moment of Pavlov’s thousand of dogs used only to prove scientifically the so-called classical conditioning reflex). “The, threshold of pain for an animal is much higher than for a man,” so I was told, “because animals lack the power of reason.” Fear has been induced experimentally in many animals, and fear means suffering. How much they suffer we can only infer from their outward signs, but is that sufficient? Are we justified in saying, as one lady pointed out to me the other day that she could not care less how many animals are slaughtered as long as it would help humanity? Do all lower forms of animals exist merely to serve mankind? Having achieved human form, I think, it is our responsibility to help, and protect the less fortunate creatures on this earth. Only lately have I begun to feel compassion towards plant-life. Once we have realised to the full the Oneness of all life, I feel we increase our own suffering, because we are only able to help and protect others in our own small orbit, and maybe, serve as an example to others, perhaps help a few of our kind to open their eyes to treat each life precious as their own.

I have read books, articles and sermons on Buddhism, written by students who have given it years of hard study, and I feel very inadequate to write about Buddhism at all as:

(a) I have had very little opportunity to contact other Buddhists personally (in Western Australia—as far as we know—there are only Mr. and Mrs. B. Flinn and myself), except by letter I have never met a Buddhist priest, and

(b) English is not my mother-tongue (born in Germany).

And yet the most important part of Buddhism to me is to make it something alive, to be aware of one's Buddha-nature and I cannot do better than quote the Venerable E. Hunt's words, that "There is no better guide to help us to attain to the "Right-way-upside" of living than the Five Precepts, and understanding of the Four Noble Truths and walk the Eight-fold Path". To keep this in our conscious minds, day and night, and let love and compassion dictate our action and emotion,—I cannot but feel that it is a step in the right direction.

* * * * *

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THE CATECHISM OF BUDDHISM

By

U Kin Maung Dwe

16. *In what manner shall we overcome these philosophical doubts?*

Ans:- Lord Buddha says:-

“Now inasmuch, Brethren, as the Ariyan disciple has by Right Insight clearly seen this law of Dependent Origination both in its relation to Cause (Paṭiccasamuppanna.) and in its relation to Effect (Paṭiccasamuppāda), as they really are, never doth it arise verily, that such as he will ponder into the past contemplating, ‘Did I live in times gone by? Or Did I not live in times gone by? What was I in times gone by? How was I then? Or from being what did I become what?’

Or that he will ponder into the Future, contemplating, ‘Shall I be reborn in a Future time, or shall I not? What shall I become in the Future? How shall I become in the Future? Or being what, shall I in the future become what?’

Or that he will ponder into the Present, contemplating, ‘Am I What I am? or Am I not what I am? what indeed am I? How indeed am I? This person that is I, whence come He, whither will He go?’

Why doth this never arise? In that the ariyan disciple, Brethren has by Right Insight clearly seen as they really are the said Law of Paṭiccasamuppanna and Paṭiccasamuppāda.

Nidāna Vagga Samyutta Nikāya, Page 265. Saya Myo’s Translation Vol. 11. Page 43. The Book of the Kindred Saying. Vol 2. Page 22.

Again Lord Buddha in Maha Nidāna Sutta says:-

“Say not so Ānanda, Say not so. Deep is this doctrine of events as arising from Cause (Paṭiccasamuppanna), and it looks deep too. It is through not understanding this doctrine; through not penetrating it, that this generation (people in this generation) has become a tangled skein, a matted ball of thread like Munja-grass and rushes, unable to overcome the doom of the Hell, Destruction and Saṃsāra (with constant round of rebirth)

Dīgha Nikāya, Mahā Vagga Mahā Nidana Sutta, Page 47. Saya Myo’s Translation. Vol 2. Page 99. Dialogue of Buddha Vol 2. Page 50.

17. *What do you mean by Four Noble Truths?*

Ans :- On true interpretation of Paṭiccasamuppāda and Paticcasamuppanna, Lord Buddha discovered the Four Noble Truths, namely

1. The Truth of Suffering (Dukkha Saccā).
2. The Truth regarding the Cause of suffering (Samudaya Saccā).
3. The Truth regarding the Cessation of Suffering (Nirodha Saccā).
4. The Truth regarding the way leading to the Cessation of Suffering (Magga Saccā).

18. *What do you mean by 'Enlightenment'?*

Ans:- The true Knowledge of the Four Noble Truths in three different aspects is called Enlightenment.

19. *Did Lord Buddha obtain 'Enlightenment'?*

Ans :- Yes, Lord Buddha obtained Enlightenment under the Bo Tree in Buddha Gaya at the age of 35 about 500 years before the birth of Christ.

Lord Buddha says:-

“Now this, O Monks, as long as these Four Noble Truths in three different aspects were not clearly seen by me, in that case O Monks in this world with its Gods, Maras, Brahmas, Ascetics and Brahmans, in the presence of these, I declare that I have not attained the Highest knowledge of Enlightenment.

But on the other hand, if these Four Noble Truths in three different aspects were clearly seen by me, then in that case, O Monks, in the presence of these Gods, Maras, Brahmas, Ascetics and Brahmans, I declare that I have attained the highest Knowledge of Enlightenment. Thus I know”.

Vinaya Pitaka. Mahā Khanda Vagga Page 14. Saya Myo's Translation. Vol 25. Page 31. Mahā Vagga Samyutta. Page 368. Saya Myo's Translation. Vol 15. Page 368.

20. *State the Four Noble Truths in three different aspects?*

Ans:- The following are the four noble truths in three different aspects.

1. Sacca Nañña. Theoretical Knowledge of the Four Noble Truths.
2. Kicca Nañña. Practical Knowledge of the Four Noble Truths.
3. Kata Nañña. Final acquirement of both the Theoretical and Practical Knowledge.

In other words, we must know as follows:-

1. This truth of Misery in the world is one that has to be clearly comprehended.

2. This truth of Misery in the world is one that has to be clearly avoided.
3. This truth of Misery in the world is one that has to be clearly realised.
4. This truth of Misery in the world is one that has to be cultivated.

The Light of Buddha. Vol 3. No. 4. Page 27.

21. *Is Buddhism a Philosophy?*

Ans:- Buddhism is the only Philosophy that is really worthy of its name.

Professor Joad says:-

“Philosophy is an exceedingly difficult subject and most books on philosophy are unintelligible to most intelligent people. This is partly, but not wholly, due to the difficulty of the subject-matter, which, being the universe, is not surprisingly complex and obscure. Philosophy is, I think, most appropriately to be conceived as a clearing house to which the results of all other human enquiries are brought and in which the records of all forms of human experience are sifted, assessed and evaluated.

Physics gives us information about the ultimate constituents of matter as revealed by contemporary analysis. But if we ask what is their real nature, physics does not tell us; it only gives us information about their behaviour.

Chemistry investigates the Laws of the combination of these ultimate constituents of matter, establishes formula for the composition of elements.

Biology gives us information about a particular class of highly organised chemical compounds which exhibit the property known as being alive.

Anthropology takes for its subject-matter a special sub-section of the creatures that are living, namely, those that are called human beings.

Physiology and Anatomy describe the contents and seek to elucidate the laws determining the workings of the human body.

Each Science working within its own sphere obtains its own set of results. But it is not the business of any one of the sciences to co-ordinate its results with those reached by the others, with a view to drawing up a map of the whole territory, each department of which has been separately investigated. It is as if each science were entrusted with the cultivation of a separate set of trees, but it was nobody's business to concern himself with the wood. Inevitably, then, no scientist sees the wood; he is too preoccupied with his allotted trees. It is here that Philosophy steps in. His concern is with the wood; that wood, that is to say, considered as a whole. He gathers together and collates the results of the

sciences not with a view to querying them, but with a view to assessing their meaning and significance.”

‘Philosophy by C.E.M. Joad. Page 16-18.

Professor Patrick says:-

“So intimate is the relation between Science and Philosophy that some knowledge of the special sciences, especially of the more generalised branches, such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and psychology is indispensable to the student of philosophy. The profound cravings of the human mind is to get just this synoptic view of life which philosophy attempts. It is not merely a quantitative view of the world that we desire, its mathematical relationships, its predictability; we want and we must have some knowledge, or at least some theory, of its Intrinsic Qualitative Character.

The Scientist is forever measuring, weighing, computing, and making sketches of details. “This says the philosopher, is all useful and necessary work; but I would like to get a picture of the way the house is going to look when it is done or at least a glimpse of it. I am truly grateful to the Scientists for all their laborious work, but I am—at time anyway—a little weary of studying all these details and I long for some picture of the whole. Philosophy tries to put this picture-puzzle of a hundred curiously shaped bodies of knowledge together, to see what sort of universe they make Philosophy is the integration of knowledge, the synthesis of the Science”.

Introduction to Philosophy by C. T. W. Patrick. Ch 2.

From what has been clearly explained by Professor Joad and Professor Patrick, it must be clear that in order to write a book on philosophy, one must be able to interpret all the reports of Science and to reach definite conclusions as to the nature of the Universe in which we live and as to our relative position and prospects in it.

Lord Buddha is the only person who has succeeded in interpreting all the reports of Science and has reached definite conclusions as to the nature of the Universe in which we live and as to our relative position and prospects in it. The philosophy produced by Lord Buddha as a result of such interpretation is called ‘Buddhism.’

21. What is really meant by Universe according to Buddhism? What is our relative position and prospect in such Universe?

Ans:- According to Buddhism, the word ‘Universe’ means the body of a person which is about one fathom long. It is not a place which can be reached by going.

Lord Buddha says:- O Rohitassa, neither do I say, that by not having got to the end of the world is the end of ill to be accomplished. It is in this fathom-long carcass, Rohitassa, with its impressions and its ideas, that, I declare, lies the world; the cause of the world; the cessation of the world; course of action that leads to the cessation of the world.

Sagātha Vagga Samyutta, page 61. Saya Myo's Translation. Vol 10. page 168. The Book of the Kindred Saying Vol 1. Page 86.

22. *What is meant by "It is in this fathom-long carcass, I declare, lies the world, the cause of the world, the cessation of the world, course of action leading to the cessation of the world"?*

Ans:- The whole passage referred to Paṭicca-samuppāda, and that it is in this Paṭicca Samuppāda, the Four Noble Truths, namely, 1. Misery and suffering. 2. Causes of the misery and suffering. 3. Cessation of the misery and suffering. 4. Way leading to the cessation of misery and suffering, are to be found.

According to Lord Buddha this world is a solid mass of misery and suffering. After reciting the twelve links of the Paṭicca-samuppāda, Lord Buddha declared:-

"Etassa kevalassa dukkha khandhassa samudayo hoti". Thus arises the whole mass of suffering.

23. *What is really meant by 'Dukkha' according to Buddhism?*

Ans:- There are four different kinds of Dukkha namely:-

1. Pilāna Dukkha. Destructive Dukkha.
2. Sankhata Dukkha. Evolutive Dukkha.
3. Santapa Dukkha. Painful Dukkha.
4. Viparinama Dukkha. Transient Dukkha.

Patisambhida Magga Page 293.

The fundamental principle underlying the abovementioned four forms of Dukkha is the Theory of Impermanence or Fluxion Theory

Lord Buddha says:-

"Sabbe sankāra anicca,
yada paññāya passati,
atha nibbindati dukkhe,
esā maggo visuddhi ya".

Dhammapada. Para 277.

Formations are all impermanent,
when he sees thus with understanding
And turns away from what is ill,
That is the path to Purity.

24. *Explain in full details the Buddhist Theory of Impermanence as propounded by Lord Buddha?*

Ans:- Before we consider the Theory of Impermanence as propounded by Lord Buddha, we shall consider in what manner the modern Science has supported the said theory.

Sir, now Earl B. Russell says:-

Until 1925, theories of the structure of the atom were based upon the old conception of matter as indestructible substance, although this was regarded as no more than a convenience. Now, owing chiefly to two German Physicists, Heisenberg and Schrödinger, the last vestiges of the old solid atom have melted away, and matter has become as ghostly as anything in a spiritualist séance.

An Outline of Philosophy. Page 104

Professor Joad says:-

“It is now fairly generally known that the nineteenth-century conception of the atom as a little, hard, solid ball of homogeneous stuff has been abandoned. It has been replaced, by the more complex conception of the atom as a miniature solar system. In the centre, there is a nucleus of packets of positive electricity known as ‘Protons’ which constitute the nucleus; around the nucleus there rotate at various distances and in irregular orbits, smaller packets of negative electricity, the ‘Electrons’. The charge of positive electricity in each proton is exactly equal to the negative charge of each rotating electron”.

Guide to Modern Thought. Page 85.

Again at Page 18, he says:-

“Today the foundation of the whole way of thinking, the hard, obvious, simple lumps of matter, has disappeared. Modern matter is something infinitely attenuated and elusive; it is a hump in space time, a ‘mush’ of electricity, a wave of probability undulating into nothingness”.

Eary Bert-rand at page 304 of the same book says:-

“But now electrons and protons themselves are dissolved into systems of radiations by Heisenberg, and into systems of waves by Schrödinger.”

From the statement of these Scientists and eminent Philosophers, it is clear that matter is after all not what we thought it to be, a hard, tangible substance but radiation or waves of electricity. This is the limit reached by modern Science.

What effect it has on the various divergent philosophical doctrines, is best explained by Earl Russell himself at 103, 511 of the same book.

Earl Russell says :-

“No philosophy can ignore the revolutionary changes in our physical ideas that the men of science have found necessary; indeed it may be said that all traditional philosophies have to be discarded and we have to start afresh with as little respect as possible for the system of the past.

Our age has penetrated more deeply into the nature of things than any earlier age, and it would be a false modesty to overestimate what can still be learned from the metaphysicians of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. P.103.

Now matter can be analysed into molecules, molecules into atoms, atoms into electrons and protons. But now electrons and protons themselves are dissolved into systems of radiations by Heisenberg and into systems of waves by Schrödinger.

P.304

The fact that matters are after all, not as they appeared to be, namely, hard tangible substance but merely radiations or waves of electricity as discovered by modern Science, was discovered by Lord Buddha 2500 years ago.

He went much further. He defined those waves of electricity into four different classes, namely Pathavi, Tejo, Āpo and Vayo.